

## Using Play-Way Reading Methods to Improve Reading Skills in English

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### Abstract

As Francis Bacon said, "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man", the world of knowledge is expressed through written form. One needs analytical skills to comprehend the written form. It is not just understanding the meaning of independent words but also the meaning that those words express in combination. Sometimes, the reader has to imagine the situation to comprehend the meaning of the text. Therefore, readers also require imagination skills. Teachers of government high schools of Mahaboobnagar district in Telangana state are facing problem in improving reading skills of their students. Their students cannot understand, skim, scan, and decode English passages, lessons etc. They need some play-way methods to improve their reading skills.

Hence, this article focussed on understanding the problems of teachers in improving reading skills of their students and applying play-way reading methods to improve reading skills of their students. For this purpose, a structured questionnaire was administered to 100 government high school teachers. The responses were analysed, interpreted, and presented in the findings section. A five-day training programme was designed for the teachers of English to show the effectiveness of play-way methods in improving reading skills. The training made a great impact on the teachers of English.

**Keywords:** Reading skills, skim, scan, play-way methods, structured questionnaire, training programme

### Introduction

H.A. Cartledge as cited in Katyayani, Girija Raman (2016 p. 123) said, "of the four skills of learning English, the one which is likely to be the most useful is reading." He further stated that the total written form is understood through one's reading ability. It is the communication between the reader and the author. Communication of a printed or written matter is impossible without a reader. He also expressed that reading involves recognition of the important elements of meaning and their relationship that contributes to accuracy and thoroughness in comprehension. Reading can be mainly understood as a decoding process.

William S. Gray as cited in Dinakar. P (2016 p.61) defined reading as

the process of recognizing printed or written symbols, involving such habits as accuracy in which words that make up a passage, a span of recognition, rate at which words and phrases are recognized, rhythmical progress of perception along the lines and accurate return sweep of the eye from the end of one line to the beginning of the next.

P. B. Ballard as cited in Katyayani, Girija Raman (2016 p.121) called reading as ‘barking at print’:

Stephen King as cited in Katyayani, Girija Raman (2016 p.127) quoted

If you don’t have time to read, you don’t have the time (or the tools) to write.  
Simple as that.

Rivers and Temperely (1978 p.88) stated that Indians as the second language learners will want to read because they:

- are curious about some topics
- need instructions in order to perform some tasks for their daily life (they want to know how an appliance works, they are interested in a new recipe, they have forms to fill in)
- want to act in a play, play in a new game, do a puzzle or to carry out some other activity in which it is pleasant and amusing
- want to keep in touch with friends by correspondence or understand business letters.
- want to know when or where something will take place or what is available (they consult time tables, programmer, announcements, menus or they need advertisements)
- want to know what is happening or has happened (they read newspapers, magazines, reports)
- seek enjoyment or excitement (they read novels of all kinds, short stories, poems, words of songs)

The above-mentioned views clearly justify the importance of reading skills in Indian context.

Many skills and abilities are involved in order to become an efficient reader. John Munby stated the following skills as cited in the Francoise Grellet, (1981 p.4):

- Recognizing the script of the language
- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items
- Understanding explicitly the stated information (factual/ direct)
- Understanding information when not explicitly stated (inferential/ direct)

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- Understanding conceptual meaning
- Understanding the communicative value of sentences and utterances
- Understanding the relations within the sentence
- Recognizing indicators in the discourse progression
- Extracting salient points to summarize (the text, an idea etc)
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Transcoding information into diagrammatic display

Thus, the above-mentioned skills are much necessary in order to be an efficient reader.

Penny Ur (1999 p.63) listed out some points for efficient reading. They are:

- Language: the language of the text must be comprehensible to the learners
- Content: the content of the text must be accessible to the learners (when they know enough about it so that they can apply their own background knowledge)
- Speed: the reading progresses fairly fast
- Attention: the reader must concentrate on the significant bits and skim the rest
- Incomprehensible Vocabulary: the reader must use the dictionary for the incomprehensible vocabulary
- Motivation: the reader must be motivated to read by interesting content or challenging tasks
- Purpose: the reader must be aware of a clear purpose in reading
- Strategies: the reader must use different strategies for different kinds of reading.

W. M. Ryburn, as cited in Katyayani, Girija Raman (2016 p.121), expressed that “the teachers of mother tongue (different from English) do not teach the students to read aloud properly.”

A majority of the government schools in Mahaboobnagar district in the state of Telangana lack adequate teaching-learning materials for language teaching. Unfortunately, the teacher is the only source of language teaching and learning. Moreover, teachers are expected or assigned to perform different kinds of roles in the classroom because of which students feel neglected. Teachers also cannot concentrate on improving the skills of the students. Hence, this article focussed on the problems of the government high school teachers in Mahaboobnagar district in improving reading skills of their learners. For the purpose of the study, a structured questionnaire was administered to 100 government high school teachers of English in Mahaboobnagar district. A five-day training programme was designed for the teachers to show them the impact of play-way methods on improving reading skills.

## Statement of the Problem

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The teachers of English in the government high schools of Telangana in general and Mahaboobnagar district in particular face many problems in improving reading skills of their students. They do not use any innovative methods to improve reading skills of the students. Hence, the present study focussed on the problems faced by the teachers in developing reading skills of the students and applying play-way reading methods to improve reading skills of the students.

### **Aim of the Research**

The present study aimed to find out the problems faced by the government high school teachers of English in Mahaboobnagar district in improving reading skills and applying play-way methods to overcome the underachievement in reading skills.

### **Hypotheses**

- Government high school teachers of Mahaboobnagar district do not possess a clear idea on the teaching of reading skills.
- Teachers face problems in improving reading skills of their learners.
- Play-way reading methods help in improving reading skills of the learners of English.
- Teachers are not properly orientated to improve reading skills of the learners.

### **Objectives**

- To find out whether government high school teachers of English in Mahaboobnagar district posses a clear idea in teaching reading skills.
- To study the problems of teachers in improving reading skills of their learners.
- To train teachers in using play-way reading methods in order to improve reading skills of their students
- To find out whether frequent orientation programmes are conducted to the teachers in improving reading skills of the learners.

### **Research Design**

For the purpose of the study, the researchers carried out a preliminary study in different schools. A structured questionnaire was administered to 100 randomly selected teachers in Mahaboobnagar district. The data thus obtained was analysed and interpreted.

### **Problems Faced by the Teachers**

It was noticed from the responses of the teacher's questionnaire that a majority of the government high school teachers in Mahaboobnagar district face difficulties in improving reading skills of their learners. The following are the problems shared by the teachers:

- Large classes are a problem for teaching reading skills.
- Students are not regular to school.
- Students are not habituated to reading activities.

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- There is a confusion whether to teach pronunciation of letters or words.
- A majority of the teachers are unaware of the appropriate teaching methodologies to be followed in improving reading skills of the learners.
- Inadequate teaching-learning materials.
- Lack of orientation programmes.
- School libraries lack adequate English materials. Teacher's handbook is the only source.

## Training

For the purpose of the present study, a model training programme on using play-way methods to improve reading skills was conducted to randomly selected 50 government high school teachers of English in Mahaboobnagar district for five days. Some of the activities for the improvement of reading skills were explained to the teachers and further asked them to conduct these activities in their respective schools for the development of learner's reading skills. These activities were designed keeping in view of the lack of teaching-learning materials in the government high schools of Mahaboobnagar district.

## Activity 1

### Reading Rhyming Words

Teachers were asked to give one word and also to give a sound on which a rhyming word has to be made. Teachers were divided into groups and were given different lists of words along with the sounds on which they have to make a rhyming word. One example is given below:

1. Reading - Feeding ( teacher should utter the word 'reading' and instruct students to say a rhyming word starting with the sound /f/)
2. Call – Wall
3. Run - fun
4. Cap – Map
5. Weak - Speak
6. Tall - Stall

Likewise, teachers were made to create a list of rhyming words. They were advised to use the same or similar activity in their classrooms.

## Activity 2

### Framing Sentences

Teachers were given a list of sentences. One teacher was asked to read the first sentence aloud and then the next teacher was asked to read the second sentence and so on. This created a rhythm in reading. Teachers showed interest in improving the sentences further by changing the tense of the sentence and by replacing verbs and objects with other verbs and objects. One example is given below:

1. She plays football

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2. He plays football
3. Radha plays football
4. Seetha plays football
5. They play football

### Activity 3

#### Words through Pictures

This was a pair activity. Teachers were divided into pairs. Blackboard was divided into two halves. A picture was pasted on one part of the board and hints for describing the picture were given on the other part of the board. Teachers were asked to write the description of the picture by using the hints given and then asked them to read aloud what they have written. One example is given below:

 <p>(<a href="https://www.google.co.in/search?q=sceneries+photo&amp;source">https://www.google.co.in/search?q=sceneries+photo&amp;source</a>)</p>	<p>Village – farmers –  produce – no pollution –  serene – greenery – lake –  fishing – literacy –  festivals.</p>
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Teachers were asked to make use of their real-life experience while describing the picture. Many teachers came up with different descriptions. While reading, the researcher checked their pronunciation, intonation, etc. They were asked to use such activities in their classrooms to improve reading skills of their students.

### Activity 4

#### Newspaper Reading

Teachers were instructed to carry some English newspapers to the classroom. Later, they were asked to present the news bulletin covering topics from politics, sports, business, science and technology, and entertainment. This activity of news reading helped in improving reading and presentation skills. Many teachers enjoyed this activity.

### Activity 5

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## Reading Comprehension

The researchers distributed handouts of short stories along with a group of pictures to the sample teachers. The researchers asked them to read the story and circle the images related to the story. They were given 10 minutes time to locate the pictures. This activity helped them in increasing the speed of their reading as there was a time limit.

Through these activities, the researchers demonstrated the sample teachers that reading skills can be improved using play-way methods. Such activities reduce fear among the learners and help in improving their reading skills. Once they improve their reading skills, they can excel in other skills too. Their performance in exams also improves as they start comprehending the lessons better.

## Findings

- It was noticed that a majority of the teachers were unaware of the appropriate ways of improving reading skills of the students.
- A majority of the teachers reported that their school libraries have no adequate English learning materials on reading skills.
- Teachers of government high schools in Mahaboobnagar district require more number of orientation programmes on using creative methods to improve reading skills of the students.
- A majority of the sample teachers opined that they are unable to pay proper attention on the students because of the overcrowded classrooms.
- Teachers felt during training programme that play-way methods help students to overcome their difficulties in reading skills.

## Conclusion

This study aimed at understanding the problems faced by the high school teachers of English in improving reading skills of the learners and using play-way methods in improving the same. Results from the study showed that if teachers are provided with adequate teaching-learning material, innovative resources, orientation programmes and stress-free environment, etc., they would certainly improve reading skills of their students. Teachers were also advised to use play-way methods that were taken up in the training programme in their classrooms. They were further advised to design more such activities in order to create interest among their students.

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