

## **Short Research Article**

**Improving the reading habits of class III students studying at Patshaling Primary School,  
Tsirang**

### **Abstract**

Reading habit is an essential and important aspect for creating the literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of an individual and helps them to develop the proper thinking methods and creating new ideas. At present, due to the influence of the mass media, people do not show much interest in reading the books, magazines and journals. Therefore, there is the urgent need to embed and develop the reading habit in the minds of our young children. This study was conducted to assess and determine some appropriate measures and method to improve the reading habits of Class III students. Reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed it can last one's life time (Green, 2001). In this paper, the researchers have discussed the various methods and benefits in improving the reading habits. The study provides some useful insight into developing reading habit and how reading habit can be enhanced to achieve maximum development in our young children.

**Keywords:** Improvement, Reading habits

### **Introduction**

“The man who doesn't read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them.” Twain, (2000). Reading to children is one of the best ways to put them on the road to success-academically and personally. By reading, it not only improves the fluency but also vocabulary, command on language and communication skill. Therefore, we as a teacher and adults should never hesitate to explain the importance of reading, building vocabulary skills and increasing reading comprehension. Moreover, reading improves a person's knowledge about various fields of life. This knowledge can help a person to make correct decisions in different situations of life when they read more books.

“Reading is a free ticket to everywhere” Schmich. M (2006). I too agree as and when I read and travel to different places in different times. I can also feel the pain, happiness struggles and

victory of the writers when I read. Good reading habit has the power to bring yesterday and tomorrow into now (Krashen, 1993). So, to bright up the students all they need is a good reading foundation as reading can take care of all other aspects like understanding and gaining confidence.

## **Reconnaissance**

### **Situational analysis**

One of the main problems faced by Bhutanese students, especially in the remotely located students is poor reading habits. Most of the students can't read correctly including using components of reading, such as phonemic awareness, phonic fluency and reading comprehension. When they read, they read it without expressions or intonations.

In my class, most of the students are slow and poor readers. The reading strength of the student is very low and they can't read alone which means their independent learning is very low.

Sometimes during class hour, I make them to read simple text and the students find it difficult to read the text. It means students never practice reading at homes.

The main reasons that I have found about my student's difficulty in reading is that when they read, they cannot comprehend the text. The main problem of the poor reading is that ninety five percent of my students are from illiterate family background and they are busy with their farm work. As English teacher, I am bit concern because if they don't have good reading habits they will not comprehend the meaning of the text.

## **Competence**

I have read some books about reading strategies by many different authors and I have got some ideas about action research and how to go about it. I can apply those ideas that I have learned.

Furthermore I, myself am finding many ways to improve by reading different books so that I can help my students.

## **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study is to study and assess the reading habits of class III students in the school so that the researcher can understand the reading trend for other classes as well. The main objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the reading habits of class III students.
2. To see and ascertain the amount of time the students spend in reading.
3. To find the major factors hindering class III student from reading.
4. To provide relevant interventions/measures to bring changes or improvement of the reading habit.

## **Literature review**

My literature review will discuss definitions, importance, consequences or results of poor reading habit, factors affecting reading and very doable and relevant strategies to develop reading habit from different authors along with my personal views or opinions.

## **Definition of reading**

According to Leo “Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation”. Whenever we read something, we grasp its meaning by recognizing the words or sentences. The cognitive process of understanding a written linguistic message is what reading means to Kellar (2015). When we read anything, we tend to make meaning out of it and then analyze it. No reading is done blindly or aimlessly. “Reading is not just a basic skill. It is a complex process as well as problem solving”, (Cziko, Greenleaf, Hurwitz & Schoenbach, 2000). According to Kunzang (2011), reading habit is an individual’s constant reading in a critical manner to improve professional knowledge and to perceive the world in a broader perspective.

## **Importance of reading**

Reading is important to keep ourselves updated with what is happening around us. It is important because we understand what the writer wants to say, what he feels in the form of written text

using suitable words and sentences. As said by Bamberger, (1975) reading is one of the most effective means of development of language and personality, reading helps to enhance our speaking and writing proficiency and sometimes it provides strength to endure frustrations. In the nutshell, it is the only way that enables humans to hold our attention, absorb new experiences and view the world differently like any other ever does. To improve the students in their studies reading helps in understanding the concepts of the written text. Not only that reading also improves vocabulary, command on the language and communication skills.

Shoebottom (2002) identified that a student who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass exams than a student who is a weak reader. In addition, Florence (2012) claims, reading play a vital role in any worthwhile effort to learn English and most importantly educational objectives can be accomplished through reading. It is truly said that when we were in schools, most of the toppers were those who read more books. Since they were reading many books, they could relate their readings with the lesson taught in the class and teachers used to appreciate them. On the other hand, we found students who have a large vocabulary are usually good readers. Wong (2012) has found out some reasons why reading is so important. Readers are to get oneself exposed to new things, for self improvement like mentally or academically, gain experience from other people, boost imagination and creativity, preparation for action and is the means of communication. Given reasons, very strongly prove the importance of reading. Through reading we get expose to outside world, new things, new information and new ways to solve problem. Exploration begins from reading. Readers are more of creative and good in imagination. Maurois as cited in Wong (2012) states, the art of reading is in great part that of acquiring a better understanding of life from the one's encounter with it in a book. We know nothing unless we read. Tella and Akande (2007) in Kunzang (2011), state that the ability to read is at the heart of self-education and lifelong learning and that it is an art capable of transforming life and society.

“Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers” (Truman). So if we want to become a leader in one's life, first and foremost thing is to have a good reading habit. As a leader if you're not reading daily, don't be surprised if you find yourself falling behind your peers (Ambler, 2015). I really liked this point because it is very relevant and true as those who reads more, learns more and performs better. In my school, I see many students who are not good in

academic and cannot communicate effectively with others and are poor in studies. They lack reading interest too. Developing reading habit is important to students as to understand the text and boost their confidence and creativity. Students can also become someone who can speak (English) fluently and write well.

### **Reading habit**

The term “reading habit” refers to the behaviour which expresses the likeness of reading of individual types of reading, tastes of reading (Sangkaeo, 1999). It is the pattern in which an individual organizes his or her reading. It is the reading habits which help the learner in obtaining meaningful and desirable knowledge. Good reading habits act as a strong weapon for the students to excel in life (Bashir & Mattoo, 2012)

### **Consequences or results of poor reading habit**

After reading Wong’s article and then by observing my students I found out that students have very poor understanding, confidence, and creativity and overall they are not a good speaker (English). The students did not get much exposure to the new world as they are from rural place. These all happens due to poor reading habit. “Reading is a key to success at all level of education and its significance in many areas of academic achievement can never be overemphasized. Reading is the only tool for success in all academic industries” (Amlado, 2015). Since my students have very poor reading habit, their academic performance is poor and not up to the standard.

Developing reading habit means to acquire a lifestyle or behavior in one’s life which was not there before. Ambler (2015) claims that “Developing a reading habit isn’t a big secret. It comes down to choices”. If reading was a game in today’s world everyone would rush to read, then there could be lots of development in the students as they will do the reading regularly. But they never tried it regularly, and that’s why they have poor reading habit.

### **Factors affecting reading**

One of the basic aims of doing this research is to find out why students have a poor reading habit and what affects and influences the reading habit and also to come up with ways to improve reading. According to Bamberger (1975), selection of type and line length, illustrations in children’s book, opportunities for reading or availability of books, time for reading and reading

interest of text difficulty influences reading interest. When I reflect on these factors some of the above factors match some of my student reasons which resulted to have poor reading habit in them today.

Another reason may be the teacher. Atwell (1998) as cited in Kunzang (2011), believes that teachers must be good reading models and that teachers need to “rethink reading” and “make a place for reading” to improve reading motivation in school. Reading is the foundation upon which other academic skills are built. It offers a productive approach to improving vocabulary, word power and language skills. Teachers at that time were not bothered about our reading difficulty. They were concerned about the coverage of syllabus before or on time and we the students were literally in the race of content coverage and not acquisition of content.

In the past teachers only focused on getting good grades and there was least or none to support and motivate us to read beyond textbooks and same goes for the parents. No one in the past thought that reading helps so, students only read for exams and tests and did not bother to read further which led to poor reading habit. However, there are students whose parents would read to them, get new story books and inspired them to read more and they were the ones who have good reading habit. So to have good reading habit one should be motivated as supported by Tshering (2014).

Society and culture are inherently influential on the perceived importance of reading for academic and personal success. Parents and caregivers engaged in many literacy activities to foster children’s positive attitudes towards reading (Busavo, 2011). Since no reading culture is promoted in our society, we developed poor reading habit. Oluwadare (2008), “The fact that children learn to read depends heavily on their early experience with language. The language spoken at home, and how language is used, are important factors in reading literacy”. Therefore language spoken at home and cultural society plays a big role in learning to read. Since English is the second language learnt only in school for my students, they faced it difficulty in opening up to it.

### **Strategies to develop reading habit**

It refers to a method used to improve reading skills. Students use reading strategies to construct and maintaining meaning from text. Reading strategies help students to become good reader.

Many teachers and parents use different reading strategies to improve their children's reading habit. I have decided to use following strategies to improve reading habit.

**Readers Theater.** Readers Theater is a fun and motivational method for student to improve their reading and fluency. I can apply this method to all kinds of students in all grade and reading level. In Readers Theater, students can practice the roles within scripts that are at their reading levels. Readers Theater also improves students confident in reading (Moran, 2006).

**Repeated reading.** Repeated reading is the most recognized approach for developing fluency. Repeated reading helps student feel more confident about their reading and is an activity in which they want to participate (Koskinen and Blum, 1984; Topping, 1987; Trachtenberg and ferruhhia, 1989). In repeated reading, teacher or parent read for their children and after that student and teacher read together, then student read on their own.

**Guided assisted reading** is also a method for improving reading and general reading performance. We define assisted reading as an oral reading of text. In this method, student read aloud and others follow along silently. While doing assisted reading teacher should guide the students in reading. Assisted reading helps the readers in pronouncing the words correctly. In assisted reading student repeat the words, so the repetition of words helps in improving fluency and build confident in reading.

**Phrase reading** understands what they read and improve fluency (Henk, 1986). Steps in assisted reading are to select easy reading materials; ask students to read one paragraph aloud and using a pencil to explain the students on how a sentence should be divided. Let student read the text aloud in meaningful phrases two or three times; you may want to read the phrases aloud together with the students.

**Schedule a Daily Reading Time.** Making reading part a daily routine and committing to read for 60 or 90 minutes as suggested by Haag (2015). In this case student can at least spend 40 mins minimum time daily for reading. Our school has a Supplementary Reading Programme on every Monday after the class for the duration of 40 minutes to 1 hour where all the teachers and students read together.

**Suggest a book to students.** Children take time to select books. They sometimes have no idea which book is good for them.

I found above skills very important to develop good reading habit which is very relevant and also doable for the student. If they take 1 to 2 hours from their day they could actually read and enhance their reading habit slowly yet constantly. The effect will not be seen immediately but at the end of a month or 6 months we will be able to see the difference within them and also the number of books read will be beyond their expectation. Anybody who wants to develop reading habit can follow above strategies. Therefore, I am going to follow above skills and strategies to develop reading habit and by the time I complete this action research I want my students to have a good reading habit.

If one wants to have lifelong knowledge, the only solution is to develop a good reading habit before it is too late. My class three student's life has just began and they have to have a better foundation for reading so they can understand the text, gain confidence and creativity. By keeping all the importance of having good reading habit, I would like my student to develop very good reading habit by doing this action research. Elio (2012), pointed out, books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselor and the most patient of teachers and we want books to be our best friend, teacher and guide.

### **Action Research Questions**

To achieve the stated objectives of this study, the following questions were considered:

1. How many hours do Class III students engage in reading per day?
2. What major factors hinder them from reading?
3. How to improve reading habits of class III students?

### **Methodology**

Data is collected from Class III students in Patshaling Primary School. Survey method with the use of questionnaire was used for data collection. Copies of questionnaire were administered on Class III students during leisure hours with the assistance of their class teacher.

### **Study population/ Participants/sampling**

Since the total strength of class III is fourteen (14), the sample consists all of (4 boys and 10 girls). The participants were put into two groups of seven each for the control group and experimental group. The students were of the age range of 8-9 years old.

### **Research instruments/Data collection**

The data was collected through the use of diaries, interviews and observations. The researcher thought that these tools are very important in the research as they will help to get the views on how frequently students read and develop reading habit.

- 1. Observation:** The researcher observed and kept record using the set criteria (as mentioned in observer form). The form is attached as **APPENDIX A**.
- 2. Reader's diary:** The researcher maintained the records of the students to see whether they understood the book they read. Diary format is developed as **APPENDIX B**

### **Data validity and reliability**

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher requested other teachers to observe and fill the observation form. Data collected by the observer were not misinterpreted, edited, manipulated and exaggerated. To make it more valid, I have checked the transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes. I have not let the observers to fill the forms without really observing because there will be high chances of getting wrong information.

### **Data processing and analysis**

The analysis and interpretation of baseline data were done immediately after the baseline data collection. The data was interpreted based on the evidences and literature review that I have done. Marshal and Roseman (1995) stated that data analysis can be done by making notes, marking key words, and passages that are meaningful for our research by reading, and rereading the transcripts. Necessary information collected through observation and reader's diary were edited before being presented as information to ensure that figures and words are accurate.

Raw data was collected using different tools mentioned above from the observer. After the data has been collected have organized and prepare the data for analysis based on its nature of content and source. The data was analyzed under the guidance of steps of analyzing data as presented by Mills (2014) and Creswell (2003).

### **Base line data/result**

The main reason to conduct this research was poor performance by the students and lack of interest in reading as we observe the students. We needed a way to improve the mindset of the students towards reading.

### **Baseline data analysis**

Following are some of the themes aroused from the observation:

#### **1. Irregular time for reading**

The students had irregular time for reading and they did other works during free time. They played and focused in academic studies.

#### **2. Visiting Library**

Despite having open library for the students, they visited when asked to and did not go during any free time.

### **Intervention**

- i. Readers Theater improves students confident in reading (Moran, 2006). Once in every month, students were given an opportunity to perform readers theater.
- ii. Repeated reading helps student feel more confident about their reading and is an activity in which they want to participate (Koskinen and Blum, 1984; Topping, 1987; Trachtenberg and Ferruhhia, 1989). So, the same book was repeated until all the students could read clearly and nicely.
- iii. Guided assisted reading is also a method for improving reading and general reading performance. Students were either guided by the teachers or peer while reading so they could gain confidence.
- iv. Phrase reading understands what they read and improve fluency (Henk, 1986). It could help students to comprehend the text so students can get ready to be an independent reader.

- v. Suggest a book to students- According to Ambler (2015), we can develop a good reading habit by scheduling a daily reading time. Haag (2015) added that making reading part of our daily routine by committing to read for 60 or 90 minutes helps in at least spending some time daily for reading besides academic work.

Reading does not only happen in the library; it can happen beyond if you are to read. To read it is not necessary to be in library we can read anywhere and everywhere provided we are in safe and conducive environment. However if we read in the bed there is high chances of falling asleep hence library is the most suitable place to read as supported by Feldman (2015).

During free hours instead of hanging out and chatting with friends, investing that free time in reading can help in improving. Students were asked to carry a book everyday so that they are reminded to read when they are free. They were also encouraged to read during assembly.

### **Post-Intervention Data Collection**

After applying number of strategies as mentioned in intervention for two weeks, we have collected post-intervention data for a week. Through this data we were able to find whether we have developed a good reading habit or not.

We collected post-intervention data just like baseline data using observation sheet and maintaining research diary. We gave observation sheet to each of our critical friends before the day we started to collect the data. We requested them to take the sheet with them every day and fill it without our notice for one week. They started filling up the form from 18<sup>th</sup> October till 24<sup>th</sup> October. They have observed us both in the hostel and class. They showed their patience and cooperation with us due to which we could collect our data successfully. The forms they have filled are attached as Appendix A.

Apart from observation we have used reading log as our second tool to collect data. Hence each of the students maintained reading log for two weeks. They have applied the strategies which are mentioned in the intervention for two weeks and maintained reading log simultaneously. In the reading log they have written about the characters they liked after reading it was done so to see whether the students understood the story or not. We have attached our research diary sample for one week as Appendix B.

### **Post intervention data analysis**

To analyze post-intervention data, we did coding and grouped the data into different themes just like in baseline data analysis shown below;

#### **Reading time**

The data indicated that as we have set time for reading hence our reading time was not disturbed and we could read instead of reading subject base books like notebooks and readers. Since we had regular reading time during morning assemble and every Monday after last period and one reading period in timetable. This regular timing really helped us to maintain the schedule of the day.

#### **Readers Theater and repeated reading**

The data indicated that the fluency of the students improved after repeatedly having Readers Theater. Readers Theater was conducted during reading time on Monday so it will not disturb the classes of the students as they are to perform common examination.

#### **Quality chatting**

It is evident from the observation that though they were surrounded by friends they would chat not to gossip but talk about the book. They shared what they learned and how they felt after reading the particular book. They asked the teachers when they wanted to know the pronunciation and meaning of the words. In the school also they carried books so that they would read during free period instead of talking with friends.

#### **Guided assisted reading**

They were guided at first by their teachers and peers. When doing so they were open to their friends as they discussed what openly in their other tongue which they understand better. This method brought interest among the students to read and help others.

#### **Suggest a book to students.**

By suggesting books to students they were more eager to know what was so special about the book and the story inside. This eagerness helped them to get engaged in reading and discussion arose which was helping them in listening and speaking a bonus for the reader.

### **Visiting Library**

The records from the library register pointed out that they visited the library frequently to get books. Library is the best place where we can find good books and read peacefully but they were not free during day time and never got time to read in the library. Since we have scheduled reading time in the school, they mostly read in the school.

### **Results and discussion**

If we look in to the two data collected it is evident that our class three students have developed a reading habit in the second data. In the first data it was shown that they had lots of problems in reading like poor concentration in study, consumption of time and less visit to the library. The other things that affected our reading were that we spent time in chatting, less reading time and doing academic works. According to those problems, we have used many strategies recommended by different authors and researchers during our intervention to improve ourselves.

After doing intervention for two weeks, we collected the data and there were lot of differences between the two data. We have developed some kind of reading habit in the second data that we had read good number of books in short period of time. There was good time management so that reading schedule was not affected. Interventions were really effective for us to improve our reading habit.

We would like to recommend to provide more time to do research can get enough time in doing the action research project and there will be continuity in the process. To have an excellent progress it will take longer time.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of doing this research project was to develop a good reading habit and we have accomplished our goal. Through this project we were able to identify the factors that affected reading habit and used different strategies suggested by different literature to get rid of those factors. We don't develop a good reading habit instantly; it takes time and needs constant practice of reading.

In course of doing this project we found out that many of the students do not prefer to read because they are busy with their work life especially in rural area where they have to help their parents after reaching home. They fail to develop a reading habit because either they were distracted easily while reading or they were not interested in reading. However after few weeks they were able to develop a reading habit by following and applying the methods suggested in the intervention. By making a set for reading and doing other works, we were able to manage the time properly and effectively. Suggesting a book has contributed in developing a reading habit for it drew concentration.

Though they were able to improve in reading by applying the above methods, it may not be applicable to all because the reason for not having a reading habit may not be same for everyone hence the strategies suggested will be ineffective. Since we have done repeated reading it is possible that the students might have memorized all the words and was fluent. To make our research project more reliable and valid we could have observed student read different books rather than the same books that we provided. The project was done over a short period of time and the improvement brought were few so it would have been more valid if it was done over long duration so that we could use more yet relevant strategies to overcome the problem.

### **Recommendations:**

If any teachers desire to improve the reading habits of their students, I would suggest to follow the strategies that I have mentioned and implemented

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