

Short Research Article

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

Abstract

The 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 create new ideas. At present, due to the influence of the mass media, people do not show much interest in reading books, magazines and journals. Therefore, there is an 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 methods to improve the reading habits of Class III students of Patshaling Primary school. Reading habits are best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed it can last one's lifetime (Green, 2001). The mixed, observational descriptive study of longitudinal design used instruments like observation, diaries and interviews to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. In this paper, the researcher also discussed various methods and benefits in improving reading habits. Findings from this study concluded that the intervention program implemented on 14 students of Class III students could significantly improve the reading habits and develop a positive attitude towards reading. This research comes as the solution to both the teachers and students of lower primary school students who are struggling to improve their reading habits. The study provides some useful insight into developing reading habits and how reading habits can be enhanced to achieve maximum development in our young children.

Keywords: Improvement, Reading habits, Comprehension, attitude towards reading, reading strategies

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 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). But, the students in our school do not have a reading habit. They lack reading habits and that is the main cause that they are not able to comprehend and perform well in academics. Most of the students cannot 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. 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, gaining confidence and improvement in academic

Significance of the study

The study was mainly conducted to help our teacher colleagues working in the remote schools of our country to implement various strategies and findings from this research to develop reading habits of students. This would also help students to inculcate reading habits from the tender age itself to improve comprehension, build confidence and excel in academic performance. Moreover, the parents can also make use of this research findings to help their students to motivate their children to have a positive mindset towards reading and improve their reading habits from a young age.

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 cannot 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 were slow and poor readers. The reading strength of the students **were** very low and they **could read** alone which means their independent learning **was** very low. Sometimes during class hours, **I made** them read simple text and the students **found** it difficult to read the text. It means students never **practiced** reading at home.

The main reasons that **I have found** about my student's difficulty in reading was that when they read, they were not able to comprehend the text. The main problem of poor reading **was** that ninety five percent of my students **were** from illiterate family backgrounds and they **were** busy with their farm work. As an English teacher, I **was a bit concerned** because if they **don't have good reading** habits they **will not comprehend** the meaning of the text.

When referring to your study, use past tense.

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 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 find out the benefits of relevant interventions/measures to bring changes or improvement of the reading habit of students.
2. To study students' attitude towards reading and their improvement in reading after the intervention program.

Literature review

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

The 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). Reading has been also defined as “the process of the brain evaluating and making sense of signs and symbols perceived through the eyes” (Özbay, 2007:4),

The 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, (1990) 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. It is a fact that a person, who keeps their knowledge up-to-date, and not a person, who is just knowledgeable, shall adapt easily to this change and be successful in every field (Erdem,2014). In nutshell, reading 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. Reading also improves vocabulary, command of 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 plays 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 lessons 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. Through reading we get exposed to the outside world, new things, new information and new ways to solve problems. Exploration begins from reading. Readers are more 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.

Reading habit

The Reading habit is inevitable in today's world. 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). 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.

"Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers" (Truman, 2015). If one wants to become a leader in one's life, first and foremost thing is to have a good reading habit. Students who are not good in academics and cannot communicate effectively with others and are usually poor in studies. They lack reading interest too. Developing reading habits is important to students to understand the text and boost their confidence and creativity. Students can also become someone who can speak (English) fluently and write well. Developing a 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. Sadly., our students never tried it regularly, and that's why they have poor reading habits. The habit of reading is the act of reading being carried out throughout life in a constant, regular and critical manner as a result of it being perceived by the individual as a need and source of pleasure (Yılmaz, 1993). The habit of reading is the basis of lifelong learning. For the purpose of the individual being someone that learns throughout his/her life, it is necessary for the act of reading to be conducted regularly throughout life (Odabaş, Odabaş & Polat, 2008). The Primary school period, which is the most challenging and developing stage of formal education, is a period when young people learn to develop the act of reading habit. Tella and Akande (2007) asserts that "During childhood, it is possible that children miss the opportunity of getting touch with books and find it difficult to form reading habit at the later years." Therefore, reading habits become crucial in the primary students acquiring and developing various required skills and the teachers have major roles to play.

Factors affecting reading

One of the basic aims of doing this research was 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 books, opportunities for reading or availability of books, time for reading and reading interest of text difficulty influences reading interest. 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 less 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 habits. However, there are students whose parents would read to them, get new story books and inspire them to read more and they were the ones who have good reading habits. So to have a 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 habits. 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 difficulty in opening up to it.

INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Strategies to develop reading habit

It refers to a method used to improve reading skills. Students use reading strategies to construct and maintain meaning from text. Reading strategies help students to become good readers. Many teachers and parents use different reading strategies to improve their children's reading habit. A researcher has decided to use the following strategies for the improvement of reading habits.

Readers Theater: Readers Theater is a fun and motivational method for students to improve their reading and fluency. Researchers can apply this method to all kinds of students in all grades and reading levels. In Readers Theater, students can practice the roles within scripts that are at their reading levels. Readers Theater also improves students' confidence in reading (Moran, 2006).

Repeated reading: Repeated reading is the most recognized approach for developing fluency. Repeated reading helps students feel more confident about their reading and is an activity in

which they want to participate (Koskinen and Blum, 1984; Topping, 1987; Trachtenberg and Ferruggia, 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: It is also a method for improving reading and general reading performance. It is an oral reading of text. In this method, students read aloud and others follow along silently. While doing assisted reading, the teacher should guide the students in reading. Assisted reading helps the readers in pronouncing the words correctly. In assisted reading students repeat the words, so the repetition of words helps in improving fluency and building confidence in reading.

Phrase reading: It helps to understand what they read and improves fluency. Steps in assisted reading are to select easy reading materials; ask students to read one paragraph aloud and use a pencil to explain to the students on how a sentence should be divided. Let students 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 of a daily routine and committing to read for 60 or 90 minutes as suggested by Haag (2015). In this case, students can spend at least 40 mins minimum time daily for reading.

Suggest a book to students: Here, children take time to select books. They sometimes have no idea which book is good for them.

Action Research Questions

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

1. What factors hindered reading habits of the students?
2. What reading strategies could help Class III students to develop reading habits ?
3. How could the researcher or teachers guide students to read and develop reading habits?

Methodology

Data were collected from Class III students in Patshaling Primary School. Survey method with the use of questionnaires 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

Since the total strength of class III is fourteen (14), the sample consists of (4 boys and 10 girls). All of them observed their reading competency and habits using the observation form, provided interventions and again tested using the same observation form. Class III students were chosen since they were the most appropriate age groups to inculcate reading habits and build a strong foundation so that they do not struggle when they transit to the next higher class. Why grade 3? 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 and observations. The researcher thought that these tools are very important in the research process as they would help to get the views on how frequently students read and develop reading habits.

- 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, the researcher has checked the transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes. The researcher has not let the observers fill the forms without really observing because there will be high chances of getting wrong information. The following observation form was used by the observer.

Name of the student: *Name of the Observer:*..... *Date:*.....
Title of the book:.....

| <i>Sl.No.</i> | <i>Items</i> | <i>Tally</i> | <i>Observer's comments</i> | <i>Remarks, if any</i> |
|---------------|--|--------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | <i>Reads with omission of the words</i> | | | |
| 2. | <i>Read with insertion of word</i> | | | |
| 3. | <i>Repeating the word</i> | | | |
| 4. | <i>Pausing between comma and full stop</i> | | | |
| 5. | <i>Voice intonation</i> | | | |
| 6. | <i>Clarity of the words</i> | | | |

Chart 1 : observation form

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 evidence 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 was collected, the researcher organized and prepared 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).

Baseline data analysis

Following were some of the themes aroused from the observation:

1. Irregular time for reading

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

2. Visiting Library

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

Intervention should be written in form of paragraphs

Once in every month, students were given an opportunity to perform in the readers theater. This helped to improve students' confidence in reading. Repeated reading helps students feel more confident about their reading and is an activity in which they want to participate (Koskinen and Blum, 1984; Topping, 1987; Trachtenberg and Ferruggia, 1989). So, the students were made to read the same book repeatedly until they could read it fluently.

For Guided assisted reading, students were either guided by the teachers or peers, who could read well. The daily reading routine of 40 minutes after the class also helped in improving 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 the library. We can read anywhere and everywhere provided we are in a safe and conducive environment. 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 a number of strategies as mentioned in intervention for one month, 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 sheets and maintaining a research diary. We gave an 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 have observed us both in the classroom and outside after the 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 logs as our second tool to collect data. Hence each of the students maintained a reading log for two weeks. They have applied the strategies which are mentioned in the intervention and maintained reading logs 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 as Appendix B.

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 assembly and every Monday after the 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 examinations.

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 periods 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 as 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 the 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 too short for the discussion of the data to answer the three research questions

If we look into the two data collected it was evident that our class three students have made significant improvement in their reading or 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 visits to the library. The other things that affected our reading were that we spent time chatting, less reading time and doing academic work. According to those problems, the researcher has used many strategies recommended by different authors and researchers during our intervention to improve the reading skills and habits of students.

Table 1 : summary of the data collected before and after invention measures

| <i>Sl.No.</i> | <i>Items</i> | <i>Baseline data</i> | | <i>Post data</i> | | <i>Improvement (%)</i> | <i>Remarks</i> |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------------|----------------|
| | | <i>Boys</i> | <i>Girls</i> | <i>Boys</i> | <i>Girls</i> | | |
| | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|----|---|---|--------|--|
| 1. | <i>Reads with omission of the words</i> | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 100% | |
| 2. | <i>Read with insertion of word</i> | 4 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 92.86% | |
| 3. | <i>Repeating the word</i> | 4 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 92.86% | |
| 4. | <i>Pausing between comma and full stop</i> | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 100% | |
| 5. | <i>Voice intonation</i> | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 100% | |
| 6. | <i>Clarity of the words</i> | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 100% | |

The figure below shows the sample of observation form filled up by the observers to check students' improvement in reading habits.

Appendix A
Name: *Diana Rama Usain* Name of the observer: *Tobygy*

| Date | | Tally | Observer's comment |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| <i>28/7/22</i> | Reads with omission of the word | — | <i>Read well.</i> |
| | Reads with insertion of word | | |
| | Repeating the word | | |
| | Pausing between comma and full stop | | |
| | Voice intonation | | |
| | Clarity of the words | | |
| <i>Title of the book - Animal senses.</i> | | | |

Appendix A
Name: *Tenzin Thulky sharpo* Name of the observer: *Tobygy*

| Date | | Tally | Observer's comment |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------|--|
| <i>28/07/22</i> | Reads with omission of the word | | <i>No proper pause & intonation.</i> |
| | Reads with insertion of word | | |
| | Repeating the word | | |
| | Pausing between comma and full stop | | |
| | Voice intonation | | |
| | Clarity of the words | | |
| <i>Title of the book - The Big Stride</i> | | | |

Students have developed some kind of reading habit in the second data that we read a good number of books in a short period of time. There was good time management so that the reading schedule was not affected. Interventions were really effective for us to improve the reading habit of our students. Moreover, students were able to write appropriate (as per their class level) book reviews as evident from the Appendix B

The figures given below show samples of the diaries maintained by students on the books read which helped to improve their reading habits.

Appendix B

Date: 29/7/2022

Name of the story book: My wonderful story

Name of the author: -

| About my favorite character from the story | What I like or dislike about the story? | What is the story about? |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Bumble bee is my favorite character from the story. | I don't like the bumble bee. he very bad. | The bumble bee is very bad to others. |

Appendix B

Date: 29/7/2022

Name of the story book: My wonderful story

Name of the author: -

| About my favorite character from the story | What I like or dislike about the story? | What is the story about? |
|--|--|---|
| The hare. He very smart. | The hare tell lie to lion and save the forest. | The hare kill the lion with his wisdom. |

Appendix B

Date: 29/7/22

Name of the story book: Peter pan

Name of the author: -

| About my favorite character from the story | What I like or dislike about the story? | What is the story about? |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| Peter Pan is my favorite. | I like Peter Pan. He fly and fight. | Peter Pan fight with Hook. |

Appendix B

Date: 29 July

Name of the story book: Planes

Name of the author: -

| About my favorite character from the story | What I like or dislike about the story? | What is the story about? |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| I like Planes. | The Planes talking. | The Planes are talking and making... |

Conclusion and Recommendation

Through this study, the researcher was able to identify the factors that affect reading habits 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 the course of doing this study, the researcher found out that many of the students do not prefer to read because they are busy with their work life especially in rural areas 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 a 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 work, 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 the 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 were fluent. To make our research more reliable and valid we could have observed students read different books rather than the same books that we provided. The study was done over a short period of time and the improvements brought were few so it would have been more valid if it was done over a long duration so that we could use more yet relevant strategies to overcome the problem.

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

Lastly, I would like to recommend the Ministry to provide more time to do research, so that we can get quality results and findings.. To make excellent progress, it takes a longer time.

Ethical Approval:

As per international standard or university standard written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

Consent

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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