Factors Affecting Quality of Teaching-Learning of English Reading at the Secondary School Level

Vanite Bala, M.A. Education, M.A. & M.Phil. English, B.Ed.
Veena Bamba, Ph.D.

Abstract

English in India is more than a foreign language and less than a second language. It has become the walk of all trades and developments. In Haryana state it is considered a second language, compulsory from 1st grade. English has been part of our education system for more than a century. Yet, the quality of English teaching is simply not good enough. The support systems, such as the number of teachers or materials for teaching, are neither adequate nor appropriate.

The objective of the present study is to analyse the factors influencing teaching learning of reading ability of English language. Survey method is adopted to collect the data by instrumenting self-prepared teachers’ opinionnaire.
The data reveals that education system is highly responsible for the precarious situation of English. Methods of teaching and other socio-cultural factors are also found responsible to some extent to make the situation more dismal. It is suggested that the first and the foremost concern should be to make amendments in the education system especially the staffing of trained faculty and essential infrastructure.

**Introduction**

English in India is more than a foreign language and less than a second language. It has become the walk of all trades and developments. It serves as the window through which we can peep into the outside world and can get the knowledge of the whole universe. The National Knowledge Commission 2006 in its report says that English has been part of our education system for more than a century, yet English is beyond the reach of most of our young people, which makes for highly unequal access. Indeed, even now, not more than one percent of our people use it as a second language. The quality of English teaching is simply not good enough. The support systems, such as the number of teachers or materials for teaching, are neither adequate nor appropriate.

In Haryana though English is considered as a second language, Haryana Govt. realising its necessity has introduced it as a compulsory subject from 1\textsuperscript{st} standard in its education set up since 2001. The state also established effective linkage between the SCERT, DIETs and schools so that altogether they can play better constructive role in its drive of pedagogical revival of teaching and learning of English in the State. Besides, seminars and camps in-service training, induction and in-school training have been launched to uplift the below mark status of teaching and learning of English language. In spite of the above said developments in ELT, Haryana is one of the states in India where English language is facing a very precarious situation. The overall situation is dismal (Daisy, 2010).
The ability to read written material is very important in the civilized world. In a society characterized by globalization and technological change, where knowledge is becoming increasingly important, reading ability is a key skill for active participation. Reading proficiency is the royal road to knowledge and it is essential to the success in all academic subjects. Seyed Hussein Fazeli (2010) and Shayistz (2003) state that reading comprehension is an important life skill. It is one of the most important domains in education, because it is the best predicator of success in higher education and job performance. Elley, (1994) stresses that reading ability is necessary for many occupations and a prerequisite for future life-long learning Levin (1975) noted that the ability to read well is the basis for success in school and thereafter.

English being the library language all over the world, the priority of reading ability is also the uppermost in the mind of most of the educational planners. The Education Commission (1964-66) accepted the idea that English is an exclusive ‘window to the world’ and the Study Group Reports (1969) emphasized that reading comprehension is a priority area all over English language teaching programmes. This has a special importance when we think of the place of reading at secondary level. Here the teaching-learning of English reading is affected by socio-cultural factors, factors related to education system and methods and techniques of teaching.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:
1. To study the impact of factors related to education system on the reading ability of English language.
2. To study the effect of factors related to methods/techniques of teaching on the reading ability of English language.
3. To study the effect of socio cultural factors on the reading ability of English language.

Methodology

The researchers used the survey method. The main instrument used for this study was a teachers’ opinionnaire. The researchers designed the opinionnaire by generating a list of items, which solicited teachers’ responses on state education system, methods of teaching used by them and socio-cultural factors affecting the teaching learning environment. The teachers who are teaching English to secondary classes are randomly selected as a sample from five districts Kurukshetra, Karnal, Panipat, Rohtak and Jind of Haryana State. The sample size is 100. Their responses are recorded on three point response rating, that is, to great extent, to some extent, and not at all. The teachers profile is noted in open-ended short answers. The data so collected is tabulated and graphs drawn to have a clear overview of the factors affecting teaching learning of English language. The simple percentage method is used for calculation of results in the present study.

Results and Discussion

Section -1 deals with the factors related to education system.
Section -2 deals with the factors related to methods and techniques.
Section-3 deals with socio-cultural factors influencing the reading ability in English language.

Section -1
Factors Related to Education System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>To Great Extent</th>
<th>To Some Extent</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of tailored curriculum</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The table 1.1 depicts that 48 percent teachers are of the opinion that untailored curriculum influences the teaching learning of reading ability of English language to great extent and 52 percent think that this factor influences the teaching-learning to some extent only. None is there to say that this factor does not have any effect. One and the same textbook is prescribed for all students with a wide range of abilities. Pardhan (1991) also supported that the prescribed syllabus of English for different schools is not up to the mark. It is not related to the surrounding of the learners. Almost ¾ of the teachers feels the lack of English language lab greatly affects learning while 1/5 finds this factor responsible to some extent, only a few do not find the necessity of language lab.

As far as the issue of training of teachers is concerned 56 percent accept the fact that it affects the teaching-learning of English reading ability to some extent, 20 percent feel that it greatly affects, while 24 percent do not find any problem whether teachers are trained or untrained. Bose (2005) has also noted that English has become a far cry because there is dearth of efficient teachers in rural areas. The evaluation system is found defective by 96 percent population to some or great extent. Only negligible number finds it suitable. Hussain A.M. (2010) also emphasizes the need for change in “student-friendly” examination system if the standard of teaching English in India is to improve. Frequent change of government policies is termed as the most responsible factor hampering teaching learning of English reading ability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lack of provision of language lab</th>
<th>74</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dearth of trained teachers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Defective evaluation system</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Frequent change of govt. policies</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Section- B
Factors Related to Methods and Techniques

Table 2.1  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>To Great Extent</th>
<th>To Some Extent</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of scientific approach to teach foreign language</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge of micro – skills of reading</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Focus on mechanism rather than mental ability</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lack of tailored remedial measures</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lack of motivation to read extra material</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The factors related to methods and techniques have noticeable effect over the teaching - learning of reading of English. 72 percent teachers admitted that lack of scientific approach in teaching of foreign language greatly affects the learning of the reading skills, 28 percent find it
responsible to some extent. The result of present study is also supported by Kaur (1979) who found that the translation method which is not scientific to teach a foreign language is the sole favourite method of the teachers.

As far as teachers’ expertise in micro skills of reading is concerned, 66 percent agree to some extent, 16 percent to great extent and 18 percent do not find any deficiency in their expertise. 64 percent teachers accepted to some extent the statement that teaching the reading skill focuses on mechanism rather than on mental ability involved in reading, 28 percent accepted it to great extent, only 8 percent are confident that both the mechanism and mental ability are taken into consideration while teaching the reading skill. The lack of tailored remedial measures are responsible to great extent in the view of 24 percent teachers, to some extent in the view of 64 percent teachers while 12 percent are satisfied with the remedial measures.

Motivation to read is an important aspect of learning in general & reading in particular. Here 60 percent opined that lack of motivation to read extra material influence the reading ability to great extent, 28 percent put it to some extent and 12 percent find no effect of motivation.
Figure – 2

Section – C

Factors Related to Socio-Cultural System

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>To Great Extent</th>
<th>To Some Extent</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Psychological fear of foreign language</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hurdle of mother- tongue</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of English speaking and listening</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Choice of teaching profession is not by</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>choice but by chance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Over crowded classrooms</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the socio-cultural factors, the absence of English speaking and listening environment is exclusively responsible to great extent in teaching-learning reading ability. Interference of mother tongue and overcrowded class-rooms are also fully responsible with a little difference of degree of extent in learning the reading skill. The psychological fear of foreign language influences to great extent in the view of 64 percent teachers and to some extent in the view of 34 percent teachers. Only negligible, that is, 2 percent rule out such fear. The most surprising factor, the choice of teaching profession is not by choice but by chance, greatly affects the teaching-learning of English reading ability in the opinion of almost half of the population. For 36 percent it affects to some extent and for 15 percent it hardly matters.
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The factors responsible for the above-stated problems are lack of constant practice (Das Gupta, 1975), poor training of teachers, lack of students' involvement, improper evaluation (Bhattacharyajee, 1984), and lack of teaching aids and faulty methods of teaching (Mohire, 1989).

Also the most prominent factor 'parental involvement' was found responsible for affecting teaching and learning of English as studied by Sharma (2000) and Shashi (1991). The overcrowded classes also hamper the teaching-learning pedagogy as the same was found by Xu (2001). Last but not the least is the time factor, that is, sufficient time is not given for reading skill. The same is the result of Rubia Fernando & David Schwarzer (2011) that only 8% of the total time is devoted to the teaching of reading.

Conclusion

It is apparent from foregoing results and discussion that major causes of this low level of English reading ability in Haryana is due to lack of English-speaking and listening environment, frequent change of government policy in education, lack of language labs and lack of scientific approach in teaching English. It is suggested that the state government should immediately look...
into this matter on a priority basis and must remove the bottlenecks in the education system. A sound recruitment policy and in-service training for teachers should be scientifically designed and the latest technology should be made available to the schools so as to raise the level of teaching-learning of English in general and reading ability in particular to cope with competitive environment at the global level.

References


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Factors Affecting Quality of Teaching-Learning of English Reading at the Secondary School Level

595
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