



READING COMPREHENSION (IN KANNADA) AMONG BOYS AND GIRLS OF VII STANDARD IN RELATION TO THEIR PERSONALITY TRAITS, SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND URBAN/RURAL LOCALITY

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Reading, writing and arithmetic were considered as fundamentals of education viewed in a much more broader perspective. It is no more a mere imparting of training in these "three R's". According to Macomber (1967), "The development of well rounded, well integrated individuals capable of living reasonably happy and worthwhile live as members of a democratic and highly dynamic society constitutes the purpose of education".

In order to achieve this objective, an individual has to master certain abilities. Reading is one such essential ability. The modern pedagogy has not denied the importance of reading. Reading occupies a crucial and pivotal role in the curriculum, as pointed out by many authors. The invention of typewriter and computer have

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greatly changed the writing and arithmetic needs of the individual. But press has enhanced the importance of reading. In this speedy world of communication, an individual has to learn to read effectively. Thus the modern teaching methods emphasize different reading abilities and new methods of teaching have been put into practice.

Reading involves the whole personality of promises countless personal and social values. It is an entrance to almost all vocations. As Strang and others write (1967), "Reading is a most rewarding use of the expanded leisure that comes as a result of automation". It also relieves emotional tensions and gives insight into personal problems. The horizons of an individual are expanded by the experiences provided by reading.

Any reading activity must result in proper comprehension. Mechanical reading without comprehension is a waste of time, whereas indifferent inattentive and sporadic reading would lead to confusion, misunderstanding and non-comprehension.

In addition to the above important primary factors of reading for comprehension the other factors that would help the fluent reader are the relative frequency of various combinations of letter and also their frequency in a particular context as also their relation to other words around it and on one's prior knowledge.

The skill involved in reading comprehension are numerous and interrelated. Understanding of these interrelationships is needed for intelligent guidance of the pupil through the successive stages of reading growth.

Schell (1972) speaks of three levels of comprehension:

1. **Literal Comprehension:** getting the primary, direct, literal meaning of a word, idea or sentence in context.
2. **Interpretation:** getting deeper meaning anticipating meanings, drawing, inferences making generalizations, reasoning from cause to effect, detecting significance, making comparisons identifying purpose.
3. **Critical Reading:** evaluating the quality, accuracy or truthfulness of what is read.

Comprehension Skills

To understand a child's problems in reading comprehension and to plan an effective development programme in reading, the teacher needs to know the various skills that make up the ability to comprehend what is read.

Another kind of classification of comprehension skills getting meaning from the printed page involves the ability to perceive and understand words in relationship. They are: Word Meaning, Synonyms and Antonyms, Phrase Meaning, Sentence Meaning, Paragraph Meaning, Comprehension of Longer Selections.

Of major import for interpretative reading is a purpose for reading. The purposeful reader is an interested reader. If the student is to understand what he is reading he must know why he is reading, he must know whether to read for information, to solve a problem, to follow directions, to be entertained, to obtain details to draw a conclusion, to verify a statement, to summarize or to criticize.

Reading being a basic cognitive skill, it needs a sustained effort on the part of the teachers to help the children of the elementary level to learn reading with comprehension. But this is not an easy task as it requires a sound knowledge on the part of the teachers reading the background of the students viz., the personality and intelligence of the students, the conducive atmosphere at home, the interest of the students about reading their psychological aspects like anxiety, self concept.

Reading as a psychological process is determined by a number of psychological factors in addition to social determinants of reading process. In a way the success in reading and reading comprehension depends to a great extent on the interactive influence of these social and psychological factors.

Among these factors the significant would be the cultural background of the community in which the child is learning. This may be examined at two levels namely,

1. The Rural-Urban dimensions and
2. Backward-Forward aspect of the locality

The status of teaching reading in schools is not very encouraging. No positive and deliberate attempt is being made to foster good reading habits in our students except during the beginning years, and hence the reading skill acquired by our students is more or less due to chance factor. No wonder the students at the elementary level do not develop a positive attitude towards reading. The opportunity

available for the children to read is restricted only to the reading of text books from the point of view of examinations and hence, there is a negative association is built in the very process of reading in schools.

The status of research in the area of reading is also not very encouraging. Except in a few states in our country no substantial effort has been expended in the direction of identifying the factors associated with reading and reading comprehension.

Acquisition of a reading comprehension being closely associated with psycholinguistic dimensions of development which involves a number of factors which need to be examined in order to make teaching learning of language in our schools more systematic, effective and successful.

While U.S.A. and U.K. have carried out varied and detailed investigations in respect of various aspects of reading, the number of studies conducted in India is very meager. Bhadrappa (1960), Bhagatwala (1966), Patel (1971), Majer (1972), Parekh (1973), Gohil (1974), Srikanta Rao (1965), Shivananda (1980), Koteswara (1999) are some of the important researches done by education researcher in India. Even though some studies are available in the area of reading they are far meager. Hence there is a large scope for educational researchers to explore this field.

Reading plays an important role in the achievement of an individual. Handicap in reading abilities may prove to be determined to the development of the individual. Hence it is necessary to know the reading levels of students and also to know the types of errors committed by them. Though reading has a position in the testing programmes in other countries like U.S.A., they have not been given their due place in our country.

Besides knowing the reading difficulties of students with help of reading tests, one can also attempt at finding out the suitability of the text books and other curricular materials provided to them.

Government of Karnataka has made Kannada as the official language at all levels of its administration. Even though it is the mother tongue of many students, teachers in the classroom experience the students committing gross mistakes while reading and writing Kannada. This can be traced to the poor development of reading ability. Learning to read mother tongue does not come automatic. Reading which is considered as a skill has to be developed systematically among children. The results of such approaches largely depends upon the learner and also about his personality traits.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To examine whether there is any difference in the components of reading comprehension among students in relation to their personality traits viz., Ascendancy, Responsibility, Emotional Stability, Vigour, Original Thinking, Cautiousness, Personal Relations.
2. To examine whether there is any difference in the components of reading comprehension among boys and girls.
3. To examine whether there is any difference in the components of reading comprehension among students belonging to different socio-economic strata.
4. To examine whether there is any difference in the components of reading comprehension among students studying in rural and urban schools.

The review of related literature has revealed that there are a few studies which have examined the reading comprehension in relation to personality factors such as anxiety (Cowen, 1965; Neville, 1967; Lynn, 1955), emotional disturbance (Stanley, 1968), emotional maladjustment (Albert, 1975), leadership traits (Dass, 1984).

There are also a few studies, which have examined the relationship of reading comprehension and sex (Agrawal Vijaya Rani, 1983; Margaret, 1994; Fanning-Marie, 1983; Dass, 1984; Subramanyam, 1982; Shivapuri, 1982).

There are a few studies which have examined the reading comprehension in relation to socio-economic status (Palamar, 1978; Elliott, 1980; Florence, 1976; Gaur, 1982; Shivapuri, 1982; Dass, 1984 (home background), Jayathi Roy, 1989; Srivatsava, 1985).

Reading Comprehension

Oxford Dictionary (1990) has defined comprehension as "act faculty of understanding".

According to Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995), "Comprehension is the ability to understand completely and be aware of situation, facts, etc".

Russel (1961) defines: "Comprehension carries the understanding of a word or a phrase beyond recognition to the understanding of the meaning intended by the author".

Gray (1948) defines as "a broader view of the nature of reading is that it involves the recognition of important elementary and of meaning in their essential relations includes accuracy thoroughness in comprehension".

Reading comprehension is an exercise through which the students understand the written material and rightly answer the questions which are asked by the researcher.

In the present study reading comprehension refers to the three components which are (1) Synonyms, (2) Antonyms, (3) Comprehension. These are prepared for reading comprehension for the VII standard students by Dr. Shivananda (1980), Department of Education, Bangalore University, Bangalore.

A set of personality traits would provide a descriptive characterization of an individual which would type of the pattern of behaviour of a person under different conditions. Personality being unique in its nature the trait manifestation is also unique and it differs from individual to individual. However, as Allport and Odbert (1936) point out that though there are innumerable adjectives describing the individual behaviour, it is possible to arrive at a set of traits, which may more or less describe an individual person. Likewise Gordon and others have made an attempt in this direction and in our Indian context Sathyamurthy (1964), Sudha (1977) have examined a set of eight traits on the lines of Gordon's Personality Profile and Inventory (1953), which would be suitable for the study of personality of an individual. The descriptive definitions of these traits are as follows:

1. **Ascendency (ASC):** Those individuals who adopt an active role in group situation, who are self-assured and assertive in relationships with others and who tend to make independent decisions stand high in the scale. As a contrast those who play a passive role in the group, who generally lack self-confidence, who prefer to have others take the lead, and who tend to be dependent on others for advice, stand low in the scale.
2. **Responsibility (RES):** Individuals who take responsibilities seriously, who are able to stick to any job and get it done, who are preserving and determined stand high in this scale. On the other hand, however, individuals who are unable to stick to tasks do not interest them and who tend to escape from them, stand low in the scale.
3. **Emotional Stability (ES):** Individuals who are well balanced, emotionally stable and relatively free from anxiety and tension, will be at the upper end of the scale. Persons who demonstrate excessive anxiety, tension, hypersensitivity and nervousness, will be at the lower end of the scale.
4. **Sociability (SOC):** Individuals who like to be with other individuals, who are gregarious and sociable, can be placed at the upper end of the scale. Low scores reflect lack of gregariousness, restriction in social contacts and in the extreme an avoidance of social relationships.
5. **Vigour (VIG):** Individuals who are energetic who like to work more rapidly and who are able to accomplish more than the average person, tend to be at the top end of the scale. Individuals with low vitality or energy with a tendency

to tire easily, who fall below average in terms of work output, tend to be at the lower end of the scale.

6. **Original Thinking (OT):** Individuals who are to be original in their thinking who like to work with ideas, enjoy solving difficult problems, who are reflective, stand at the higher end of the scale. Persons who do not care for intellectual or creative activity, and who lack both an inquiring mind and a general inclination for original thinking, tend to be at the lower end of the scale.
7. **Cautiousness (CAUT):** Individuals who are highly cautious, who consider matters very carefully before making decisions, and who do not like to take chances or run risks, stand at the top end of the scale, while individuals who are impulsive, who act on the spur of the moment, who make hurried or snap decisions, stand at the lower end of the scale.
8. **Personal Relations (PR):** Persons who have great faith and trust in people and are tolerant, patient and understanding tend to be at the higher end of the scale. Low scores reflect a lack of trust or confidence in people to be critical of others and to become annoyed or irritated with others for what they do.

Socio-Economic Status

Socio-economic status is the social status of the parents (head of the family) as determined by a few accepted factors. They are (1) Educational Status, (2) Occupational Status, (3) Economic Status, by using Dr. Puranik's Socio-Economic Status Scale.

Variables of the Study

In the present study reading comprehension of the students of VII standard was treated as a dependent variable. The independent variables were:

1. Personality Traits, viz., Ascendency, Responsibility, Emotional Stability, Sociability, Vigour, Original Thinking, Cautiousness and Personal Relations.
2. Sex
3. Socio-Economic Status
4. Urban and Rural Locality

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been formulated in order to get a direction for the study. The hypotheses have been stated in null form:

1. There is no significant difference in the Synonyms, Antonyms and Reading Comprehension of students of VII standard with varied levels of different dimensions of personality traits, viz., Ascendency, Responsibility, Emotional Stability, Sociality, Vigour, Original Thinking, Cautiousness and Personal Relations.
2. There is no significant difference in the Synonyms, Antonyms and Reading Comprehension of boys and girls studying in VII standard.
3. There is no significant difference in the Synonyms, Antonyms and Reading Comprehension of students of VII standard with various levels of socio-economic strata.
4. There is no significant difference in the Synonyms, Antonyms and Reading Comprehension of students of VII standard studying in the urban and rural schools.
5. There is no significant difference in the Synonyms, Antonyms and Reading Comprehension of students of VII standard studying in the government and private schools.

In the present study the investigator has used proportionate stratified random sampling method. Stratification was being based on the sex of the students. This method was applied to ensure representativeness and to avoid bias.

The sample for the present study consisted of 240 students from primary schools studying in the VII standard of Bangalore rural and urban area, which included 120 boys and 120 girls; 120 students from government school and 120 students from private schools; 120 students studying in rural schools and 120 students studying in urban schools.

The stratification of sample was drawn on the basis of Sex, Type of School and Rural/Urban Locality.

Tools Used

Test used to measure the Reading Comprehension

To measure the reading comprehension of the students studying in VII standard, a reading test in Kannada constructed and standardized by Deve Gowda and Shivananda (1980) was used. This test consists of five sub-tests. They are:

1. Vocabulary - Synonyms
2. Vocabulary - Antonyms

3. Reading Comprehension
4. Word Discrimination
5. Sentence Formation

Of these five sub-tests, only three have been used in this study. They are:

1. Vocabulary - Synonyms
2. Vocabulary - Antonyms
3. Reading Comprehension

Description of the Test

1. Vocabulary - Synonyms

Vocabulary is defined in the test as the individual's stock of words employed in Kannada language. It is measured by a test which is composed of thirty items.

Each item consists of a key word, the synonym and three distractions. The student must choose the synonym, that is, the word that means the same as the key word. The time limit for the test is ten minutes.

2. Vocabulary - Antonyms

This sub-test is also composed of thirty items, each of which consists of a key word, the antonym and three distractions. The student must find the antonym of the key word. This test has a time limit of ten minutes.

3. Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is the essence of the reading test. The objective of all reading is to understand or comprehend what is read. Reading comprehension is an abstract process that occurs in the brain of the reader. It is difficult to observe and measure directly. A good way to explore the process of reading comprehension is to discuss reading with a reader who shares his/her thought as he/she reads. In other words, reading comprehension is processing written language to get ideas, evaluating ideas and utilizing ideas, comprehension skills related to various kinds of interaction between those meaning and the readers purpose for reading. In short, comprehension may be said to be a big blanked term that course a whole area of thought getting processes to reading.

From a communication point of view, reading comprehension may be explained as a dialogue between an author and a reader. The written language is the vehicle that permits the dialogue to occur. For the purpose of the present study, comprehension is defined as understanding what is written within, between and

beyond the lines and it includes reading (a) to get the main idea (b) to get important details, (c) to answer specific questions, (d) to apply what is read, and (e) to select appropriate meaning of the words in the context.

This test consists of five selections. The material of three selections is similar to the one found in the text books and graded in order of difficulty.

Each item will have four alternatives of which only one is correct. The task of the student is to read each selection and then answer the questions under it. In all, there are thirty items and the students are allowed twenty-five minutes to complete this test.

The battery of the text consisting of synonyms, antonyms and reading comprehension consists of 90 items. Each one of the items is followed by 4 possible responses. Similar words in the case of synonyms, words with opposite meaning in the case of antonyms and 4 possible responses. A right response scores one point. Each answer in the case of items measuring reading comprehension based on the passage given.

Reliability of the Tests

The coefficient of reliability of the sub-test was determined by using (1) test re-test method with an interval of four weeks = (N=100) 100 for each sub-test varied from 0.602 to 0.798; (2) Split-half method by taking odd and even items (N=300) for each sub-test, coefficient varied from 0.848 to 0.908 and (3) Kuder Richerdson formula-21 (N=300) for each sub-test, the coefficient varied from 0.877 to 0.909.

Validity of the Tests

The validity of the present test was established by considering the marks obtained by a sample of 300 students in their annual examination of 1979. For this purpose a sample of 300 students from grade VII consisting of equal number of boys and girls was drawn from 25 randomly selected schools.

Their annual examination marks in Kannada language were correlated with the total score obtained by the students on the reading test and within its sub-tests. The coefficient varied from 0.50 to 0.52. Therefore, the test found to be valid and reliable.

Personality Scale

Personality Scale developed by Sudha (1977) on the lines of Guttman was used. This scale measures eight personality traits viz., (1) Ascendency, (2) Responsibility, (3) Emotional Stability, (4) Sociality, (5) Vigour, (6) Original Thinking, (7) Cautiousness

Table 1: Numbers, Means, Standard Deviations, t-values and its Significance at 0.05/0.01 Levels of "Antonyms", "Synonyms" and "Comprehension" dimensions of Reading Comprehension of students having Low and High Levels of Personality Traits viz., Ascendancy, Responsibility, Emotional Stability, Sociability, Vigour, Original Thinking, Cautiousness and Personal Relations.

Sl. No.	Personality Traits	Number (N)	Synonyms		Antonyms		Comprehension		t-values
			M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
1.	Ascendancy	L	10.05	4.03	10.37	4.95	12.03	5.83	$t_{sy} = 5.49^{**}$
		H	14.5	4.84	13.65	4.82	13.53	5.50	$t_{an} = 3.75^{**}$
									$t_{comp} = 1.35$ (NS)
2.	Responsibility	L	13.30	5.25	12.0	5.63	11.85	6.05	$t_{sy} = 1.17$ (NS)
		H	14.21	4.50	14.0	5.63	13.75	5.0	$t_{an} = 1.92$ (NS)
									$t_{comp} = 1.94$ (NS)
3.	Emotional Stability	L	12.48	5.05	11.80	5.53	11.51	5.19	$t_{sy} = 1.59$ (NS)
		H	13.75	5.34	12.55	5.66	13.20	5.63	$t_{an} = 0.87$ (NS)
									$t_{comp} = 2.04^{*}$
4.	Sociability	L	12.66	4.55	11.65	5.75	11.45	5.56	$t_{sy} = 0.12$ (NS)
		H	12.55	5.55	11.65	5.75	12.46	5.02	$t_{an} = 0.12$ (NS)
									$t_{comp} = 1.12$ (NS)
5.	Vigour	L	12.30	5.20	11.70	5.70	12.00	5.02	$t_{sy} = 2.63^{**}$
		H	14.25	4.57	13.46	5.56	13.50	5.63	$t_{an} = 2.05^{*}$
									$t_{comp} = 1.83^{*}$
6.	Original Thinking	L	12.42	4.55	11.86	4.48	11.85	4.79	$t_{sy} = 1.31$ (NS)
		H	13.57	5.53	13.77	5.70	13.46	5.78	$t_{an} = 2.11^{*}$
									$t_{comp} = 1.75$ (NS)
7.	Cautiousness	L	11.79	4.34	10.15	4.87	10.28	4.91	$t_{sy} = 2.67^{*}$
		H	14.06	5.36	13.45	5.97	13.69	5.81	$t_{an} = 3.47^{**}$
									$t_{comp} = 3.59^{**}$
8.	Personal Relations	L	12.95	4.58	12.95	4.81	12.93	5.13	$t_{sy} = 1.98^{*}$
		H	14.64	5.38	13.83	5.40	12.78	5.76	$t_{an} = 1.0$ (NS)
									$t_{comp} = 0.16$ (NS)

*p less than 0.05; **p less than 0.01; NS: Not Significant]

and (8) Personal Relations. Each trait has six items. The items have been reported to be discriminating as indicated by the obtained t-value for the upper and lower 25% of the sample. The indices of reproductivity showed that the scale is a quasi-scale in the sense used by Guttman measuring unidimensional traits. The scale consists of forty-eight items. Among the 48 items prepared there were negative as well as positive items. The items were provided with three alternative choices to response. They were "Yes", "Cannot Say", and "No". The scoring procedure for the items were done by giving 1 and 0 for yes and no for positive items and 0 and 1 for negative statements. For each trait the score varies from 0 to 6. Higher the score, higher would be the personality traits.

Table 2: Numbers, Means, Standard Deviations, t-values and its Levels of Significance at 0.05/0.01 Levels of "Antonyms", "Synonyms" and "Comprehension" dimensions of Reading Comprehension of Boys and Girls belonging to Low and High Socio-Economic Status and belonging to Urban/Rural Locality.

Dimensions of Reading Comprehension	Socio-Economic Status				't' values
	High		Low		
	N=58		N=39		
	M	SD	M	SD	
1. Synonyms	13.80	5.48	11.35	5.0	2.29*
2. Antonyms	14.30	5.59	10.40	4.79	3.64**
3. Comprehension	13.10	6.34	11.20	4.15	1.79(NS)

	Sex				't' values
	Boys		Girls		
	N=120		N=120		
	M	SD	M	SD	
1. Synonyms	14.25	5.37	11.80	4.52	3.83**
2. Antonyms	13.55	5.62	11.52	4.72	3.09**
3. Comprehension	13.05	5.31	12.17	5.56	1.26 (NS)

	Urban/Rural Locality				't' values
	Urban		Rural		
	N=120		N=120		
	M	SD	M	SD	
1. Synonyms	12.60	5.20	13.29	4.96	1.06 (NS)
2. Antonyms	11.71	5.26	13.10	5.74	1.96 (NS)
3. Comprehension	13.00	5.75	12.55	5.17	0.64 (NS)

The effect of eight dimensions of personality traits on the components of reading comprehension has revealed some very interesting results.

The analysis of Table 1 has revealed that the students having high 'Ascendancy' were significantly better in the 'Synonyms' and 'Antonyms' components of reading comprehension than the students having low "Ascendancy". The students having high "Emotional Stability" were significantly better in their "Comprehension" component of reading comprehension than the students having low "Emotional Stability".

The students having high "Original Thinking" and high "Personal Relations" were significantly better in their "antonyms" component of reading comprehension than the students having low "Original Thinking" and low "Personal Relations".

The students having high "Vigour" and "Cautiousness" were significantly better in all the components of reading comprehension viz., "Antonyms", "Synonyms" and "Comprehension" than the students having low "Vigour" and "Cautiousness".

With regard to the other two Personality Traits viz., "Responsibility" and "Sociability" it was found that there was no significant difference in any component of reading comprehension between high and low "Responsibility" and "Sociability".

Table 2 has revealed that in respect of sex, it was found that boys were significantly better than girls in the "Antonyms" and "Synonyms" components of reading comprehension.

In the case of Socio-Economic Status, it was found that the students belonging to high socio-economic status were significantly better in the "Antonyms" and "Synonyms" components of reading comprehension.

With regard to urban/rural locality, it was found that none of the components of reading comprehension were significant between the students studying in either urban or rural schools.

In general, the students of seventh standard were found to be 'just average' in their level of reading comprehension.

Educational Implications

The educational implications can be drawn from the findings of the present investigation:

1. The study has indicated that boys are better in reading comprehension than girls. So for the girls, special remedial teaching, special coaching and extra activities should be given.
2. The study has shown that urban and rural students were poor in the reading comprehension. So for the urban and rural students teaching should be given in bilingual method, play-way method and story telling method. Thus the comprehension of the rural and urban students should be improved.
3. The study has proved that the reading comprehension and personality traits are closely related. The students with low level of 'personality traits' have poor understanding and low achievement. From this the teacher can use language laboratory for developing their language proficiency.
4. The study has shown that students of private schools were better in components of reading comprehension than the students of government school. So for the students of government schools, teaching may be given in the form of play-way method, story telling method, dramatization and need to develop intensive programs of teaching reading in Kannada to VII standard students.
5. Reading comprehension tests are useful to classify better, average and poor readers. These tests are also useful to identify cause for highly able and disable readers. So for the poor and disable readers supplementary reading materials should be provided, and thus their reading comprehension should be improved.

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