

Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences Review (JERSSR)

Investigating Factors That Influence Primary School Students' Reading Comprehension and Writing Skills

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Abstract

There are different challenges and difficulties in language learning and teaching at primary school level, low reading comprehension and writing skills in the language learning topics are the core concerns, this occurs due to students' background and their usage of regional languages in routine. This study seeks to evaluate in-depth the techniques to improve reading comprehension and writing skills of primary school students in recognizing and eliminating reading comprehension and writing issues. The current study adopted action research design, one of the qualitative research methods and carried out in a number of cycles. The data of the study were acquired through observation and interview methodologies. The tools for collecting data were tests, and during each cycle of teaching and learning process, observations were also made. Criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling strategies was applied in determining research group. Researchers spent three months working with 249 students and six female teachers at a private school in north Nazkiabad Karachi, Pakistan, on their reading comprehension and writing skills. Researchers practice to do comprehension activities and creative writing on weekly basis. Findings of the study demonstrated that practices of focused reading and creative writing increased student's reading comprehension and writing skills. The outcomes of the study also demonstrated that the use of library is very beneficial in developing reading and writing skills. It also boast students moral and confidence. This research advised that Schools must set the libraries, equip with wide range of books that must be of diverse levels. Those schools who do not have libraries, they must supply numbers of work sheets of comprehension passages to their students and creative writing exercises must be done in routine.

Keywords: Language Learning; Reading Comprehension; Writing Skills; Primary School Level

Introduction

Learners in today's classrooms are increasingly diverse in a number of aspects, including linguistic background, cultural background, geographical background, socioeconomic background, and location. This growing diversity inside the classroom underscores the necessity for a transition toward education that is more learner-centred and is supported by a greater number of resources. A system of education that is centred on the learner requires teachers to make use of their expertise and the available resources in order to determine how individual students learn best and then encourage them to actively engage with the appropriate vocabulary learning strategies in diverse cultural classrooms. This is because a system of education that is centred on the learner requires teachers to use their expertise and the available resources in order to determine how individual students learn the best (Ali, Mankash, & Ullah, 2022). Learning a second language requires the development of four key skills: listening to and speaking the language, reading the language, and writing the language. Students shouldn't graduate high school without having mastered writing, which is the capstone skill. It is a crucial communication talent that cannot be attained, but it can be learnt through formal instruction or it can be socially passed from one person to another. Writing and public speaking are two of the four facets of language that fall under the category of productive talents (Evans, 2018).

The ability to read and write effectively is absolutely necessary for success. Students run the danger of experiencing academic, behavioural, social, and emotional challenges if they do not read at an appropriate level for them. It takes bravery to put one's thoughts into words, whether one chooses to do so verbally or in writing. Strategies for learning a language are an important but often overlooked component of language acquisition. Language students who have a solid foundation in effective learning practices are better able to become independent students who are able to self-manage and self-regulate and who are willing to accept responsibility for their own education (Habok & Magyar, 2018). Reading is not only an important strategic skill but also a skill that should be maintained throughout one's life (Alenezi, 2021). According to Nouri and Mazdayasna (2014), the current instructional methodologies do not effectively educate students to increase their productive skills. This is the conclusion reached by the authors. They argue that the projects and activities that are given to the children in the classroom are not sufficient and are not acceptable for the students to participate in. Students may develop unfavourable attitudes toward language learning, lack the confidence necessary to participate in class discussions, and be unable to work in pairs or groups if they are enrolled in programs that are exam-focused, lecture-based, and employ ineffective teaching strategies. This may cause students to miss out on the opportunity to learn. In a similar vein, Hasan (2014) asserts that students do not acquire the ability to produce language simply by attending classes in which the teachers act as sole speakers and flood the minds of the students with information while the students merely take notes and serve as passive recipients of the information.

Participation in the educational process is an essential factor that has an effect on the acquisition of a second language. The vast majority of English classes today make use of instructional methods that do not enable pupils to develop their linguistic skills. These methods serve no purpose other than to practice the language in a setting that is highly restricted and in which EFL students are not given sufficient opportunities to creatively express themselves. In the form-focused English lessons described by Al Muhaimed (2013), the obligations of the pupils include listening, repeating, memorization, solitary learning, answering, and not questioning. Another problem is that the vast majority of students in English classes are not confident in their reading and writing abilities, and as a result, they do not participate in any of the reading or writing exercises that are assigned in class. Writing is believed to be one of the most prolific skills, which can be very difficult for learners to develop; yet, it is considered to be a crucial ability for the production of effective language. It is widely acknowledged that strong writing skills are an essential component of students' overall academic performance (Sarwat, Ullah, Shehzad Anjum, & Bhuttah, 2021). The willingness of students in elementary school to acquire new concepts and languages is far higher than that of students in senior school. Students are able to look up the meanings of unfamiliar words that are discussed in their textbooks, but they are not able to utilize these words in their own original work. In a similar vein, when they read any information that is associated with a subject that is not related to language, they are unable to fully comprehend it, despite the fact that the content contains the same words that they acquired in language courses.

Students in elementary school are able to comprehend the material of their subjects when it is explained to them by their teachers, and they are able to discover the meanings of difficult words through the use of dictionaries or the internet. However, the vast majority of them are unable to comprehend new material. Sometimes pupils are unable to comprehend the material even though it contains the same terms that they have learnt in any other topic. This is due of the inadequate instruction that they receive and their lack of enthusiasm in reading (Sajeerat, 2011). In mathematics, for instance, the vast majority of children are unable to comprehend tale sums. The children are taken to the library by their teachers, where they are given reading assignments to determine whether or not they are able to comprehend the stories. Unhappily, the majority of students rely on their teachers for assistance, or they try to understand any story with the aid of illustrations provided in books and by drawing on their own personal experiences (Babaiba, 2015). Students that are proficient in standard language nevertheless frequently have trouble communicating with their instructors, which is a challenge that frequently emerges during the process of education (Bintoro, Mardhatillah, Bagaskorowati, & Winarsih, 2022). According to the findings of research, a deficit in linguistic competence has a significant correlation with difficulties in reading (Do Minh & Vo Phan, 2015). It was recommended by Dara (2019) that the root cause which affected on reading comprehension such as family issue, English study time, learning and teaching material, library access, and so on should be

included as a factor for future research; consequently, in this research study library access has been given to students for the purpose of improving their comprehension, reading, and writing abilities.

Significance of the Research

This action research will be beneficial first and foremost to the two hundred and forty nine students who are enrolled in the third, fourth, and fifth grades because it will teach them how to address the challenges they face in reading and writing, and it will also assist them in developing their ability to comprehend what they read. The students' reading comprehension will increase, they will have an easier time learning the lessons that are required, and their overall academic performance will almost certainly get better. This action research will also be beneficial to instructors since it will tell them how to help pupils at the elementary level learn how to read and comprehend, as well as improve their writing abilities. In addition to this, the tactics that may be used to increase students' reading comprehension will be taught to them. When the students' reading performance went from a low level to a high level, the instructor's own reading performance and teaching skills improved as well. Enhancing student understanding, in addition to reading and writing, and determining whether or not this concentration translates to enhanced student writing are also important. To be more explicit, the primary purpose of this research was to investigate how the specific usage of reading and writing tools influenced students' development of knowledge and skill in a second language. They have been given a reading evaluation so that we can determine their reading performance level and their degree of writing ability. In addition, the causes and factors that contribute to students' reading challenges are analysed and discussed in this action research. In addition to this, it provides a number of instructional methods that have been shown to be effective in primary school classes, as well as instructional methods that have been tried and discovered to be effective by other educators and researchers. Reading education is always changing, and with that change comes new best practises that need to be researched and developed, as well as new ways to teach. The purpose of this research was to create a solution for the reading challenges experienced by students in grades three, four, and five at a private school in Karachi, Pakistan.

Literature Review

There is a strong correlation between being able to read a variety of texts and having the capacity to write effectively (Evans, 2018). The majority of children have no trouble reading, but they do not comprehend what they are reading because they do not have an understanding of the terms (Herlina, 2017; Nugraha, Jabu, & Atmowardoyo, 2021; Klinger, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2007). There are numerous things in a student's life that can get in the way of them getting better at reading and writing. The main problem is that the children do not even understand the language well enough because they are not used to reading from different sources. Ali, Mankash, and Ullah (2022) conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study in Karachi, Pakistan. The results showed that the majority of the learners agreed that vocabulary can be enhanced through various but appropriate intensive reading strategies, such as reading story books, repeating lessons through rhyming words, and repetition of new words while listening to colleagues and others. Additionally, most of the learners rated high scores on the vocabulary comprehension subscale. They suggested that in order to gradually improve the learners' language proficiency, comprehension, and expression for practical application in day-to-day life, the English language should be taught taking into account the learners' one-of-a-kind needs and cultural backgrounds using a variety of strategies, approaches, and ways. This would allow for gradual improvement in the learners' language proficiency, comprehension, and expression for practical application in day-to- Reading books is one of the most effective methods available for enhancing one's reading and writing abilities. In most cases, the focus of teachers was on completing their syllabi, while the focus of parents was on ensuring that their child understood the concepts that were being taught in various disciplines.

There is no more content presented to pupils by either their schools or their parents. It is the reason why children do not develop the habit of reading. If schools provide students with reading material and activities that test their comprehension, they can cultivate kids who are more self-assured and knowledgeable (Blickenstaff, Hallquist & Kopel, 2013). If schools offered pupils books to read, there would be no extra activities. For instance, teachers would not require students to write book reviews. Students' vocabulary is increased when teachers urge them to write book reviews because the students are required to investigate new words for their writing. They need to make an effort to investigate the answers to the questions "What, How, and When," which will raise their level of

knowledge (McKown & Barnett, 2007). Students who have a poorly developed understanding of tenses are sometimes unable to produce independent work of a satisfactory quality. The majority of pupils who do below average in school struggle greatly with spelling errors. When people first begin to develop their writing skills, one of the first challenges they encounter is learning how to compose sentences (Ahmed, 2017). To get around this problem and avoid making mistakes, they write sentences with simple words and stop trying to be original. Students who are not given the opportunity to learn in a variety of settings are unable to generate better and more original ideas; instead, they simply repeat their writing style while using the same instances to describe their emotions. Students of this sort have a far harder time understanding what is being said in a conversation in a second language. They are unable to comprehend the language without cues. According to the findings of a number of studies, teachers do not offer students free reign to write in their classes, and even when students are given the opportunity to do so, the outcomes are not very noteworthy (Alfaki, 2015). The difficulties that students face with writing in the English language have developed into a serious concern for those who teach and learn English. Writing in English is regarded as a very difficult skill, particularly in primary school classes, where pupils face a wide variety of problems related to this skill (Sarwat, Ullah, Shehzad Anjum & Bhuttah, 2021).

Empirical Studies

Guner-Ozer and Belet Boyac (2020), conducted a study and the conclusions revealed that the use of authentic task-based authentic material increased the reading comprehension, writing skills, and writing motivation of primary school children in the fourth grade. The study was carried out with primary school children. In addition, it was found that the students who took part in the research had favourable thoughts towards the language class that was taught using authentic material that was based on authentic assignments. This was observed when it was discovered that the students had participated in the research. Graham, Harris, Fishman, Houston, Wijekumar, Lei, and Ray (2019) conducted research to determine whether or not reading comprehension, gender, class, and school effectiveness were statistically significant predictors of fifth-grade students' composition quality and length when it came to a persuasive writing task involving source material. Specifically, the researchers wanted to know whether or not these factors influenced the students' composition quality and length. In order to determine whether or not writing skills, knowledge, motivation, and strategic behaviours (within the context of robust writing instruction) each made a statistically unique contribution to the prediction of fifth-grade students' writing abilities, the researchers conducted the following tests: Each of the following criteria, with one notable exception, accounted for statistically distinct variance in predicting the quality of the composition: writing skills, knowledge, drive, and strategic activities. Students are expected to comprehend and generate texts that become progressively more challenging as they go through the primary grades, and it is generally understood that having excellent academic language and literacy skills is vital to meeting these expectations (Proctor, Silverman, Harring, Jones, & Hartranft, 2020). The findings showed that the intervention had very meaningful effects on standardized measures of academic language and reading comprehension. These findings have implications for both the theory and research behind teaching, as well as the actual practice of teaching in the classroom.

The authors Wijekumar, Graham, Harris, Lei, Barkel, Aitken, and Houston (2019) explain as a basic tenet of their model of domain learning that learning is affected by cognitive and motivational processes. When it comes to writing, these catalysts consist of the learners' knowledge, motivation, and the ability to take strategic activities and make strategic decisions. They repeated the experiment again, once in the autumn and once in the spring, with 179 pupils who were in the fifth grade both times (52 percent of whom were female). To determine whether or not writing knowledge, motivation, strategic behaviour, and skills each made a statistically significant and unique contribution to predicting writing quality and output on social studies persuasive writing tasks, the purpose of the experiment was to determine whether or not these factors contributed. This was done after the researchers had initially accounted for variance related to other catalysts and reading comprehension. This was done in order to validate the previous findings. Writing knowledge, strategic behaviours, and skills were the three of the four catalysts that each accounted for statistically significant and distinct variance in predicting writing quality, amount of words, or both at each assessment point. Each of these three factors accounted for one-fourth of the total variance in predicting writing quality, amount of words, or both. This was true for all three of these catalysts at

the same time. These findings offer some support, if limited, for the concept of domain learning when it is applied to writing. However, this support is not conclusive.

An experimental study was conducted by Kim, Relyea, Burkhauser, Scherer, and Rich (2021) with the objective of duplicating and expanding a prior efficacy study of a primary grade content literacy intervention. This intervention was found to have a positive impact on the students' overall vocabulary knowledge as well as their reading comprehension and argumentative writing. This study was conducted with the intention of extending and replicating the findings of a prior study. A metropolitan school system in the south-eastern United States of America served as the setting for this experiment's replication, which was carried out with the participation of 5,494 youngsters enrolled in first and second grades across 30 elementary schools. The design of the investigation was a cluster randomized trial, which was the method that was applied. Teachers devise thematic lessons to help students acquire networks of connected vocabulary knowledge while they are studying the content of science and social studies. This is done to aid students in gaining networks of linked vocabulary knowledge (a total of twenty lessons). These lessons served as a foundation for intellectual structure. The teachers integrated thematic lessons, concept mapping, and interactive read-aloud of conceptually connected informative texts in order to help their students construct networks of vocabulary knowledge and transfer this knowledge to argumentative writing and collaborative research activities. This was done so that the teachers could cater to the requirements of their respective classes. Confirmatory analyses not only supported positive findings on science vocabulary knowledge depth and argumentative writing, but they also extended favourable findings to social studies vocabulary knowledge depth and argumentative writing. This enlarged the scope of the study's positive findings. Furthermore, the good findings were able to be replicated. The outcomes of students' domain-specific argumentative writing appeared to be somewhat mediated by the extent of vocabulary knowledge that students possessed, according to the findings of exploratory studies.

Avşar Tuncay and Ulu Bilim (2022) carried out a study to investigate the connections between students' vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing abilities in fourth grade in primary schools. They discovered that students' ability to comprehend what they read was enhanced when they possessed a bigger vocabulary. Students who had a bigger vocabulary also showed improvements in their writing abilities. In addition, the purpose of this study was to investigate the degree to which one's vocabulary and reading comprehension skills can be used to predict one's writing skills; conversely, one's reading comprehension and writing skills can be used to predict one's vocabulary; and vocabulary and writing skills can be used to predict one's reading comprehension skills. Lastly, the purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which one's reading comprehension skills can be used to predict one's writing skills. It was discovered that the students' reading comprehension skills and vocabulary had a positive effect on their writing skills, and that the students' writing skills and reading comprehension skills had a meaningfully positive effect on their vocabulary. Both of these findings can be attributed to the fact that the students were given the opportunity to reflect on their progress. The results of the research that was carried out provided the foundation for these discoveries. Reading comprehension abilities were found to be affected favourably and significantly by a person's vocabulary as well as their writing talents. This influence was found to be positive and meaningful. It was determined that this was indeed the case. They suggested that the influence of vocabulary and reading comprehension on writing skill; the effects of writing and reading comprehension on vocabulary may be disclosed through in-depth research, and the reasons can be studied. They also suggested that the influence of vocabulary and reading comprehension on writing skill was reciprocal. These findings can be attributed to the findings of the study that came before this one. Provisioning of awareness on improving English language to undergraduate ESL/EFL students for use in everyday life is something that requires proper attention in Pakistan's education system due to the various factors and variables involved. In today's fast-paced world, effective communication is the key to achieving one's goals. The current method of instruction needs to place more emphasis on intensive reading. Learners of English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language need to review a variety of components of intensive reading. Particular attention should be paid to reading tactics and approaches (Ali, Mankash, & Ullah, 2022).

Methodology

In this study, one of the action research designs, which are part of the qualitative research methods, was utilized. The approach that was used in taking action to the research subject, the priority in this

study was to reveal the meaning of the learning process and effort to improve skills through the actions that were carried out, and the approach that was used was the approach that was used in taking action to the research subject. The researchers decided to conduct Classroom Action Research, which is a method for enhancing students' analytic abilities in the classroom that is also used to enhance the overall quality of education in schools by influencing how teachers instruct, how they manage their classes, as well as how they teach and learn. This type of research is used to improve education on multiple fronts, including how classes are managed, how teachers teach, and how students learn. One of the research methodologies that teachers can use to investigate a specific issue within the school is called action research. This type of research methodology directly involves the participation of the teachers in the process of finding solutions to the problems that they encounter during the course of their teaching-learning processes. According to Johnson and Martnez Guzmán (2013), action research is particularly applicable for educators such as teachers and administrators in the field of education because these individuals are the ones who are directly involved in and interested in the process of finding solutions to issues related to the educational system. Teachers are strongly encouraged to participate in action research because it allows them to discover problems, find solutions to those problems, and reflect on those problems all without leaving the classroom. This study included 249 third, fourth, and fifth grade students' and six female teachers from a private school.

Sampling

Criterion sampling is one method of purposeful sampling, and it was used to select the people who would participate in the study. The perspectives of teachers on the reading and writing abilities of students will be taken into consideration; consequently, the educators who will be chosen should have prior experience working with students who struggle in these subject areas. In order to accomplish this goal, the researcher used a method called criteria sampling to collect data from a sizable group of participants. Selecting data sources for more in-depth analysis based on how well they align with the research objectives is an important part of the purposeful sampling process. The purpose of criterion sampling is to conduct research with a group of people selected on the basis of certain criteria, whether those criteria are predetermined or self-created. One primary school was chosen as the recipient of the program based on the following criteria: (1) "having a student with reading or writing challenges in the past," (2) "being a primary school," and (3) "being a long-term participant." In addition, the researchers chose the school they were going to observe based on a predetermined list of characteristics. Following this, a period of three months of classroom time was observed with two hundred forty nine students of grade third, fourth, and fifth having difficulty with reading and writing at a private Sector Primary School located in north Naziabad Karachi, Pakistan.

Process of Research

At the beginning of the session, teachers make sure that students can read challenging words with ease in both English and Urdu, and that they can pronounce words correctly. In the second phase, teachers incorporate the vocabulary of other courses into the question papers that their students complete. The questions were too difficult for the students to comprehend. In the third phase, the teacher will give the pupils a word bank, and they will be required to construct a paragraph using the terms from the word bank. Regrettably, students did not utilize terms in a suitable manner. The teachers gave them books from the library to read every week so that they might improve their students' reading comprehension and writing abilities. Students were figuring out the meaning of difficult or new phrases; in addition, they sought assistance from their teachers and looked at visuals provided in the textbooks in order to better understand the scenario. The teachers educated them on the proper application of various linguistic devices. In addition to it, they compiled a list of vocabulary words. After a week, the teachers instructed that they compose a brief summary of the story. The following step, which took place after a month, consisted of the teachers giving the students comprehension passages of the same degree of difficulty but without any visuals. In addition to that, they required them to write passage summaries. In addition, the students were given the task of writing a new story while using the same language. The examinations, which provided a transparent depiction of the students' development, also helped them improve their reading comprehension and writing abilities. In the test, the instructors used vocabulary from other topics. They were educated about rubrics in advance of their examinations so that they could gauge the quality of their writing. After the students have participated in the aforementioned activities for a period of two months, there is a field trip arranged to take them to a museum. Following the trip, the teachers assign them the responsibility of

writing a report on what they experienced on the trip. In addition, teachers have noticed that students are able to comprehend new material that is at the same difficulty level as previous material and write their own content using words that they have learned over the course of the previous two months. As a result, students are now able to comprehend material, write with greater accuracy, and produce quality work. They were also able to articulate their thoughts and feelings through the use of suitable language.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The findings that were gleaned from the interviews and observations are presented in this portion of the report. The conclusions that were gathered through the interview method were presented first, and then the data that was gathered through the observation method was used to back up those findings. When teachers included vocabulary from other topics into what was being taught, a substantial number of the students were unable to understand what was being taught.

Table 1

Standard	Class III	Class IV	Class V
Total students	84	82	83
Students unable to comprehend	61	69	71

When the teachers gave the students the word bank and asked them to compose a paragraph, a significant majority of the pupils were unable to use the words in a suitable manner.

Table 2

Standard	Class III	Class IV	Class V
Total students	84	82	83
Students unable to use words appropriately	63	56	48

After the first phase, when students were allowed to keep library books they love to read since they had practiced understanding material after knowing the meaning of difficult or unfamiliar terms, this was when they were allowed to keep the books. The students' tendency to read was encouraged as a result. Students were able to improve their writing abilities by working on summary writing. Their vocabulary improved as a result of the provided information, which made it easier for them to write anything. The meanings of various words, as well as their applications, became much simpler for them to grasp.

The subsequent findings revealed the amount of pupils who received marks that were below fifty percent in all three exams.

Table 3

Test 1 Results

Standard	Class III	Class IV	Class V
Total students	84	82	83
Students got less than 50% marks	26	17	16

Table 4

Test 2 Results

Standard	Class III	Class IV	Class V
Total students	84	82	83
Students got less than 50% marks	14	09	11

Table 5

Test 3 Results

Standard	Class III	Class IV	Class V
Total students	84	82	83
Students got less than 50% marks	6	5	3

The findings showed that pupils improved both their reading comprehension and their writing abilities after going to a museum and making use of libraries (reading books).

Conclusion and Discussion

Based on the thoughts and observations of the instructors who participated in this research project, the experiences and methods of classroom teachers with their pupils who struggle with reading and writing were investigated. The findings of the study and the data that were collected indicated that teachers need to investigate the areas in which their students struggle. They are able to achieve it not only through the formal examinations, but also through a variety of activities. It is not enough for pupils to grasp the meanings of words; in addition, they need to be familiar with the appropriate ways to utilize words. The integration of topics must take place not only in terms of the content but also in

terms of the terminology. The kids are able to better comprehend the appropriate application of words as a result of this. In each and every elementary class, there is required work in the areas of reading, comprehension, and imaginative writing. The results of the tests reveal that students' levels of comprehension and creative writing improved steadily when they continued to perform these exercises. Students were inspired to write about their experiences while on a field trip.

Recommendation

The school library should be stocked with a wide range of different types of literature. There should be a variety of levels of difficulty in the books. Those schools that do not have libraries are the ones that are required to supply their students with a number of work sheets of comprehension passages. It is required that the activity of creative writing be done on a weekly basis in addition to being done on special occasions.

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