

Original Article

Improve English Reading Habits for class IV students in Balaam Primary School

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Abstract: Cultivating a love of reading remains a cornerstone of building a well-informed society. As stated by that reading shapes who we are, strengthens our ability to think critically, and sparks creativity. However, the digital age presents a hurdle. The influence of social media and the captivating nature of digital spaces have led to a decline in student engagement with traditional reading materials like books, magazines, and journals. This shift necessitates innovative approaches to reignite the joy of reading and ensure that future generations continue to thrive in a world enriched by intellectual exploration. Thus, there is an imperative need to build up the reading habit in the minds of our young children. This study was carried out to assess and determine some appropriate methods to improve the reading habits of Class IV students of Balaam Primary school. According to Green "Reading habits are best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed it can last one's lifetime." So reading must be hobby for most of the young people in today's world and otherwise, the success will be far cry. In this paper, the researcher discussed various methods and benefits in improving reading habits. Findings from this study concluded that the intervention program implemented on 27 students of Class IV students could significantly improve the reading habits and improve academic performance. The study provides some useful approaches to develop reading habits and how reading habits can enhance academic performance.

Keywords: Improvement, reading habits, academic performance, reading strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Educational research is particularly done by the teachers in order to bring some enhancement to the existing problems in his or her teaching-learning tactics or in the education system [1]. The primary aim of the research is to improve rather than to produce knowledge. More often, action research is a joint activity among colleagues searching for a solution to an everyday problem experienced in school to improve and enhance students' achievement [2]. Reading is the process of interpreting symbols in order to build or gain meaning [3]. The success of the school also depends on success in reading. Loan claimed that a weak person becomes a communicator and a lame person can climb mountains of knowledge through reading [4]. So, the art of reading is the gateway to all other knowledge which will help boost one's vocabulary and ability to think and improve one's verbal and writing abilities [5]. Hence, it is an essential part of language instruction at every level because it supports learning in multiple ways. Generally, reading habits in our school are relatively deprived as compared with other schools as most of the children are seen glued to their recreational activities [6]. Though the school focuses on reading through different reading activities such as reading in the assembly, reader's theater, reading week, and reading picnic, the students fail to read independently despite the support

of the teachers. The lack of seriousness in reading is that a majority of children come from a farming background and they lack guidance and access to reading materials. Thus, it is important for students to adopt the reading culture to improve academic performance and this action research will find out the ways or strategies to improve the reading habits of class IV students in our school [7]. The research aims to improve the overall level of reading habits in class IV students Balaam Primary School has a boarding facility with classes from PP to VI. The school was established. It is located under Monger District, the eastern Bhutan and it is 65kilometers away from the Dzongkhag Head Office [8]. It is located in the heart of the scattered villages in Balaam Georg. It caters to the schooling needs of 19 villages and a few civil servants. The school greets by a vision with "A community of happy learners with the values of." That dam-thigh ley gyu-drey Mr. Nemaha Wagdi has been teaching class IV English for last two years [9]. He found out that many students perform below expectation in tests and examinations due to poor reading habits. In order to be a good or an excellent performer, it is necessarily important that an individual to make reading a daily habit [10]. Despite knowing the fact, many students do not care about reading books instead many of them prefer to play games, watch movies and TV shows. Most of the parents and teachers also complain about students not doing well in their studies due to technologies [11]. The unnecessary use of modern technology decreases time for reading books in the new generation. Therefore, it is critically important to develop effective reading habits in children as to facilitate them to improve their academic achievements. This study is intended to find the various mechanisms to improve reading habits of class IV students [12]. In the past years of Mr. Nemaha Wagdi's teaching profession, he encountered students performing low in English subject in particular. Thus, reminding him to think of an answer for their low performance. For this very reason, he planned to conduct an action research with the hope to increase their performance level with the help of good reading habits. For the analysis part, he gathered Unit Test results of two Units [13]. In total, there are 27 students in the class out of which 13 boys and 14 girls. From the total of 27 students in the class, only 3 students secured 30 marks and above and no one got 41 marks and above. Most of the students landed up in getting 11-20.9 marks which accounts to 12 students and 7 students scored 0-10.9 marks in the test. The English teacher conducted Unit Test for four times including re-test and the performance of the students seemed the same as depicted in the above figure 1. Therefore, the English teacher decided to conduct research on reading habit of the students particularly class IV to enhance the academic performance [14]. It is because reading is one of the most important tools that the students should have to have deeper comprehension of the text. In order to work towards improving reading habits of students, it is important for the teachers to fully understand their students' preferred learning styles and their own outsets of learning. As teachers, it is our sole responsibility to design, prepare, and develop lesson that will cater learners' learning styles. Modeled reading, echo reading, chorus reading and guided reading had been in constant practice in the two years of the English teacher [15]. Despite various strategies in placed, the English academic success remained below expectation till today. However, the English teacher has some knowledge of action research. He got an opportunity to do his Post Graduate in Guidance and Counseling (PgDGC) at Sates College of Education. During his course, he learnt basic ideas to conduct Action Research and he even conducted two action researches in the past few years. Moreover, he got an opportunity to attend a two day training on Action Research facilitated by the Dzongkhag Education Office, Monger in the beginning of 2023 academic year [16]. With the collaborative support from all the teaching staff of the school, the action research was carried out to find out ways to improve English reading habits of class IV students [17]. Most of the teachers in the school have some knowledge on Action Research as some of them have had the Action Research module in their training years and some attended Profession Development in Action Research [18]. The principal has the teaching experience of twenty four years in different level for different subjects [19]. Moreover,

he possesses a Master's Degree in Leadership Management and has a rich experience in research. He has published series of research papers in online despite thesis papers [20].

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data was collected from Class IV students in Balaam Primary School. The questionnaires were used for pre-data collection. Copies of questionnaire were administered to Class IV students during leisure hours with the assistance of their class teacher. Questions were circulated in uniform for both male and female students and the data collected were analyzed accordingly. The post data were collected through the use of survey Reading Journals and observations. The teacher researcher thought that these tools were very important in the research process as they helped to get the views on how frequently students read and develop reading habits. The researcher observed the students and kept a record using the set criteria. Moreover, the students maintained reading journal to see whether they have understood the book they read. Twenty seven (27) respondents from class IV of mixed gender (13 males and 14 females) were participated in the study. They were observed their reading competency and habits using the observation form, provided interventions and again tested using the same observation form. Class IV students were chosen, since they were the most appropriate age groups to inculcate reading habits and build a strong foundation to transit to the next higher class. The students were in the age range of 9–11 years old. To interpret and analyze the data, the researcher has used the Microsoft Office Excel 2007 and other primary (reading journal) and secondary (Electronics, journals) sources as statistical techniques to analyze the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Pre- data analysis

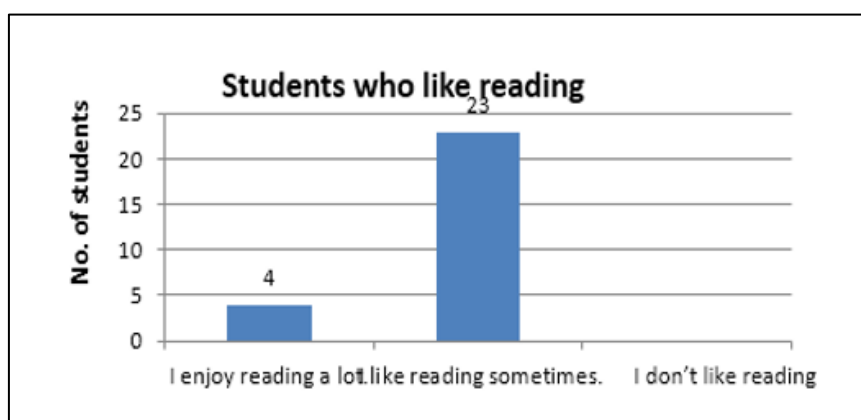


Figure 01: Students who like reading

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) program on teachers' instructional mastery and pedagogical efficacy. The pre line data was collected using structured questionnaire before the execution of intervention strategies of reading. It was found that only 4 students enjoy reading a lot and 23 students like reading sometimes. So, the data says that the students who like reading was satisfactory and some of the students were really lagging behind in reading. Thus, from that data it was very clear that there was huge achievement gap between the students.

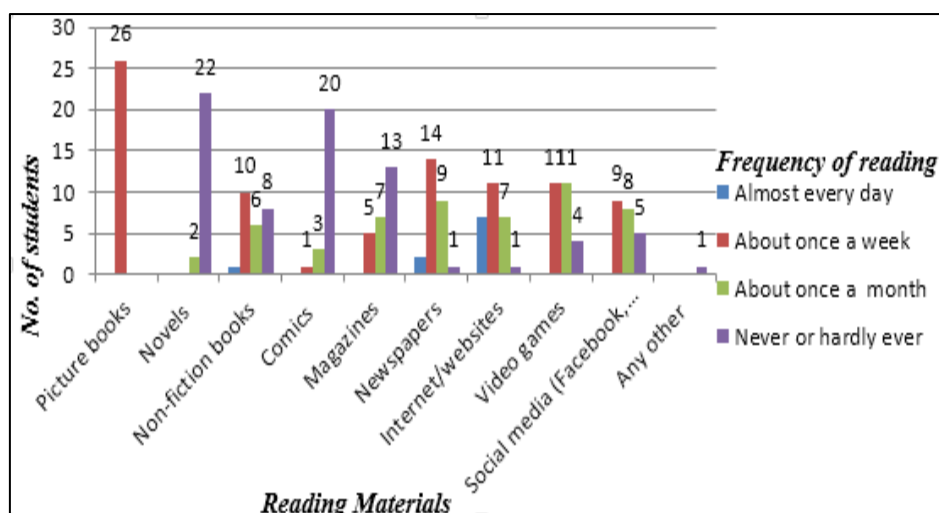


Figure 02: Types of reading materials and frequency of reading

The above data depicts that most of the students read picture books accounting to 26 students that were also once in a week. On a contrary, there were students who have never or hardly read either the novels or comics which account to 22 and 20 students respectively. However, there were 14 students who read newspapers at least once a week and 11 students used internet/websites as a reading material once a week and 11 students in once a month. After having seen such findings, the researcher came to realize that there were still few areas a teacher can play an active role to enhance their English reading habits through modeled reading, following reading routine, keep reading journal, and observation.

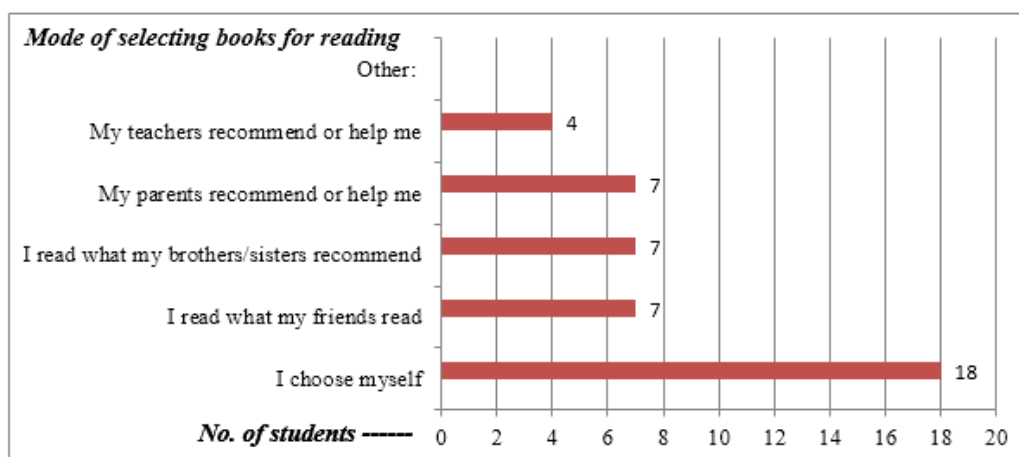


Figure 03: Students choosing their reading materials

In line to this, it is a graphical representation about the students' selecting their books for reading. The graph depicts that around 18 students select or choose their materials themselves and only 4 students choose and read books as per their teachers' recommendation or help. On the other hand, 21 students from the class were seeking help from their parents, friends and siblings to choose reading materials with 7 students respectively. By going through the graph it clearly showed that the role of a teacher to select reading materials for students was very minimal and therefore, the teachers' role is paramount important to enhance the reading habit of the students.

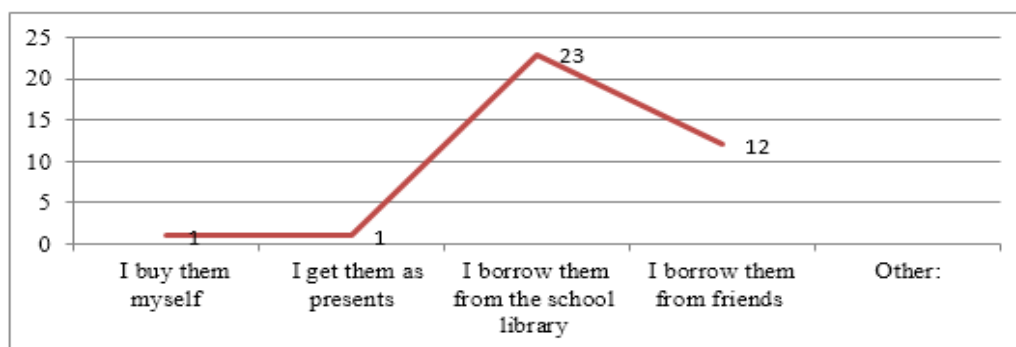


Figure 04: Sources of getting/lending books.

The school library is the only source of lending books for most of the students which accounts to 23 students. Whereas, only 1 student buys books by himself and get book as a gift and it evidently explains that reading habit is very low among the class IV students as many students do not have the habit of buying or borrowing books from other sources other than school library. However, there are 12 students who borrow books from their friends other despite school library.

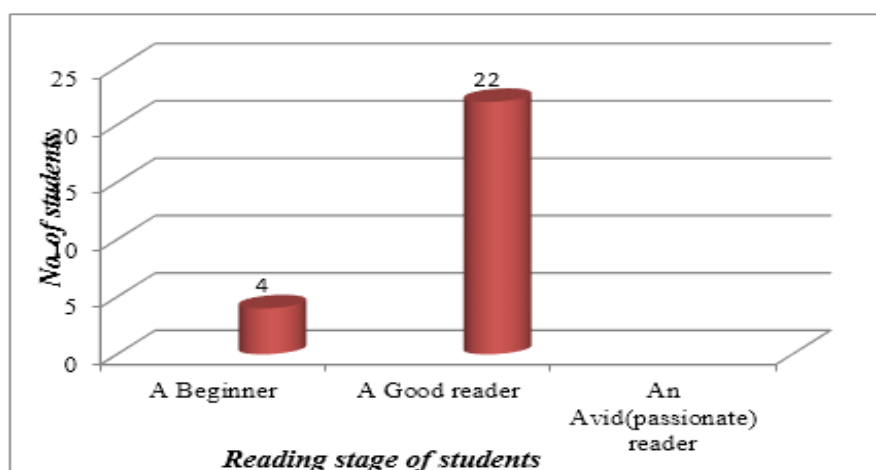


Figure 05: Reading stage of students

The graph portrays that most of the students (22 students) are leveled in good reader as they are able to interact with text, make out important ideas, predictions, and ask quest as they read. Only 4 students are leveled in a beginner category as they are able to name the alphabets, tell letter sounds, and recognize a few words from the text. With the use of different strategies, the researcher hoped to bring some changes in the academic performance in English subject.

3.2 Intervention Plans/Strategies

After collecting baseline data, the teacher researcher used some gist of strategies for reading text. Students were able to master the words by using the most frequently in their daily activities and had a proper amount of vocabulary; it became easy for them to express what they want. The following interventions were used to carry out the research:

1. Model reading
2. Daily reading routine
3. Reading journal
4. Observations

The teacher researcher also made reading materials available for the students despite library facility. The daily reading routine of 20 minutes were scheduled and made best use of it by effective monitoring. Further, the researcher asked students to prepare reading journal once they finished reading a book or an article as per the format besides researcher's model reading. Every time the teacher did model reading to students prior to their actual reading. Sometimes, the teacher asked advantaged students to do model reading to their friends under the teacher's observation. Model reading found to be more useful for the students who were lagging in reading even a word. Model reading and availability of reading materials of their interest supported Barr, Blachowicz, Katz, & Kaufman, in becoming children proficient in reading when they read the materials of their interest which enriches their lives. Once in every week, the students were made to read the same book to the class repeatedly until they could read fluently. 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 the disadvantaged students were also provided teacher or peer coaching till they could read well. The daily reading routine of 20 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. Apart from model reading and reading routine, the students were made to maintain reading journal to see whether they understood the book they read. They were asked to record their reading as per the format developed by the teacher every after they finish reading a book or an article. It was understood that reading does not only happen in the library; it can happen beyond if you are to read. They were asked to carry at least a book at all times. They were also encouraged to read during assembly. Moreover, the researcher observed and kept record using the set criteria as mentioned in observation form.

3.3 Post-Intervention Data Collection

After applying a number of strategies as mentioned in intervention for three months, the researcher collected post-intervention data for three weeks. Through this data the researcher was able to find whether the students have developed a good reading habit or not. The researcher collected post-intervention data just like baseline data using observation sheets and maintaining a reading journal. The researcher gave an observation sheet to the critical friend and librarian. He requested them to take the sheet with them every day and fill it within one week. They have observed students both in the classroom and outside after the class. They showed their patience and cooperation to collect data successfully. The observation form shows both pre-and post-record reading of students. From the data collected, Apart from observation, I have used reading journal as a second tool to collect data. Hence, each of the students maintained a reading journal for two weeks. They have applied the

strategies which are mentioned in the intervention and maintained reading journal. 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. It was evident that our class IV 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 performing below expectation in tests and examinations, playing games, watching movies and TV shows. 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. The class IV Mid Term examinations result was up to expectation due to improve in reading habits among the students. The reading habits of a student were found relevant to improve the academic performance. The Term I result is as shown below: The table above depicts the class IV English subject analysis for Mid Term, 2023 and it was found out that maximum student from the class could maintain at least a pass mark accounting to 19 students passed from the class with 70.4% pass percentage. However, there were 8 students who could not make a pass mark with 29.6% fail percentage. These failed pupils were those who lags reading habits despite repeated support and strategies applied. On the other hand, there are 4 students who secured more than 70% and these are the pupils who could read any articles exceptionally good as examinations are conducted in a structured manner where the students must read the questions and answer the questions accordingly without the teacher's help. Those students who secured more than 70% in the examinations were the exceptionally good readers who comprehend the text or questions in whatever manner they are being asked. According to Shoe bottom 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. Nonetheless, there are good numbers of students who could score more than 45% which accounts to 13 students from the class. These students were not able to read well in the beginning and with the implementation of intervention, they were able to read and speak in English.

3.4 Discussion

Reading is one of the most important skills and it is the foundation through which other skills such as writing and speaking are developed [21]. Reading opens door to other learning. Reading keeps us informed with the happenings in the world and enriches our lives. So, it is the foundation upon which other academic skills are built [22]. As teachers we always commit ourselves to cultivate reading habits by asking them to appreciate the experiences reading affords. Children become proficient in reading when they read the materials of their interest which enriches their lives [23]. Therefore, the responsibility of a teacher is not only teaching student's knowledge but need to enlarge their problem solving and lifelong learning skills. Furthermore, 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. On the other hand, Florence claims, reading plays a vital role in any worthwhile effort to learn English and most importantly educational objectives can be accomplished through reading [24]. It is truly said that when we were in schools, most of the toppers were those who read more books. The good readers could recount their readings with the lessons taught in the class and make teaching learning more interactive. In addition, we found that good readers have a large vocabulary, more creative, have many new ways to solve problems and good in imagination. In addition, as said by Bamberger 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 [25]. It concludes that 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. There are different strategies incorporated for effective reading [26]. Reading strategies are the methods used to improve reading skills. It will help students to become a good reader and many teachers or parents

use a variety of reading strategies to improve their children's reading habit [27]. It is because they (teachers or parents) are considered as role models in all grounds in the eyes of children. Model reading is one of the prominent reading strategies incorporated to develop fluency [28]. "Modeling refers to the patterning of thoughts, beliefs, strategies, and actions after those displayed by one or more models usually teachers or parents who explain and demonstrate skills". The role of the teacher is paramount for students to have appropriate reading role models in schools [29]. On the other hand, guided reading is also a technique for improving reading performance. It is an oral reading of text where students read aloud and others follow along silently. It helps the readers in pronouncing the words correctly [30].

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study suggests that a combination of model reading, daily reading routines, and reading journals can significantly improve reading habits in Class IV students. Model reading by teachers exposes students to proper pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension strategies. Establishing a daily reading routine, even for short periods, fosters consistency and builds the foundation for a lifelong love of reading. Finally, maintaining a reading journal allows students to reflect on their reading experiences, record new vocabulary, and track their progress, fostering a sense of accomplishment and ownership over their reading journey. By implementing these interventions, teachers can create a stimulating and supportive classroom environment that encourages students to become enthusiastic and engaged readers.

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