

COMPUTERIZED READING PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPING IX-STANDARD STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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This research aims at investigating the effect of a computerized programme on developing IX-standard students' reading comprehension skills. The targeted reading comprehension skills are prediction, skimming, scanning, recognizing synonyms and antonyms, deducing meaning from context and relating the text to personal experience, opinion or evaluation. The researcher purposively has chosen a sample of 60 ninth-standard students from Arakkonam Block, Vellore District. The participants have been divided into two equivalent groups: each group has 30 students. The researcher has used four tools: 1) a questionnaire for teachers to determine the most important reading comprehension skills for IX-standard students, 2) an achievement test (pre & post), and 3) the suggested computer-based programme for the reading texts. The results of the study revealed that the computer-based programme has been effective to develop the reading comprehension skills of IX-standard students. In light of these results, the researcher recommends that language teachers should use computers as a tool for enhancing students' reading comprehension.

Keywords: reading, computerized reading texts, comprehension skills, etc.

Introduction

English language is considered as the first international language which is used in all fields as; politics, technology, economy, formal conferences, industry, commerce, tourism, journalism and education. Baron (36) confirms that over the past two decades there has been a significant increase in the number of people around the world who speak English as a second language. In the same respect, Harmer (14) argues that various countries are placing more importance on learning English as a second or other languages and it becomes the "lingua Franca" for business transactions between countries. Thus, India provides plans and programs for teaching English to enable students to use English Language effectively.

Reading is considered as an additional tool of communication to listening and speaking. People who have no chance to talk with native speakers of the target language can have an access through reading to their literature, journals, and then understand much about their civilization. In this sense, reading is the window through which other cultures can be seen and more general or specific knowledge can be gained. (Kailani and Muqattash 85)

Reading comprehension is the most important skill to be taught in school and the ability to read accurately and fluently is the most important need for the students. Thus, it's clear that students in our country face a serious problem in grasping the items of the

curriculum in general and in reading comprehension in particular. Comprehension is complex and multifaceted, and it is thus no surprise that the population of children identified as having reading comprehension difficulties.

The researcher, in this study, suggests a well-designed computerized program to develop students' reading comprehension because technology in general and computers in particular has become the most used tool in all fields especially in education. Students have become familiar with the text and comprehend its idea when using computers. Using computers is one of the most efficient ways to make the lessons audio-visual, to supply a fluent and effective education, to keep the students away from memorization, to obtain speed and permanence in perception. Computers address more senses compared to other technological tools and make abstract and complicated concepts concrete digitally because of their extensive multimedia properties. (Abo Oda, 2010). In the same concern, Becker (4) declares that computer technologies and the environments they support can help motivate the learner to learn, increase the learner's control over the material being presented, and allow the learner to take an active role in the learning process.

This study aims at investigating the effect of a computerized program on developing reading comprehension skills. In addition, it seeks for examining the students' attitudes towards reading importance, reading method, reading teacher and the integration of computer in a reading course.

Review of Literature

Paran (1996: 24) reports that reading is an activity including constant guesses that are later rejected or confirmed. This means that one does not read all the sentences in the same way, but one relies on a number of words – or 'cues' - to get an idea of what kind of sentence is likely to follow.

Using computers in the language classroom for reading may support the development of reading skills among students because reading materials from the internet, for example, provide a variety of current, authentic texts compared to potentially dated reading material sourced from textbooks. (Abu Bakar, 2005:43) Kim (2008:243) concludes that the computer was considered to be fully controlled by and totally dependent on the teacher. Thus, the common use of computers in classrooms was as a tutor or a teaching machine. For instance, computers were used for drill-and-practice purposes or for presenting materials or texts to individual students, which allowed them to practice certain skills at their own pace. Computers in the classroom expanded their functions to provide diverse formats of feedback on students' performance, to accommodate their choices, and to monitor their learning.

Computerized language is now a reality to all language learners, educators and applied linguists. Web-based programs allow existing computer labs to become a good technological center for effective teaching. Educators desire to know the ways that computer can be utilized to support and nurture students' learning and understanding. This study may help teachers to use computer in their classes to improve reading comprehension and motivation. In addition, it may encourage communication skills experts to prepare training courses for teachers to use computers when teaching reading. Moreover, syllabus designers

may change the curriculum design to suit the new technological environment. Further, the study will evoke researchers to do more studies about using different technologies in developing other skills as listening, writing or speaking.

Methodology of the Study

The study attempted the experimental approach. Two groups were assigned as the participants of the study; the experimental group, and the control group. The research includes three variables; the first variable is *a computerized program*. The second variable is *reading comprehension skills*. The third variable is *students' attitudes towards reading*. The experimental group was taught the reading comprehension texts via computer, while the control group was taught via the traditional method. The experiment lasted for eight weeks.

The sample of the study consisted of (60) students distributed into two groups; one experimental group consists of (30) students and one control group includes (30) students. The groups were a purposive sample from the selected secondary schools in Arakkonam Block, Vellore District.

The researcher included the general aims of the reading comprehension skills for the ninth standard students which were prepared by the English Language Curriculum (1999) as a questionnaire for teachers to choose the most important reading skills for ninth standard students. The items of the questionnaire are twenty-four reading comprehension skills. This questionnaire aimed at measuring the degree of importance of the reading comprehension skills for the ninth standard students to be developed in the suggested program and to be used in building the achievement test.

The Result of the Study

1- What is the suggested computerized programme which may develop ninth standard reading comprehension and their attitudes towards reading?

To answer this question, the researcher prepared a computerized program in order to develop students' reading comprehension and their attitudes towards reading. The program includes:

Students' Book (the suggested computerized program)

The program includes all the reading comprehension lessons from the Second Term English book. The researcher used some software programs in designing the program as: Microsoft PowerPoint, Internet explorer and Microsoft Word. He adds pictures for each highlighted word in the text in addition to related videos for each lesson. As well as, he designed the text as a web-quest so as to get students live the experience and interact with the text.

T.test independent sample results of differences between the experimental and the control group in the post test

Skil	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. value	Sig. level
Prediction	Experimental	30	2.650	0.852	2.669	0.010	Sig. at 0.05
	Control	30	1.850	1.403			
Skimming	Experimental	30	2.567	0.626	3.147	0.00.	Sig. at 0.01
	Control	30	1.933	0.907			
Scanning	Experimental	30	2.067	0.868	3.828	0.000	Sig. at 0.01
	Control	30	1.233	0.817			
Synonyms and antonyms	Experimental	30	1.533	0.629	2.587	0.012	Sig. at 0.05
	Control	30	1.000	0.938			
Deduce meaning of unfamiliar words from context	Experimental	30	1.700	0.877	4.021	0.000	Sig. at 0.01
	Control	30	0.850	0.756			
Relate text to personal experience	Experimental	30	1.667	0.959	2.819	0.007	Sig. at 0.05
	Control	30	1.000	0.871			
Total test score	Experimental	30	12.183	2.503	5.604	0.000	Sig. at 0.01
	Control	30	7.867	3.396			
“t” table value at (58) d f. at (0.05) sig. level equal 2.00							
“t” table value at (58) d f. at (0.01) sig. level equal 2.66							

The results in table indicate that the ‘t’ computed value was greater in all the skills and in the total score of the post test than the (t) table value in the post test. This means that there are significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.01$) and (0.05) between the experimental group and the control one favouring the experimental group. There was also a significant difference between the means of both groups in favour of the experimental group. Whereas the mean of the control group was (7.867) in relation to the total score of the test and the mean of the experimental group was (12.183). That means that the computerized program is effective to develop the reading comprehension skills.

T.test independent sample results of differences between experimental and control group for all domains and total score of the domain

Domain	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. value	Sig. level
Attitudes towards the value and importance of reading	Experimental	30	38.900	2.695	20.083	0.000	Sig. at 0.01
	Control	30	21.567	3.884			
Attitudes towards	Experimental	30	38.167	3.302	17.539	0.000	Sig.

enjoying reading	Control	30	21.633	3.970			at 0.01
Attitudes towards learning via computer	Experimental	30	16.100	2.820	1.080	0.285	Not sig.
	Control	30	17.000	3.591			
Attitudes towards the reading teacher	Experimental	30	16.067	2.912	0.820	0.416	Not sig.
	Control	30	15.433	3.070			
Total test score	Experimental	30	66.800	6.504	0.361	0.719	Not sig.
	Control	30	66.000	10.249			

The findings in table 25 show that the ‘t’ computed value was larger in all domains and in the total score of the attitude scale than the ‘t’ table value in the post attitude scale. This means that there are significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.01$) and (0.05) between the experimental group and the control one favouring the experimental group. There was also a significant difference between the means of both groups in favour of the experimental group. Whereas the mean of the control group was (84.000) in relation to the total score of the test and the mean of the experimental group was (155.400). That means that the computerized program was able to improve the students' attitudes towards reading.

No study investigated the role of computers on the development of the high-achievers attitudes towards reading and computer, but they clarified the role of computers on the students' motivation and attitudes towards learning in general and reading in particular. This is observed in the studies of Vorhees (1993) which confirmed the role of computer technology on improving students' attitudes towards learning and motivation to read.

After analyzing the data of the test and the attitude scale statistically, it is obvious that there are significant differences in developing the reading comprehension skills and the attitudes towards reading between students in the experimental group and their counterparts in the control one in favor of the experimental group. The results of the study indicate that students in the experimental group were more aware of the reading comprehension skills. In addition, the students who studied reading via computer became more successful in answering the reading comprehension questions. This may be due to the pictures, sounds and videos used in the computer program. As well as, the technological environment in which students were involved in. Concerning the computer and its effect on developing reading, the results of the current study agree with the results of several related studies as: Baniabdelrahman (2010) in his study which investigated the effect of using a computerized package on EFL students' achievement in reading. The findings of this study revealed a significant difference in reading comprehension between the two groups, regardless of gender, in favor of the experimental group taught using the computerized package. Similarly, Siddiqi (2007) examines the effect of using computer-assisted semantic mapping on the achievement of EFL students in reading comprehension at the second year in secondary

school in Makah. The results were positive in developing the reading comprehension through computer.

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