

Report on the One-Day Workshop “Effective Reading Skills” for X std. Students and English Teachers of Government Schools at Yercaud

- Organized by** : ELT@I – Salem Chapter
- Convener** : Mr. Sudhakaran, Chapter Head, Salem
- Organizer** : Mrs. Naseera, Teacher, Dept. of English, Govt. High School,
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- Resource Person** : Dr. D. Praveen Sam, Dept. of English,
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Background

Reading is one of the major skills that help learner communicate better. More importantly, recent studies show that lack of reading results in a less active brain. Therefore, at the school level, it is high time to emphasize on reading and reading skills development. It is believed that children begin the process of learning to read long before stepping into a school as they come across many situations and vocabulary used to handle them, and these experiences help them acquire vocabulary and background knowledge. But the moment they enter school, they lose those rich resources they use to come across. Subsequently, the atmosphere that prevails over in Govt. schools doesn't let students focus on improving or applying their reading skills. Most of the time, teachers read textbooks for students in the classroom which further worsens the situation. The end result is, on average, only less than 20% of the materials in the textbook are read by the students. Based on the survey conducted among the students in these schools, two major reasons for lack of reading could be showcased – (i) the learning system doesn't allow the students to participate in reading, and (ii) students don't know how to make reading fun and interesting.

Objectives of the workshop

The objectives (focusing students) of the workshop was:

- To introduce reading strategies to the students before, while and after reading texts.
- To motivate students to participate in an independent and intra-dependent reading.

The objectives (focusing teachers) of the workshop was:

- To assist the teacher in conducting reading sessions using the prescribed textbook.
- To train them in designing activities that suit their teaching contexts.

[The objectives were minimal considering the time and resources available.]

About the Workshop

The workshop started at 9:30 a.m. on 10th Feb 2020 at Govt. High School, Govt. High School, Vellakadai, Yercaud, Salem. 48 students from the X std. and 12 English teachers participated in the workshop.

The workshop consisted of three sessions. The **first session** was a discussion with students regarding the problems they face in terms of reading. On the question of their problems, the majority of them came out with fear as the reason that stops them from reading. After a focused discussion, the resource person identified reasons that had more clarity. They were,

- I. The texts in the book had many words that they couldn't understand, and the glossary at the end of the lesson covered only 5 to 10% of the words they had a problem with.
- II. Most of the text dealt with ideas they couldn't relate to. For example, the first lesson in their textbook is 'His First Flight'. The text starts with the name of a bird which not even one student in the session knows. Similarly, the students were made to read the following sentence from the same lesson:

“Bungee jumping is an activity that involves jumping from a tall structure while connected to a long elastic cord.”

The above sentence is a definition of bungee jumping, but not even one student could understand the definition because of the words such as *tall structure, elastic cord...*

The **second session** involved teachers and students. The resource person made the teachers teach a part of the lesson focusing on reading. In these sessions, along with the activities in the textbook, the resource person helped the teacher design activities to enhance the reading ability of the students. Teachers actively participated in the sessions, and they realized how those activities motivated the students.

The **third session** was a discussion session. In this discussion 12 teachers, the resource person and two students were involved. First, the students were asked to give detailed feedback on the sessions their teacher handled. Followed by that, the teachers shared their learning points.

The following are a few of their **learning points**:

- Enhancing the reading skills of the students make them better in their writing.
 - A teacher justified this by recalling an instance with students. Students were noting down many words and sentences in the form of graphic organizers and story webs from the textbook simultaneously while reading the lesson from the textbook. So they were practicing writing in the course of reading the text (channel conversion).
- Students get motivated when they are introduced to activities beyond the textbook.
 - The interest level of the students was more when they participated in the activities beyond their textbook.
- Using images to enhance the reading competence of the students.
 - E.g., Graphic organizers, story web, Story cakes and so on.

The session concluded with the **Vote of thanks** by Mrs. Naseera, Teacher, Dept. of English, Govt. High School, Vellakadai, Yercaud, Salem