



ROLE OF READING COMPREHENSION IN ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This study explores the reading comprehension abilities of Standard 6 students in Maharashtra State Board schools, focusing on three key areas: interest in reading, variety of reading materials, and self-esteem. Reading comprehension is vital for academic success, especially in contexts where English is a second or third language. Many students face challenges due to limited vocabulary, poor reading habits, and lack of instructional support. Using an experimental research design, data was collected from 36 students (19 girls and 17 boys) through a rating scale consisting of 15 statements across the three dimensions. The sample was selected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique. Graphs were used to analyze the data. The study aims to identify how these factors influence comprehension and to suggest ways to enhance students' reading abilities and academic performance. Altogether, the findings suggested that when students are encouraged to enjoy reading, exposed to different types of reading material, and supported in building their confidence, their reading comprehension improves meaningfully.

Key words: *Interest in reading, Variety of reading materials, Self-esteem*

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Introduction:

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts. It is a crucial skill that enables students to draw meaning from a passage, grasp its central ideas, and make logical conclusions. In the context of secondary school education, reading comprehension plays a vital role in academic success, as it influences students' performance across the various subjects.

It is essential to develop reading comprehension skills in the early years as it helps children to develop their understanding. It also enhances critical thinking, promotes independent learning, and improves communication skills. Students with strong reading comprehension skills can engage more effectively with textbooks, answer questions accurately, and develop a deeper understanding of various topics. On the other hand, weak comprehension skills can hinder academic progress, leading to difficulties in grasping complex concepts and performing well in exams.

In order to help readers with or without reading difficulties, it is very important to understand what specific problems they encounter during their reading process. Reading motivation is considered crucial for learners, both in the classroom and in extracurricular settings. It plays a key role in English language learning, as motivated students are more likely to develop strong reading comprehension skills. Therefore, fostering reading motivation is essential for learners to read and understand texts with purpose.

Need of the Study:

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill that directly impacts a student's academic success and overall cognitive development. In Maharashtra's state board schools, students often face challenges in reading comprehension due to factors such as curriculum structure, teaching methodologies, language proficiency, and exposure to diverse reading materials. Thus, reading comprehension is needed because: a) It is fundamental for understanding textbooks and other

academic materials. Weak comprehension skills can hinder students' ability to grasp concepts across subjects, leading to lower academic achievement. b) Since English is often a second or third language for many students in Maharashtra's state board schools, reading comprehension plays a key role in their overall language development and communication skills. c) Many students face difficulties in comprehension due to a restricted vocabulary, insufficient reading habits, or a lack of effective instructional support. Recognizing these obstacles can help develop more effective solutions.

Good comprehension skills enable students to analyze, interpret, and evaluate texts critically. This study can highlight gaps in these skills and suggest ways to foster deeper understanding. Thus, looking at its significance, the researcher focused the study on reading comprehension.

Statement of Problem:

“A study of reading comprehension of secondary school students studying in state board of Maharashtra.”

Aim of the Study:

The aim of this study is to analyze and evaluate the reading comprehension abilities of secondary school students studying in Maharashtra's state board schools, with a specific focus on the influence of reading interest, exposure to a variety of reading materials, and self-esteem.

Operational Definitions:

- **Reading Comprehension:** The ability to understand and analyse words, phrases and sentences leading to overall language development.
- **Interest:** Interest refers to a person's willingness or curiosity to want to learn or know about a particular topic.
- **Variety of reading material:** This includes various types of reading material like magazines, newspapers, fiction, non-fiction, digital books etc.

- **Self- Esteem:** Self- esteem means a positive perception of oneself including the confidence, beliefs and satisfaction you have in yourself.

Objectives of the Study:

- To evaluate the reading comprehension levels of secondary school students in Maharashtra's state board schools.
- To evaluate the relationship between self-esteem and reading comprehension among secondary school students.
- To analyze the influence of reading interest on students' ability to comprehend texts effectively.

Literature Review:

Shenoy, S., Wagner, R. K., & Rao, N. M. (2020) studied 'Factors that influence reading acquisition in L2 English for students in Bangalore, India.' This study sheds light on key challenges and differences in reading instruction across Bangalore's private schools. The findings showed a clear link between school type and reading performance. Pinninti, L. R. (2016) studied 'Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies: An Indian context.' The findings showed that some strategies were used more frequently than others, including: Previewing the text before reading. Underlining unfamiliar words to improve understanding. Re-reading difficult sentences for clarity, and Recalling summaries after reading to reinforce comprehension. Students used these strategies for different reasons, such as predicting the main idea, overcoming comprehension difficulties, memorizing important information, and building their English vocabulary. Malhi, P., Bharti, B., & Sidhu, M. (2017) studied 'Reading achievement of Indian children: role of home literacy environment.' The findings revealed that many children had limited access to literacy resources at home. A large number of families did not own a library card (90%), did not subscribe to magazines (77%), had never read to their child (65%), and lacked children's books at home

(55%). Amer, A. A. (1997) studied ‘The effect of the teacher’s reading aloud on the reading comprehension of EFL Students.’ These findings suggest that hearing a story read aloud by a teacher can greatly enhance EFL learners’ reading comprehension, making it a valuable teaching strategy in early language learning. Lipka, O., & Siegel, L. S. (2012) studied ‘The development of reading comprehension skills in children learning English as a second language.’ The results showed that students in the Good Comprehenders group outperformed those in the Poor Comprehenders group across all cognitive measures. This highlights that reading comprehension relies on multiple factors, including phonological awareness, memory skills, and language processing abilities.

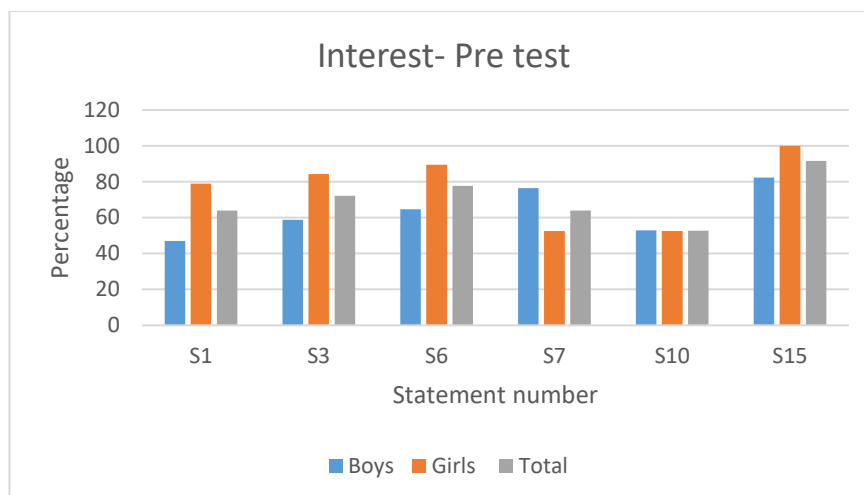
Research Methodology:

The study adopted single group pre-test post-test experimental research design. To find out about the challenges students faced during reading, the researcher prepared a Pre-test for students of standard 6. It was observed that students were fluent in reading the material but found it challenging to understand what that material meant. They weren’t able to comprehend what they were reading. It was also noted that students chose to read only texts that had been taught in class and hence were fluent in their reading. While most students were eager to read aloud, they were still soft and struggled with certain words. Some

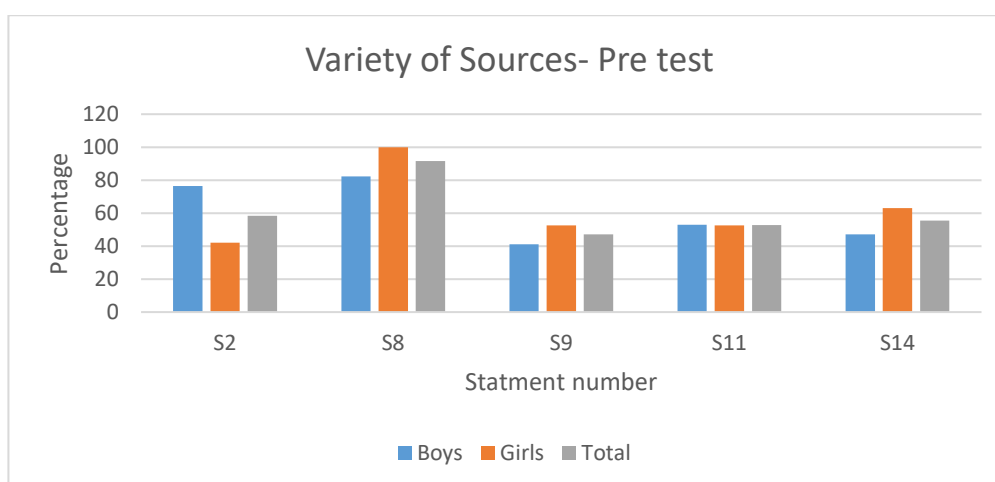
did not even want to try reading, even softly only for the researcher. This indicated that such students were probably shy or under confident about reading aloud. After analysing the student’s difficulties, the researcher prepared an intervention programme to help them. The intervention programme included training the students with comprehending what they were reading. Students were made to break down sentences into parts and read them one by one. They were asked meanings of words and when they were unable to the answer, they were explained the meaning of the sentence and were asked to again explain it to the researcher. After administering the intervention programme, the researcher carried out a Post-test in which the same test was used as the Pre-test and the results were then analysed.

For the present study, the sample of 36 students of class 6 was drawn using the non-probability method of convenience type. Initially the data was collected from 50 samples. After evaluating the rating scale due to incomplete data, 14 rating scales were discarded and hence, the final sample kept for the study is 36 out of which 19 were girls and 17 were boys. The data was collected using 15 items rating scale which were further sub divided into 3 dimensions- 1) Interest, 2) Variety of reading and 3) Self-Esteem. The researcher has used Graphical representation to evaluate students under reading comprehension.

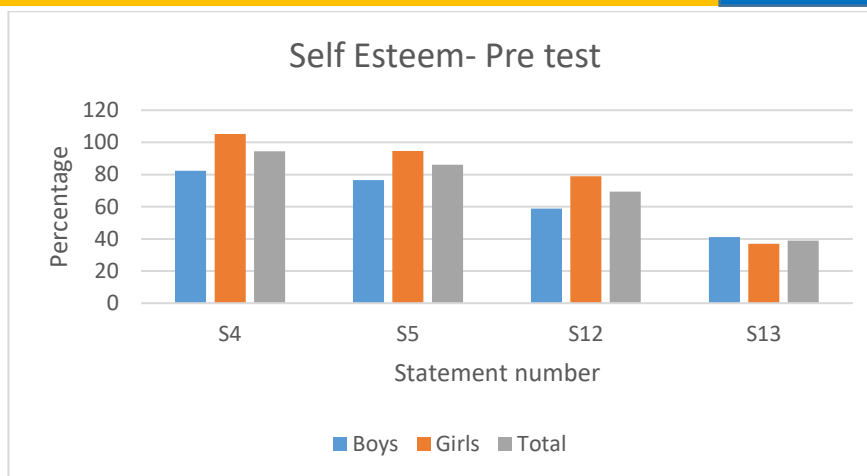
Interest		Variety of sources		Relation between reading and self-esteem	
1	I read books outside of school regularly.	2	I read different types of written pieces like newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and posters.	4	I feel reading will help improve my knowledge and skills in the future.
3	I like reading in my leisure time	8	I enjoy reading books with pictures	5	I enjoy participating in class discussions about what I read.
6	I stop reading immediately if a book does not interest me.	9	I enjoy reading books without pictures	12	I worry about being judged if I misspell words while reading.
7	While reading, I underline key points or take notes	11	I have a good collection of books at home.	13	I compare my reading skills to my classmates and feel bad if they read better than me.
10	I feel bored and distracted when reading long passages.	14	I prefer reading digital books (e-books) because of the cost factor		
15	Reading can be more enjoyable if I read with friends or in groups				

Data Analysis:**Pre-Test Analysis**

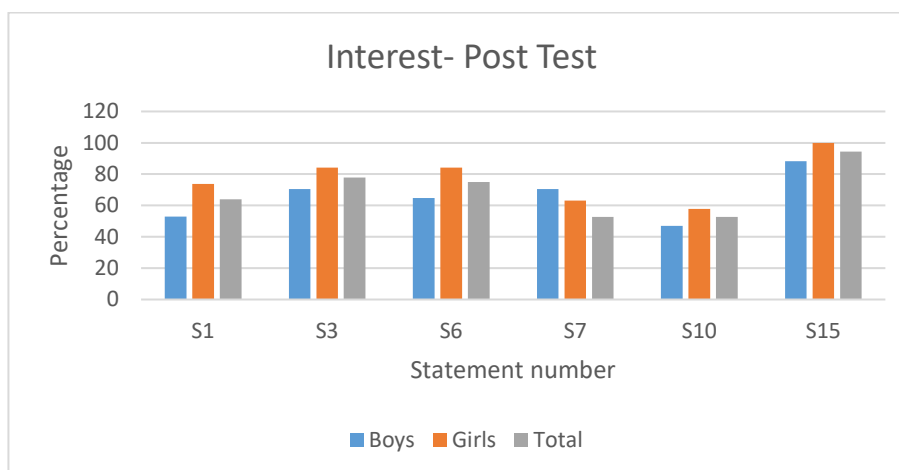
Inference: The girls reflected a strong inclination toward reading. While both genders were positively inclined, girls showed a greater enthusiasm toward reading in leisure time. Both boys and girls underlined key points and made notes, making it an encouraging area to focus on in reading programs. Boys need additional support to address their struggle, boredom and distraction when reading long passages. Reading a book that does not interest one is a shared challenge for both boys and girls. It showed that this may be a general concern that affects both genders equally and may require attention in classroom strategies. The strategy of reading along with the friends or in a group resonated positively with students. Thus, we can say that this is the most engaging area, and teachers can capitalize on this strength to build reading enthusiasm.



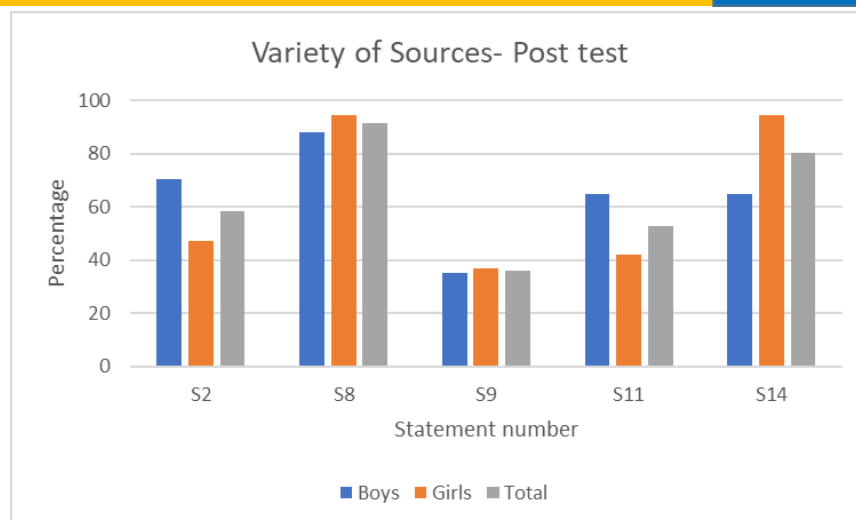
Inference: Boys were more inclined to try out varied reading sources, whereas girls might benefit from greater exposure or motivation to broaden their reading choices. Strong interest and enthusiasm were found among both boys and girls for reading books with pictures. Students were highly receptive to engaging with different kinds of reading materials. Girls appeared to be more receptive to reading books without pictures. Overall, the average indicated that students were not entirely familiar with or at ease with this type of reading experience. Both boys and girls showed similar, moderate levels of agreement, indicating a balanced interest in exploring various reading materials. Girls again showed that most of them have a good collection of books at home as compared to boys.

**Inference:**

Girls were found to be more open to reading which can have a positive effect on their self-esteem. It also showed that while boys were confident, girls felt even more secure about themselves in the area of sharing the content acquired through reading. Most students felt confident and did not experience the negative feelings of sadness on comparing their reading skills. Girls showed slightly higher disagreement, indicating a slightly stronger sense of self-esteem compared to boys. It also indicated that feelings of low self-worth or doubt were not commonly experienced by either group, with the overall responses reflecting a positive self-image.

Post-Test Analysis:**Inference:**

In the post-test, boys showed a slight improvement in their inclination towards reading, while girls continued to show strong agreement. The boys' responses showed a noticeable improvement w.r.t. reading in the leisure time, and the girls consistently demonstrated high levels of agreement. After the intervention, both boys and girls reflected higher levels in highlighting the main points and making the notes. Boys, in particular, showed a slight increase in their disagreement, suggesting that they had become even more positive towards reading, with girls also holding a strong positive outlook. Students' positive attitude toward reading remained steady and unaffected by negative feelings. Both boys and girls showed a huge jump in agreement, with girls reaching 100%. This indicates that students felt very connected to and excited about reading now, with almost unanimous enthusiasm.



Inference:

Post-test scores revealed that, boys developed a stronger interest in exploring a variety of reading sources, while girls were slightly less engaged in this aspect compared to boys. Both boys and girls displayed a very high level of agreement, with girls slightly outperforming boys. This suggested that the majority of students developed a significant interest in reading books with pictures. The students still found to lack interest in reading the books without pictures. The boys became more receptive to using digital books, though girls were a little less responsive. Both boys and girls showed very high levels of agreement, with girls nearly reaching 100%. This suggested that students, especially girls, have a good collection of books at home.



Inference:

The majority of students, particularly girls, developed a strong sense of self-confidence as they believed that reading will help improve their knowledge. After treatment, girls were found to be more participative in class discussions while boys showed some improvement but to a lesser extent. Girls were found to be more successful in rejecting negative thoughts about themselves, showing better self-esteem, while boys showed some improvement but still had room for growth. Boys particularly, continued to struggle with negative self-perceptions of being judged by others for their mistakes in reading, highlighting an area that needs more focus.

Findings of the Study:

The findings closely reflect the objectives of the study and gives insight into how students' reading habits and attitudes evolved.

The first objective—to understand the reading comprehension levels of secondary school students in Maharashtra's state board schools—is clearly supported by the data. After the intervention, students, especially boys, showed a noticeable improvement in their agreement with positive statements and rejection of negative ones. Girls maintained consistently strong responses, showing they already had a high level of interest and understanding, while boys made progress, suggesting a positive shift in their reading comprehension.

The second objective was to see how self-esteem connects with reading comprehension. The results showed that students who felt reading would improve their knowledge (like in Statement 4) or felt confident speaking in class (Statement 5) tended to perform better in reading tasks. Likewise, when students strongly disagreed with negative thoughts about themselves (Statements 12 and 13), it reflected a healthier self-image—something that clearly helped them engage better with reading.

Finally, the third objective was to explore how interest in reading affects understanding. Students who showed a keen interest in reading—especially those excited about books with pictures (Statement 8) or who enjoyed underlining and making notes (Statement 6)—also tended to understand texts better. Their growing enthusiasm, particularly seen in Statement 15, suggested that when students enjoy reading, their comprehension naturally improves.

To strengthen reading comprehension among students, educators can allot reading as a holiday homework where students have to read aloud in front of parents and write a short paragraph about their understanding of what they have read. In the class, to boost interest

they can use interactive methods like storytelling. To increase exposure to variety of sources, educators can ask students to bring newspaper or magazine articles on a particular topic or theme and have them read it aloud in class. To build self-esteem, teachers can offer positive feedback, set achievable goals, and create a supportive environment where students feel confident and motivated to read. Teachers can design lessons which incorporate diverse reading materials like fiction, non-fiction, poetry, newspapers, digital content, etc. which helps to stimulate students critical thinking. Exposure to rich vocabulary, sentence structures, and diverse writing styles can enhance students' speaking, writing, and comprehension skills. Teachers must encourage group discussions and presentations based on reading materials to help students develop confidence in expressing their ideas.

Conclusion :

The study which the researchers conducted on reading comprehension in secondary school students of State board was an eye-opening study for the researchers as it revealed certain findings. Hence the research would like to suggest the stakeholders of education to take part as reading comprehension enables students to grasp key ideas, think critically, and communicate effectively. In the context of Maharashtra's State Board schools, reading comprehension is particularly important as many students face challenges due to English being a second or third language, limited vocabulary, lack of diverse reading materials, and insufficient instructional support. Developing these skills early will help children become independent learners and enhance their overall understanding.

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