

## Impact of Socio Economic Status on The English Reading Comprehension of The First Year Pre-university Students in Mangalore Taluk

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### **Abstract:**

*The present study aims to find out how the socio economic background and the reading habits of the undergraduate students influence the reading comprehension ability. Random sampling method is used to select 842 IPUC students from the colleges of Mangalore Taluk. Data is collected using Descriptive survey method. It is observed that very few students have good socio economic background and hail from well- educated families. Hence they have first-rate access to reading materials and are able to improve their reading habits due to the motivation by the parents. They possess utmost capacity to comprehend the given text. But majority of the students with poor background are not exposed to reading resources and are not able to comprehend the given passages in English. Therefore there is an urgent need for both the teachers and the parents to create interest among the students in reading and guide them regarding how and what to read.*

**Key words:** Socio economic background, reading habits, comprehension ability, teachers and parent.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most useful skills of learning a foreign language. It opens the unbounded field of knowledge and enables us to know new facts and relationships. Good reading habits promote self education and help in moulding the personality. It is commonly observed that those who read more excel in all the areas of academic and social life. Reading helps us to understand the thoughts and feelings of various writers. It improves our way of expression and creativity.

Reading Aloud is useful at elementary level to develop the capacity to pronounce the words correctly and the uniformity of speed. At the higher level Silent Reading is encouraged to develop comprehension and grasping power of the students. In Intensive Reading pupils arrive at a detailed and thorough understanding of the text by mastering the structure and vocabulary. The Extensive Reading habit helps to get the information, meaning and general theme of the material rapidly. Here the readers make use of the background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with the text and other strategies to understand the written texts.

Most of the scholars in India feel that maximum knowledge can be acquired only through English Language. It brings national unity and promotes international trade. It opens employment opportunities, social mobility and career advancement. Over 70% informants regard English as an Indian language and consider it to be a medium suitable for higher education, scientific and technological development. (Agnihotri & Khanna, 1997) explored that as compared to old people, young students are more positively inclined towards English and have stronger instrumental motivation to learn English. They also use English in different spheres of education more strongly. This clearly shows that the

perception of the importance of English has increased in the modern era. This is borne out by the mushroom growth of English Medium Public Schools, English language teaching institutes and street corner English conversation classes.

I, being a teacher in English for the past 22 years, have personally observed that, those who use English as the medium of instruction at all the levels of education hail from high income group and upper strata of society. They have high levels of parental encouragement and low levels of classroom anxiety. But those with low socio economic status lack parental support to speak and read English. They are forced to opt for vernacular medium. So they do not develop any interest in learning English language. But in view of pursuing professional or technical education, parents persuade them to change their medium of instruction to English either at the high school level or at the college level. So their proficiency is inadequate to acquire reading habits in English.

In the present scenario, enhancing the quality of education at all levels has become a dire necessity to keep in pace with the changing world. Hence the students at all the levels need to be motivated especially by the parents and the teachers to acquire interest in extensive reading especially in English language (Day & Bamfore, 1998), so that they will be able to learn a foreign language and have an access for knowledge available in this language.

The habit of reading begins at primary school level. It has not flourished because the nourishment comes only from a text at primary schools. Therefore the reading in schools should focus on developing individuals with an appetite for knowledge, new experience and innovative ideas that stretch the young minds and their imagination. In the college level the teacher is a key factor in encouraging reading habits

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among the adolescents. A teacher who is not conversant with the recent publications in her own area of specialization is hardly likely to encourage them to read current publications. A teacher who knows little or nothing beyond the confines of her own subject area cannot guide or support the adolescent who wants to read widely in other fields. Teachers and librarians, at the elementary, secondary and college level, need to work together to see to it that the right book is chosen by the students according to their area of interest. (Grambs, 1959) proposed this idea in the summary of the conference on Lifetime Reading Habits

A study by (Poornima, 1992) on the reading habits of KSOU students pursuing their graduate and postgraduate degree courses (distance mode) was conducted mainly to know the frequency and purpose of using KSOU library, role of library in promoting reading habits, kind of books they read, language preferences, content, gender and occupational status. Results revealed that distance learners of KSOU differ in their reading habits in terms of type, content of books and number of hours they read. They also differ in their purposes and frequency of visiting KSOU library. Large majority visited the library to borrow books, 70.8% and 68% frequently visited to read general knowledge books and newspapers respectively, and 59.8% visited most frequently for reference work. More distance education learners visited KSOU library to use the textbooks/reference books than that of journals and other research resources. Less than 1/3rd of them used internet resources. Both the male and female distance education learners used variety of reading materials. Female respondents dominated in internet use whereas in reading general books and biographies male respondents dominated. This proved that these students had moderate reading habits.

Many students entering college do not make satisfactory progress because they have not learned to read advantageously and comprehensively. A study by (Mabelle, F., Blake, B., Walter, 1935) was conducted on the students who had percentile ratings of 20 or below in the verbal section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test to find the speed of reading. Previous experience had shown that the verbal section of this test offered a fair prediction of ability to complete subject assignments in college. From an entering class of 477 students, there were 104 who rated 20 or below. The results showed that in the rate of reading these students ranked on the average, which is equivalent to the ninth month of the eighth grade according to the norms. It is obvious that this is a slow speed for college level. This study proved that the reading experience in the primary grades is probably as crucial as any other in the development of adult readers.

Referring to the National Reading Panel's report (Dole, 2002) has listed a number of comprehension strategies that have been found to be useful to readers and successfully taught. These strategies include procedures such as identifying existing prior knowledge, predicting, visualizing, summarizing, generating questions, monitoring comprehension, and repairing comprehension breakdowns. The value of these different strategies is that they can be useful for developing instructional procedures to teach students. With instruction and practice, students can learn to

use the strategies on their own when they read. The use of these strategies will help readers become independent of the teacher.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find the relationship between the socio economic status and the reading comprehension among the First Year Pre- University students of Mangalore Taluk.

## III. HYPOTHESIS

- There is a significant difference in the socio economic status and the reading comprehension among the First Year Pre- University students of Mangalore Taluk.

## IV. VARIABLES

The socio economic status and medium of instruction are treated as the independent variable. Reading comprehension is treated as the dependent variable.

## V. METHODOLOGY

### *Sample:*

A sample size of 842 students from a total of 17,244 students studying in the First year Pre-University course of Mangalore Taluk is selected by random sampling technique.

### *Tools used in the Study:*

A questionnaire to find out the socio economic status of the chosen sample prepared by the investigator and a standardized tool on Reading Comprehension to measure the level of Reading Comprehension of the Pre- University students constructed and validated by Dr C.C.Ahuja and Pramila Ahuja was used by the investigator for this purpose.

### *Procedure of the study:*

The questionnaire to assess the socio economic status of the students was distributed to 842 students. Among them 57.8 % were males and 42.2% were females. Their personal information questionnaire included area of residence, parental education, parent's occupation family income per month, number of siblings, medium of instruction from first to seventh standard and from eighth to tenth standard as well as the total number of years studied in Vernacular and English medium.

After collecting the information based on the above tool, a standardized tool on 'Reading Comprehension to measure the level of Reading Comprehension of the Pre- University students prepared by C.C.Ahuja and Pramila Ahuja' was administered. Four Silent Reading Comprehension Passages consisting of a total number of 26 questions were given to the students. After reading each passage within a given time limit, the respondents were asked to answer the Multiple Choice Questions set on it. Four options were given after each question. After collecting these test papers the investigator asked the students to read the fifth passage for 10 minutes and return it, after which they had to fill up 52 blanks with articles, prepositions, nouns, pronouns, verbs, auxiliaries and

conjunctions related to the passage. Then the filled questionnaire and test sheets were collected and processed for data analysis.

**Data analysis and interpretation:**

The findings of the data analysis are shown in the tables below.

**Table 1:** Categorization of sample students in terms of residential area

Rural		Urban		Total	
447	53.1%	395	46.9%	842	100.0%

Out of the 842 students 53.1% of them reside in rural area of the taluk and 46.9% of them reside in urban area. The socio-economic status of the sample based on Parent’s education, their occupation and their monthly income is as follows.

**Table 2:** Categorization of sample students in terms Parental Education

Education	Father		Mother	
	Below PUC	493	58.6%	553
PUC	178	21.1%	104	12.4%
Degree\Diploma	127	15.1%	146	17.3%
P.G	44	5.2%	39	4.6%

Table 2 clearly indicates that very few parents are well qualified and most of the parents have least education that is below PUC level.

**Table 3:** Categorization of Sample students in terms of Parent’s Occupation

Category	Father		Mother	
	Office	84	10.0%	44
Business	243	28.9%	11	1.3%
Professional	95	11.3%	55	6.5%
Any other	420	49.9%	732	86.9%
Total	842	100.0%	842	100.0%

Table 3 shows that 86.9% of the mothers of the respondents are housewives and 5.2% mothers work in offices. 28.9% of the fathers are businessmen and 11.3% are professionals.

**Table 4:** Categorization of sample students in terms of Family income per month (Rupees)

Category	Respondents	Percentage
Below 10,000	422	50.1%
10,000-20,000	168	20.0%
20,000-30,000	91	10.8%
30,000-40,000	68	8.1%
40,000-50,000	54	6.4%
Above 50,000	39	4.6%
Total	842	100.0%

As indicated in table 4 very few parents (4.6%) have monthly income of above 50,000 and half of the parents have income below 10,000 per month.

**Table 5:** Categorization of sample students in terms of Number of Brothers and sisters

Category	Respondents	Percentage
Only child	56	6.7%
Elder siblings	288	34.2%
Younger siblings	239	28.4%
Both	259	30.8%
Total	842	100.0%

Only 56 students do not have any influence of the siblings whereas all the others have.

**Table 6:** Medium of instruction from first standard to tenth standard

Category	Respondents	Percentage
Kannada	444	52.7%
English	398	47.3%
Total	842	100.0%

2.7% of the students had their primary and high school education from Kannada medium schools and 47.3% of them studied in English medium schools.

**Table 7:** Mean score, standard deviation, percentage mean score, ‘t’ value, ‘df’ value and ‘p’ value

Components		n	Min. score	Max. score	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Mean (%)	t value	df	p value
residence	Rural	447	17	77	50	15	47	64.10256	12.634	840	.000
	Urban	395	19	78	62	12	65	79.48718	t		HS
	Total	842	17	78	55	15	58	70.51282			
Medium of instruction	Kan	444	17	77	48	15	45	61.53846	17.991	840	.000
	English	398	36	78	64	9	66	82.05128	t		HS
	Total	842	17	78	55	15	58	70.51282			
Fathers education	Less than PUC	493	17	78	52	15	54	66.66667	24.756	3 and 838	0.000
	PUC	178	22	78	59	14	64	75.64103			HS
	Degree	127	25	78	62	12	67	79.48718			
	PG	44	39	70	62	8	65	79.48718			
	Total	842	17	78	55	15	58	70.51282			
Mothers education	Less than PUC	553	17	77	51	15	53	65.38462	61.291	3 and 838	0.000
	PUC	104	32	78	64	11	70	82.05128			HS
	Degree	146	25	78	64	10	68	82.05128			
	PG	39	39	73	63	8	65	80.76923			
	Total	842	17	78	55	15	58	70.51282			

Fathers Occupation	Office	84	22	78	65	9	67	83.33333	75.151	3 and 838	0.000
	Business	243	30	77	59	13	62	75.64103			HS
	Professional	95	32	77	66	8	68	84.61538			
	Other	420	17	78	49	15	47	62.82051			
	Total	842	17	78	55	15	58	70.51282			
Mothers occupation	Office	44	25	78	64	13	68	82.05128	9.962	3 and 838	0.000
	Business	11	53	73	66	5	67	84.61538			HS
	Professional	55	33	73	60	14	65	76.92308			
	Other	732	17	78	54	15	57	69.23077			
	Total	842	17	78	55	15	58	70.51282			
Family income	Below 10000	422	17	78	48	14	46	61.53846	and 836	52.818	0.000
	10000 - 20000	168	33	78	61	11	63	78.20513			HS
	20000 - 30000	91	29	78	62	14	67	79.48718			
	30000 - 40000	68	25	75	65	11	69	83.33333			
	40000 - 50000	54	32	75	67	9	69	85.89744			
	Above 50000	39	41	69	61	7	63	78.20513			
	Total	842	17	78	55	15	58	70.51282			
siblings	No siblings	56	29	77	59	14	64	75.64103	13.228	3 and 838	0.000
	Elder	288	25	78	57	14	61	73.07692			HS
	Younger	239	19	77	57	14	62	73.07692			
	Both	259	17	75	51	15	48	65.38462			
	Total	842	17	78	55	15	58	70.51282			

The mean difference is significant at 0.05 levels. The ‘df’ value and ‘t’ value too is highly significant.

**Table 7:** Frequency of students reading comprehension based on the result

	Frequency	Percent	χ <sup>2</sup> & p value
Poor	153	18.17%	χ <sup>2</sup> value=178.625 p=0.000 H.S.
Moderate	334	39.66%	
Good	113	13.42%	
Very Good	242	28.75%	
Total	842	100.0	

Table 7 shows that 153 students with 0-20 scores had the poor level of reading comprehension. 334 students with scores in between 21-40 had exhibited moderate level of comprehension. Those who scored between 41-60 had good level and 242 students had very good level of reading comprehension with 61-80 scores.

The chi square test shows that there is a significant association between the socio economic status and reading comprehension as  $P = 0.000 < 0.01$ . Further the extent of relationship between the socio economic status and reading comprehension is 0.418. So the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the socio economic status and level of reading comprehension in English among the first year Pre –University students of Mangalore Taluk is accepted and the objective is proved.

## VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is observed that the 28.75% students who have scored the highest marks in the range of 61-80 and the 13.42% students who have scored 41-60 marks are among those who reside in urban areas. Their parents are either graduates or post graduates, occupying good position in the society. Around 40% students who have scored in the range 21-40 are those whose parents have studies at least upto PUC level and most of them are into business field. Their children have moderate ability to comprehend the given passage. Around 153 students who have scored 0-20 belong to rural areas, with parents having qualification less than PUC and annual income below 10,000. This shows that students with excellent socio economic conditions are encouraged to read by the parents and the siblings. They also can afford to buy books and read e-books online. The conducive environment at home helps them to develop their reading and comprehension skills.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Reading is an art, the art of living with the books. Reading not only leads to writing, but also enriches the mind of a reader and sharpens his intellect. The findings of this study suggest that very few respondents enjoy reading and read book for the purpose of gaining knowledge. It is observed that students kill time by continuously using mobile phones to forward the videos and watch movies. They also waste time gossiping in the colleges.

Reading abilities widely vary among children, adults and old people. Giving appropriate training at the school level can easily develop reading abilities among the children. Language teachers play a major role in improving reading skills at the college level. Instead of sticking on to one particular method of teaching, they should try to adopt innovative methods, wherein they ask the students to read the headlines and explain the news in detail, motivate the students to narrate short stories, inspire them to actively participate in different group activities related to language learning etc. The language should not be imposed upon the students; instead language learning should be made an enjoyable task. Teachers, who teach other subjects, can also create interest and motivate students to be competent readers. This can be done by encouraging the students to read different newspapers, magazines, journals related to their subjects. They can instil the values and need of reading in the minds of the pupils. Along with other clubs Reading Clubs should be formed in schools and colleges where students participate in group discussions on what they have recently read and present seminars. Then there is a possibility that students would continue reading for the rest of their life, with confidence.

At home parents have a major role in inculcating reading habits of their children. They could help them to select interesting books from the library and encourage them to read at home. They should buy books for the children and encourage them to have a library at home. Thus apt motivation, proper guidance and reader friendly atmosphere both at college and home can help the present generation to improve the comprehension ability in English language.

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