

#### 4. Effectiveness of English Reading Programs in Local Schools

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##### **Abstract**

This research paper explores the effectiveness of English reading programs in the local schools with the help of a field-based study. The investigation involves the direct involvement between teachers, students and administration, combining qualitative and quantitative data collecting methods, by conducting sessions on how effective the English reading programs are taking place in the local schools and the teaching techniques adapted by the schools. This research work also discusses about the English teaching methods adopted by schools, its effect and suggests more constructive ideas and strategies. The research paper also emphasises the importance of English in contemporary times, along with the future. The ultimate agenda is to acknowledge and create lasting change- boosting English literacy, fostering love for reading, promoting learning habits and enhancing students' prospects.

**Keywords:** Language acquisition, Effectiveness of reading programs, Literacy development, English proficiency, Teacher perspectives

##### **Introduction**

In the 21st century, English has emerged as a global language, playing a vital role in communication, education, professional development, career advancement, and personality development. It serves as a bridge across cultures and nations, enabling individuals to acquire knowledge with increased possibilities while removing the lingual barrier (Crystal, 2003). English is widely used as the most common medium of instruction in higher education and the primary language of global literature, aiming at boosting students academically (Graddol, 2006). The digital revolution in the past decades has categorised English as a dominant language of the internet globally. From online education courses and research articles to seeking employment on online platforms, English has played a significant role (Crystal, 2012). For many students in local schools, particularly non-English-speaking schools, English reading programs and acquiring strong English reading skills are both a challenge and a necessity (August & Shanahan, 2006).

To fulfil this need, many local schools aim to address various English reading programs to improve literacy, comprehension, and fluency in the language (Scarborough, 2001). Therefore, this study helps us to understand and assess how effectively English reading programs are undertaken at local levels and how efficient they are in contributing to developing students' literacy, confidence, and readiness for the future.

What is the Effectiveness of English Reading Programs?

In recent years, many schools, especially local ones, have implemented English reading programs that aim to enhance students' ability to read and speak fluently in English. The ability to achieve proficiency in the English language acts as a strong base and part of a student's skill set, enabling access to future opportunities and academic success (Snow, 2002). The effectiveness of these programs refers to how

well they improve various aspects of reading, such as comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and overall engagement with the language (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

It also recommends improvements for the design and delivery of English reading programs in local schools. Based on the findings regarding student performance, teaching strategies, resource use, and challenges, the study will propose evidence-based recommendations for strengthening reading initiatives. These recommendations may include the integration of technology, professional development workshops for teachers, the use of culturally relevant reading materials, and strategies to encourage independent reading habits among students. The goal is to ensure that the programs are not only effective in enhancing reading proficiency but also sustainable and adaptable to the evolving educational needs of local schools.

In conclusion, these objectives collectively aim to provide a holistic evaluation of English reading programs in primary and secondary schools. By assessing student outcomes, analysing teaching methods, identifying barriers, comparing effectiveness across levels, and suggesting improvements, the study will contribute valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers. Ultimately, the findings will serve as a foundation for enhancing the quality of English education, equipping learners with strong reading skills that will support their academic and personal growth.

Overall, the study extends beyond measuring student outcomes to include the structural, instructional, and environmental factors that influence English reading programs. By incorporating both student and teacher perspectives, the study provides a holistic evaluation that can inform educational policies, improve classroom practices, and ultimately enhance the quality of English language learning in local schools.

### **Review of Literature**

Research on the effectiveness of English reading programs highlights a variety of approaches that have been implemented in schools, ranging from phonics-based instruction to vocabulary development, fluency practice, comprehension strategy training, and integrated literacy models. Studies consistently show that systematic phonics instruction is particularly effective in helping younger learners build decoding and word recognition skills, which serve as the foundation for later comprehension (Ehri, 2005; Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018). Comprehension-focused strategies, such as predicting, questioning, and summarising, have also been found to improve understanding of texts, especially when explicitly taught in upper primary and secondary classrooms (Pressley, 2006). Fluency-based programs, including repeated oral reading with teacher feedback, have been shown to enhance reading accuracy, speed, and comprehension (Rasinski, 2012).

The effectiveness of English reading programs can be explained through several well-established reading and learning theories. At the core lies the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), which proposes that reading comprehension is the product of decoding and language comprehension. This is further elaborated by Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001), which emphasises that skilled reading develops as multiple strands—including phonological awareness, word recognition, vocabulary,

background knowledge, and verbal reasoning—intertwine to create fluent comprehension. Fluency theory also supports these frameworks, suggesting that repeated practice and feedback lead to automaticity in word recognition, allowing students to focus on meaning-making (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). In addition, motivation and engagement theory (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) highlights the importance of student interest, choice, and authentic reading experiences in sustaining long-term literacy growth.

From a broader learning perspective, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory explains how scaffolding, peer collaboration, and teacher guidance allow learners to move beyond their current abilities within the zone of proximal development. Finally, implementation science (Fixsen et al., 2005) suggests that program success depends not only on instructional design but also on teacher training, fidelity of delivery, and school leadership support.

In conclusion, this research paper focuses on various aspects that remain uncovered even after conducting vast studies on the effectiveness of English Reading Programs in local schools. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing a holistic perspective that moves beyond test scores and standardised assessments, shedding light on the ways in which English reading programs influence learners and educators at the local level. At its core, this research takes an in-depth look at English reading practices as they occur within schools at the local level, with a particular focus on students across different age groups, capturing a wide spectrum of experiences.

### **Methodology**

In this study, the primary objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of English reading programs in local schools across both primary and secondary levels. To achieve this, a carefully structured research methodology is adopted that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative component primarily focuses on standardised reading assessments and structured surveys to measure students' reading abilities and perceptions. The qualitative component, on the other hand, emphasises interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations to capture rich, descriptive data on the processes and challenges within the reading programs.

The chosen methodology—anchored in a mixed-methods approach—ensures that the study captures both measurable outcomes and contextual realities surrounding English reading programs in local schools. By integrating quantitative assessments with qualitative insights, the research will provide a balanced and in-depth evaluation of program effectiveness, offering evidence-based recommendations for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers.

### **Data Analysis**

This research presents, analyses, and interprets the survey data collected from students and teachers in a local school. The survey was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of English reading programs, focusing on four essential components of reading development: reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency, and overall student engagement. In addition, teachers were asked to provide thoughts,

opinions, and insights into the instructional methods they employ, the resources available to them, and the challenges they encounter while implementing these programs.

Responses were gathered from 45 primary students, 56 secondary students, and 5 English teachers. The data has been carefully organised in tables and charts for clarity, accompanied by detailed narrative explanations.

Understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents is crucial for contextualising the results of the study. Variables such as gender, class level, and years of teaching experience help in identifying patterns that may influence responses and in interpreting the findings with greater accuracy.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Category**

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender (Male)	42	44.2%
Gender (Female)	53	55.7%
Primary Students	45	47.3%
Secondary Students	50	52.6%
Teachers	5	-

A relatively balanced demographic distribution across categories strengthens the validity of the findings, as it ensures that conclusions are drawn from a representative sample rather than being skewed toward a single group and facilitates the research to attain data from vast sources.

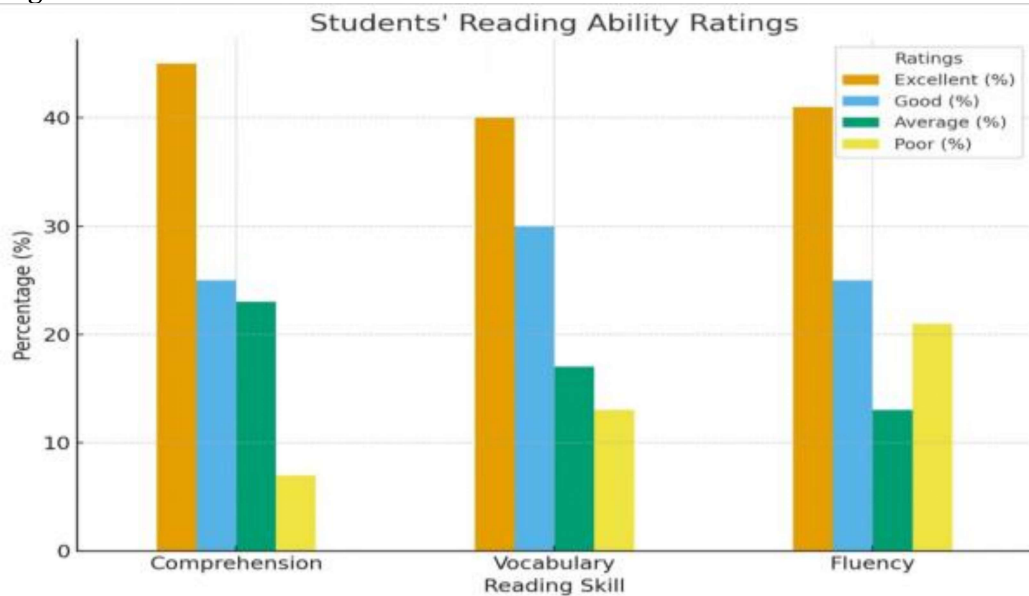
**Objective 1: To Assess the Reading Abilities of Students:**

Students self-reported their reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and fluency, while teachers provided performance-based assessments. Students were also asked about their confidence towards their reading skills and ability to speak fluently, and their level of comfort with the language.

**Table 2: Students' Reading Ability Ratings**

Reading Skill	Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Average (%)	Poor(%)
Comprehension	45	25	23	7
Vocabulary	40	30	17	13
Fluency	41	25	13	21

**Figure 1:**



These findings imply that while the reading programs are effective in strengthening comprehension and vocabulary, there is a strong need to prioritise systematic fluency-building practices such as repeated readings, oral practice, and modelling. Strengthening fluency will not only improve oral reading but also support deeper comprehension, ensuring more balanced growth in all aspects of reading.

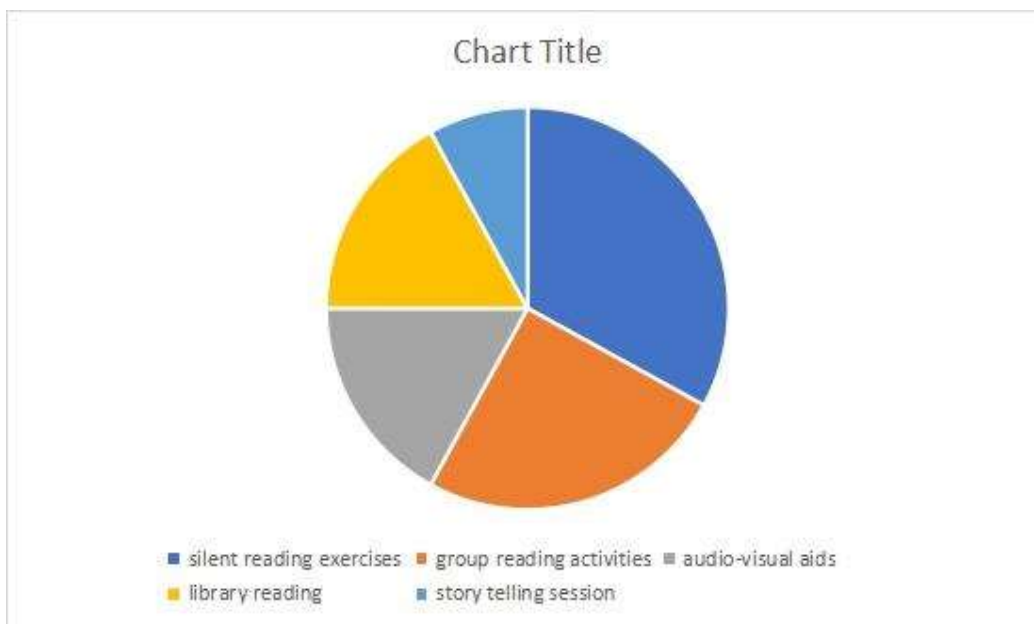
**Objective 2: To Examine the Teaching Strategies and Resources Used by Teachers**

Teachers were asked about the instructional methods they employ and the resources they have access to. Amongst 5 teachers, everyone was asked for their preferences while teaching amongst the following provided options. This data showed which method is widely adopted by teachers and is undertaken during the teaching-learning process.

**Table 3: Strategies Used by Teachers in English Reading Programs**

Strategy Used Teachers' Reporting	Percentage
Group Reading Activities 3/5	25%
Audio-Visual Aids 2/5	17%
Storytelling Sessions 1/5	8%
Silent Reading Exercises 4/5	33%
Library/Reading Corner Use 2/5	17%

**Figure 2:**



On being asked by the students about the initiatives taken by the school to boost their confidence and provide them opportunities to showcase their abilities, they informed, “The school has taken many initiatives such as organising English Elocution, English Essay Writing Competitions and Debate competitions”.

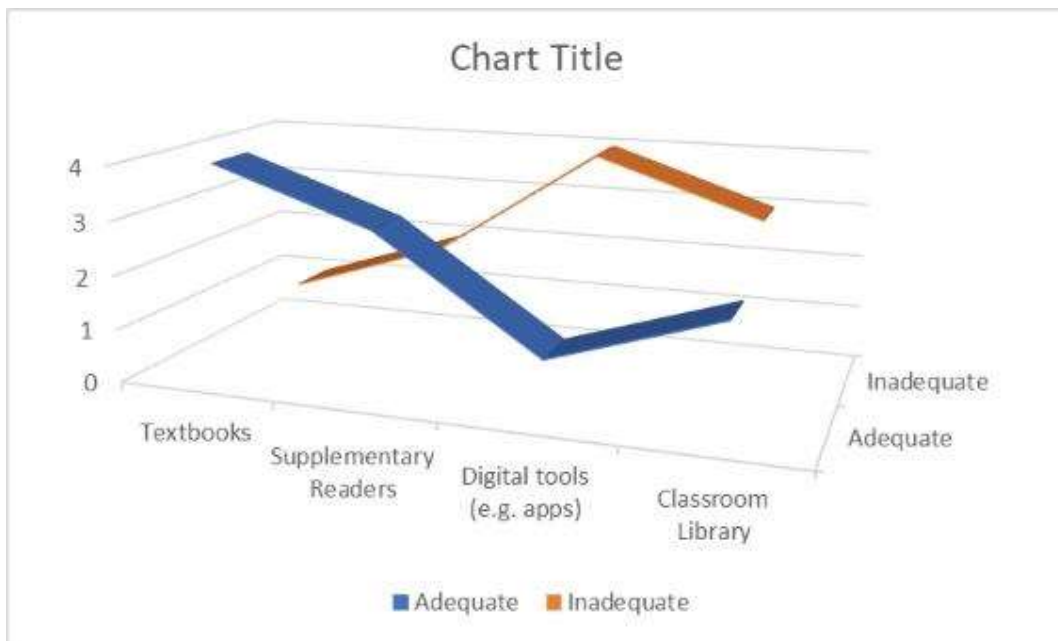
Shweta Kumari, an experienced teacher, suggested that the ‘Play-way Method’ can be an effective way of learning, adding to this, she said that “Students must be involved practically to showcase themselves”.

Overall, the data suggest that teachers adopt a balanced approach, combining individual-focused strategies (silent reading) with collaborative and resource-based practices (group reading, audio-visual aids, and library use). Silent reading emerges as the dominant strategy, reflecting an emphasis on strengthening core skills of fluency and comprehension.

**Table 4: Teachers’ Perception of Resource Adequacy**

Resource Types	Adequate (%)	Inadequate (%)
Textbooks	4	1
Supplementary Readers	3	2
Digital Tools (e.g., Apps)	1	4
Classroom Library	2	3

Figure 3:



The findings suggest that traditional methods such as group reading and storytelling remain the most used strategies among teachers. These approaches play a valuable role in encouraging student participation, enhancing listening and speaking skills, and stimulating imagination. Group reading fosters collaboration and peer learning, while storytelling captures interest and brings texts to life, making reading lessons more engaging. However, the over-reliance on these traditional strategies may restrict opportunities for individualised practice. Students who require focused support to develop fluency and comprehension may not benefit equally in such group-centred approaches, which tend to prioritise collective engagement over personalised skill-building.

**Objective 3: To Identify Challenges Faced by Students and Teachers in English Reading Programs**

Both students and teachers identified several obstacles to the effective implementation of reading programs. Students struggled with limited vocabulary, low motivation, and a lack of reading materials, while teachers faced inadequate resources, large class sizes, and limited training. These combined challenges hinder program effectiveness and highlight the need for targeted interventions. This data was collected from the 50 students at the secondary levels, as they have adequate ability to understand and respond to the questions.

**Table 5: Reported Challenges in Implementing Reading Programs**

<b>Reported Challenge (Students) (%)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Lack of interest/motivation 34%	17
Limited vocabulary 26%	13
Poor comprehension skills 22%	11
Lack of reading materials 12%	6
Low family support 6%	3

<b>Reported Challenge (Teachers)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Inadequate resources	2
Large class sizes	4
Lack of technological support	4
Time constraints	3

The table demonstrates that both students and teachers view insufficient reading materials as a primary concern. Students frequently cite limited practice time and low motivation, suggesting that while they may recognise the importance of reading, they often struggle to remain engaged in the activities provided.

Teachers, on the other hand, emphasise systemic barriers such as overcrowded classrooms, rigid curricula, and a lack of professional training opportunities. Sangeeta Rai, a teacher at school, talked about her perspective on the hurdles that she faces while teaching and said that:

“I have personally experienced, with juniors I face problems to make them concentrate, and with seniors it becomes difficult to make them respond”.

These factors not only limit their ability to provide individualised support but also restrict the effective integration of innovative teaching approaches that could make reading more engaging for learners.

### **Comparative Analysis**

Comparisons reveal more nuanced insights: students often demonstrate enthusiasm for stories, picture books, and reading-related games, as these methods align with their natural curiosity and preference for interactive learning. However, their limited vocabulary frequently restricts their comprehension and ability to fully engage with texts, making them reliant on teacher guidance and simplified materials. In contrast, secondary students typically possess a broader vocabulary and stronger foundational skills, yet they often display reduced interest and motivation in reading.

Students vs. Teachers: Students tend to perceive reading challenges through the lens of their immediate experiences—insufficient practice time, lack of appealing materials, or waning interest in repetitive activities. Their concerns are rooted in how enjoyable, accessible, and relevant reading tasks feel daily. Teachers, however, frame these challenges within broader systemic constraints. They highlight issues such as overcrowded classrooms, limited access to diverse resources, heavy curricular demands, and inadequate training opportunities that restrict their ability to innovate or provide individualised support. Students were provided with various suggestions that can help to make learning interesting for them. Students from 8<sup>th</sup> standard suggested:

“A technology-friendly class would make learning more interesting, along with real-life examples”.

Bridging these perspectives requires interventions that address both dimensions simultaneously.

### **Overall Interpretation of Findings**

The findings indicate that English reading programs in local schools demonstrate moderate effectiveness, reflecting both positive outcomes and persistent shortcomings. On one hand, students display encouraging progress in comprehension and vocabulary development, suggesting that classroom activities are successfully building foundational literacy skills. However, fluency and sustained engagement remain weak, with many students struggling to read confidently and consistently over time. This imbalance highlights the need for more targeted interventions that go beyond surface-level understanding to foster long-term reading proficiency.

### **Conclusion**

This research set out to examine the effectiveness of English reading programs in local schools, with a particular focus on how these programs influence students’ comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and overall engagement with reading. The study also explored the challenges faced by teachers and schools in implementing such programs. From the outcomes of the survey and analysis, it becomes clear that English reading programs play an important role in shaping students’ language skills, yet their effectiveness remains only partial and uneven across different settings. The findings show that reading programs have been successful in improving comprehension and vocabulary. Many students demonstrated a better ability to understand texts and use new words effectively, which shows that these programs are contributing to the foundational aspects of language learning. However, the study also revealed that fluency and sustained reading engagement remain weaker areas. Students often struggled with reading aloud confidently, maintaining pace, and developing the natural flow that marks fluent reading.

In conclusion, English reading programs are not just tools for improving academic performance but also pathways to broader educational and social opportunities. For students in local schools, mastering reading in English can open doors to higher education, employment, and global communication. The findings of this research underline the importance of nurturing reading skills as an essential part of holistic

development. By recognising both the progress made and the challenges that remain, this study contributes to the ongoing effort to strengthen English reading programs and ensure that every child, regardless of background, has the chance to become a confident and capable reader.

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