

Literacy- the first step to Academic Inclusion

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Literacy- the first step to Academic Inclusion

Literacy is the first phase of formal education. Children acquire basic literacy skills from the elementary level itself. Through reading and writing children will be coming to the stream of knowledge. Language is the carrier of wisdom. One who is not efficient in language faces difficulty in attaining knowledge of core subjects. Though, literacy is not sufficient for deriving highest development possible for every individual, but no one can debate that literacy is the first step to academic inclusion.

From elementary level itself, children begin to learn basic language skills such as listening, speaking reading and writing. Listening and speaking skills are acquired by the young children well before school, but they are getting better from schooling. Practically, reading and writing are the skills to be acquired from school. Teacher is the main factor in giving the literacy competency to the children. Does a teacher help to attain this goal? This has to be debated. And we have to investigate and evaluate whether the children achieved the expected skills.

Need and Significance of the Study

Conventionally language skills are four in number. But, research on the development of language refer to factors as Morphological awareness, phonological awareness, knowledge of semantics and syntax and transcription skills as the ones to be acquired by a learner to be effortless in reading and writing a language. Morphological Awareness has a very important role in the development of reading and writing. Morphology is the knowledge about the meaningful units of language.

Morphology play a role in reading acquisition, and young readers are sensitive to the morphemic structure of written words (Casalis, Dusautoir & Cole, 2009). Morphological awareness training has a positive effect on language processing in speech, reading and writing (Elbro & Arnbak, 1996). In spelling, morphological strategies Training (Griva & Anastasiou, 2009) is a feasible way of improving students' morphological processing and morphological training (Ghaeni, 2009) has specific effect on learning of morphological spelling rules apart from non-specific beneficial effects on word reading. A strong relationship exists between morphological awareness and the standard measure of spelling ability (Deacon and

Bryant, 2006). Morphological skill at the end of grade 1 was the predictive factor for spelling performance at the end of grade 2 (Plaza & Cohen, 2004).

At present, theories of social constructivism, Universal Grammar, Gestalt psychology, Child centered education and Humanism are the foundations of language education in Kerala. The present methods of language teaching include, Interactions in group work, Co-operation in classroom activities, and Establish relationship with others, Problem solving and Learning through activities. This methodology is used to persuade the children to react with his/her environment and produce language through imaginative interpretation (SCERT, 2008). This study examines how much morphological awareness and writing skill acquired by 2nd grade children being practiced in this method.

An informal interview with lower primary teachers revealed that some children are always away from literacy skills. This study gives direction to include these students in the active process of achieving language skills. This insufficiency in attaining basic literary skills by elementary students is a problem of investigation. By this, a feedback can give to the teachers, educators, system of teacher education and policy makers. This paper strongly recommends an elaborate training programme to nourish teachers for educating their students with finest skills and aptitude.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study has the following objectives.

The major objective of the study was to probe into component language deficits in Malayalam among second grade students in Kerala in the context of constructivist –critical pedagogy which emphasize oral expression and comprehension of language over written aspect of the language. Specifically, this study

1. To find out the extent of morphological awareness in Malayalam among 2nd grade students.
2. To find out the extent of acquisition of spelling among 2nd grade students.
3. To find out the relationship between morphological awareness and acquisition of spelling among 2nd grade students

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey method is employed in this study.

Sample

Sample used for this study constitute 2nd grade pupils from 11 Lower Primary Schools of Thrissur District (N=180).

Tools Used For the Study

1. Test of Morphological Awareness
2. Dictation

Test of morphological awareness

Morphemes are the minimum meaningful units of a language. Morphological Awareness involves the ability to be conscious of and manipulate the morphological units of a language. It involves the ability to identify root words and their inflected or derived forms.

Morphological Awareness Test is designed to investigate children's Morphological Awareness in Malayalam. This test consists of 6 subtests (Number, *Kevala/Prayojaka*, gender, compound words, derived words, derived adjectives). Each of the subtests consists of two practice items.

Dictation

Writing is the most complicated language skill. It is the final expressive language skill. Present test is used to quantify the student's ability to write correctly the words they are specifically taught as per their Malayalam text book. This test consists of 43 words. They are taken as a dictation. These words formed by the letters which the 2nd graders have in their syllabus. The words are for their level.

Based on achievement, students were grouped into three categories as following:

Approximately below 33% - Poor

Approximately above 70% - High; and

In between - Average.

Analysis and Interpretations

1. Percentage Analysis

Percentage analysis is used to find the percentage of student achievement in Morphological Awareness and its subtests and ability in dictated spelling.

Table 1: Percentage of achievement in Morphological Awareness & Dictated Spelling

	Groups Compared		
	Below 1/3 poor (%)	Average (%)	Above 2/3 high (%)
Dictated Spelling	37.02	48.6	14.4
Morphological Awareness (Total)	18.64	81.36	0
Sub Tests of Morphological Awareness			
Gender	23.3	37.8	38.9
Compound word	28.9	31.4	39.4
Derived words	58.9	35.5	5.6
Derived Adjectives	6.7	71.1	22.2
<i>Kevala/Prayojaka</i>	3.9	10.6	85.6
Number	24.4	51.1	24.4

Table 1 reveals a noticeable percentage of students performed poorly in Dictated Spelling, Morphological Awareness and in each sub tests of Morphological Awareness.

2. Correlation Analysis

This section of analysis is intended to find out the extent of relationship of Morphological Awareness with Dictated Spelling. The relationship is investigated by Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation.

Correlation of sum of the subtests of Morphological Awareness with Dictated Spelling and correlation of each subtests of Morphological Awareness and Dictated Spelling are calculated .

Table 2: Correlation between Morphological Awareness and Dictated Spelling

Subtests of MA	r*	t-value	Confidence Interval		Percentage Overlap
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
Gender	0.39*	5.64	0.23	0.55	15.21
Compound words	0.40	5.80	0.25	0.55	16
Derived words	0.34	4.82	0.19	0.49	11.56
Derived adjectives	0.27	3.73	0.09	0.45	7.29
<i>Kevala Prayojaka</i>	0.31	4.34	0.13	0.49	9.61
Number	0.45	8.37	0.30	0.60	20.25
Morphological Awareness (Total)	0.52	8.096	0.38	0.66	27.04

* $p < .01$

From the table it is clear that there is a significant relationship between Morphological Awareness and Dictated Spelling and there exists a significant correlation between each sub tests of Morphological Awareness and Dictated Spelling.

Implications and Conclusion

Purpose of the present study is to investigate the Morphological Awareness and Writing Difficulties in 2nd Grade children. This study also analyse the relationship between Morphological Awareness and writing.

The results showed that a sizeable proportion of 2nd grade students are under achievers in the case of writing and in morphological awareness. They show incompetence in the sub tests of Morphological Awareness.

To improve Morphological Awareness and writing skills in students, we have to implement or administer different teaching techniques. Some training programmes are given below:-

1. Morphological Training Programme
2. Exemplary Writing Instruction
3. Modelled Writing
4. Think Aloud Writing

5. Guided Writing Strategies.
6. Independent Writing
7. Co-operative Learning
8. Morphological Strategies Training
9. Symbol Assisted Writing

These teaching techniques will help to improve Morphological Awareness and Writing Skills. This will also help in improving literacy skills. Literacy development is the foundation of all other knowledge which the child studies in his/her academic life. It is the medium of our effective communication. So the teachers educators, policy makers should stress on the development of language skills they should travel through effective path of language education to lead all the students into the success of academic life.

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