Research Article

READING COMPREHENSION SKILL IN FIRST LANGUAGE WITH REFERENCES TO DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRATA

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Reading comprehension is the procedure of making meaning from text. The goal, therefore, is to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to get meaning from isolated words or sentences. The objectives of the study were to compare the reading comprehension ability among the students with different Socio- Economic status (SES). It was tested by Socio- Economic Status Scale and two types of comprehension tests. Tests were administered on 684 samples from 16 schools of West Bengal. The collected data were analyzed by statistical procedure ANOVA. The major findings were observed that in M.C.Q. Test, students with high and moderate SES are better than low SES, whereas students with moderate and high SES do not differ from each other. In the performance of Cloze Test high and moderate SES are scored better than low SES, and also found high SES is better than moderate SES. In the performance of both test (MCQ Test & Cloze Test), students with moderate and high SES are better than students with low SES, and also found high SES is better than moderate SES. The probable causes behind this type of result were discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Comprehension is meaning - making. A text can be viewed as having probable for meaning. Comprehension is the expression of this prospective in the mind of the reader. Sometimes the pronunciation, expression, concretization differs from one reader to another. Reading of a text with comprehension is therefore reconstruction text-construct with the sense of explanation with supplementation. For better understanding of the process of comprehension, we have to focus upon two main aspects:

1. The aspects of textual material (text construct).
2. The socio – psychological factors of the learner (text reconstruction).

Many times we have seen that a particular sentence comes with different meaning to the different students. In that case the socio-economic and cultural status of the learners creates the differences from one another. So many times we have seen that the students give a wrong answer due to lack of comprehensibility of the language of questions. I think reading comprehension is an ability that helps students to read the words of different subjects. Reading the words lead a student to read the world.

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Previous research has established that SES is related to reading comprehension (Hart *et al*., 2013. Children with lower SES display lower levels of morphological awareness, word recognition, and vocabulary (Bowey, 1995). Rowe and Goldin-Meadow (2009), investigating the relationship between SES and children's early vocabulary development and the results found that SES gap in vocabulary size begins by 36 months of age, widens until age four, and then remains relatively constant through to 13 years of age. Kelu (1990) found that parental income, occupation and education, socio-economic status and socio-familial status were positively correlated with listening comprehension, handwriting speed & vocabulary.

Objectives

1. To assess the reading comprehension skill of the Higher Secondary students through
a. Comprehension Test (M. C. Q. Test)
b. Cloze Test
2. To study and compare the reading comprehension skill in First Language among the students with different socio- economic status.

Delimitation

1. The study was conducted in eight districts of West Bengal.
2. The study was delimited to class XII students only.
3. Only Bengali medium schools were taken for the study.

Hypothesis

$H_0 1$. There is no significant difference in reading comprehension skill in first language among the students with different Socio - Economic Status (SES) in MCQ Test.

$H_0 2$. There is no difference in reading comprehension skill in first language among the students with different Socio - Economic Status (SES) in Cloze Test.

$H_0 3$. There is no significant difference in reading comprehension skill in first language among the students with different Socio - Economic Status (SES) in both test (MCQ Test & Cloze Test).

Sample and Sampling Procedure

For the study only eight districts were chosen from the state West Bengal on the basis of geographical location. These eight districts touched the geo-diversity of the state in position of east, west, north and south. From each of the district only two higher secondary schools, one from rural area and one from urban area were taken randomly. After fixing the schools the researcher has taken all the standard XII students presented on that day as the sample of the present study. Thus the sample size got a figure of 684.

Research Tools

The investigator constructed three Research Tools with the help of his research guide. The details of the research tools are given below:

Socio- Economic Status Scale

The Socio-Economic Status Scale (SESS) was developed by the researcher to elicit information from class XII students regarding the socio- economic component, educational qualification, the occupation and income, possession of goods & services and health status of their family. The students have to put a tick mark in front of any one alternative. In the front page of the questionnaire the student have to fill the information with regards to their name, age, sex, class, roll no, school, and community. After they have given their expert opinion and suggestions then the questionnaire was modified accordingly.

M.C.Q. Test

The researcher selected a short story of great Bengali Author for the test. The test was constructed through a passage of 677 words. It was verified from five Bengali Language teachers of different schools as the passage may applicable or not for the standard XII students and all the teachers suggest to apply it. Then fifty test items from the passage were given to them to check the content validity. All the teachers put their individual opinion about the test items and suggest which items should be appropriate for the students. Thus only 34 items out of 50 were taken to construct the test. After checking the content and item validity of the test, it was administered to the larger sample of the study.

Cloze Test

A standard cloze test is a passage with blanks of standard length replacing certain deleted words which students are required to complete by filling in correct words or their equivalents. In traditional 'cloze test', every fifth word is removed from a 250-500 word reading passage. Usually, no word is deleted either in the first or the last sentence of the passage. Students are required to supply either the original word of the author or an appropriate equivalent word in the blank space (Helfeldt *et al*, 1986:216).

Preparing of a Standard Cloze Test

The researcher selected a passage of a famous Bengali Author for the test. After that he justified from five Bengali Language teachers of different schools as the passage may applicable or not for the standard XII students. Then the researcher made the test with the help of his guide following the procedure of a standard cloze test, which was constructed through a passage of 392 words where 50 words were deleted (every seventh word) except in the first and last sentences.

Data Collection

After preparing the tools, the researcher went to the selected schools and concern with the Headmaster or Headmistress. With their permission and help the tests (M.C.Q. Test & Cloze Test) were administered on all the 684 subjects of different schools. The class teachers in the respective schools helped the investigator in contacting the subjects, giving instructions to them etc. The investigator administered the tools personally. The data were collected and organized in tabular form for analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation

The problem here is the skill of Reading comprehension of standard XII students and to study this particular problem the investigator collected data and analyzed the data by and ANOVA with SPSS statistical procedures as given below:

Descriptive Statistics of Data

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Reading Comprehension

			Statistic	Std. Error
Reading Comprehension	Mean		37.2895	.52734
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	36.2541	
		Upper Bound	38.3249	
	Median		37.0000	
	Variance		190.215	
	Std. Deviation		13.79184	
	Skewness		.001	.093
	Kurtosis		-.693	.187

The table 1 shows that that, the total (N= 684) mean score in reading comprehension is 37.2895, Median is 37.000, SD is 13.79184, Skewness is .001 and Kurtosis is -.693. Furthermore data with graphical representation (Normal P-P Plot, Q-Q Plot) are also presented below for visual scanning of the nature of the data.
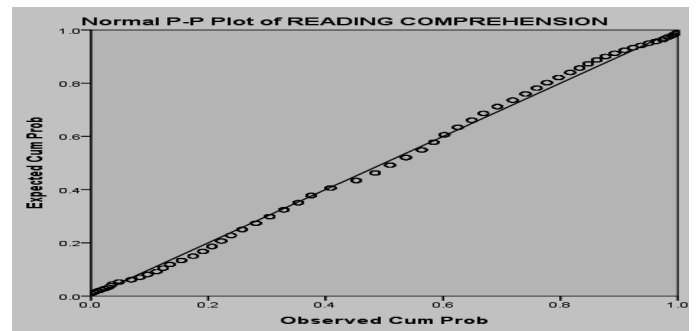

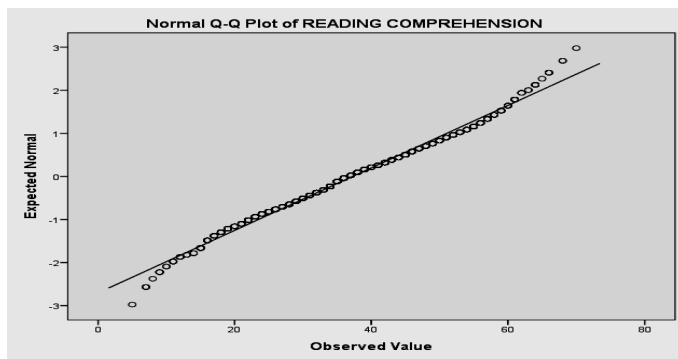**Figure 1** P- P Plot _ Reading Comprehension

Figure 2 Q- Q Plot _ Reading Comprehension

Analysis and Interpretation

To analyze the null hypotheses ANOVA was considered as a statistical procedure. Test descriptions are given bellow:

Table 2 Descriptive Table: OnewayAnova_ Level of Socio-Economic Status: MCQ Test

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Reading Comprehension _ MCQ Test	Low	157	17.5732	5.53683	.44189	16.7004	18.4461
	Moderate	360	19.7778	4.57565	.24116	19.3035	20.2520
	High	167	20.2216	5.07225	.39250	19.4466	20.9965
	Total	684	19.3801	5.02660	.19220	19.0027	19.7575

The descriptive table 2 provides some very useful descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation and 95% confidence intervals for the dependent variable (Socio-Economic Status) for each separate group (Low, Moderate, High), as well as when all groups are combined (Total).

$H_0 1$. There is no significant difference in reading comprehension skill of first language among the students of different Socio - Economic Status (SES) in MCQ Test.

Table 3 ANOVA: Reading Comprehension _ MCQ Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Reading Comprehension _ MCQ Test	Between Groups	687.737	2	343.869	14.133	.000*
	Within Groups	16569.432	681	24.331		
	Total	17257.170	683			
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

In case of comparing the reading comprehension skill of higher secondary students in MCQ Test with respect to different group of SES (Low, Moderate, High), it is found from table 4.38 that the calculated f = 14.133, df = 2, 681 and p < 0.01. It means F is statistically significant at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there are significant differences exist among the different group of SES in their reading comprehension skill in MCQ Test.

Table 4 Multiple Comparisons: Reading Comprehension _ MCQ Test): Post Hoc Test (LSD)

Dependent Variable	(I) Level of Socio-Economic Status	(J) Level Of Socio-Economic Status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.*	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Reading Comprehension _ MCQ Test	Low	Moderate	-2.20453*	.47176	.000	-3.1308	-1.2782
		High	-2.64831*	.54833	.000	-3.7249	-1.5717
	Moderate	Low	2.20453*	.47176	.000	1.2782	3.1308
		High	-.44378	.46182	.337	-1.3505	.4630
	High	Low	2.64831*	.54833	.000	1.5717	3.7249
		Moderate	.44378	.46182	.337	-.4630	1.3505
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.							

From the results so far, it was found that there were statistically significant differences between the groups as a whole. To determine which group is different from others, Post Hoc Test (LSD) was conducted and it is found from table 4.39 that mean difference between Low status and Moderate status is 2.20453 and Low status and high status is 2.64831, the p values are 0.000 and 0.000 (p < 0.05) which are significant at 0.05 level. So it is concluded that students with Low SES is significantly different from the students with moderate and high SES in their reading comprehension skill in MCQ test, whereas students with Moderate and High SES do not differ significantly from each other.

Table 5 Descriptive Table: One way ANOVA_ Level of Socio-Economic Status: Cloze Test

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Reading Comprehension _ Cloze Test	Low	157	14.65	10.099	.806	13.06	16.24
	Moderate	360	18.05	9.978	.526	17.02	19.09
	High	167	20.66	10.519	.814	19.06	22.27
	Total	684	17.91	10.336	.395	17.13	18.69

The descriptive table 5 provides some very useful descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation and 95% confidence intervals for the dependent variable (Socio-Economic Status) for each separate group (Low, Moderate, High), as well as when all groups are combined (Total).

$H_0 2$. There is no difference in reading comprehension skill of first language among the students of different Socio - Economic Status (SES) in Cloze Test.

Table 6 ANOVA: Reading Comprehension _ Cloze Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Reading Comprehension _ Cloze Test	Between Groups	2943.429	2	1471.714	14.314	.000*
	Within Groups	70018.951	681	102.818		
	Total	72962.380	683			
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

In case of comparing the reading comprehension skill of higher secondary students in Cloze Test with respect to different group of Socio-Economic Status (Low, Moderate, High), it is found from table 6 that the calculated f = 14. 314, df = 2, 681 and p < 0.01. It means F is statistically significant at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there are significant differences exist among the different group of SES in their reading comprehension skill in Cloze Test.

Table 7 Multiple Comparisons: Reading Comprehension _ Cloze Test: Post Hoc Test (LSD)

Dependent Variable	(I) Level Of Socio-Economic Status	(J) Level Of Socio-Economic Status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.*	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Reading Comprehension _ Cloze Test	Low	Moderate	-3.403*	.970	.000	-5.31	-1.50
		High	-6.015*	1.127	.000	-8.23	-3.80
	Moderate	Low	3.403*	.970	.000	1.50	5.31
		High	-2.612*	.949	.006	-4.48	-.75
	High	Low	6.015*	1.127	.000	3.80	8.23
		Moderate	2.612*	.949	.006	.75	4.48
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.							

From the results so far, it was found that there were statistically significant differences between the groups as a whole. To determine which group is different from others, Post Hoc Test (LSD) was conducted and it is found from table 7 that mean difference between Low status and Moderate status is 3.403 and Low status and high status is 6.015, moderate status and high status is 2.612 the p values are respectively 0.000, 0.000 and 0.006 (p < 0.05) which are significant at 0.05 level. So it is concluded that students with Low SES is significantly different from the students with moderate and high SES and also the students with moderate SES is significantly different from the students with high SES in their reading comprehension skill in Cloze test.

Table 8 One way ANOVA_Level of Socio-Economic Status: both test (MCQ & Cloze Test)

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Reading Comprehension in Both Test (MCQ & Cloze Test)	Low	157	32.2229	14.01355	1.11840	30.0138	34.4321
	Moderate	360	37.8306	13.01174	.68578	36.4819	39.1792
	High	167	40.8862	13.92857	1.07783	38.7582	43.0142
	Total	684	37.2895	13.79184	.52734	36.2541	38.3249

The descriptive table 8 provides some very useful descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation and 95% confidence intervals for the dependent variable (Socio-Economic Status) for each separate group (Low, Moderate, High), as well as when all groups are combined (Total).

$H_0 3$. There is no significant difference in reading comprehension skill of first language among the students of different Socio - Economic Status (SES) in both test (MCQ Test & Cloze Test).

Table 9 ANOVA: Reading Comprehension _ both test (MCQ & Cloze Test)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Reading Comprehension in both test (MCQ & Cloze Test)	Between Groups	6295.985	2	3147.992	17.342	.000*
	Within Groups	123620.700	681	181.528		
	Total	129916.684	683			
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

In case of comparing the reading comprehension skill of higher secondary students in both test (MCQ Test & Cloze Test) with respect to different group of Socio- Economic status (Low, Moderate, High), it was found from table 9 that the calculated f = 17.342, df = 2, 681 and p < 0.01. It means F is statistically significant at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there are significant differences exist among the different group of SES in their reading comprehension skill in both test (MCQ Test & Cloze Test).

Table 10 Multiple Comparisons: Reading Comprehension _ both test (MCQ & Cloze Test): Post Hoc Test (LSD)

Dependent Variable	(I) Level Of Socio-Economic Status	(J) Level Of Socio-Economic Status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.*	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Reading Comprehension in both test (MCQ & Cloze Test)	Low	Moderate	-5.60763*	1.28859	.000	-8.1377	-3.0775
		High	-8.66330*	1.49774	.000	-11.6040	-5.7226
	Moderate	Low	5.60763*	1.28859	.000	3.0775	8.1377
		High	-3.05567*	1.26144	.016	-5.5325	-.5789
	High	Low	8.66330*	1.49774	.000	5.7226	11.6040
		Moderate	3.05567*	1.26144	.016	.5789	5.5325
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.							

From the results so far, it was found that there were statistically significant differences between the groups as a whole. To determine which group is different from others, Post Hoc Test (LSD) was conducted and it is found from table 4.45 that mean difference between Low status and Moderate status is 5.60763 and Low status and high status is 8.66330, Moderate status and High status is 3.05567 the p values are respectively 0.000, 0.000 and 0.016 (p < 0.05) which are significant at 0.05 level. So it is concluded that students with Low SES is significantly different from the students with Moderate and High SES and also the students with Moderate SES is significantly different from the students with High SES in their reading comprehension skill in both test (MCQ Test & Cloze Test).

Findings of the Study

1. In the performance of reading comprehension in First Language through MCQ Test, students with Low SES is different from the students with Moderate and High SES and the mean scores of students with Moderate and High SES are better than students with Low SES, whereas students with Moderate and High SES do not differ from each other.

2. In the performance of reading comprehension in First Language through Cloze Test, students with Low SES is different from the students with Moderate and High SES and the mean scores of students with Moderate and High SES are better than students with Low SES.

3. And it is also found that students with Moderate and High SES differ significantly from each other, and the mean score of students with High SES is better than students with Moderate SES.

4. In the performance of reading comprehension in First Language through both test (MCQ Test & Cloze Test), students with Low SES is different from the students with Moderate and High SES and the mean scores of students with Moderate and High SES are better than students with Low SES.

And it is also found that students with Moderate and High SES differ significantly from each other, and the mean score of students with High SES is better than students with Moderate SES.

DISCUSSION

The differential analysis shows that the Socio - Economic Status (SES) influences the achievement of Reading comprehension. The students of the three different categories with low, moderate and high SES are compared on the basis of their mean scores. The students with high SES seem to score higher in Reading comprehension than the other two categories.

Students with high SES leads to greater availability of reading sources. It is seen that the reading skills of children depended mostly on SES. When the annual income is high the SES will also be high. When there is high SES, there may be a possibility of getting more educational oriented appliances such as computer, smart phone etc. In such families one can expect very good support and motivation for higher studies. Thus it may be concluded that because of these reasons, students from SES families are found to do better in Reading comprehension.

The population of the study comprises pupils of standard XII studying in government-aided institutions. All such institutions have parallel structure, similar mode of teaching, similar mode of examinations etc. Therefore the expected linguistic differences in the students of different SES may get nullified because of the ambience of the school from where they get education. That is why Reading attitude, reading habit may be the same for all. In the same way cognitive style is also not influenced by SES of parents. Thus it may be concluded, that in the case of different SES of parents may occur the differences in reading comprehension in first language.

CONCLUSION

The present study may create awareness among the Bengali language experts as well as school teachers about the scenario of reading comprehension skill in Bengali as first language with respect to different socio- economic status. The findings and discussion may create an awareness for designing different reading situation and developing techniques, suitable for the students to make 'reading' a enjoyable and purposeful job at all levels of schooling.

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