CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1INTRODUCTION

Education is an integral part of a child's holistic development. The aim of education is to develop a child's inborn capabilities, inherent potential to make her a wholesome thinking and feeling individual. It is a lifelong journey in our lives, which develops various skills. The way in which a child learns these skills, depends on the child as well as the approach taken by the teacher. So, one-size-fits-all approach can leave many young children behind. As Locke (1632-1704) had stated, we are born as blank slates (tabula rasa), that we have no innate knowledge but we acquire what we know after we are born, through sensation and reflection (Newman, 2010).

The responsibility of education and learning is naturally the parents', in the early years. Thereafter, it is with the preschool where they spend their initial time experiencing the world beyond their home. Thus, the preschool is where the growth and development of young children is facilitated in their formative years, so it is very important what they learn and how they learn. Preschool is where a variety of early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes are held for children's quality care and education between the age of two and six.

The first six to eight years of a child's life are globally acknowledged to be the most critical years for lifelong development since the pace of development in this time is extremely rapid. Recent research in neuroscience, particularly on the brain, has thrown light on the 'critical periods' located within these early years for the forming of synaptic connections (pathways) in the brain and for the full development of the brain's potential. Research has also indicated that if these early years are not supported by, or embedded in, a stimulating and enriching physical and psychosocial environment, the chances of the child's brain developing its full potential are considerably, and often irreversibly, reduced. These pathways get pruned if not utilized well (Mustard, 2007). The period between 2 years to 7 is the first critical period of brain development in a child. So, the early years in life have far-reaching repercussions for a child since it inculcates language, social values and personal habits, which last a lifetime. As a result, it makes sense to invest in these early years in order to provide an enabling

environment for all children, which will give them a lifelong sound foundation and the quality of human capital will be affected positively. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) derives its importance from this rationale.

Language plays an important role in communication, exchange of information, development of reading skills, reading with comprehension, and, in later years, academic success. Yet, little attention is being paid to language acquisition and experiences in ECCE programmes.

There is a need to enhance children's language competency in the early years, since Foundational reading and writing skills that develop from birth to age five, have a clear and a consistently strong relationship with later conventional literacy skills (Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Also, six variables representing early literacy skills/foundational skills have medium to large predictive relationships with later measures of literacy development. These six variables correlated with later literacy as shown by data drawn from multiple studies with large number of children. These six variables are, Alphabet Knowledge (AK), Phonological Awareness (PA), Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN) of objects or colors, Writing Letters/Writing one's own name, Phonological Memory.

Listening and comprehension, oral skills/speaking and communicating, vocabulary development, pre-literacy/emergent literacy skills such as phonological awareness, print awareness and concepts, letter-sound correspondence, recognition of letters, building words and sentences, early writing, and introduction to school transaction language are all part of language development in early childhood.

Children will continue to use two languages if they perceive it to be valuable by doing so. Language is not linear, and formal teaching does not speed up the learning process. Language learning is dynamic – language must be meaningful and used (Collier, 1995a; Grosjean, 1982; Krashen, 1996; McLaughlin, 1984).

The way children perceive, remember, comprehend, and make sense of their world is all tied up in language. It is one of the classic human traits, since non-humans do not communicate by using language.

An English Phonetician and Language Scholar, Henry Sweet said, 'Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts' (Chand, 2001). Language requires coordinating and integrating a large number of diverse abilities, functions and skills. We are endowed with the innate ability/faculty for language acquisition, all

humans have the capability to acquire language. Children's language development follows a predictable path, depending upon the age they reach their milestones.

Language acquisition is the process, by which we acquire the capacity to perceive and understand language, as well as produce and use words and sentences to communicate.

Acquisition depends on children receiving linguistic input during the critical period. Humans use language for social interaction, so for children to learn language, they need to interact socially to develop it adequately. Children acquire language through interaction with parents, teachers and their peers and it happens in stages, first understanding, then one-word utterances, then two-word phrases, and so on. Exposure to language is the basic requirement for language acquisition, auditory and acoustic inputs are essential for activating the language faculty in children. Language acquisition can be categorized into two types; first language acquisition and second language acquisition. Learning a first language is something any child does successfully, without really needing formal lessons, at home. Whereas, learning a second language usually happens in a school or later. It is quite interesting to understand how children acquire language so early and rapidly. They do so through a subconscious process during which they are not really aware of any grammatical rules. Some important theories of language acquisition are, behaviourist theory, innateness theory by Noam Chomsky, cognitive theory by Jean Piaget, and social interaction theory by Vygotsky.

5.2 LANGUAGE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)

The main four skills of language are - Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). These skills are the main skills in language learning-teaching. Listening and reading are receptive skills whereas speaking and writing are productive /expressive skills. It is easy for a teacher to spot a child who is not speaking and writing, while a child who cannot listen well and read well, comes under a teacher's radar a bit late. Listening and speaking are auditory skills; reading and writing are visual skills. All four of these skills are interconnected and are required to learn a language.

The research in neuroscience confirms the importance of early years in a child's life, particularly since 90% of brain development has already taken place by the time the child is six years of age. So, whatever experiences are gained during this period, have a massive impact on the child's future learning. Here is where the basis of language is laid. The rate of development particularly, intellectual development is most rapid in the early years of life and

that during this period of the most active growth of an organism, the environmental enrichment or deprivation makes its maximum impact.

Piaget's cognitive development theory stresses upon seizing the pre-operational stage in a child from 2 years to 7 years for maximum learning. Children try to represent the world through words, images, and drawing in this golden period. Due to evolutionary acceleration of various skills like motor, cognitive, affective, etc. in the young (4+) learners, the children are learning faster than expected out of them. Having worked with children for over thirty years, the researcher feels that children, who are the first- generation English learners, and whose mother tongue is not English, come to school with hardly any print exposure in English at home. They cannot complete their schoolwork successfully because of their low reading levels. There is a huge difference between schooling and learning. Little do adults realize that children who just even pretend to read at home are more likely to read better later in their lives. The books could be in their native language or English, but the habits and attitudes are very important to develop when they are young. Reading ability has not much to do with age, but more to do with child's linguistic competencies, how much he was read to, how much he has been playing with words and books, how much he pretended to be a reader when he played with the language. Through the act of reading, a child makes contact with the outside world, which is a thrilling feat for someone so young. (NIPUN Bharat, 2021).

5.3 ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

English is a global language and one of the top five most spoken languages worldwide (McKay, 2002). This language is spoken by around 427 million people who are native speakers (Crystal, 1997). Around two billion people speak English as a first, second and foreign language (Crystal, 2008). So, almost 30% of the world speaks English and the number is on the rise. As a vehicular language, it is used for communication, commerce, education, and exchanging ideas and culture across the globe. Interestingly, about 80% of English speakers are non - native speakers (Crystal, 2003).

According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) data, two-thirds (68%) of children – 262 million out of 387 million – are enrolled in school and will complete the fourth grade, but will not meet the required reading competency levels. These findings demonstrate how education systems around the world are failing to offer high-quality education and conducive

learning environments for children.The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2018) findings for reading proficiency, reflect that in the digital age, the rising bar of success in education puts even more pressure on educational systems to lay solid foundations. Technology has the potential to super-empower individuals with superior knowledge and skills while leaving further behind others with inadequate foundations.

While high-income countries are on track to meet this goal, a recent World Bank report shows that 53 percent of children in low- and middle-income countries are learning poor, as indicated by their inability to read and comprehend a simple text by the age of ten. In India, it affects 55 percent of children in the late elementary school years.The situation is that all of a child's fundamental to advanced information will be predominantly available in English throughout his or her lifetime, making it critical that any child, everywhere, be able to read in English and not miss out on education due to a lack of this understanding.

5.4 IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

With about 250 million school-aged children and 9.2 million teachers, India has made tremendous progress towards achieving universal access to education up to the basic level. However, studies have shown that simply guaranteeing that pupils attend school does not automatically result in improved learning. Today, there is a considerable national concern over children's inadequate learning levels at various stages of schooling. Once students fall behind in foundational literacy and numeracy, research has shown that they tend to maintain flat learning curves for years, unable to catch up.This is because children are supposed to 'learn to read' and acquire fundamental skills until they reach third grade. Children are supposed to be able to 'read to learn' after third grade. If this does not happen, the learning gap will increase even more in later years as language textbook materials and mathematics concepts become more complicated and abstract. Children who are forced to study in a language they do not speak or understand suffer considerably more hardship.

In this globalized world, India has been largely influenced by English. Also, the colonial era has left its mark on the way our country uses language. Hoping their children be prepared for the changing world, many parents seek to raise their children to be multilingual. The parents' aspirations for their children for a better life and a better job, drive them to opt for English medium education. With the globalization process kicking in the business scenario, English began to be seen as an important vehicle for success and made an entry into our classrooms.

Research shows that multilingual persons have higher levels of cognitive brain function and are more adept at solving problems, planning, and other mentally demanding tasks (Amanda Chatel, 2014). Jayasundara (2015) and Ramirez &Kuhl (2016) revealed that starting to use second or third language since the child begins to acquire his/her language is the best method in raising bilingual/multilingual children. Ramirez and Kuhl (2016) found that children learn best when they begin learning two languages at a young age and engage in high-quality interactions with real people, and both languages were supported throughout the toddler, preschool, and school years. The school choices and multilingualism make our education system quite complicated, hence it is of grave importance that non–native speakers of English are taught with a thorough understanding of their cultural differences and English language deficits. English is not just about grammar or new words; it is mainly about communicative competence.

Macaulay's minutes February 2, 1835 paved the way for English in India officially. The Governor-General Bentick issued the necessary order on March 7, 1835 to make English the medium of instruction in all the institutions of learning. The first important commission after Independence, The University Grants Commission,1948 under the chairmanship of Dr S. Radhakrishnan clearly said, 'Our students who are undergoing training at schools which will admit them either to university or to a vocation must acquire sufficient mastery of English to give them success to the treasures of knowledge.' The Official Language Commission (1955) said, 'English has to be taught hereafter principally as a "Language of Comprehension" rather than as a "Literary Language", to develop in the students learning it a faculty for comprehending writings in English language.' The Kothari commission (1964) went further and stated, 'As English will, for a long time to come, continue to be needed as a "library language" in the field of higher education, a strong foundation in the language will have to be laid at the school stage.'

National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (2005), states that, in the context of teaching a language, it is important to recognize the inbuilt linguistic potential of children as well as to remember that languages get socio-culturally constructed and change in our day-to-day interactions. The liberalisation of our economy led to the entry of multinationals resulting in huge job opportunities that required a good command over English. Students started learning English to meet the practical needs, relating to job research. Spoken English institutes and English medium schools all over the country started mushrooming. This scenario made the academicians and policymakers take another good look at the syllabus and pedagogies.

Exam-oriented teachings, rote method, no individual attention, were some of the reasons why it was difficult to pick up English by the students.

According to the National Knowledge Commission's (2007) report, the situation is ironic. For more than a century, English has been a component of our education. However, English is out of reach for the majority of our youth, resulting in extremely unequal access. Even now, only around 1% of our population speaks it as a second or third language, let alone as a first.... However, NKC feels that the time has come to teach English as a language in schools to our young people, regular people. Early effort in this area would aid in the development of a more inclusive society and the transformation of India into a knowledge society.

NCERT (2007). stated that there was an interesting finding on how English medium schools are multiplying in the All-India School Education Survey. The percentage of schools teaching English as a 'first language' doubled between 1993 and 2002 from 5% to 10% in primary schools and from 7 % to 13% in upper primary schools. English is offered as a second language by more states than any other language. 33 to 35 states claim to offer English as a medium of instruction; this is more than any other language. Hence, on the basis of above-mentioned facts, we can see a major shift from regional to English language as a medium of instruction in India. Today, all over the world, more non-native speakers use English than the native English speakers. English as medium of instruction is used in15.49% schools at the primary stage, 21.08% schools at the upper primary stage, 28.73% schools at the secondary stage and 33.06% schools at the higher secondary stage. The corresponding figures in the 7th survey were12.98%, 18.25%, and 25.84% and 33.59%, respectively. (7th survey NCERT).

Many parts of India have extremely low literacy rates. Between 2012 and 2013, children's reading levels did not improve considerably (ASER, 2013). In many situations, pupils' reading abilities have deteriorated over time to the point that they are unable to read at levels well below their grade level. For example, since 2009, the percentage of pupils in Standard 5 who could read a Standard 2-level text has steadily fallen, reaching only 47% in 2013. In government schools, the percentage drops even further, to 41.1 percent. In Andhra Pradesh, for example, over 31% of students in Standard 3 are unable to read a single word, and 48% are unable to read a Standard 1-level paragraph. In Karnataka, roughly 37% of children in Standard 3 are unable to read a single word, while 62% are unable to read a Standard 1-level paragraph.

There are roughly 447 languages spoken in India, 75 of which are institutional languages and 22 of which are formally utilised by various states (Paul, Simons, & Fennig, 2013). The Three Language Formula is the nation's language-of-education policy, which reflects this

multilingualism. By the completion of secondary school, all students must have learned three languages: one as a medium of instruction, one as a second language (L2), and one as a third language (L3) (Department of Elementary Education and Literacy & Department of Secondary and Higher Education, 2013).

The school determines the order in which the languages are taught. English is more likely to be used as a medium of instruction in private schools than in other types of schools, followed by Hindi and a regional language. Government schools are more likely to employ the state's official language as the medium of instruction (such as Kannada in Karnataka or Telugu in Andhra Pradesh), followed by English and Hindi. Furthermore, the potential of socioeconomic mobility associated with English language and literacy abilities has sparked a boom in parental and community demand for English-medium schools (Azam, Chin, & Prakash, 2010; Coleman, 2011). However, there is no indication that students who attend these low-resource schools learn English any better or quicker than those who attend schools where the medium of instruction is a regional language (Mohanty& Mishra, 2000). Furthermore, there are no scientific instructions on when and how to introduce English in order to improve outcomes in both regional languages and English.

Considering the prevailing situation of multilingualism, non-alphabetic writing systems, and limited resources, reading research is crucial to uncovering the process of learning acquisition unique to these environments. Such formative, pre-intervention research is critical for improving the quality of rigorous impact evaluations, especially the theory of change on which these evaluations are based (White, 2014). Furthermore, by providing a theory of change that is relevant for educational contexts in the developing world, and by supporting the development of effective reading programmes and policy decision making, such a science-based learning framework is highly likely to improve the quality of learning outcomes in children.

5.5 READING SKILL AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Reading compared to the spoken word is very new, just around 6000 years old, while speech dates back to six million years ago. Also, it is worth remembering that until about a hundred years ago very few people were able to read. It is only in the last century reading has become so widespread, and a prerequisite to many day-to-day activities. Reading is a complex skill that requires reading words and comprehending text simultaneously (NIFL, 2001).

Stanford University Psychologist Brian Wandell says, 'Reading is probably the hardest thing we teach people to do in the education system. There are some kids, who are just going to have a hard time.' Humans appear to the only species that can record their communication- and this is a very powerful ability. Also, we seem to be the only species, which can translate their communication into another medium. Thus, reading is a very special ability that we have articulated. Our brains are naturally programmed to master spoken language; but learning to read is another story. No one is born how to read. Reading is basically a visual task. It is also learning to identify the sounds of letters into words and to associate the printed word with its meaning. It involves understanding the meaning behind a passage, which may involve various degrees of thinking.

When we read, our brains have to do a lot of things at once; it has to connect letters to sounds and put those sounds together in the right order (National Research Council, 1998). Learning to read is a complete learnt skill and very crucial for a child's development. Cunningham and Rose (2002), advocated that if a child avails rich language experiences early in life, the brain becomes more receptive to acquisition of reading skills, such as phonemic awareness, decoding and word recognition. If a child is read to in the early years, when she learns to read, her brain continues to develop more pathways for language and cognition. The pathways become well- travelled, and the acquisition of good reading skills can lead to many greater abilities. Strong consistent reading instruction can alter the functioning of the brain. Two important variables can help strengthen neural pathways to enable children to become strong and successful readers:

- Deliberate practice: Children need to hear and read many different types of texts often.
- Intense instruction: To prepare the brain for gradually complex texts in school, children require intense instruction of fundamental reading skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension.

Through the act of reading, we connect with the mind and the world of another, which is a very unusual feat. It is an enjoyable and a rewarding practice, which enables us with a lifelong exploration and discovery. Reading is receiving ideas, feelings, emotions, experiences and concepts.

During a child's schooling, reading is the most important study tool, almost like a magic wand, with which a child can gain knowledge and explore the wonderland of books and in turn become self-sufficient and confident. It is undoubtedly the best way to absorb new experiences for a young child. Policy makers and educational professionals recognize that the

ability to read is critical to a child's success and to the health of our society. Reading is the main path to knowledge. If children do not become proficient readers, they will drag a country down from the road of progress and bring poverty as a grave consequence.

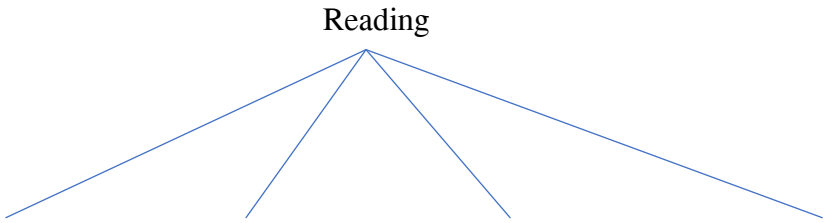
National Policy for Elementary Education (1986) stated that, 'A warm welcoming and encouraging approach in which all concerned share a solicitude for the needs of the child, is the best motivation for the child to attend school and learn. A child-centred and activity-based process of learning should be adopted at the primary stage. First generation learners should be allowed to set their own pace and be given supplementary remedial instruction. The availability of books at low prices is indispensable for people's education. Measures will be taken to improve the quality of books, promote the reading habit and encourage creative writing.'

A number of children do manage to teach themselves how to read, many others are taught before they start formal schooling; by a family member or a preschool teacher. Teaching reading is a difficult task; books do not do it, not by materials, and not by writing inspiring reports and policies, only teachers who interact with children and help them take it up as a lifelong activity, can do it. It also requires children listening to correct pronunciations and making use of learned words meaningfully in interaction. Many long-term studies on reading achievement show that children who don't get off a good start with literacy (reading and writing), tend not to catch up. Though reading happens to be one of the most studied aspects in education, the way it is being taught does not really reflect the scientific view on what works the best.

Sinha (2003) opines that achieving mass literacy is an important goal in India. However, the gap between what is desirable and what is achieved in terms of mass literacy is a cause of great concern. Although the percentage of literate people in the population has increased, the absolute number of illiterates also continues to increase. A large number of those who are considered literate are, in fact, incapable of comprehending what they read. Given this situation, it is very important to discuss what goes on in the primary years of schooling because this is where most Indian children make their first contact with literacy and, hence, depend on schools to become literate. This explains very well that for literacy (reading and writing). schools are the only choice for a majority of our future literate citizens. So, we need to pay a lot of attention and care and to see to it that this happens in a proper-guided way at the entry level itself. Research also shows that children who fail in reading and do not improve by the end of their first grade, are at a high risk of failure in other academics throughout school (McIntosh, Horner, Boland, and Good, 2006).

They keep performing poorly until they lose interest in school and give up trying. The ability to decode meaning from a text is defined as reading skill. It is the ability to grasp, interpret, and decode written language in a broad sense. To become a proficient reader, you must have these skills. Reading skills can be classified into skills -macro skills and sub-skills-micro skills (Harmer,1991).

The figure below shows the macro skills.



We read different types of materials, like a story, a newspaper, a letter or study material. Each material is looked into/read differently. These ways of different reading are called reading sub-skills or micro skills. The main micro-sub skills are-skimming and scanning.

The main reading methods for teaching reading are the phonic method, the word whole or look-and-say method, and the sentence method (Schonell, 1961).

The Components of Reading

There are five cornerstones of reading, according to National reading panel, 2000.

- Phonological awareness/Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

Phonological awareness: It can be explained as the awareness that the sounds of the spoken language can be put together to make words.

Phonemic awareness: It is basically the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in words. It is the best predictor of reading success; it helps students understand letter (grapheme) – sound (phoneme) relationship to become good readers.

Phonics: It is a method of learning to read and write English that concentrates on the sounds the letters make. Here, the alphabet is used as the cornerstone. It emphasizes reading as the decoding of graphemes (letters) into phonemes(sounds).

Vocabulary: It refers to the words we must understand to communicate effectively. There are four types of vocabulary: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
Vocabulary plays a huge role in the reading process and contributes greatly to a reader's comprehension.

Fluency: It can be defined as the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Students must be able to able to read fluently in order to understand what they read, whether silently or aloud.

Comprehension: It's about comprehending and interpreting what's been read. Students must be able to (1) decode what they read; (2) establish connections between what they read and what they already know; and (3) think carefully about what they have read in order to effectively understand written information. It is perhaps the most complex skill, and the ultimate goal in reading.

5.6 READING PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS

It is observed that children start to learn language from birth. During early speech and language development, they learn to read and write. So, this emergent literacy stage begins at birth and continues to their preschool years. If children are to read and write in English, they need to have words, which, in the early years come from their home environment. Children learn differently due to their behaviour, motivation, achievement, personality, self-esteem and last but not the least, the teaching method. Now children whose parents don't read, write, converse in English, will be at a disadvantage over the ones who come from literate homes.
It is easier to prevent reading difficulties in the early grades before they emerge than to try and remediate after they have become entrenched and intractable (Coyne, 2006). Children attempt reading in English in a more formal and rigid environment-the classroom, which is not always conducive to learning. The researcher feels a lot of efforts and strategies on the teacher's part are required to initiate reading with comprehension for our senior kindergarten students.

Phonological Awareness

Most educators believe that phonological/phonemic awareness education is one of the most effective approaches to teach children to read. The ability of a reader to focus on and modify phonemes in spoken words is referred to as phonological awareness. The tasks used to assess/improve children's phonological awareness are; phoneme isolation, phoneme identity, phoneme blending, phoneme segmentation, and phoneme deletion.

Phonological awareness teaching was found to have good benefits on both word reading and pseudo word reading in a meta-analysis by NRP (National Reading Panel, 2000) that included 96 studies, demonstrating that it helped children decode novel words as well as remember how to read known words. Although the effect size was smaller than for word reading, phonological awareness training was beneficial in improving reading comprehension. Other talents, such as a child's vocabulary, global knowledge, and text memory, have an impact on reading comprehension.Normal-developing readers, children at risk for future reading problems, disabled readers, pre-schoolers, kindergartners, 1st graders, children in 2nd through 6th grades (the majority of whom were disabled readers), children from various socioeconomic backgrounds, and children learning to read in English and other languages all benefited from phonological awareness instruction.

Teaching children to read and write with letters is crucial because it allows them to apply their phonological awareness skills. Decoding is aided by teaching young children to combine phonemes with letters. Using letters to teach children phonemic segmentation aids their spelling. It is critical to teach letter shapes, names, and sounds to children who have not yet acquired letters so that they can utilise letters to develop phonological awareness. When phonological awareness education makes explicit how children are to apply phonological awareness abilities in reading and writing tasks, it is more effective. To be effective, phonological awareness teaching does not have to take up a lot of time. In these studies, shorter programmes (less than 20 hours) were found to be more successful than lengthier programmes.Because the majority of kindergarten students will be non-readers with limited phonemic awareness, phonological awareness teaching should benefit everyone. It teaches children how their language's alphabetic system works and how to read and spell words in a variety of ways.

5.7 DYNAMIC INDICATORS OF BASIC EARLY LITERACY SKILLS (DIBELS) SCALE

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is a set of culture-free measures used to assess early literacy and reading skills for students from kindergarten through sixth grade.DIBELS Next is a ground-breaking redesign based on four years of fresh study with over 25,000 kids in 90 schools across the United States, as well as consumer feedback. DIBELS Next keeps the best of DIBELS, but it's been upgraded to make it easier to use and produce more accurate results. Assessing students' performance on key early literacy abilities, also known as foundational skills or core components, can help distinguish between children who are on track to become proficient readers and those who are likely to struggle. According to studies, these skills are the fundamental building blocks that every child must acquire in order to become a proficient reader (Adams, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000; National Research Council, 1998,Kame'enui, Carnine, Dixon, Simmons, & Coyne, 2002; Simmons &Kame'enui, 1998; Torgesen, et al., 1999) suggest that these skills can be enhanced with instruction.

The DIBELS tests are meant to serve as indicators of early literacy aptitude. A short, efficient index that provides a decent measure of certainty about a larger, more complex system or process is called an indicator. A child's height and weight, for example, are measured by a paediatrician as a quick and efficient indicator of his or her physical growth. Each DIBELS Next measure, likewise, provides a quick and precise indication of a child's development in learning a certain early reading skill.

The DIBELS Next is intended to be a time- and cost-effective instrument for assisting teachers in making decisions about reading teaching, as well as for assisting teachers in providing early support and preventing the onset of later reading issues. The DIBELS Next evaluates core early literacy abilities, or the skills that every child needs to master in order to become a successful reader (National Reading Panel, 2000; National Research Council, 1998).

DIBELS Next measures applicable for senior KG children are four as stated below (DIBELS Next Assessment Manual, 2011).

• FSF (First Sound Fluency): The assessor says words, and the student says the first sound for each word.

• Letter Naming Fluency (LNF): The learner is given a sheet of letters and instructed to name them.

• Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF): The assessor says words, and the student says each word's individual sounds.

• Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF): The student is given a list of VC and CVC nonsense words (for example, SIG, RAV, OV) and asked to read them.

In a prevention-oriented framework, this model highlights that phonemic awareness abilities can be formed very early and can offer a basis for successful phonics education. In a planned curriculum, phonemic awareness and phonics skills may be taught and practised separately, but education is not complete until the abilities are merged. The integration of all key components into a coherent whole is required for a thorough knowledge of how words are represented in written English. Second, throughout this approach, systematic and explicit training plays a vital role.Acquisition and mastery of an earlier skill is unlikely to result in success in the succeeding skill, while explicit training in the later skill is likely to result in success.

5.8 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This is by far the most important aspect of research - a summary of relevant research papers, done previously on the topic selected by the researcher. It throws light on what is known and what is not known- not tested as yet. It also helps point out how the undertaken research stands out from the other research done before and its significance in the present day. This chapter has the reviews of the related aspects of the research topic. The literature review supports the rationale of this research and helps throw light on the unique aspects of the topic. The researcher has reviewed studies conducted in India, as well as abroad, from various sources (Indian Educational journals, policies, surveys, doctoral theses, books, international dissertations, Shodhganga, etc.).

The undertaken study encompasses many areas like the importance of preschool education, the importance of reading skills, the importance of learning Phonological Awareness in kindergarten, the importance of using the tool-DIBELS Next, etc. The availed reviews are classified broadly into the below categories.

- Studies related to preschool education
- Studies related to reading skills
- Studies related to phonological awareness

- Studies related to phonics
- Studies related to DIBELS

The study conducted by Rajawat (2015) emphasized that pre-school children are able to learn at their best through play way and art-based activities. Sharma (2006) also inferred based on the qualitative data of 12 schools (Private and Government) that learning through rote method has been reduced in pre-school education and alternative teacher learning methodologies are found very effective in teaching especially language. Significant findings found by Di Santo and Aurelia (2006) pointed out that children's emotional maturity is highly important for successful transition to school. Teachers and parents play the most important role to cultivate social competence and wellbeing of pre-schoolers.

Research studies related to reading skills development, practices and teaching to pre-schoolers-nineteen studies were found relevant and reviewed by the researcher. Out of these nineteen studies, nine studies explain various interventions executed on pre-school children for the reading skills enhancement, development of phonemic awareness and English language teaching, one study is about the development of mobile application for the English language to enhance literacy skills. five studies about various teaching methods, eight studies talk about psychometric assessment and 3 studies talks about the challenges faced by students and challenges during the teaching – learning of English language. The researcher found the quasi-experimental study conducted by Karimkhanlooei&Sefiniya (2005) effective to inculcate reading skills in pre-school children. 40 students (Experimental Group – 20 & Control Group – 20) were selected and effects of phonics program were assessed on teaching alphabet, reading and writing English as a second language. Yeung (2012) utilized 12-week long language enriched phonological awareness instruction program on young Chinese ESL learners in Hong Kong. Children's learning was measured through receptive and expressive vocabulary, phonological awareness skills at the syllable, rhyme and phoneme levels, reading and spelling in English through quasi-experimental method. These activities have been very helpful for the researcher to develop the intervention program.

Out of the eight studies reviewed for phonological awareness, two studies explain interventions to enhance phonological awareness, two studies explain the relationship between English oral language and early literacy skills. Phonological awareness is a significant aspect to inculcate the reading skills in pre-schoolers. One study on a long-term early intervention for struggling readers, one research on teaching grapheme – phoneme correspondence to teach reading. One research on effects of ERI (Early Reading Intervention,

Simmons &Kame'enui 2003) for enhancing PSF (phoneme segmentation fluency) and NWF (nonsense word fluency) for young children and Lesaux and Siegel (2003) on the effects of phonological awareness instruction on L1 and ESL, kindergarten and first grade children.

The research on phonics is very vast, the researcher chose four studies, out of which Jalaluddin and Hashim (2019) discuss the importance of early reading skills development among pre-schoolers and also understand the effect of synthetic phonics instruction for the young children. Wyse and Goswami (2008) also mentioned that synthetic phonics needs to be recommended to teach to young English learners. The researcher found this approach effective and planned to add activities related to synthetic phonics in the intervention.

Eight DIBELS studies were chosen by the investigator which were carried out in foreign countries. Berthelsen (2013). Billow C (2017), and Shante (2015) studied the extent of teachers' knowledge, also the impact of teaching phonological awareness on kindergarteners. Brice and Brice (2009) emphasised the importance of phonemic awareness and phonics skills for L1 and ESL children. Dotson (2019) observed that first grade DIBELS Next composite scores are good predictors of third grade TCAP ELA. Rao (2005) measured the effects of a supplemental reading intervention on phonemic awareness and alphabetic principle skills with the help of DIBELS scores, for children at-risk for reading failure to overcome challenges in English language.

The researcher found no Indian research on DIBELS carried out so far. The researcher sees the opportunity to implement the DIBELS tool for the first time, among pre-schoolers in India from its effectiveness of the studies reviewed.

5.8.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of the study is to enhance reading skills of pre-schoolers through an intervention programme. Various interventions, assessments to measure the improvement in reading skills and teaching methodologies have been discussed and reviewed. The researcher gained the insight of probable research design and tools to measure the reading skills as well plan activities which can be inculcated during the intervention. Phonological awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Fluency and Comprehension were found to be the significant components to enhance reading skills. Phonological Awareness training was found to be very effective in teaching phonemic awareness to students. It was successful in teaching young children how to manipulate phonemes in a variety of ways, including segmentation, blending, and deletion. Children's ability to read and spell improved in the short and long term as a result of the

training. Programs that concentrated on teaching one or two Phonological Awareness abilities had a greater impact on Phonological Awareness learning than programmes that taught three or more. Children learned Phonological Awareness skills faster when they were taught phoneme manipulation with letters than when they were taught without letters.

Children who were taught in small groups had bigger effect sizes on Phonological Awareness acquisition than children who were taught individually or in classroom-size groups. Students in lower grades, such as preschool and kindergarten, had bigger effect sizes in gaining Phonological Awareness than those in first and second grades.

Teaching that concentrated on one or two types of Phonological Awareness manipulations resulted in bigger impact sizes than teaching three or more. Using letters to teach toddlers how to manipulate phonemes have a greater impact than instruction without the use of letters. Multiple-skill education had a substantially smaller effect size on reading than blended and segmenting instruction. Individualized or classroom instruction had smaller effect sizes on reading than small group instruction. The length of training had an impact as well, with the shortest training having the smallest effect size. Although the effect size of classroom teachers was smaller than that of other trainers, their Phonological Awareness instruction was helpful in increasing transfer of reading. Computer-based phonological awareness training transferred to reading as well. The characteristics of the students also made a difference.

Kindergartners improved their spelling more than 1st graders. Children with a mid-to-high SES had a bigger effect size in spelling than students with a low SES. The effect of phonological awareness training in English on spelling was greater than that of phonological awareness training in other languages.

According to NRP (2000) findings, children who were taught one or two Phonological Awareness skills had better Phonological Awareness and better reading transfer than children who were given three or more Phonological Awareness abilities. The disparity could be explained in a variety of ways. Perhaps more pupils mastered the abilities that were taught as a result of focused instruction. Perhaps teaching numerous abilities muddled children's understanding of which manipulations to use in reading transfer tasks, or perhaps it confused their understanding of the alphabetic principle.Clarifying why children's advances in Phonological Awareness and reading demands may be limited by various skill teachings. When teaching phonological awareness abilities, it's best to teach them one at a time until they've learned them all before going on to the next, and to show children how each skill connects to reading and spelling assignments. The purpose of teaching first-sound comparisons is to direct the attention of pre-schoolers or kindergarteners to the notion that

words have both sounds and meanings. One motivation for teaching phoneme segmentation is to assist kindergartners and first graders in producing more comprehensive word spellings. The goal of teaching phoneme blending is to assist students in decoding words.

It's worth noting that when Phonological Awareness is taught using letters, it's considered phonics training. Synthetic phonics is defined as phonological awareness training that teaches kids to pronounce the sounds associated with letters and to mix the sounds to make words. When children are taught to segment words into phonemes and pick letters for those phonemes as part of Phonological Awareness training, they are being taught to phonetically spell words, which is a sort of phonics teaching. These phonics teaching methods existed long before the term "phonemic awareness training" was coined (Balmutha, 1982; Chall, 1967). Although it is a relatively recent concept to teach young children to manipulate sounds in spoken phrases, phonemic awareness training that involves segmenting and blending letters is not. The label is the only thing that's new. Because phonemes are the phonological units that correspond to letters, explicit education in the alphabetic principle must involve a focus on them. The incorporation of phonemic awareness training in phonics education is likely a major component contributing to its efficacy in teaching children to read, according to NRP studies.

Children engaged in a range of sound manipulation exercises, including isolating, segmenting, blending, and deleting phonemes; segmenting and blending syllables and onset-rime units; and working with rhyming words, as part of the overall treatment.Children exclusively practised segmenting and blending onsets, rimes, and phonemes in the concentrated treatment. Training was prolonged for ten weeks, with two 15-minute sessions per week for a total of five hours of training. Beginning in the fifth week, letter-sound associations were taught in both groups for the sounds that were being practised orally. In the Phonemic Awareness activities, however, children were not taught how to manipulate phonemes using letters. Only the letter-sound instruction was given to the third treatment, the control condition.

5.9 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

A child's foundational learning serves as the foundation for all subsequent learning. If a child does not master key core abilities such as reading comprehension, writing, and basic math operations, he or she will be unprepared for the complexities of the curriculum beyond grade 3. The National Education Policy 2020 recognises the importance of early learning and states,

"Our highest aim must be to achieve universal basic literacy and numeracy in primary school and beyond by 2025." If this most basic learning (i.e., foundational reading, writing, and arithmetic) is not first completed, the remainder of this Policy will be largely useless for such a big part of our kids." The Ministry of Education (MoE) is prioritising the establishment of a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy to this goal.

According to the World Children Report (1999), nearly a billion individuals enter the twenty-first century unable to read or write their names. All over the world the reading habit of children is waning. A nation's achievement of basic quality education depends on good reading habits of children and adults. Reading habits are best acquired in school at a young impressionable age, but once formed, they can last a lifetime. (Choudhary, 1990).

The present study was conceptualized two years ago.The mainstays of this study are mirrored in the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy's current complete guidelines for the implementation of foundational literacy and numeracy (NIPUN Bharat, 2021),which highlights the importance of early literacy measures and covers key technical aspects of foundational literacy and numeracy as well as administrative aspects of effectively setting up an implementation mechanism at the national, state, district, block, and school level, and was created after a series of in-depth discussions with implementing partners and experts in the field.

The National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (2021) aspires to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools by 2025, with all children achieving grade-level reading, writing, and numeracy competence. In addition, one of the mission's goals is to help children become more motivated, independent and engaged readers and writers with comprehension possessing sustainable reading and writing skills.

The National Education Policy 2020 recognises the importance of early learning and emphasises, "Our highest aim must be to achieve universal basic literacy and numeracy in primary school and beyond by 2026-27. The rest of the policy will be largely irrelevant for such a large portion of our students…" National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework, 2005 advocates for early measures saying, " The first six years of life are crucial because development occurs at a faster rate throughout these years than at any other time in life. Research in neuro-science confirms the importance of early years in a child's life, particularly since 90% of brain development has already taken place by the time a child is six years of age" (Mustard, 2007).

It takes longer to learn to read in languages with complicated spelling patterns, such as English, Portuguese, Tamil, or Urdu. Even deprived and malnourished children should be

able to decode and read fluently if the neural circuits used in reading are functional (though they may have difficulties in comprehension). Because many people do not get enough practise at home, it may take more teaching hours for them to become fluent. When a considerable number of pupils in grades 2 or higher are unable to read, the most likely cause is insufficient or incorrect instruction rather than poverty or malnutrition.

Reading is integral to many of our day-to-day activities and is perhaps the most crucial skill learnt in school. It is almost impossible to imagine how a child can have access to the content of a subject without reading. Children who do not learn to read during the early grades usually struggle with reading throughout their schooling (Juel,1988; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; Stanovich,1986). The better and wider the background of the pupil's understood language the greater his chance of success in learning to read, irrespective of other conditions. Hence, learning to read must be preceded and accompanied by a background of language experiences obtained through home and school. Stories must be told and read, pictures must be shown and books provided so that a variety of talk about everyday situations will produce a wide vocabulary of common words (Schonell,1961).

Reading is one of the most important skills that students must master to be successful educationally, occupationally, and socially. It enables students not only for learning, careers, and pleasure, but also for language acquisition (Heba, 2019). Reading is more than just understanding sounds, words, phrases, and the abstract components of language that linguists may study. Reading, like hearing, entails decoding and generating meaning from words. The reader brings a wealth of knowledge to this active and complex process (Goodman and Goodman, 1994). Stuart and Stainthorp (2016) discussed that every act of reading (R) involves recognizing and understanding written words (D, decoding) combined with understanding the sentences and texts the written words comprise (C, linguistic comprehension). They pointed out that reading is the result of the output from two sets of very complex, separable but linked processes (decoding, linguistic comprehension). Sadly, older class children cannot attain proficient levels of reading, because once poor reading trajectories are set, it is almost impossible to reverse the damage (Francis et. al,1996; Good et. al., 2009).

A study comparing the rate of development of word reading skills in children learning to read in nine European languages showed that learning to read words in English is more difficult than most other alphabetic languages (Seymour, Aro& Erskine, 2003). Children learning to read in English, these skills developed more than twice as slowly as those of beginners learning to read in Finnish, Spanish or Greek. The early stages of learning to read in this

language are more taxing in English, and it takes longer for children to become fluent. The difficulty lies in its orthography, the conventional spelling system of a language and the way it maps onto spoken language. If a child cannot read, the chances of grade retention, dropouts, difficulties with employment and basic life activities can increase significantly (Lyon, 2001). So, the long-term effects of early reading difficulties can prove to be disastrous, hence it should be a top priority to impart effective early reading instruction to young children.

The most important factor in reading instruction is the initial attitude the children exhibit. If the children can successfully read at the beginning, then they will persist in further efforts. (Schonell, 1961)

Family involvement can be a potentially potent element in improving/enhancing early learning and development. It is a well-known fact that a child's brain develops rapidly between the age 0-5. Any delay in developing in this period may set a child back permanently in terms of cognitive learning abilities.

Young children who are starting out to write with their fine hand motor skills, should be encouraged to practice at home. The teacher can give some basic guidelines in a call/video call to the parents for this. The parents can communicate with the teacher regarding the daily activities their child can undertake at home. If the child has any learning hitch/impairment, the teacher can guide the parents about it. The teacher can squeeze the syllabus, sifting out the most important points/competencies. In a detailed call explain it to the parents. Also, a checklist of learning points can be made for parents to monitor the progress at home. The teacher can recommend watching educational videos, also distribute some materials to parents to refer to. To continue the learning process in this adverse situation, and minimize the learning losses, this can prove to be an effective strategy. Storytelling, field trips with the family can engage the children meaningfully. In case of parents being not literate, older siblings can read to children. Children benefit immensely when parents and family members get involved and support in their learning. When parents are directed by teachers, they become more engaged in their children's learning, irrespective of their educational background.

Children benefit when parents and teachers work together as partners in education. Especially in early literacy practices, dialogic and shared reading help a lot. parent-child interactions at home were associated with students' increased code-related skills, including: Print knowledge and preschool phonological awareness (Cottone, 2012; Fielding-Barnsley and Purdie, 2003; Weigel et al., 2006). Many researches posit that letter - sound knowledge is one

of the most important factors of reading development (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Dehaene, 2011; Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001; Nation, 2019;Solheim, Frijters, Lundetræ, &Uppstad, 2018; Sunde, Furnes, &Lundetræ, 2019; Tønnesen&Uppstad, 2015). Dehaene (2011) argues that letter-sound correspondences must be systematically taught, one by one and that the amount of such teaching is the best predictor of reading performance.

Beginners should really be taught letters as well as phonemic awareness. When youngsters are taught to manipulate phonemes using letters, phonological awareness training is more successful. This is due to the fact that letter knowledge is required for reading and spelling. Learning all of the letters of the alphabet is difficult, especially for students who arrive at school knowing only a handful of them. Shapes, names, and sounds must be overlearned so that children can read and spell words automatically using them. If children lack letter recognition, this must be taught alongside phonological awareness.

In the report of National Reading Panel (NRP) (2019), it was found that Children who were taught Phonological Awareness for 5 to 18 hours had a significant impact on their ability to acquire phonemic awareness. For beginners, learning to read is a difficult task. To read effectively and fluently, they must coordinate a number of cognitive processes, including word recognition, sentence and text construction, and memory retention of the material read. For novices, understanding the alphabetic system, which includes letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns, as well as how to apply this knowledge in their reading, is an important element of the process. Systematic phonics instruction is a method of teaching reading that emphasises the learning of letter-sound correspondences and their application in reading and spelling words (Harris & Hodges, 1995).Beginners in the primary grades and children who are having problems learning to read will benefit from phonics teaching. Early phonics education was found to be far more successful than phonics instruction given after the first grade. Based on the association between letter-sound knowledge and reading skill, it seems reasonable to advocate learning letters and their sounds early on in the first year of school, to ensure that children have equal opportunity to learn how to read (Nation, 2019). In a practical setting this could mean that all children should be measured on letter knowledge when they start school. Children who have broken the reading code should be given the right challenges for their skill/action capacity to further promote their literacy (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). For those who have yet to break the reading code, effort should be put into acquiring enough letter-sound knowledge to start practicing decoding words (Hatcher, Hulme, & Ellis, 1994). As reading is the key to other keys in the

educational systems, these should be prioritized tasks in the first 1–2 years of school (Solheim et al., 2018).

From the research studies which are reviewed and discussed, it is evident that teaching reading skills early can help to resolve later reading problems among children. The investigator believes that developing/enhancing reading skills in English can be achieved early in school through a systematic programme in the classroom. The intervention programme is developed with this understanding and includes simple developmentally appropriate activities for kindergarteners to enable them to begin reading.

5.10 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Development and Implementation of a Programme for Enhancing Reading Skills in English Language of Senior Kindergarten Students.

5.11 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To develop a programme for enhancing Reading Skills in English Language of Senior Kindergarten Students
- To implement the programme for Senior Kindergarten Students for enhancing their Reading Skills
- To study the effectiveness of the programme using DIBELS Next tool

5.12 HYPOTHESIS

The following null hypothesis was formulated to achieve the above stated objectives of the proposed study.

- There will be no significant difference between the mean achievement score of reading skills of the Senior KG students in pre- test and post-test.

5.13 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How will the reading skills enhancement programme for English language improve the reading skills of English medium Senior KG students?

2. How will the enhancement of reading skills in English language help Senior KG students in English language comprehension?
3. What could be the conducive environment for learning reading skills in Senior KG students?
4. To what extent can reading be developed /enhanced in Senior KG students?

5.14 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher selected the experimental design for the intervention program developed to enhance the reading skills in English among the senior KG students. The experimental method provides a logical, systematic way to answer the question." If this is done under carefully controlled conditions, what will happen?" (Best and Kahn, 2011). The researcher chose Quasi-Experimental Design for this purpose. Pretest-Posttest Nonequivalent Groups Design was suitable for the intervention program. As Best and Kahn (2011) suggest, the Pretest-Posttest Nonequivalent Groups Design is used in the classroom experiments when experimental and control groups are such naturally assembled groups as intact classes. To improve the strength of the study the researcher made the groups equivalent on the pre-test achievement in English. The design of the study can be presented as below.

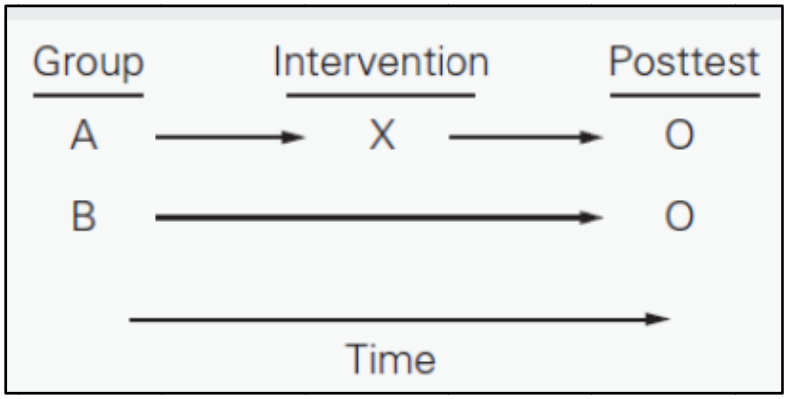


Figure 5.1 Framework of Pretest Posttest Nonequivalent Groups Design

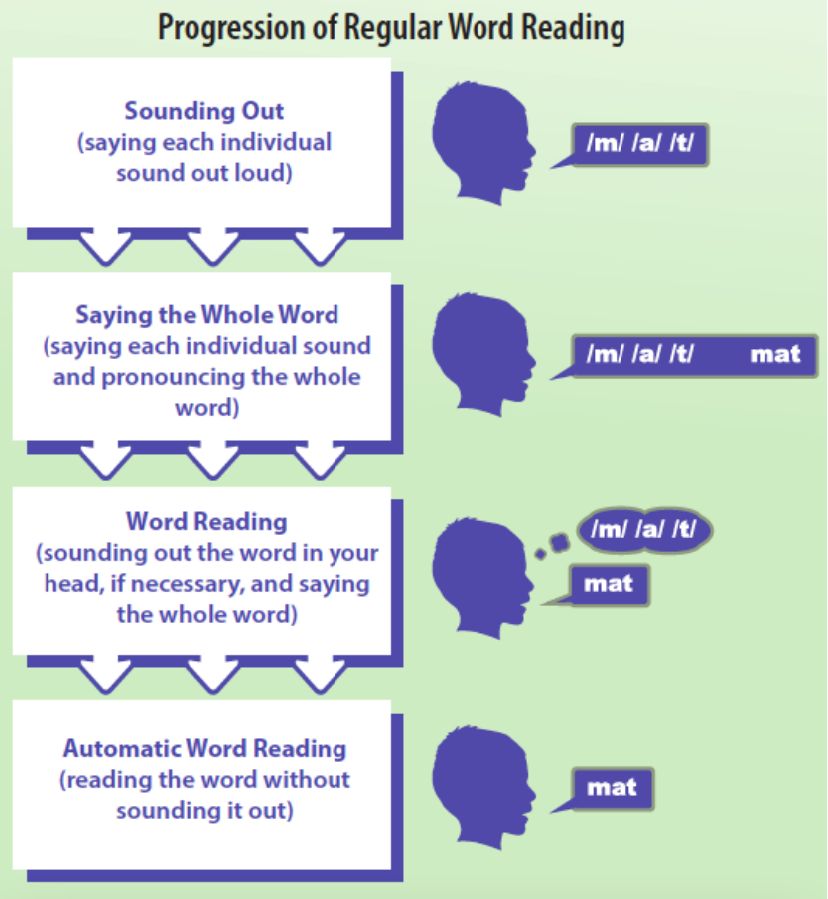
Figure 5.1 explains the framework of this research design. Group A represents the Experimental Group and Group B the Control Group. X stands for the intervention program. The researcher selected a class of senior kindergarten students for the experiment and the students were divided into two groups – Experimental Group and Control Group. In the pre-test, the fundamental early literacy skills of the English language were assessed through a standardized assessment tool. The scores measured for both the groups in the pre-test were

used to make the groups equal. The intervention was implemented among the students of the experimental group and the control group was following the traditional learning methods used by teachers. During, post-intervention time, the early literacy skills were measured again among the experimental and control group.

5.15 EXPLANATION OF THE TERMS

- Phonological Awareness: It is the ability to manipulate the sounds in language. It is the ability to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds, phonemes, in spoken words. It involves skills like rhyming, counting the number of words in a sentence spoken aloud, identifying the first sound in a word, and segmenting a word into its sounds.
- Phonemic Awareness: It is a part of phonological awareness. It is the ability to hear and manipulate individual phonemes. For example, the /k/ sound in the word 'cat'. Both phonological awareness and phonemic awareness focus on sound in words, they do not involve print (alphabet letters or words). These skills are practiced by only speaking and listening.
- Alphabet knowledge: Alphabet knowledge refers to knowing the names, sounds, and shapes of individual letters.
- Alphabetic Principle: Connecting letters with their sounds to read and write is called "Alphabetic principle". For example, a student who knows that the written letter "c" makes the /k/ sound is demonstrating the Alphabetic Principle. The goal of phonics is Alphabetic Principle, it has two parts:
    3. Alphabet understanding is knowing that words are made up of letters that represent the sounds of speech.
    4. Phonological recoding is knowing how to translate the letters in printed words into the sounds they make to read and pronounce the words accurately.

  The chart below explains how the alphabetic principle leads to word reading



(Source- National Center on Improving Literacy, 2018)

Figure 5.2 Alphabetic principle leading to Word Reading

- Decoding Skills (Phoneme Blending): Decoding is a process of letter-sound correspondence for recognizing words. When a student can hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds, phonemes, in spoken words and can combine the phonemes to form a word, it is known as blending. When a student can blend individual sounds to make up a word, that process is called decoding. For example, /c/ /a/ /t/ is cat. Decoding skills are very crucial to form words from their sounds.
- Encoding Skills (Phoneme Segmentation): Encoding is a process of breaking a word into separate sounds, phonemes. This is how you learn to spell a word phonetically. For example, there are four sounds in the word cream:/k/ /r/ /ea/ /m/. Encoding skills are very important to learn to spell.
- Phonics: Phonics is a process of teaching students to correlate an individual sound with its corresponding letter or letter group, basically matching the sounds of spoken English with individual letters or letter groups. For example, the sound k can be spelled as c, k,

ck or ch. Phonics builds upon a foundation of phonological awareness, especially phonemic awareness.

- Vocabulary: Vocabulary is a set of familiar words used and understood by a student to communicate in these four reading skills- listening, speaking, reading or writing.
- Reading Comprehension: Reading Comprehension is the ability to process text, understand its meaning, and integrate with what the student already knows. It is the ultimate goal of learning to read.

5.16 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population for the study comprised all the students of the English medium senior KG students in 36 Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation-run Nagar PrathamikShikshanSamiti preschools of Ahmedabad city during the year 2019 -2020.

5.17 SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The sample of the study was selected using purposive sampling method. The researcher selected Naranpura public School, Sola run by Nagar Shikshan Prathmik Samiti, Ahmedabad Municipality Corporation Public Kindergarten School. The due permission was taken to conduct data collection and for the implementation of the intervention for senior kindergarten students.

There were 47 students in the class of senior kindergarten. Students were divided into two groups – the Experimental Group (20 students) and the Control Group (20students). A pre-test was administered on both the groups after obtaining permission from the District Primary Education Officer, Ahmedabad. Based on the pre-test scores of early literacy skills in the English language, the experimental and control group were made equivalent. Creswell (2012) describes this process as a process of identifying one or more characteristics which can influence the outcome and assigning individuals with that characteristic equally to the experimental and control group. Matching of the groups reduces the risk of selection bias. After matching the groups based on pre-test scores, the sample size was 20 in both experimental and control group. The researcher made sure that both the groups had no prior knowledge of any of the fluencies that were tested for.

5.18 PHASES OF THE STUDY

The present study was carried out in three phases from the development of an intervention to analysis.

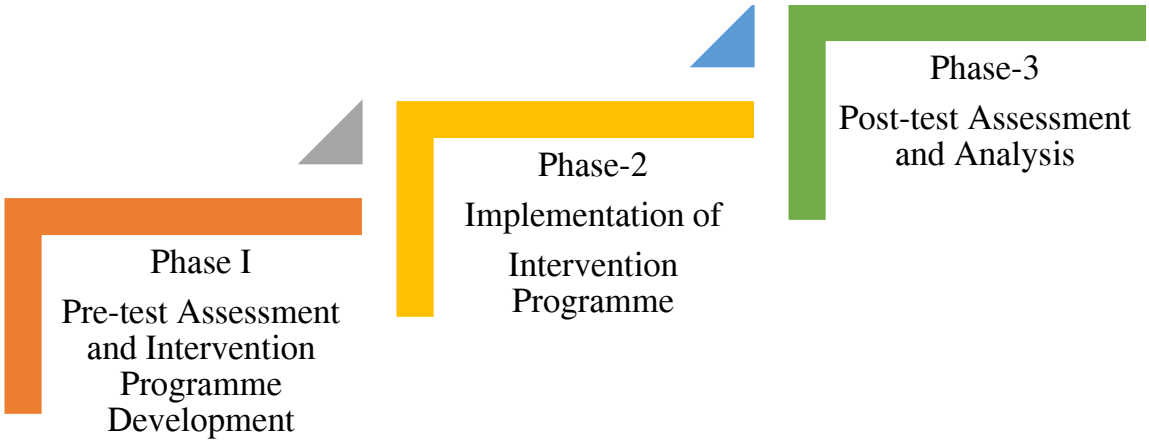


Figure 5.3 Phases of the Study

A brief description of all phases is defined as below,

Phase 1: Pre – Test Assessment and Intervention Programme Development

In this phase, the researcher developed the intervention programme for enhancing Reading Skills of senior KG students. After researching many programmes on Reading and Reading skills Enhancement, the researcher felt that for senior KG students, it would be important to enhance developmentally appropriate reading skills in phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. For this purpose, the design of the intervention was conceptualized. The testing of the skills would be in FSF (First Sound Fluency), LNF (Letter naming Fluency), PSF (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency), and NWF (Nonsense Word Fluency) according to students' appropriate age mentioned in the DIBELS Next tool, which is 4.5 to 5.5 years. So, with careful planning, the researcher charted out activities to develop these fluencies in a joyful manner, with the help of many audio-visual rhymes, stories, exercises and innovative classroom teaching. The point was to make the young children interested in reading without a burden and involve them in it effortlessly. The researcher personally carried out the pre-test comprising of four fluencies according to the DIBELS Next for kindergarten, First Sound Fluency, Letter Naming Fluency, Phoneme segmentation Fluency, and Nonsense Word Fluency in the last week of November, 2019 before the

beginning of the intervention program. The investigator prepared various activities based on the fluencies which needed to be enhanced for improving the reading skills of the children of the experimental group.

Phase 2: Implementation of Intervention

The activities on enhancing the basic four fluencies for phonological awareness and other reading skills were prepared after the pre-test results. The children needed to have basic Alphabetic Knowledge to start with. The intervention program began on December 2, 2019 and finished on March 17, 2020, lasing 60 days. The activities included recognizing both the alphabets, the sounds of alphabets, playing songs on the laptop to introduce the sounds of each alphabet, simple stories, songs and rhymes for about 45 minutes every session. The children participated with enthusiasm and looked forward eagerly to the sessions.

Phase 3: Post - Test Assessment

The DIBELS Next assessments are intended to be markers of early literacy skills. Each metric is a rapid measurement of a child's progress in mastering a certain early literacy skill. Phonemic Awareness is measured through FSF (First Sound Fluency) and PSF (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency). Alphabetic Principle and Phonics are measured from NWF (Nonsense Word Fluency) which checks correct letter sounds and whole words read.

Four sheets comprising of four different fluencies were prepared. Children from the experimental group and control group were tested. Each fluency lasted a minute and the correct responses were underlined and wrong responses were slashed.

5.19 TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

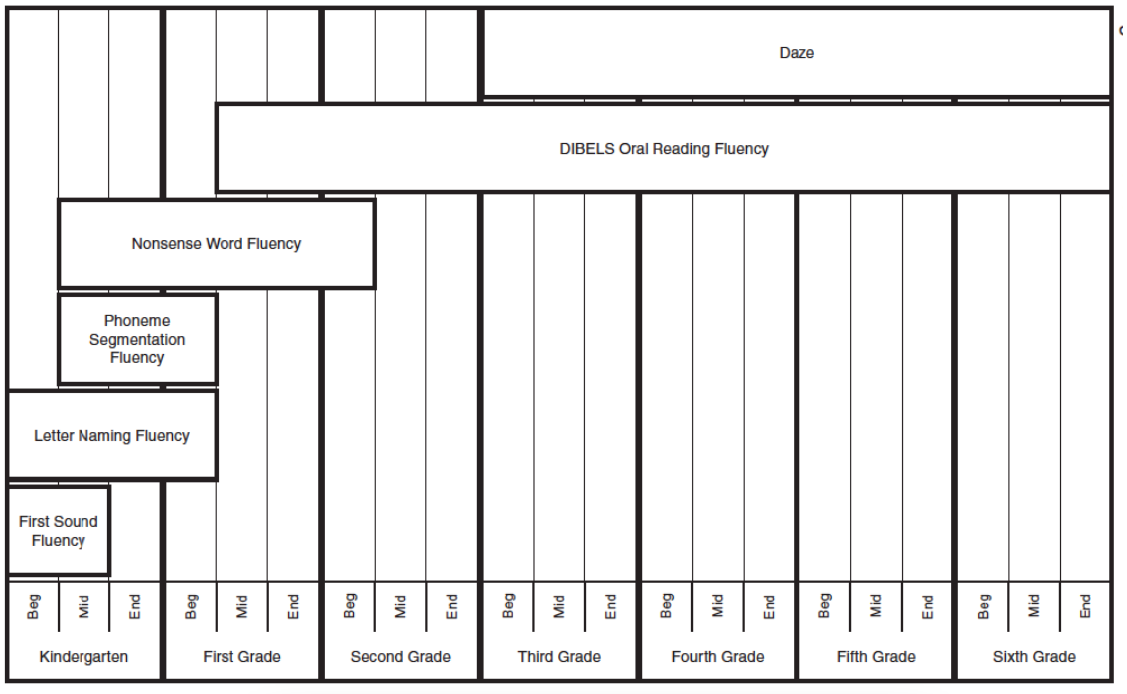
The researcher visited the five Nagar PrathamikShikshanSamiti Ahmedabad Municipality Corporation-run schools and proposed them to allow for data collection and the implementation of the programme for reading skills enhancement of senior KG students. One school agreed and allowed the researcher for data collection. The researcher visited a school, met school teachers of pre-primary classes and observed the teaching approaches used for senior KG students especially for English language teaching. Then, the researcher conducted a pre-test assessment by using DIBELS Next tool to measure the existing knowledge of senior KG students for English language reading. The same DIBELS Next tool would measure the post-test assessment after the implementing the intervention. Both pre-test and post-test assessments were conducted on worksheets and scoring was done based on the

responses given by the senior KG students. The scores were analysed statistically to measure the effectiveness of the intervention.

5.19.1 DIBELS Next

DIBELS Next (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) is a set of measurements used to assess early literacy and reading skills in kindergarten through sixth grade students. The DIBELS Next is a significant tool to keep track of how well elementary students are learning to read. It's a series of methods and tests for evaluating the learning of a set of K-8 reading abilities such Phonemic Awareness, Alphabetic Principle, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension that every child must master to become a proficient reader (National Reading Panel, 2000; National Research Council, 1998).

According to the DIBELS Next Assessment Manual, 2011, it can be used in two ways: Benchmarking and Progress Tracking. The DIBELS Next can be employed as a problem-solving, prevention-oriented approach for early reading acquisition (Good, Gruba, et al., 2001). One of the main reasons for using DIBELS Next is that it is one of the few tests that can assess fluency as well as phonological and alphabetic understanding (Rathvon,2004). This tool assesses fluency in the first sound, letter naming, phoneme segmentation, and Nonsense Word Fluency for Kindergarten students which directly measures the Basic Early Literacy Skills like Phonemic Awareness, Alphabetic Principle and Basic Phonics.



(Source – DIBELS Assessment Manual)

Figure 5.4 – DIBELS Next Benchmark Administration Timeline

Figure 5.4 explains the grade-wise distribution fluencies, which can be enhanced in a student should be equipped with for good reading skills. For senior KG students First Sound Fluency (FSF), Letter naming Fluency (LNF), Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF), and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) are the foundational early literacy indicators which DIBELS Next measures quickly and efficiently (The DIBELS Next Manual, 2011).

The DIBELS Next assessments are designed to be quick fluency tests (one minute) that can be used to detect risk and track the development of early literacy and reading skills in kindergarten through eighth grade. The tool was created to assess skills that have been experimentally validated and are connected to general reading results. Each subtest has undergone extensive investigation and has been shown to be a reliable and relevant measure of early literacy progress. DIBELS data, when used as directed, can be used to assess individual student progress as well as offer grade-level feedback on validated instructional objectives.

Table 5.1 - Alignment of DIBELS Next Measures with Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS Next Assessment Manual, 2011)

	Basic Early Literacy Skills	**DIBELS Indicators**
1	Phonemic Awareness	First Sound Fluency (FSF)
		Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)
2	Alphabetic Principles & Basic Phonics	Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)
		Correct Letter Sounds
		Whole Word Read
3	Advanced Phonics & Word Attack Skills	DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF)
		Accuracy
4	Accurate & Fluent Reading of Connected Text	DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF)
		Correct Word /Minute
		Accuracy
5	Reading Comprehension	Daze
		DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF)
		Correct Word /Minute
		Retell / Total / Quality of Response
6	Vocabulary & Language Skills	Word Use Fluency - Revised
		(Available as an experimental measure from https://dibels.org/)

(Source - DIBELS Next Assessment Manual, 2011)

As per the DIBELS Next Manual 2011, the main four fluencies which will be assessed on kindergarten students are explained below along with their relationship with the reading skills.

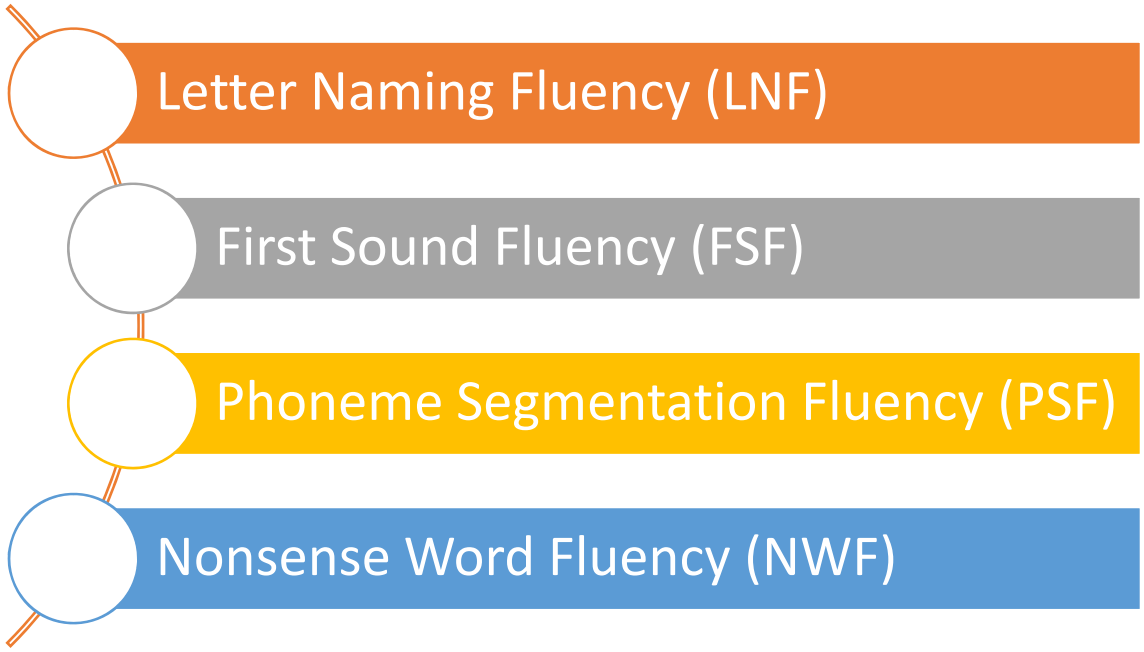


Figure 5.5 DIBELS Fluencies

Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)

Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) is a quick and easy way to assess a student's ability to name letters. The LNF test measures a student's ability to recognise and pronounce individual letters. The assessor hands the student a page with upper- and lower-case letters placed in a random order and asks them to name them using usual guidelines. The assessor will note any letter names that are read incorrectly or skipped. The student's final grade is based on how many correct letter names he or she can say in one minute. Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) is a test that assesses a student's automaticity in naming letters. The ability to name letters fluently is a potent and reliable predictor of future reading success (Adams, 1990). Because the goal of the LNF materials is to test fluency rather than which letters a student knows or doesn't know, all letters are presented in a random order.

As a result, it serves as an additional risk signal for children who are still in elementary school. Students must be able to recognise, name, and associate letters with their matching sounds in order to read an alphabetic writing system such as English (Troia, 2004).

The five fundamental components of early literacy do not include letter naming. Most of the kindergarten students have only a basic understanding of letter names, they may speak the letters' names in order and sing the alphabet song. Many students may quickly distinguish

the letter forms and print signals of their favourite retailers or cuisines since they are surrounded by environmental print.All of these encounters serve as a gateway to the printed word. The practical implication of learning letter names through music and rhythm is that teaching the visual representation for each letter follows easily and almost naturally.Recognizing environmental print provides children with the understanding that print has meaning. Knowing letter names is disputed in terms of understanding the alphabetic principle because knowing letter names is not a must for reading success. Despite this, knowledge of letter names in kindergarten is a significant and reliable predictor of subsequent reading success (Adams, 1990), and it has a long-term association with phonological awareness (Adams, 1990, Kaminski & Good, 1996; Scarborough, 1998; Stahl & Murray, 1994; Wagner et al., 1994) (DIBELS Next Assessment Manuel, 2011).

First Sound Fluency (FSF)

First Sound Fluency (FSF) is a new DIBELS Next metric. The FSF is a quick way to assess a student's ability to recognise the first sounds of words. A critical phonemic awareness skill associated to reading acquisition and success is the ability to separate a word's first sound (Yopp, 1988). Because it is easier to isolate and identify the first phoneme in a word than it is to segment words or manipulate phonemes in words, the FSF is used as a test of developing phonemic awareness in kindergarten. The researcher uses standardised directions to say a series of words to the student one at a time and asks them to say the beginning sound in each word. On the score page, the assessor circles the relevant sound or collection of sounds that the student says. Students are given two points for stating the initial phoneme of a word (for example, /s/ for street) and one point for saying the first consonant blend, consonant plus vowel, or consonant blend plus vowel (for example, /st/, /str/, or /strea/ for street). If the student gives any of the correct answers for the word, the response is considered correct. The overall score is determined by the number of right 1- and 2-point responses given in one minute by the student. Due to the use of differential scoring for student replies, young pupils might obtain partial credit for exhibiting basic phonemic awareness skills.Even if a student is unable to isolate the first phoneme, /s/, he or she will be granted partial credit for providing the first group of sounds in the word, demonstrating an increasing understanding of how words are constructed from sounds. Regardless of partial credit, the goal is to be able to pronounce the first phoneme of each word correctly (DIBELS Next Manual, 2011).

Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)

DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) Phoneme Segmentation Fluency is the next sign for Phonemic Awareness of Basic Early Literacy Skills. The Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) is a quick and easy way to assess the phonemic awareness of students. It evaluates a student's ability to break down a spoken phrase into its' constituent elements, or sound segments. The facilitator says a word and then instructs the student on how to pronounce the sounds in the word. The assessor underlines each accurate sound segment that the student says. Any separate, accurate part of the word that the student says is referred to as a correct sound segment. The overall score is the number of right sound segments said in one minute by the learner.If the examiner says fish and the student says /f/ /i/ /sh/, the student has segmented the word into its component sounds entirely and accurately, and the score is 3 correct sound segments. The score is two correct sound segments if the student states /f/ /ish/. Partial segmentation receives partial credit. While a student developing phonemic awareness may not be able to segment words into individual sounds, he or she may be able to segment words into sections. One point is awarded to a pupil who correctly pronounces the first sound of the word sun (/s/). A student receives 2 points for successfully segmenting all of the phonemes in the word (/s/ /u/ /n/), and 3 points for correctly segmenting the onset and rime (/s/ /un/). Two or more phonemes must be produced individually in order for a student to obtain full credit for a consonant blend. For example, a student who says /tr/ /a/ /p/ gets partial credit of 3 points, while a student who says /t/ /r/ /a/ /p/ gets full credit of 4 points. Partially granting credit in scoring raises the measure's sensitivity, allowing it to track growth from partial to total segmentation. Although partial credit is provided, by the conclusion of kindergarten, pupils should be able to completely segment words at the phoneme level.

Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)

Nonsense Word Fluency with Correct Letter Sounds and Whole Words Read are DIBELS indicators for Alphabetic Principle and Basic Phonics of Basic Early Literacy Skills.

NWF uses phonetically normal make-believe (nonsense or pseudo) words as test items. Students must use their knowledge of letter-sound correspondence and also how to blend sounds into whole words to successfully complete the NWF task. According to Rathvon, 2004 NWF is a good indicator of Alphabetic principle, since pseudo words do not have a lexical entry and thus it provides a relatively pure assessment of students' ability to apply grapheme- phoneme knowledge in decoding.

The student is asked to read randomly placed vowel-consonant and CVC words,(e.g. rit, cit, git, mot, vot, sot), and the assessor underlines each correct sound produced either in isolation or blended together.
Number of Correct Letter Sounds(CLS) and number of Whole Words Read(WWR) without sounding out in one minute are underlined by the assessor.

5.19.2 ADMINISTRATION OF DIBELS Next

DIBELS Next test for reading skills is a set of measures for assessing the acquisition of Basic Early Literacy Skills. The pre-test and the post-test measured the four fluencies, FSF, PSF, LNF and NWF suitable for the Senior Kindergarten students. Phonemic Awareness is measured through FSF (First Sound Fluency) and PSF (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency). Alphabetic Principle and Phonics are measured from NWF (Nonsense Word Fluency) which checks correct letter sounds and whole words read.
Four sheets comprising of four different fluencies were prepared. Children from the experimental group and control group were tested. Each fluency lasted a minute and the correct responses were underlined and wrong responses were slashed.

5.19.3 ACTIVITIES FOR READING ENHANCEMENT IN ENGLISH

Many varied activities were included for enhancing reading skills in English for senior KG students in the intervention programme. The senior Kindergarten students of Naranpura Public School, Sola did not have Alphabetic Knowledge of both the cases, lower and upper. Hence the researcher first imparted the Alphabetic Knowledge to the students for about ten days before the intervention began.

In the intervention, the students were encouraged to recognize letters, form words, identify in print and read words through play-based activities on the blackboard and the researcher's computer. The magnetic board was used to entice them for letter recognition, and the sound of the particular letter. The letter-sound correspondence of simple words was sounded out by the researcher speaking each sound of the letter slowly for the students to understand that words are made up of these sounds spoken together. These phonological awareness activities helped them understand the connection of sound to the alphabet and vice versa. Then segmenting and blending sounds were explained and how they make up words and sentences.

The activities for separating first sound (initial), middle (medial) sound and the last (final) sound of a three letter words were carried out. The researcher spoke a word slowly, to enable students to identify the sounds in it, e.g. man. Then asked students to identify all three sounds, /m/, /a/, /n/; first, medial and last. When the students did, the researcher asked them to speak it fast, n thus showing them how to blend sounds into a word. The researcher made colourful chits with the first letter of the students' names written on them and asked them to pick up the one containing their name letter.

The alphabetic song was daily played on the laptop, and just in a few days, students started singing along it. Rhymes and songs were sung every day. Students were given worksheets containing both the cases alphabets with pictures for revision. For rhyming exercise, words like man-pan-can- fan, rug-bug-pug-mug where the first sound was different but last two same, were practised. Also, some rhymes on the laptop were played after the session. The researcher also made chits first with their names and then rhyming names with first sound different and last two sound same, e.g., Hitesh-Ritesh. For a child, her name is one of the most important words for her. Learning it can lead to other types of learning, so this activity is very important. Also, with repeated practice they learnt their classmates' names, and built a strong classroom community along with building letter-sound knowledge. The students once they learnt rhyming and their name spellings, were able to find matching rhyming names.

Every day stories were told at the end of the 45-minute session. The students looked forward to that time eagerly. The Thirsty Crow was the most favourite story, the students gathered around the researcher to see the animated story on the laptop. Also, the story was visualised with a finger puppet of a crow, a pot of water and pebbles. The children were thrilled to see it and supplied many words like here and there, pebbles, one-by-one.

5.20 COMPONENTS OF ACTIVITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT OF READING SKILLS

Learning to read is a combination of many skills including letter recognition, decoding skills, phonics, phonemic/phonological awareness, building vocabulary, comprehending the meaning of words and memorizing sight words. Hence the researcher employed many activities simultaneously for the enhancement of the reading skills in the intervention programme.

Table 5.2 Activities for Enhancement of Reading Skills

No	Component	Activities
1	Alphabet Knowledge	Upper –Lower case alphabet on the blackboard/magnetic board, songs on Alphabet on the laptop, reading from books, Charts on walls of the classroom about alphabet, fruits, birds, vehicles, etc. Writing their names on colourful chits
2	Phonological awareness	Phonetic Sounds of letters of the Alphabet, First Sound, Medial Sound, last sound of three letter words, Phoneme Segmentation of words, Blending of letters. Rhyming games like "Simon Says, touch the body part that rhymes with 'land'" (each student would touch her hand.) The researcher spoke a word slowly, to enable students to identify the sounds in it, e.g. man. Then asked students to identify all three sounds, /m/, /a/, /n/; first, medial and last. When the students did, the researcher asked them to speak it fast, n thus showing how to blend sounds into a word.], songs and poems that emphasize rhyming or manipulation of sound were sung.
3	Phonemic awareness	Games like "I Spy", where the researcher would say, "I spy something that begins with the sound /b/." Students would look around the classroom for an item that begins with that sound. Similar exercise with pictures or small objects. A group of picture cards that begin with /t/, like 'tub' and /d/, like 'dog'. Then ask students to sort these pictures by their beginning sounds.
4	Phonics	soft and hard sounds of the letters, Diagraphs, Diphthongs, blended letter sounds, long vowels,

		short vowels
5	Fluency	Repeated stories and words drill
6	Comprehension	Stories, Songs with action
7	Rhymes	Singing and listening to rhymes on the laptop to make children understand the relationship between print and speech/sound

5.21 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The researcher started the intervention on the experimental group of 20 students of Senior Kindergarten of Naranpura Public School. The intervention was continued for 60 days, from December 2, 2019 to March 17, 2020. The programme was for about 45 minutes per day.

5.22 DATA COLLECTION

The investigator went to the AMC School Board Office and met the District Primary Education Officer, and obtained permission to conduct the intervention programme in a Nagar Prathmik Shikshan Samiti Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation-run English medium school. There were 36 such schools and the researcher randomly selected five out of them and approached them to explain the reading skills enhancement programme. Out of these five schools, one agreed to let the researcher carry out the intervention, and it was taken as a sample for the study. The data was collected personally by the researcher from December 2019 to March 2020 administering DIBELS Next tool on the students of control and experimental groups.

The tool checked age-appropriate four fluencies-FSF (First Sound Fluency), LNF (Letter Naming Fluency), PSF (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency), and NWF (Nonsense Word Fluency) related to reading skills, suitable for the senior KG students of the school in the pre-test. After the implementation of the programme for 60 days, post-test was administered on both the groups to know the effectiveness of the intervention.

After the Diwali break 2019 in November end, the researcher personally administered the pre-test on the on the senior KG students of the Naranpura Public School, Sola. The administration of the pre-test was done on both, experimental and control group. The investigator explained the test prior to its administration to both the groups.

After the implementation of the intervention, the investigator carried out the post-test on both control and experimental group in March 2020. The same DIBELS Next tool was used to check the four fluencies-FSF (First Sound Fluency), LNF (Letter Naming Fluency), PSF (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency), and NWF (Nonsense Word Fluency) related to reading skills.

5.23 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The responses given by pre-schoolers were administered on worksheets and scoring was done based on the standardised scoring system of the DIBELS Next tool. The scores pre-test and post-test assessments of both Experimental and Control groups were entered into Microsoft Excel document. The data were coded and imported into SPSS software for further data analysis. As the sampling was done purposively, non-parametric statistics was used for data analysis. As the research design was quasi experimental in nature, non-parametric equivalent of t test, that is Mann-Whitney U-test was calculated on the post test scores of the control group and experiment group through SPSS 24.0.

5.24 MAJOR FINDNGS

- The intervention developed for the enhancement of the reading skills for English language was found effective for the Experimental Group.
- There was no significant difference found in the reading skills of English language of senior KG students who belonged to the Control Group.
- There was a significant difference found in the Phonological Awareness of senior KG students of the Experimental Group after the intervention programme.
- There was a significant difference found in the phonics of senior KG students of the Experimental Group after the intervention programme.
- There was a significant difference found in the first-sound fluency and segmentation fluency of senior KG students of the Experimental Group after the intervention programme.
- There was a significant difference found in the rhyming words and alphabetical knowledge of senior KG students of the Experimental Students after the intervention programme.
- There was a significant difference found in the long and short vowel and diagraphs of senior KG students of the Experimental Group after the intervention programme.

- There was a significant difference found in the nonsense word fluency of senior KG students of the Experimental Group after the intervention programme.

5.25 DISCUSSION

The intervention programme developed by the researcher had many joyful learner-centric activities for enhancing the reading skills of Senior KG students. These activities helped develop students' interest in reading. The experimental group got enough exposure to LSRW activities and the enhancement of their learning is reflected in the post-test results.

Objective 1 - To develop a program for enhancing Reading Skills in English Language of Senior Kindergarten Students.

The researcher explored many studies on teaching reading in English language to young students, and observed practices currently being employed in senior kindergarten schools of government schools in Ahmedabad. This helped her gain insights for the research design, tools to measure the reading skills and plan suitable activities to enhance them. The purpose of this intervention programme was to help students glide into the first grade with adequate skills to enable them to read easily and help them achieve their academic goals, in a joyful, age-appropriate method. The enhancement of five significant cornerstones of reading- Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension was kept in mind while designing the intervention. From the various reviews of the related literature, phonological awareness seemed to be very crucial for learning to read well (e.g., Ehri and Wilce, 1980.1985; Perfetti et al.,1987). There is a strong association between a child's ability to read and the ability to segment words into phonemes (Liberman et al., 1974). A child understands phonemic awareness with the appreciation of alliteration and rhyming. Also, research indicated that lack of phonemic awareness in children did not help to internalize the phonics lessons. With the ability to sound out (phonologically decode) a child is equipped with a self-teaching mechanism, which can be useful for learning to read, along with oral vocabulary knowledge. As described in Appendix 2, daily activities for the all five components of reading were planned for students for about an hour, lasting for 60 days.

Objective 2 - To implement the programme for Senior Kindergarten students for enhancing their Reading Skills.

The researcher designed a 60day intervention programme, especially for the Senior Kindergarten students of Naranpura Public School, Sola. The researcher obtained all necessary permissions to carry out the intervention from the District Primary Education

Officer School Board Office, Nagar Prathmik Shikshan Committee, Ahmedabad. The programme began on December 2, 2019 and ended on March 17, 2020.

The intervention programme contained activities to enhance phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension for about 45 minutes per day. In the beginning of the programme, the researcher devoted extra time to impart alphabetic knowledge, since the students did not have it. The pre-test was carried out before the programme began, on both, experimental and control group, after the Diwali break in November 2019. The investigator explained the test prior to its administration. Also, the post-test was administered at the end of the intervention programme on both the groups to check the effectiveness of the intervention, in March2020.

During the intervention, the students were encouraged to recognize letters, form different words, identify print and read words they see on wrappers, hoardings through play-based activities (phonics). The researcher spoke a word slowly, to enable students to identify the sounds in it, e.g. man. Then asked students to identify all three sounds, /m/, /a/, /n/; first, medial and last. When the students did, the researcher asked them to speak it fast, n thus showing how to blend sounds into a word.

Objective 3- To study the effectiveness of the programme using the DIBELS Next tool.

DIBELS Next tool was employed to be administered on the students of control and experimental groups. The tool checked age-appropriate four fluencies-FSF (First Sound Fluency), LNF (Letter Naming Fluency), PSF (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency), and NWF (Nonsense Word Fluency) related to reading skills, suitable for the senior KG students of the school in the pre-test.Learning to read combines many skills including letter recognition, decoding skills, phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, building vocabulary, comprehending the meaning of words and memorizing sight words. Hence the intervention programme included many activities simultaneously for the enhancement of reading skills.

The DIBELS Next tool can also indicate whether the child is ‘on track’ for learning to read, or maybe needs extra help for learning basic reading skills.Since the results showed a significant difference in all four fluencies in the experimental group children, it is evident that the intervention programme was effective, and the tool which has been used extensively over thousands of children in the USA and other countries was useful to test the reading skills of senior kindergarten students. The results indicated positive reading outcomes of the intervention programme.

5.26 CONCLUSION

Language is considered a significant tool to transmit thoughts. Neuroscience urges to utilize the 0-6 years of period of a child's life for maximum language input. It is essential that a child begins her schooling equipped with basic reading skills. Teaching young children to read is not only a challenging task, it has to be done in a way that children become lifelong readers. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that all children gain reading proficiency in the first year of school/kindergarten. The researcher strongly feels that the intervention programme which incorporated effective research-based instructional strategies, helped children break the reading code, and thus motivated them by instilling a sense of confidence to tackle their learning easily and/ enable the kindergarteners a smooth transition into the primary classes.

5.27 RECOMMENDATION OF THE STUDY

From the experience of the study, below mentioned *are the aspects which needs attention for further research and training development.*

- There is a huge scope of research in reading development field, especially in the area of lower SES, ORF (Oral Reading Fluency). After children learn to decode (read) print, how they can learn to read with better comprehension and also learn to encode (spell) is an area which deserves further research.
- Training programme can be developed based on five cornerstones of reading skills enhancement recommended by National Reading Panel, United States and implemented for the professional development of pre-school teachers and students who are enrolled in preschool education courses.