

Improving Reading Comprehension through Picture Books in Primary

Grades: A Study at Ak/Al-Muneera Junior College, Addalaichenai

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a vital skill for young learners, particularly in English as a second language (ESL) context. This study explores the use of picture books as a tool to enhance reading comprehension among Tamil-medium Grade 4 and 5 students at Ak/Al-Muneera Junior College, Addalaichenai. Given the linguistic and cognitive development stage of primary learners, picture books serve as a bridge between visual literacy and text understanding, making them ideal for young ESL learners who face challenges in vocabulary, sentence structure, and inferencing. The study adopts a qualitative approach supported by simple pre- and post-tests to measure improvements in comprehension. A purposive sample of 30 students (15 from Grade 4 and 15 from Grade 5) was selected. Over a four-week intervention period, students were exposed to a series of graded English picture books with guided reading sessions, group discussions, and follow-up activities such as sequencing, storytelling, and vocabulary matching. Findings indicate that the use of picture books significantly increased students' ability to predict content, identify main ideas, and make inferences. Visual support helped in decoding unfamiliar words and improved students' engagement and motivation to read. Teachers also reported better participation during reading activities, especially among low-proficiency learners. The study concludes that integrating picture books into the English curriculum can be an effective method to support reading comprehension development in Tamil-medium primary learners. It recommends teacher training on how to use picture books strategically and calls for more contextualized materials that relate to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Keywords: Picture books, reading comprehension, primary education, ESL learners, visual literacy