

# Graphical reading as a trigger for English language learning

Developing reading skill in English among class 1 students is very challenging though they are well versed with the alphabet. In the earlier days I used to make the children read alphabet, two-letter words, three-letter words and four-letter words using drilling methods. Last year my class 1 students could read more than 60 words at the end of the first term. I thought it was a great achievement. But I found that it didn't help them in reading with sense. So I shifted to the phonetic method. Students made an attempt to pronounce the words. But, they could read only to some extent. Though they were capable of reading words it didn't prepare them for sensible reading. Later, I realized that reading some words or sentences was not going to help the learners to develop their reading skills.

## The concept of graphical reading

After participating a workshop at Azim Premji Foundation with Dr. K.N. Anandan I came to know about graphic reading. Graphic reading is a method of holistic reading where children observe the graphical structure of the whole idea



(words and sentences) and register it in their mind holistically. They use this mental

representation while reading and writing. In this method, students may not have the knowledge of

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alphabet. Actually, during this process alphabet is not introduced to the students. A good example is using name cards to read and write their names. Name card is a long strip of paper in which the name of the child is written in front of him. Students see their name cards daily and after some time they are able to identify their names from the bunch of name cards. They can also write their names holistically using the graphical structure. Syllable-wise reading is also co-related with the process of graphical reading.

## Translating the concept into classroom practice

In class one, graphical reading has worked very well. In my class, I saw the improvement in the reading ability of the students. There was an activity in which students drew an object and wrote about it. In this activity children drew pictures of their choice objects like car, house, fish, fan, snake, tiger, drum, tree, mango etc. They also wrote sentences like 'This is a car; 'This is a house'; 'This is a mango,' etc. below the pictures. Many of them did not know the name of each



letter but they could point out and read the whole sentence “THIS IS A CAR” with sense.

The effect of graphic reading was noticed when I was taking the prose lesson “Lalu and Peelu”. In the beginning I narrated the story with the help of pictures and interaction and then elicited and wrote the central ideas from the text (which worked as a sub text) on the board. After the narration, I asked the learners to identify the subtext that I had written on the board. Students read it with sense and they hunted for those ideas in the textbook passage, individually. I also

asked the students to circle the words or phrases that they were able to read. To my wonder, they could identify many words and phrases from the passage. I then made them to sit in groups and asked them to share the words and ideas they could read with the group members. I moved to all the groups and helped them to read those words that were new to them. At the end of the class, learners were capable of reading the whole passage. Now, my students can identify these words and phrases wherever they appear.



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