

# CHAPTER – I

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Introduction

Academics performance depicts the learning outcomes of students. Reading and writing are two important basic skills for all school-based learning. Reading and writing ability has its social importance not only in literacy but also in socio – economic growth. (CE.Snow, MS.Burns, P. Griffin, 1998). “It is accepted that reading skill as an important skill that child should grasp at elementary level”. ( (Lyon G. , 1996); (K.E. Stankovic , G.R. Nathan , M.Vala-Rossi, 1986))

Students with below basic reading proficiency are two times at risk of being dropped out from school than who have basic reading ability (Education, July 2003). Therefore, the area of reading skills is very important for academic performance. There should be effective reading instruction for struggling readers. Researchers during past few decades have been trying to discover most effective reading instruction. They have succeeded in identifying several components of reading for effective reading instructions.

In India, many children facing such difficulties at schools do not have their problems identified until they start to perform very poor or fail in examination or even after dropout from the education process. Some children are labeled as lazy learners whereas some are called as slow learner or late developer since their academic performances are very poor. But no such initiatives are not taken to find the cause or the reality behind such problem. Children with difficulties in reading should be diagnosed as early as possible and should be assessed their reading ability.

Secondary level students are at a transition to secondary level from primary level. In the present study, researcher has tried to consider reading problem of secondary level students of rural co-ed schools in Howrah district. The purposes of the study were to design a “reading intervention for students with reading difficulties in order to improve their reading skills. The other purpose was to find if there is any effect of intervention on their academic performance”. The result of the study will be helpful for planning future intervention to address reading problem and it also help those students with reading difficulties as an assistance to improve reading skills.

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

In the present study, two theoretical aspects were used. One is explicit instruction which was used as instruction for reading intervention. Another is oral reading fluency which was trying to enhance up.

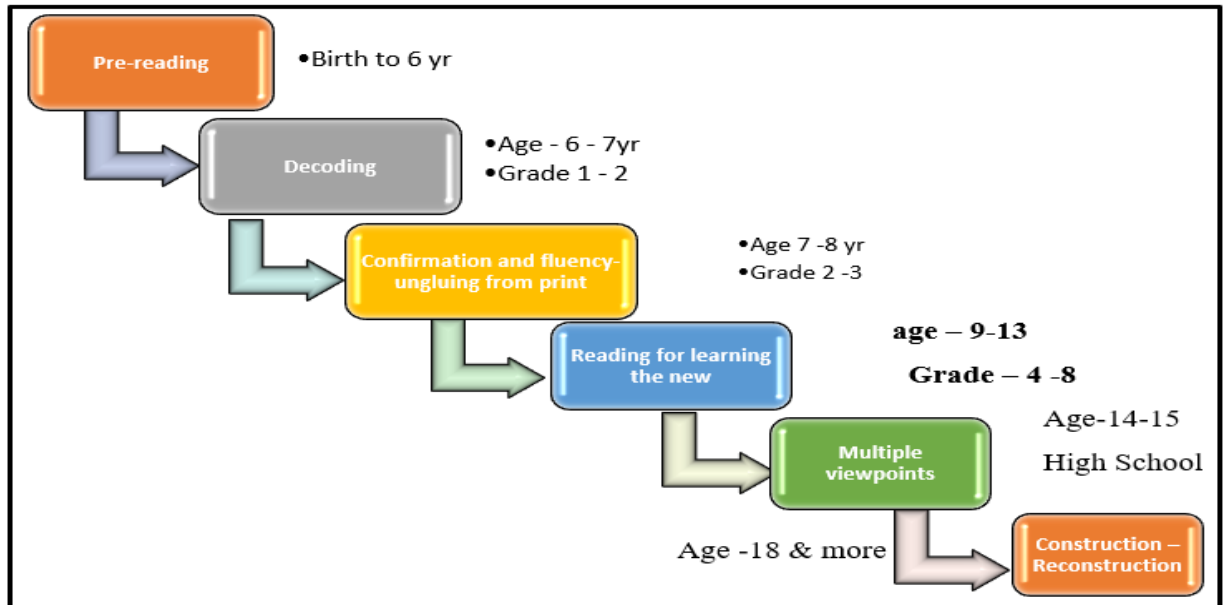
### **Explicit Instruction:**

**Torgesen (2004)** elicited that explicit instruction avoids chance factor and does not make assumptions on learner’s acquired skills and knowledge (J.Torgesen, 2004). Explicit instruction is described as an active process reflective teaching. In explicit instruction of reading, teacher recognizes that it is an iterative process for imparting of new information to students with effective teacher – learner interactions (W.H.Rupley , T.R. Blair , W.D. Nicols, 2009). Explicit instruction of reading fluency includes modelling and feedback. Instruction about reading fluency is to be modelled and implemented. Completion of each sub steps, there should be feedback session. It has observed that good readers engage themselves in reading process in fluency not only because of academic purposes but also, they enjoy it. In contrast, struggling readers need

to have explicit instruction about how to read fluently and to engage in fluent reading programs (R.M. Allinder , L.Dunse , C.D. Brunken , J.H. Obermiller-Krolikowski, 2001)

### **Reading fluency:**

There are many theoretical constructs which supports skill of oral reading fluency. Among them researcher would like to highlight Chall's model of reading development. Chall's (2003) model of reading development is based on which intervention of reading for oral reading fluency could be designed. There are six stages of reading development – “pre-reading, decoding, confirmation and fluency- ungluing from print, reading for learning the new, multiple viewpoints, and construction – reconstruction” (Chall, 1983). The major idea of the model is reading is developed with advancement at these stages. Consequently, failure in advancement in a stage may hinder reading development. Chall's reading development model supports the effectiveness of reading interventions for improving reading skills (Chall, 1983). This model also tells that “decoding and reading fluency enhance ability to understand text. To improve reading fluency development of higher-level reading skills, Interventions can be designed according to stages as outlined” by Chall.



**Fig - 1: Chall's Stage of Reading development<sup>1</sup>**

With above discussed theoretical concepts as framework, intervention for students with reading difficulties was designed.

### 1.3 Background of the problem

Reading skill may be considered as a basic skills of learning progress. It is very common for almost every young learner to face reading problem in starting phase of learn to read. As they progress through school, the ability of reading improves, and they acquire reading fluency. Whereas some students do not perceive reading skill improvement. Since reading is much needed for learning from subject text material, their inability of reading skills lags them in their learning. Thus, presence of reading difficulties may reflect their academic difficulty (S.S.Hamilton,P.F.Glascoe, 2006).

Reading is an essential component of learning which carries learners academic outcomes also. As a student progresses through school, their inability to acquire

<sup>1</sup> Chall, J.S., & Jacobs, V.A. (2003). Poor children's fourth grade slump. *American Educator* (J.S. Chall, V.A Jacobs, 2003)

appropriate reading skills may affect other subjects in school as reading is required for many subject areas. Hamilton and Glascoe (2006) suggested that, “the presence of reading difficulties may be indicative of continuing academic difficulty (S.S.Hamilton,P.F.Glascoe, 2006)”. “Student may have difficulties in different areas of reading. But they are not supposed to have any assistance in this area until second grade”. (D.J.Chard , E.J. Kameenui, 2000).

The basic area of reading skills of learners is phonics which consequently impacts their reading fluency (E.M.Bukowiecki, 2007). Again, trouble decoding, and fluency impacts on comprehension and their study material. This may lead them to face academic failure. Such failure in reading skills may last long. “Hamilton and Glascoe (2006) enumerate that in every 5 children, there is at least a child with reading difficulty. It is evident that 75% of children whose reading problems are not treated under consideration or no remedial be taken by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will continue to have trouble in reading throughout their education”, (S.S.Hamilton,P.F.Glascoe, 2006). Lyon argued that, “at least 38% of students are not reading at a basic skill by fourth grade (Lyon, Reading disabilities: Why do some children have difficulty learning to read, 2003)”. So, it is very important to address the reading difficulties and couldn't let these to impact on future learning. Grade 6 is the time when students are in a transition period of primary education into secondary level of education. Hence, it could be right time to take some initiatives to prevent of reading problem of those students with reading difficulties.

### **1.3.1 Reading Development**

There are five components of reading development. According to **Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2003)**, “reading development has five different components – Phonemic awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension (B.B. Armbruster,

2003)”. In reading development stages as described by Chall, these different areas are being developed one upon one. When a child begins to make sound, the reading developmental stage commences. Eventually they come to know that these sounds go together to make words and enter phonics stage. Once a child can sound out words in a read-text, they can build their fluency in their read-text. Thereafter, they build their vocabulary which enhance their comprehension skill. As reading development progresses, there may have some difficulty in some stages. The progress to the next developmental stages could not be assured until the present level achieved. Thus, to build successful reader, the stages of reading development are as follows:

⊖ **Phonemic awareness:**

“Phonemic awareness includes the ability to assure that child sounds letter to make words (International Reading Association, 1998)”. Individual with phonemic awareness skill can manipulate sounds to form words. It helped child to learn rhyme words and to separate beginning and ending sounds. The process of word recognition consists of Phonemic awareness and phonics. (E.M.Bukowiecki, 2007)

⊖ **Phonics:**

Phonics is the 2nd component of reading development. It also comes under the word recognition process in which individual associate letter and sound. To know each letters’ sound or group of letters have a specific sound which form words by combining these sounds. Phonic skills help in decoding words.

⊖ **Fluency:**

To become proficient reader student, require combination of skills – “word decoding, reading fluency, and comprehension”. Child achieved these skills at different

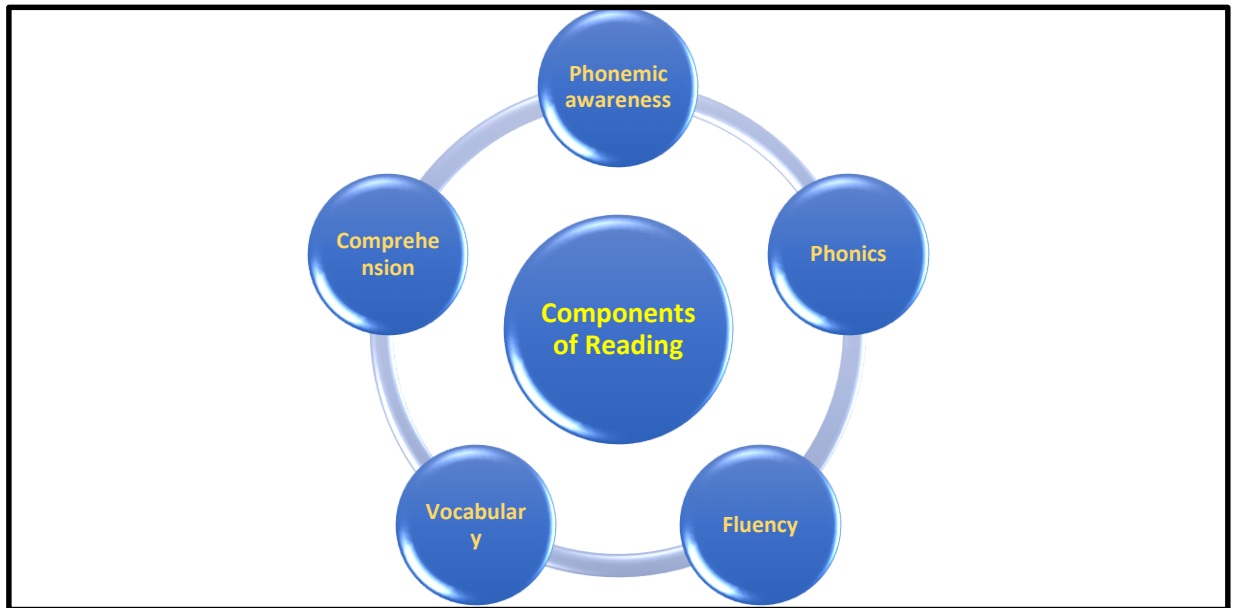
developmental stages. Reading fluency is the ability of reading a text efficiently and accurately. It is a combined skill of word decoding and comprehension. Students begin to build the fluency skill at first grade and become experts in the skill in grade – 3.

#### ⊕ **Vocabulary:**

Vocabulary is the ability of an individual to understand written or oral word meanings. Reading fluency helps to improve an individual's vocabulary skill (E.M. Bukowiecki, 2007). Vocabulary is increased by the process of 'learn to read'. Student's vocabulary can be influenced with many factors outside of academics. Vocabulary usually begins in grade – 4 or age of 8 years and it continues through grade – 8, i.e. this is the stage of, 'reading to learn new'. Strong vocabulary base helps children to understand what they are reading.

#### ⊕ **Comprehension:**

It is the final stage of reading development. "Comprehension is the ability of an individual to understand the material they read". Enabling to fluidly read material, reading fluency makes individual to comprehend easily what read. Without understanding the word meaning, if one tried to read, can read but individual faces trouble in reading comprehension. Reading comprehension indicates the mastery of reading.



**Fig – 2: Component of reading development**

### **1.3.2 Monitoring Reading Process**

The reading skills comprised of all five components occur from birth to adulthood with stages of reading development as depicted by Chall. At stage zero, i.e. pre-reading stage (0 – 6 years), oral sound developed. Phonemic awareness development begins at this stage and followed by phonics skill building stage. Phonics skill allows child to sound out words in learning. Then there is a shift of stage to reading fluency stage. The reading fluency stage occur during grade – 2 and grade – 3. In stage three, skill of vocabulary to learn the new occurred. In this stage, individual begin to rely on text and hence on their vocabulary. The stage stays from grade – 4 to grade – 8 i.e. from age 9 to 13 years. The final stages of reading make individuals to build their comprehension skill. “Stage four and five are multiple viewpoints and construction-reconstruction respectively (Chall, 1983)”. In this final stage of reading development, readers can understand the text what they read. In transition of a stage of reading development to another stage reader may face



difficulties which may stop the progress of reading development. Hence it is very important to monitor and examine the process to address reading difficulties if occurred.

### **1.3.3 Reading Interventions**

The purpose of reading instruction is to prevent reading difficulties though students have trouble as they learn to read. The various interventions help in remediating reading difficulties. Hence it is suggested and remarked that reading intervention should be implemented and which should be followed by identification of reading difficulties as early as it could be. Intervention at elementary level may focus on phonemic awareness since it is the reading component that occurs during elementary level. Intervention of higher grades may focus on comprehension and reading fluency. Daly, Chafouleas and Skinner (2004) indicated that among learners of grade – 4, grade – 8, grade – 12, one third of the entire population could be considered as proficient reader (J.E.Daly, 2005). Intervention should be designed according to the area of deficit.

### **1.3.4 Interventions for Oral Reading Fluency**

Current trends of reading interventions include silent reading and small group interventions. Small group intervention for reading difficulties is a popular technique of intervention. This allows the “professional to help more than one student at once in the process of intervention (but not all students in a classroom)”. The usefulness of small group intervention is also that a variety of methods could be possible to apply in order to improve reading skills. “Some of the interventions used to address reading fluency viz. silent reading technique, partner reading technique and teacher directed explicit instructions of reading. Intervention on reading difficulties could be designed using one

– one or small group instruction”. (B.Elbaum, S.W. Moody , S.Vaughn, J.S.Schumm , M.Hughes, 1999) .

#### **1.4 Statement of the problem**

Research indicates that 37% of grade – 4 cannot read at basic reading level whereas only 55% of grade – 4 learners could read fluently (Martens et. al, 2006). Hence there is a complete trend of existence of students with reading difficulties.

In state West Bengal, mother language of the state is majorly Bengali. Here English is taught as a second language. In primary level, ESL learners can hardly identify English alphabets or word decoding. Though some have developed reading fluency, the major part of students fails to achieve at least basic level of reading. Secondary students of grade – 6 may face several difficulties due to transition of primary school system to secondary. Students with reading difficulties of grade – 6 face trouble in basic reading but within the time frame they should learn the board textbook. Since they could not read fluently, the comprehension of the text material is not possible for them. As a result, they fail in exam and labelled as slow learner or late developer etc. All these situations affect their interest in learning in school and they drop out. To get over the situation, there might be some initiative of remedial attempt, may be in the form of intervention or any other instructions. The problem was felt. Researcher had tried to design a reading intervention to improve their ability to read at least at basic level. Hence an effort was made to identify the problem in the study entitled “*An Intervention Program for Reading Difficulties of Secondary Level Students*”.

#### **1.5 Rationale of the study**

Children with reading difficulties are found in all classrooms no matter what they are learning in urban or rural areas. Around 10 million children have reading difficulties at 'learn to read' stage, 10 – 15 % of them dropped out from school in India. According to global literature, about 1 % children are born with language disability and up to 17 % may have language disturbance of various levels (P.Karanath, J.(Eds).Rozario, 2003).

There is numerous research work abroad regarding reading problems of students both in elementary level and secondary level. But India is still far behind as compared to other countries in terms of exploring the nature of reading trouble, diagnosing the problem and appropriating intervention. Only some such studies were researched on reading difficulties of regional language like Kannada.

In India, among 180 million school children approximately 20 million children have specific learning disabilities (P.Manjula, G.Saraswathi, P.Padakannaya, 2009). But the classroom teachers, educational administrators, as well as parents are unaware about the problem. Instead, these children are promoted from one grade to the next grade under malpractice of government's 'no detention' policy. Such children fail to proceed through the school system. As a result, they become school dropouts. So, it is very needed that the problem of reading difficulties should be diagnosed at early age. Children whose problems are identified early be treated carefully with additional reading instructions. (Royer, 2004). If they are provided with necessary remedial teaching and support, it is possible for them to successfully complete educational and employment requirements. In such cases individualized intervention can really help. Intervention programs are the key for minimizing the learning difficulties in majority of school going children (Rapp, B., & Glucroft, B, 2009).

There are a smaller number of studies that conducted on reading difficulties of those students who used to read English as their second language in rural Indian school. Hence, a need was observed to study, considering rural co-ed secondary schools of district Howrah of West Bengal entitled “*An Intervention Program for Reading Difficulties of Secondary Level Students*” and an effort was made to raise an awareness to identify such difficulties of students in secondary level and how to prevent them.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

The research questions of the study are:

1. Does the reading intervention program improve reading skills of students with reading difficulties of secondary level?
2. Does the reading intervention program have sustainable effect on students with reading difficulties of secondary level?
3. Does the reading intervention program impact on academic achievement of the students with reading difficulties of secondary level?

## **1.7 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- ⊖ To know the effect of reading intervention program on students with reading difficulties in improving their reading skills

- ⊖ To know the effect of intervention sustained in the students with reading difficulties
- ⊖ To find out the impact of reading intervention program on academic performance of students with reading difficulties

## 1.8 Hypotheses

Researcher has framed the following hypotheses based on objectives of the study. These are given in tabular form below:

**Table No -1 : Table of hypotheses**

Objectives	Type	Hypothesis
Objective – 1	<i>Null hypothesis</i>	<sup>1</sup> <b>H<sub>0</sub></b> : “There is no significant effect of reading intervention on reading performance of students with reading difficulties”.
	<i>Alternative hypothesis</i>	<sup>1</sup> <b>H<sub>1</sub></b> : “There is significant effect of intervention on reading performance of students with reading difficulties”.
Objective – 2	<i>Null hypothesis</i>	<sup>2</sup> <b>H<sub>0</sub></b> : “The effect of intervention is not significantly sustained on the students with reading difficulties”.
	<i>Alternative hypothesis</i>	<sup>2</sup> <b>H<sub>1</sub></b> : “The effect of the intervention is significantly sustained on the students with reading difficulties”.
Objective – 3	<i>Null hypothesis</i>	<sup>3</sup> <b>H<sub>0</sub></b> : “There is no significant effect of reading intervention on academic performance of students with reading difficulties”.

	<i>Alternative hypothesis</i>	<b><sup>3</sup>H<sub>1</sub></b> : “There is significant effect of reading intervention on academic performance of students with reading difficulties”.
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*Source: Researchers - made*

## 1.9 Operational Definitions

- **Reading Intervention program:**

*Reading* Intervention is a supplementary program to address identified or anticipated problems in reading (J.L.Irvin, J.Meltzer , M.J.Mickler , M.Philips , N.Dean, 2009). That is, it is a systematic aimed instruction based on student’s reading needs. Interventions are a systematic well – compiled instructional strategies and techniques based on evidence or research.

- **Students with Reading difficulties:**

Student who are facing difficulties in reading are said to be student with reading difficulties. Such difficulties may be due to some neurological reasons or natural processing reasons. Student with reading difficulties usually face difficulty in letters sounds, word recognitions or in phonic skills etc. In explanation of such difficulties, it suggested “The term *Difficulties* do not appear to have organic origins or to be directly linked to socio-economic, cultural or linguistic factors (OECD, 2005)”.

- **Oral Reading Index (ORI):**

“The Oral Reading Index (ORI) is a combination score of students’ Fluency and Comprehension scaled scores. It measures oral reading fluency in GORT – 5 scale of assessment”.

- **ESL- “English as a Second Language learners”:**

ESL learners are those learners whose native language is not English. They used to learn English as their second language. For example, in the present research, participants are chosen from Bengali medium rural co-Ed secondary school under West Bengal board in Howrah. The participants native language is Bengali and hence they are considered as ESL learners.

## **1.10 Limitations and Delimitations**

### **1.10.1 Limitations**

Creswell (2002) explained that limitations are potential weaknesses of a study (J.W.Creswell, 2002). There are several limitations that affected the results of the study.

These are:

- ⊖ “*Threat to external validity* due to small sample size can be considered as a limitation of the study. Small sample size cannot generalize to all grade 6 students with reading difficulties”. Though a small sample size of 5 or fewer students makes maximum effect in an intervention (D.Bryan,J.Wexler,D.Reed, S.Vaughn, 2012). Again, in the study the sample was taken with convenience, not randomly. Though it is preferable that sample be chosen randomly but convenience sampling is most feasible in this study and hence it is used.
- ⊖ Second limitation was the *period of intervention*. It was a 7-week program consisting of two different phases and an interval. Within the duration of time, all the assessments – pre, post – test, academic performance test at midpoint were

performed. A longer research period might result better than a shorter intervention aiming towards improving reading fluency.

- ⊖ Third limitation was *inability to control outside reading fluency input*. It is almost impossible to control reading input that participants get outside the intervention class during the research period. Though researcher had tried to monitor the treatment group keenly to avoid the said effect.
  
- ⊖ Again, during the reading intervention program participants were mostly indulged with the program. Hence their regular classes where teaching with board curriculum was bit hampered and their academic performance was affected. Also, for comparison group, since there were give no intervention program, they could attend regular classes and get results in their academic performance.

### **1.10.2 Delimitations**

Creswell (2002) indicated that delimitations are such factors which are narrowing the scope of a study (J.W.Creswell, 2002).

The delimitations of the study can be listed as –

- ⊖ The study was restricted to Bengali medium rural co-Ed secondary schools at Howrah district of West Bengal.
  
- ⊖ The study concentrated on intervention instruction on fluency of reading English Language only.
  
- ⊖ The study was delimited to grade 6 students (age group 10 -12 years). All the participant are ESL learners.

### **1.11 Summary**



The present study was focused on reading intervention for improving reading fluency skills. It aims to help the students having reading difficulties to enhance their reading skills with using the knowledge they gather during intervention. The study was attempted to determine if there exist a sustained effect of the given intervention on the participating students. The work was also tried to find the effect of the intervention program on their academic performance in English.

Chapter one outlined – “the introduction, theoretical framework, background of the study, rationale of the study, significance of the study, research questions, objectives, hypotheses, operational definitions, limitations, delimitations of study”.

Review of related literature will be presented in the next chapter. Depth review of literature was done in the related field in context of both India and abroad to find out the research gap.

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