

Raising the Literacy Skills of Early Grade Students through Exercises

© Edita HAXHIJAJA

Primary School "Emin Duraku" Prizren, Kosovo

editahaxhijaha@gmail.com

In this research, I will explore the impact that exercises will have in enabling students to fluent reading in the early grades. The subject was taken from everyday situations of my work, and the explorer will react directly to the pupils' needs, in gaining their confidence, as the most important element in correct forming of children's character and for their success. Collection of data will be done through: observation of pupil, personal notes, questionnaires, conversations and tests. Research will be conducted in the city of Prizren, Republic of Kosova, in the Primary and Lower Secondary School (PLSS) "Emin Duraku", class II-3, there will be involved 5 pupil and they will be led by me, as the teacher of this class. The research will be conducted in coordination with school management, teachers and parents of the pupils involved. Collection of data will be implemented within three weeks. It is expected that the research will have double impact; in the first the improvement of pupil will be satisfactory, and also the research will have influence in the professional improvement of teachers. In this research will be explored Raising the literacy skills of early grade students through exercises, through A-EGRA test which contains 7 subtests – components considered essential during learning to read, but I will use 4 subtests, such as: Phonetic awareness, acquisition of letter / Phonetics; Reading of frequent words / photographic and Reading of non-words. This study aims that gained results during the search have values and be applied in the practice, making a significant contribution in developing knowledge in this field. Reading will be studied from the theory and practical aspect, determining its role and importance among pupils of early grades. Research results will serve to define the setting of reading without causing stress – emotions among pupil, and teachers will find many roots, roads and paths to achieve success. In drafting this research will be used professional, scientific literature, from the field of reading, applying adequate scientific methods.

Keywords: Action research, pupil, teacher, reading, planning, testing, inducement, technology, analysis, result, success.

JEL qualification: I2.
I25 Education and Development

Reading is the ability to decipher a series of signs printed or written or any other. This means language interpretation or intelligible interpretation of the appropriate level of understanding of a range of signs.

In slightly limited meaning, reading is the ability that verses of signs in a text are given objective meaning of connectivity have submitted those signs. Almost in all of world cultures, throughout history, the ability of reading for a long time was considered the ability of a small educational stratum of the population. Now in the most modern cultures, reading is a phenomenon which has gradually penetrated even among social and economic strata of the population. For this reason reading is not just a matter of philology and pedagogy but also of other disciplines.

Reading is essential skill that enables all of other forms of learning. A student who does not read well by the end of second grade, there will be difficulties in other subjects. Therefore, it is important to monitor how students read and to evaluate whether they have achieved the necessary level of reading skills. Therefore the reason of my research has come about naturally, by the fact that, during the working with a ABC-Book of the first grade I encountered students who have had significant difficulties in phonetic awareness which is the first step in reading.

Is this problem is not dealt with from the beginning, the children will have difficulties in higher class to read fluently and understand what they read, not only in literature but also in each learning area. Even my goal as a teacher was to raise the quality of teaching and good results of the students. This can be achieved through changes in teaching methodology, in the implementation of new forms and methods of work.

The aim of the study

This study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the readers “at risk”.
2. To make the connection between graphemes and sounds, in order to be mastered phonetics.
3. To avoid the difficulties encountered by children in reading comprehension.
4. Use different teaching strategies to achieve reading rhythm, accent and intonation reflects the natural speech.

Methodology

Aiming progress, improving my teaching practice, as a methodology of this study i have used research into action. In the first sequence because through it can be solved problematic situations and practical concerns of teachers and in second sequence was a good opportunity for me to change my teaching practice and then to represent evidences to show how the practice has improved.

The research was conducted in the period 1 to 19 December 2014. For data collection I used: personal data (keeping a diary), classroom observation, questionnaire (with parents), conversations (with colleagues) and tests with students. Keeping a diary (my notes) – are notes that I kept all the research period, I have taken at the time when students were conducting given activities (tasks). In the context of each working day, monitoring of students, is a routine, but the observation during my research was planned and focused on five of my students, of their actions, activation and participation in planned activities in group, as well as their feelings, which they express through comments like: I liked, it was interesting, I realized, I did not understand, now I understand that and I recorded in my diary. I identified the enthusiasm of the students who come to expression when students eagerly in my diary. I identified the enthusiasm of the students who come to expression when students eagerly wait for the the next Albanian language class.

Interviews with colleagues helped in providing ideas for improving reading. These interviews I have done before I started the research. Inter alia, I have collected data by using questionnaires, with parents who have followed the progress of their children during my research.

All the time I have exchanged ideas and experiences with my labor colleagues, "Critical Friends", which have followed my work and have suggested from time to time, have given me the courage to continue the path I started, I consulted with the Albanian language experts, have maintained regular contacts with parents who have followed the progress of their children during class actions, I talked with my students and I have organized additional course.

The aim and questions of the research

The aim of the research is to find ways to raise the reading skills of early grade students. The question of the research is: How do the reading exercises affect in raising the reading skills of early grade students?

a) *The context of the school and participants.* The search was conducted in elementary school "Emin Duraku" – Prizren, Kosovo, involving five parents and five students. Students were researched twice during the process, once at the beginning to see where they are with reading, and then finally to see the results of the action.

b) *Techniques of data collection.* As a instrument for collecting data from parents and teachers were used questionnaires. The questionnaire contained 10 questions for parents, and students were tested with A-EGAR test, exactly subtest 5a and 5b. All students have been willing to cooperate as well as parents.

c) *The planning of the research.* As a research instrument for collecting data from parents I have used a questionnaire to understand the real situation of students. Parents were previously informed about the purpose of this research through a preliminary conversation and then each of them has completed the questionnaire.

Analysis of the obtained data was performed through statistical analysis and inductive analysis. While students were tested with A- EGRA test, exactly with subsets: 1. Phonetic awareness; 2. Knowing the sound of the letter; 3. Reading familiar words; 3. Reading the words of meaningless.

After testing have been taken measurements to improve reading for three available weeks, through exercises, tecjmoques, strategies, different ideas and methods. I have worked with students using technology (laptop, projector, letters, plastic words and senteces), techniques, strategies, ideas, different approaches taken by: *The first action plan* has been for students to identify a letter, based on the material: "A-EGRA Manual" – Bep as: Spelling of name; Spelling game; Look and spells; wordsrhyme; secret language; revert to the secret language; find sound; take off the sound; take off the sound of the name; change the sound; add sound; playingwith dolls; shoot desk; hidden object; fast-slow; rimo on; walk with words, syllables and sentences; find and pronounce the sound the missing; sorrounds the letter; classification according to the letter; game characters; acrostic; most frequent words; book of stories (Basic Education Program..., 2014:27). Students need to understand that words are composed of separate sounds and should know how to divide words into sounds (Basic Education Program..., 2014:26).

The second plan of action has been to enable students to read sentences fluently. Based on the material: "Course manual of reading" – BEP (crosswords; tickets to the most frequent words; pantomime; find the letters of the word; letters mixed; guess the word; from new words; hidden words; add the (Basic Education Program..., 2014:34); friends of reading; visualization; frames of the story; tree of thoughts, etc).

The third plan of action has been that children read fluently and without mistakes tales of short texts and to reading different books for children online (www.libroteka.org; dyteumll.html).

After two weeks I have tested the students again and for such of short of time (with the cooperation of parents – exercises at home that I have sent through e-mail) was noticed the raising of the reading skills of these five students. This shows encouraging and manifestation of the desire to read the students through activities, techniques, methods and different strategies that I used during this time.

Analysis and interpretation of the data

Since my research was research into action, I was personally active in collecting data, I have personally interviewed teachers and surveyed parents, taking steps to get the maximum of answers. To deteminate that where the problem is I have decided as the first plan:

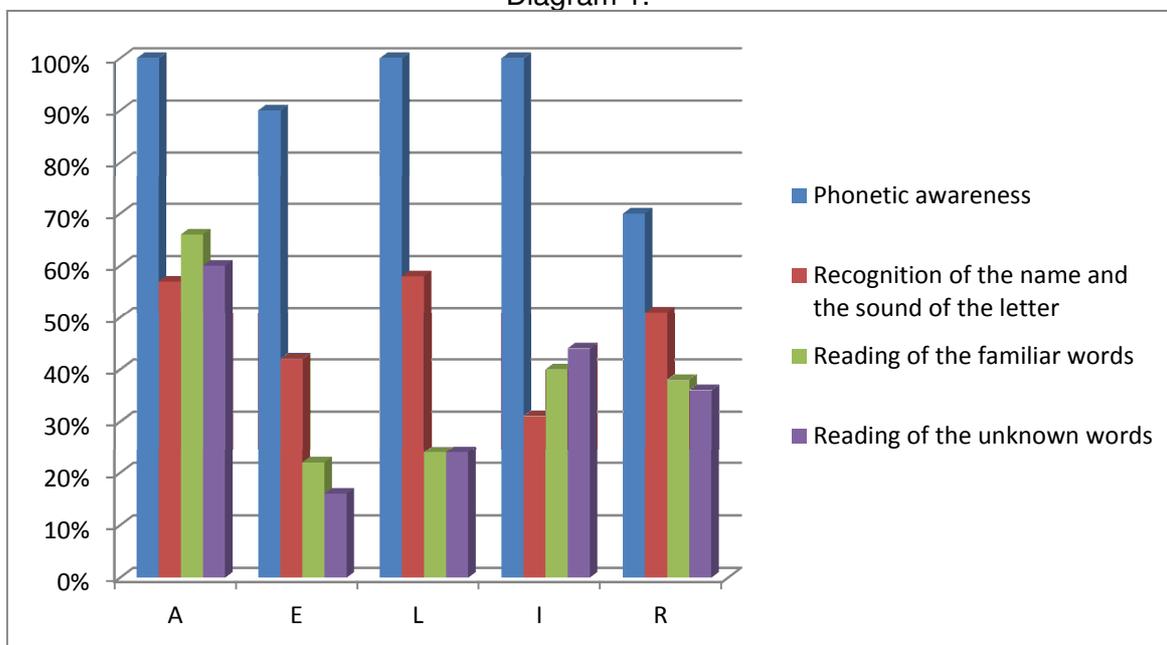
- Use of a questionnaire for parents to see how do they read together with;
- Use of the modified test based on test A-EGRA, which has to do with:
phonetic awarness; Recognition of letter / Phonetics; Reading the of frequent words / Photo; Reading of the non words.

From the questionnaire conducted with five parents of children involved in the research, i wanted to understand whether are the children in contact with the book at home and if they are, how do they do the reading with children.

Table 1. *First testing of students*

A-EGRA											
Phonetic awareness			Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter			Reading of the familiar words			Reading of the unknown words		
Stud.	Points	%	Stud.	Points	%	Stud.	Points	%	Stud.	Points	%
A	10	100	A	57	57	A	33	66	A	30	60
E	9	90	E	42	42	E	11	22	E	8	16
L	10	100	L	58	58	L	12	24	L	12	24
I	10	100	I	31	31	I	20	40	I	22	44
R	7	70	R	51	51	R	19	38	R	18	36

Diagram 1.



In the first test of the five tested students were taken these results. *The student A* of the subtest: *Phonetic awareness* of the 10 given words, or 100%, has all divided into sounds; the subtest: *Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter*, from the 100 capital and small letters, for 1 minute has correctly read 57 characters or 57%; *the subtest: Reading familiar words*, by 50 frequent words to be read aloud, for 1 available minute are read 33 words of 66% of them, and subtest: *Reading the unknown words* were read 30 words of 60% of them.

The student E of the subtest: *Phonetic awareness* of the 10 words given, 9 words has divided into sounds or 90% of them: the subtest: *Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter*, from the 100 capital and small letters, for 1 minute has correctly read 42 characters or 52%; *the subtest: reading the familiar words*, by 50 frequent words to be read aloud, for 1 available minute are

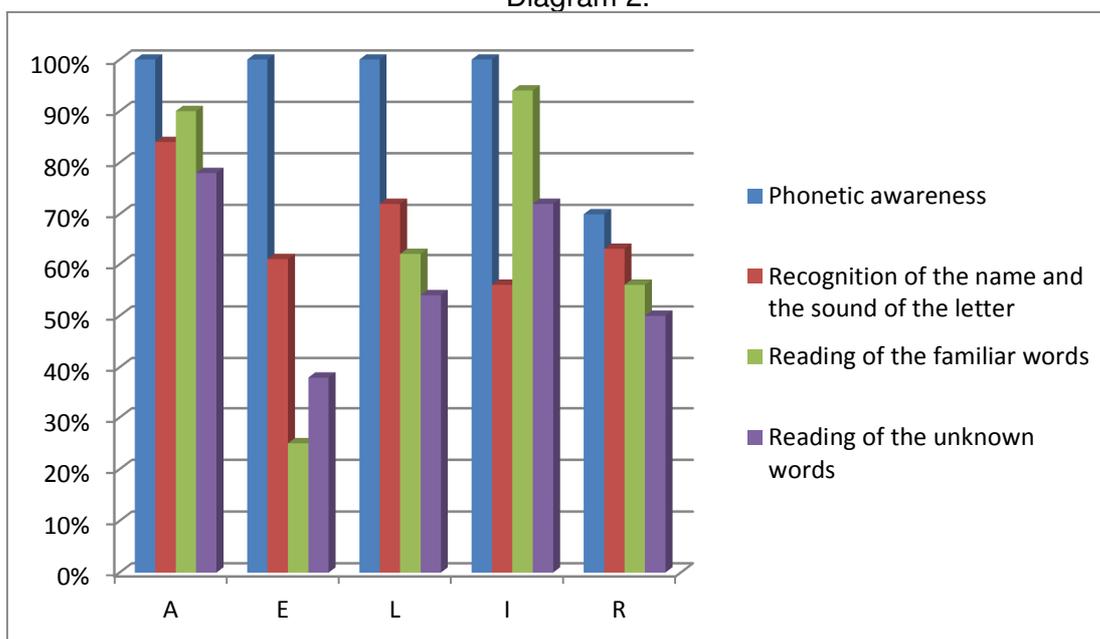
read 11 words of 22% of them, and subtest. *Reading the unknown words* from 50 given words were read 8 words or 11% of them.

Student L of the subtest: *Phonetic awareness* of 10 given words, all has divided into sounds or 100% of them; the subtest: *Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter*, from the 100 capital and small letters, for 1 minute has correctly read 58 characters or 58%; *the subtest: Reading the familiar words*, 50 frequent words to be read aloud, for 1 available minute are read 12 words or 24% of them, and subtest: *Reading the unknown words* from 50 given words were read 12 words or 24% of them.

Table 2. Second testing of students

A-EGRA											
Phonetic awareness			Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter			Reading of the familiar words			Reading of the unknown words		
Stud.	Points	%	Stud.	Points	%	Stud.	Points	%	Stud.	Points	%
A	10	100	A	84	84	A	45	90	A	39	78
E	10	100	E	61	61	E	28	25	E	19	38
L	10	100	L	72	72	L	31	62	L	27	54
I	10	100	I	56	56	I	47	94	I	36	72
R	7	70	R	63	63	R	28	56	R	25	50

Diagram 2.



In the second test it was noticed obvious difference of raising the literacy skills of these five students. *Student A* of the subtest: *Phonetic awareness* of the 10 given words, all has divided into sounds or 100% of them; the subtest: *Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter*, from 100 capital and small letters, for 1 minute has correctly read 84 characters or 84%; *the subtest: Reading the familiar words*, by 50 frequent words to be read aloud, for 1 available minute were read 45 words or 90% of them, and subtest: *Reading the unknown words* from 50 given words were read 39 words or 78% of them.

Student E of the subtest: *Phonetic awareness* of the 10 given words, all has divided into sounds or 100% of them; the subtest: *Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter*, from 100 capital and small letters, for 1 minute has correctly read 61 characters or 61%; *the subtest: Reading the familiar words*, by 50 frequent words to be read aloud, for 1 available minute were read 28 words or 25% of them, and subtest: *Reading the unknown words* from 50 given words were read 19 words or 38% of them.

Student L of the subtest: *Phonetic awareness* of the 10 given words, all has divided into sounds or 100% of them; the subtest: *Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter*, from 100 capital and small letters, for 1 minute has correctly read 72 characters or 72%; *the subtest: Reading the familiar words*, by 50 frequent words to be read aloud, for 1 available minute were read 31 words or 62% of them, and subtest: *Reading the unknown words* from 50 given words were read 27 words or 54% of them.

Student I of the subtest: *Phonetic awareness* of the 10 given words, all has divided into sounds or 100% of them; the subtest: *Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter*, from 100 capital and small letters, for 1 minute has correctly read 56 characters or 56%; *the subtest: Reading the familiar words*, by 50 frequent words to be read aloud, for 1 available minute were read 47 words or 94% of them, and subtest: *Reading the unknown words* from 50 given words were read 36 words or 72% of them.

Student R of the subtest: *Phonetic awareness* of the 10 given words, 7 of them has divided into sounds or 70%, it's noticed that this student during the first and second test has achieved to divide 7 words into sounds even during the exercises he was successful; the subtest: *Recognition of the name and the sound of the letter*, from 100 capital and small letters, for 1 minute has correctly read 63 characters or 63%; *the subtest: Reading the familiar words*, by 50 frequent words to be read aloud, for 1 available minute were read 28 words or 56% of them, and subtest: *Reading the unknown words* from 50 given words were read 25 words or 50% of them.

Conclusion

Research in action was done has given answer in my concerns and has increased the speed of reading to students of lower classes. This shows that the action plan implemented carefully, had a positive impact on pupils. Action research has been a very good way to improve reading ability and I believe that will be the guide for many other teachers.

Results achieved have increased the interest first of all parents who are engaged with their children, then the teachers to find different ways to achieve the raising of the skills of reading to the early grade students, and students to read more often and with delight. From this research I realized that reading is a skill that is acquired very easily, but have to find methods, techniques of different strategies to achieve it.

Teachers must attend various trainings in order to bring about changes in teaching and to facilitate that learning of our students. Calculating that a child should repeat 8 times a word to become part of his vocabulary, then I conclude

that parents should exercise at home more with the children, because the time of study at school is not enough so the teachers should consider that each student to be exposed to reading and writing every day.

Should note that reading is the most important skills you need to develop each child at school. Besides being essential life skills, reading is essential for studying all other subjects in school. Always should find different ways to reach out to each "formula" of learning of each student.

From the research: Students gained self-confidence, extraordinary care by parents, raising the skills in reading, have understood of our class motto "I Can". My intention was: success, raising their self-esteem, pedagogical triangular of cooperation parent-student-teacher and raising the achievement of reading skills in the these children.

Some recommendations: The drafters of the textbooks have to develop textbooks that awaken the imagination of children. Teachers should choose interesting books for students to awaken interest to read it. Classes have enriched reading corner with books. To use the projector during the teaching. To produce small books and filled with various articles.

Reference

Basic Education Program, Assessment of reading in early grades (A-EGRA) (2014). Pristina.