A Reading Readiness Test in Kannada:
Its Development and Standardization*

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Reading readiness has received considerable attention from the investigators during recent times. It has been defined by many investigators as the stage of development, during which the child can learn to read without any difficulty. By testing the pre-reading skills of all the children on entry to the school or before, the individual differences and needs of the children can be found out. One of the problems faced by the schools nowaday is the child who fails to make satisfactory progress in reading. Therefore, objective assessment of children's reading readiness becomes necessary. Through the use of reading readiness tests. we can identify children's weaknesses in specific areas of reading and remedial measures can be taken up at an earlier age, before any reading problem deteriorates into a reading failure.

Reading readiness tests are standardized measures which measure directly or indirectly the most important skills and abilities contributing to readiness for reading. They are either group or individual tests which test specific abilities such as visual discrimination, auditory discrimination and vocabulary. There were no such reading readiness tests in Kannada. Therefore, it was decided to develop a reading readiness

test in Kannada, and to try it out on a small group of children.

The study was done in two parts, the first part of which was concerned with the development of the test. A careful study of research literature showed that the basic skills necessary for learning to read are vocabulary, visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, ability to follow directions and pay attention and left to right orientation.

For the vocabulary test in the current reading readiness test, the words were selected based upon the criteria of familiarity and picturability of the words and the frequency of occurrence of the sound in the language. This vocabulary test consisted of 23 items. Each stimulus card consisted of four words which were picturised and the children were asked to point out to the picture named by the tester. In the second part of the vocabulary test, they were asked to name the picture shown by the tester. The instructions were recorded.

The visual discrimination test in the present reading readiness test was constructed by analyzing the Kannada script and by selecting the distinctive features of the Kannada Alphabet. Finally a test consisting of 30 items, which required the child to match different shapes, letters and words and point out two of the items which are

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similar was constructed. This test required the child also to examine the items in a left to right sequence and follow directions correctly.

The auditory discrimination test developed by Kumudavalli (1973) was used in the current reading readiness test. This test makes use of those features that are distinctive in Kannada Language. This test consisted of seventeen minimal pairs made up by using pairs of sounds which differ in one or two distinctive features. Four pairs of pictures represented each item. The instructions and stimulus word pairs were recorded. This test required the child to pay attention to the stimulus words, listen carefully and to examine the pictures thoroughly.

In all the three tests, each correct item was scored as one and an incorrect item as zero.

The second part of the study was concerned with the administration of the newly developed reading readiness test to group of children. For this purpose, 100 school-going children of Mysore City ranging in age from 3·0 years to 6·6 years were selected. They were grouped on the basis of age. There were four such groups. The test was administered individually and it has scored on the basis of number of correct responses. The maximum reading readiness scores that could be obtained was 118, with the maximum vocabulary score being 22, maximum visual discrimination score being 28 and maximum auditory discrimination score being 68.

The data for each group was analysed and statistical treatment was done. The results showed that the means of total reading readiness scores increased with age. Similarly means of visual discrimination and auditory discrimination scores increased with age. Mean vocabulary scores increased from age group 1 to 2 and reached a plateau in the second group itself. This indicated that the vocabulary test was found to be too easy and to improve the efficiency of the test, there was a need for increasing the difficulty of the test.

The results also indicated no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls on this test on any of the three abilities concerned.

Reliability of this test was established by test–retest method and the test was found to have fairly high reliability (0·90).

The test was found to have fairly high construct validity, which was established by finding out the correlation between total reading readiness scores and subtest scores. The test also has good content validity. The predictive validity of the test was established by comparing the teacher's estimates of children's reading and reading readiness test results, by means of a device called coefficient of contingency. The results indicated a less substantial agreement between the two, indicating a low predictive validity. To conclude, the current test satisfies the criteria of good content validity, high construct validity and fairly high reliability. Therefore this test can be used as a guide to identify the weaknesses in the specific abilities tested. This test also provides a quick and reliable measure of the important reading readiness factors such as vocabulary, visual discrimination and auditory discrimination. Once the teacher knows the strengths and weaknesses in these vital reading readiness skills

and abilities, he/she can take positive steps to develop these skills in these children.

Recommendations for Further Research

This test is a satisfactory test. Therefore,

(1) It is recommended that this test should be used to identify the weaknesses of the children in specific areas of reading until further revisions are made.

(2) This test should be used in conjunction with other tests such as intelligence tests, visual acuity tests, auditory acuity tests, laterality tests, etc., in order to diagnose specific reading patterns.

(3) Similar tests in other Indian languages should be constructed.

(4) The vocabulary test in the present reading readiness test has to be reconstructed to improve the efficiency of the test, and the difficulty of the task has to be increased.

(5) Standardization of the test on a larger population has to be attempted and norms have to be developed on this test.

(6) Longitudinal studies with standardized reading achievement tests have to be done.

(7) The discriminative ability of this test has to be found out.

(8) Studies corroborating the deficiencies identified by this test with other test batteries should be done.