

# Developing Reading Profile of Students without using Standardised Tools—Is it Possible?

BHARTI\*

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## ABSTRACT

*School students in India study three languages at the elementary level, namely mother tongue, regional language and a foreign language. The foreign language is usually English in the majority of the schools. The medium of instruction in the school could be English or Hindi (national language) or mother tongue depending on the school management and the choice of the parents. The present paper is an attempt to assess the reading errors committed by the class III students studying in a Kendriya Vidyalaya situated in the heart of the capital of India. The assessment data is compiled to create reading error profile of the class and individual students. The reading error profile provides significant information to develop remedial education programme leading to reduction of reading errors. The vital element of the entire process is the use of informal means of assessment without using the standardised reading tests.*

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## Introduction

Reading is one of the basic skills taught in the schools as an integral part of the curriculum, yet it is often found that children commit a number of errors while reading the age and class appropriate text even in their mother tongue. This fact emerged during discussion with the principal Kendriya Vidyalaya (KV), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and other teachers. The discussion also revealed that in every class of 40 students, there are minimal 10 per cent students who are not able to read at par with their classmates.

According to the position paper of the National Focus Group on Teaching of Indian Language<sup>1</sup>, “ It is important to realise that all children learn the basic systems and subsystems of their language, including a substantial part of their sociological correlates (i.e. they acquire not only linguistic but also communicative competence)

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before they are three years old. It is eminently possible to engage in a meaningful conversation with a three year old on any subject that falls within his/her cognitive domain.” This clearly indicates that even before the child’s entry to the formal school and his/her introduction with the basic learning, comprising of reading and writing, the child has some proficiency in language. Although it is different matter that this proficiency is usually in the mother tongue, which may encourage us to conclude that if the child’s mother tongue is Hindi then he/she will have either no or minimum problems in acquiring the reading and writing skills in the Hindi Language. This may be true in most of the cases, but in every class we find few students whose performance in reading and writing of Hindi falls below the class average in spite of this being their mother tongue. The difficulties in learning language multiply in case of learning of second and third language. As far as learning of English is concerned the foremost difficulty is, no support at home from family members in learning to read and write English, as often the family members themselves are not familiar with the language.

The Annual Status of Educational Report (ASER) released by Pratham for the year 2012 revealed that “For all children in Std. V, major decline in reading levels (of 5 percentage points or more) between 2011 and 2012 is seen in Haryana, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Kerala. Even private schools in Maharashtra and Kerala, with a large proportion of aided schools; show a decline in reading ability for Std. V.” (Source: <http://www.pratham.org>)

However, the report doesn’t throw any light about the reasons for good performance or the poor performance. The language teachers hardly conduct error assessment drive for their students due to lack or easy access of the standardised tools. Many a times teachers tend to interpret meanings from the student’s erroneous sentences. This works well if done in the presence of the student, but may fall short of success in the absence of the student. (Md. Obaidul Hamid, 2007). The students learning English as second language face some specific problems in learning English as a second language, in writing essays, phrases and idioms, using conjunctions and sentence patterns (Singaravelu, 2006). The reading errors can be related with the comprehension or with the mechanical aspect of reading with or without comprehension.

The present study focuses only on the reading errors committed by the students without getting into the depth of the comprehension level of the child.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To identify reading errors made by students during loud reading of English text
- To develop reading error profile of class
- To prepare loud reading profile of individual students

### **Sample**

Forty children studying in Class III of KV constituted the sample for the present study. The sample school had two sections of Class III each having 40-43 students. The discussion with the principal before data collection resulted in selection of the section having maximum number of below average readers, as perceived by teachers.

### **Data Collection**

Few excerpts from the NCERT Class III language textbooks were chosen and opinion of the experts was sought on the usage of text as a tool for recording reading errors. The loud reading error profiles thus developed would facilitate in planning remedial strategies both for the class as well as individual students. The text opined as most suitable for the purpose was selected and its multiple copies were prepared, one for each child. Each child was requested to read aloud the text and the observation was recorded as:

1. The words in which the child required some assistance from the researcher were underlined, say for example around.
2. The words at which the child hesitated but doesn't need any help were  $\surd$  above the words. Say for example little  $\surd$ .
3. If the child has made some insertions between two words in the text then  $\wedge$  was inserted between the two words and the word inserted was also mentioned there.
4. For words which were mispronounced, the same is written above the word.
5. Omitted words were circled.
6. If the child has reversed the order of words while reading then  $\cup$  was inserted to mark the reversal.
7. The punctuation marks deleted by the child while reading were circled and additions if any by the child were mentioned there.
8. If the child repeats the words while reading then ~~~ was made beneath the word.
9. If the child reads a word incorrectly and then realises the mistake and self corrects the mistake, then in that case "sc" was written along with the word.

10. If the child makes some substitution while reading then the substituted word is stroked out and the new word is written over it.

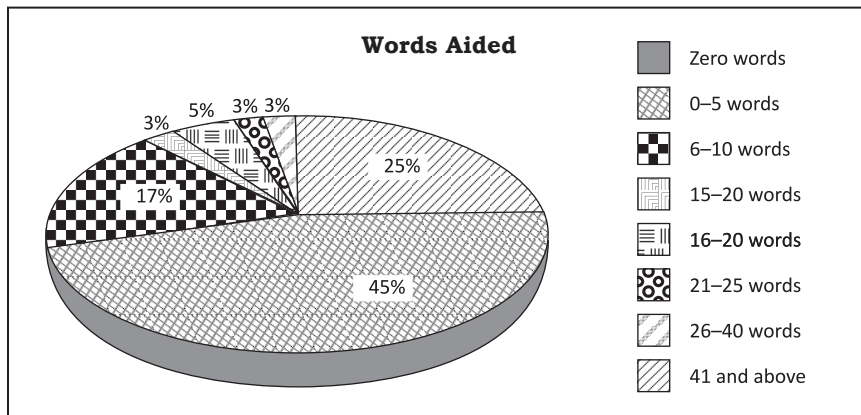
The above errors were adopted from page 242 “Assessment of children, fundamental methods and practices” by Joseph C Witt, Stephen N Elliott, Jack J. Kramer and Frank M. Gresham5.(1994)

### Data Analysis and Discussion

The paragraphs below present the analysis of the data with respect to each of the above mentioned ten error behaviours.

#### 1. Error behaviour **words aided**

The text read by the students contained around 70 words. The data for the number of words aided with respect to number of students is presented in the figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Words aided with respect to number of students**

Total number of students in the class=40

There were 10 students who didn't required any help in reading the text given, where as 18 students required help in reading at the most 5 different words. Only 1 child needed assistance in 41 different words.

Table 1 shows the number of times a word was aided and for how many students. Here the frequency is inclusive of the situation where the child sought help more than once for the same word appearing at different place in the text i.e. why difference in the number of frequency and number of students.

**Table 1**  
**Words Aided**

Word Aided	Frequency	Number of students
Repeatedly	21	21
Butterflies	17	11
Chases	13	13
Wind	11	11
Buried	10	10
Ratan	8	6
Through	8	8
With	8	6
Birds	7	6
Fields	6	6
Plants	6	5
Tosses	6	6
Colorful	5	5
Around	5	5
Corner	5	5
Peeps	5	5

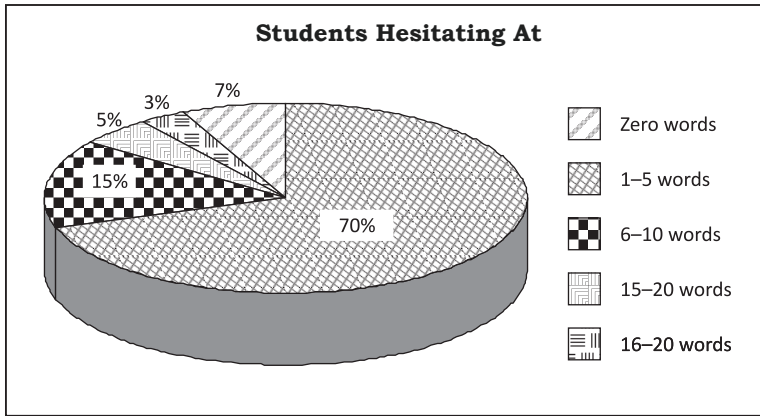
The words 'butterfly', 'chases', 'repeatedly' seems to be the new ones as maximum students faced difficulties in reading them.

The table indicates that the text selected for reading was age and ability appropriate as 70 per cent students in the class were able to read it without much assistance. As per Fig.1 only five per cent i.e. 2 students required assistance in more than 20 words.

## **2. Error behaviour *Hesitated but no help needed***

This error behaviour is said to be exhibited when the child stops at a word for may be less than five seconds and then reads it correctly without any help. The table below presents the data regarding this behaviour.

Here hesitation denotes that the child has acquired basic reading skills but somehow lacks confidence or is afraid of the mistakes. The error behaviour 'hesitation' is different from the previous error behaviour of 'words aided' in the aspect that in hesitation the child hesitates but didn't ask for help whereas in the words aided the student was asking for help, and moreover there were no obvious visual signs of struggle to read as they were present in the hesitations.



**Figure 2: Hesitation with respect to number of words**

Fig. 2 above shows that 70 per cent of the students were hesitating at five words but they didn't need any help in reading these words. The table 2 below presents the data with respect to the words at which students hesitated versus the number of students.

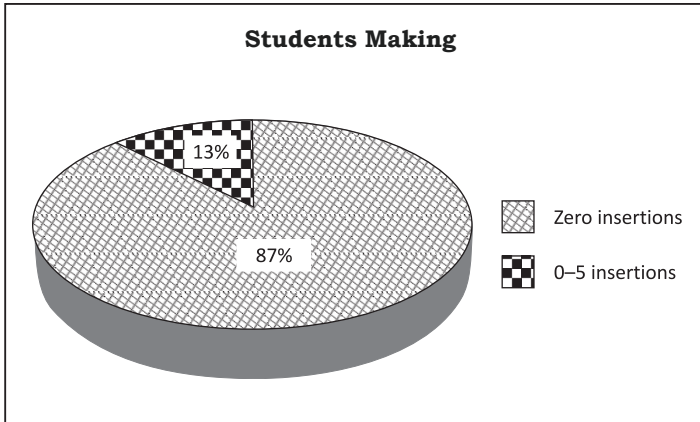
**Table 2  
Error Behaviour "Hesitation"**

Words	No of students hesitating
Butterflies	12
Fields	8
Colorful	8
Plants	6
Ask	6
Paddy	6
Rattan	6
Goes	5
peeps	5

The maximum students (12) were found to hesitate at the word "butterflies" followed by (8) students hesitating at the words "fields" and "colorful". Linking it to figure 2, 70 per cent students lie in the range of 1-5 words for this error behaviour, one may expect long list of different words eliciting error behaviour, however from the list of words in table 2, two common words i.e. 'butterflies' and 'fields' can be identified at which 50 per cent of the sample population exhibited the error behaviour. These words might be the new/unfamiliar words for the class.

### 3. Error behaviour *Insertions*

The error behaviour insertions implies the situation where a child may add a word in between the text or add a letter as prefix or suffix say for example reading “flowers” in place of “flower”, or reading “Rohit is a good boy” instead of “Rohit is a boy”.

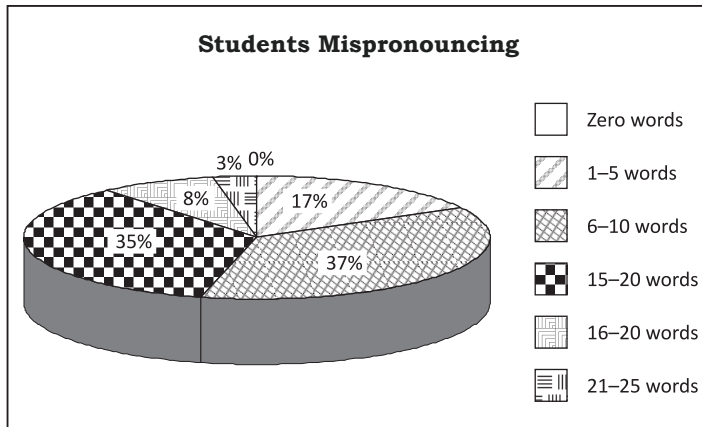


**Figure 3: Insertions with respect to number of students**

It is evident from Fig. 3, the sample students committed least number of insertions both as a group as well as individual. Majority (87%) students could read without any insertions. The observed insertion behaviour might have occurred due to carelessness, or in the enthusiasm of reading in front of a stranger and that too from a text yet to be covered in the class. Moreover this error behaviour lacks consistency as observed by the researcher both during the data collection as well as its analysis. The error committed at one place was not necessarily repeated with the same word occurring at other place in the text given for loud reading.

### 4. Error behaviour *Mispronunciation*

The data analysis revealed, students using different pronunciations for the same words occurring at different places in the text. Say for example “Ratan” was read as “Reytan” at one place and as “Ratta” at another place by the same child. One child misread “the” at all the places.



**Figure 4: Mispronunciation with respect to number of students**

No student was observed to read the entire text without a single mispronunciation, the minimum number of mistake committed by a child was 2. There was only one student who mispronounced 2 words “wind” and “Come” whereas the same child was able to correctly read the supposedly difficult word “repeatedly” in the text.

The table below presents the different words which was mispronounced by the students and the various pronunciation used by different students.

**Table 3**  
**Different Pronunciations used by students for same word**

S. No.	Word	Frequency	Pronounced by students as
1	Ratan	23	राता रेटन (2) रिटन(2) रीया रेन (2) रैट रताना राटना रिटिना रयान (2)रिटन (3) रया रयाना रेटिना रेन्तन रटना (2) रीना रेन्टस रेन्ट(2) राया रेनू राटन रटन
2	Wait	14	वीट वेत्स विद विन्ट वट (2) वेन्ट (3) वाट वो वाल वर्ड वेर वोट ओट वे
3	Tears	11	टराइज टूइस टाइमस टेरस टराइस ट्राइस टीस टीस ट्रीज टेयर्स टूस
4	Corner	11	कोर्न कलोसर कुनर कलोनर कर्निस कोरना कानर (2) केरनर कार कोरन कोनड
5	Plants	10	प्लेत्स प्लेटी प्लीटस प्लेन्टस (3) पाटस प्लेटस प्लेडस प्लेस (2)पलानेटस प्लेट
6	Repeatedly	9	रेपटड रीपिटली रिपेटली रिप्लाइड रिलाटड रिटेपरडली रिप्लाटली रिपीट रिपलाइटली
7	Windows	9	वानडो वरडिंग वाइन्ड विन्डस बालडो वुन्ड विन्डस वैन्ड वोन्ड



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8	Peeps	9	पेपिस पेपर पीपल पीपरस पाकी पेपरस पीस (6) पीन्स प्लाटस
9	Tosses	8	टोयस टसस टोस(3) टोशिस टस (2) टासड टूसस टायस
10	Buried	8	बारिड वैलड ब्राइड (2) बर बरड बुरीड (2)बर्ड ब्रउड
11	Wild	8	वे (2)विलड(4) विटस विल्ड (8) वाइन्ड (2) विन्ड (2) वोल्ड वोन्ड
12	Talk	8	टेकन (7) टल्क टक टेल (3) टेल्क (2) टोल टैक टेलक (2)
13	Field	8	फेल्ड (5) फेट फेल्डस (3) फाइलड फाइल्डस फाइल्ड फलाइड फलाइन्ड
14	Flies	8	फिलस (8) फिज फिलीश फलीस (2) फूलस फील्स (2) फ्लीपस फलाइ
15	Chases	7	चेस (3) चेसिस (3) केस चिस चूस चस चाइस
16	Through	6	थराऊ (2) था (2) थ्राऊ थाट थ्रुम थो
17	Wind	6	वैड वाइन्ड (5) वेन्ड विड वेड विड
18	Head	6	हिड (4) हड (2) हेन्ड हेयर हीड हेथ
19	Wet	5	वेन्ट (11) वेक्ट विंट(2) वेन्ड वेस्ट
20	Paddy	5	प्रेडी (2) पाइड रेडी बोडी पाडी
21	Toss	5	टोज टायस (2)टोसिस टूस (7)टस (4)
22	Goes	5	गूज (3) इस गस (2)गोट डस
23	Heads	5	हिल्डस हिडस (3) हिड हेन्डस हेन्डस
24	Come	4	केम (4) कोम सेमी केमी
25	Eyes	4	ऐवरी आइसस ऐवर ऐक्सी
26	His	3	हैज हेस द
27	Little	3	लाइट लेटर लिड
28	Find	3	फिन्ड (2) फील्ड (2) फलीट
29	Does	3	इस डूस डू
30	Has	3	हिस वास (2) हेड
31	Sweet	3	स्लोलोली स्वेंट सैवट
32	Says	3	सन्स बेथस स्लोलोली
33	Crying	2	कैरिंग (14) क्रिंग
34	The	2	दे टू (2)
35	Around	2	अन्डरस्टेन्ड अरन्ड
36	He	2	हर हिडस
37	Why	2	वे (3) वो
38	Now	2	नो (2) ओन
39	Butterflies	2	यूटीफुल वटरफीलस (3)
40	Loves	2	लवली (2)लीवस (2)

The table above shows that the same word has been pronounced in amazingly different ways by the students. The frequency here denotes the number of different pronunciations used by the students for a particular word. The number in bracket's along with

the words in column four in the above table shows the number of times the word has been spoken like that by the students, not necessarily the same student. Say for example the word “crying” has frequency 2 indicating only 2 ways of mispronunciation of this word by the students, but the number in the bracket after the word क़ैरिंग is 14 which indicate that 14 times the same mispronunciation for the word “crying” has been used by the students while reading the text. The word “crying” has appeared only once in the text. This is a very interesting and thought provoking observation in the sense that 45 per cent of the class was found to be committing the same mistake without any apparent reason. This may point that the children are more or less on the same reading level. It may also mean that students are facing the same difficulty with respect to the same phonetics. This may be interpreted as the need for making some relevant changes in teaching loud reading for the benefit of whole class.

#### **5. Error behaviour *Omissions***

This error behaviour may be present in the expert loud readers as well as the beginning loud readers, though the reason for its existence may be entirely different. In the fast readers the behaviour may occur due to their carelessness or may be due to their hurry to finish the reading whereas in the beginner readers the same may occur due to their lack of confidence in their own abilities to read the words. Hence they may tend to omit few words which are perhaps self-perceived to be beyond their own reading ability.

The data analysis revealed that only six students (15 %) out of the 40 were able to read the entire text without any omission, and the rest of the class had exhibited the error behaviour omission. Most of the students had omitted the “s” and “es” wherever they appeared as suffix in the text say for e.g. in plants or tosses etc. This might be happening due to carelessness on the part of the students. The data analysis suggested more practice for reading plurals should be done in the class.

Interestingly, many students who have shown this behaviour have omitted words or sentences from the second paragraph of the text. This might have happened due to fatigue or decrease in the children’s motivation to read by the time they reached second paragraph or he/she might be in a hurry to finish the work.

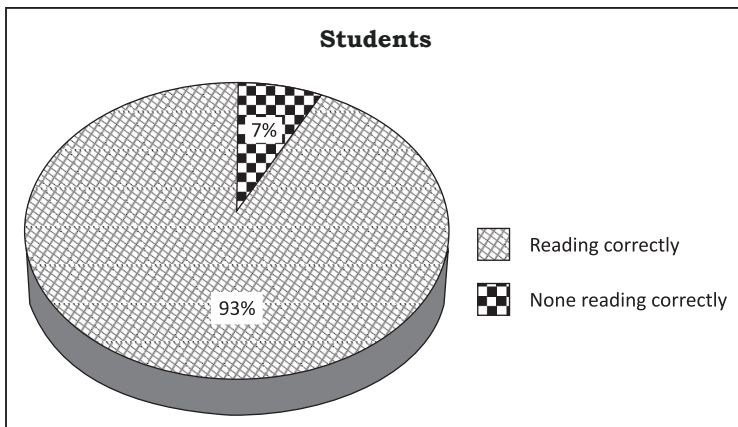
#### **6. Error behaviour *Reversals***

It was observed that the error behaviour reversal was not at all displayed by any of the sample student. The reason for absence

of this behaviour might be found in the manner, the text was read aloud i.e. reading the text by blending the letters. The reversal may occur at three levels one at the level of letters and second at the level of words and the third at the level of sentences but none has been shown by the sample students; this marks the lack of perceptual errors. This may also lead to the inference that none of the child has specific learning disability as frequent consistent reversals are one of the indicatory symptoms.

### 7. Error behaviour *Punctuation*

The students were divided into two categories on the basis of their reading performance i.e. the students reading none of the punctuation correctly and the students reading all correctly. Figure below shows pictorial representation of the same.



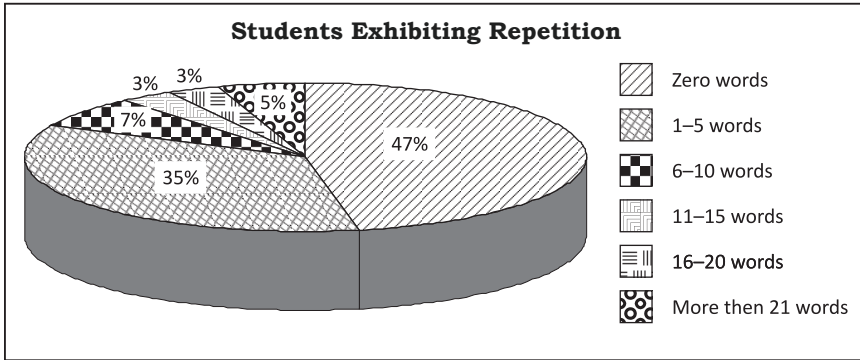
**Figure 5: Punctuation with respect to number of students**

Most of the students were observed to be beginner readers. Out of 40, only three students were able to loud read the entire text with correct punctuation. Hence it may safely be inferred that these students possess advance reading skills as compared to their classmates. This strongly implies that while teaching loud reading students should be sensitised towards recognising as well as reading of punctuation marks.

### 8. Error behaviour *Repetition*

This behaviour might be exhibited in the initial stages of learning to read loudly when the child himself or herself is not very confident

of the correctness of the word being read by him/her. The pictorial presentation of data for this error behaviour.

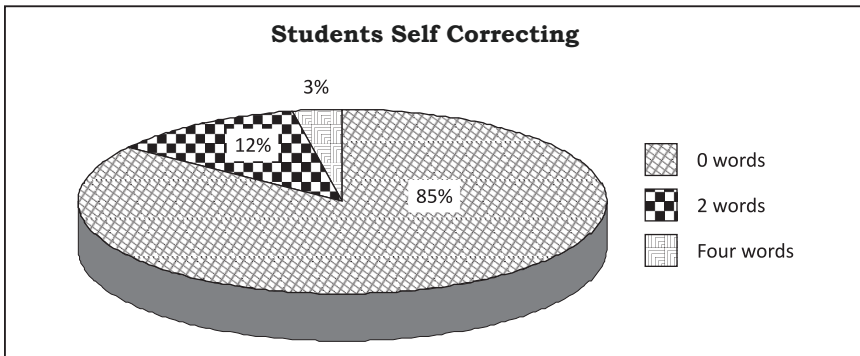


**Figure 6: Repetitions with respect to number of students**

As evident from the figure almost 50 per cent of the class was found to be lacking the behaviour, which may indicate the comfort level of students with the text chosen. The two students who exhibited the error behaviour for more than 21 words were observed to be showing this for the whole sentences, including the words which they were able to read correctly in the previous sentences. These two students could be the potential case for designing and implementing the loud reading improvement intervention programme.

### 9. Error behaviour *Self-correction*

Often student tend to read a word incorrectly and then realise the mistake themselves and self correct the same. This behaviour may occur due to carelessness in the expert reader, whereas in the



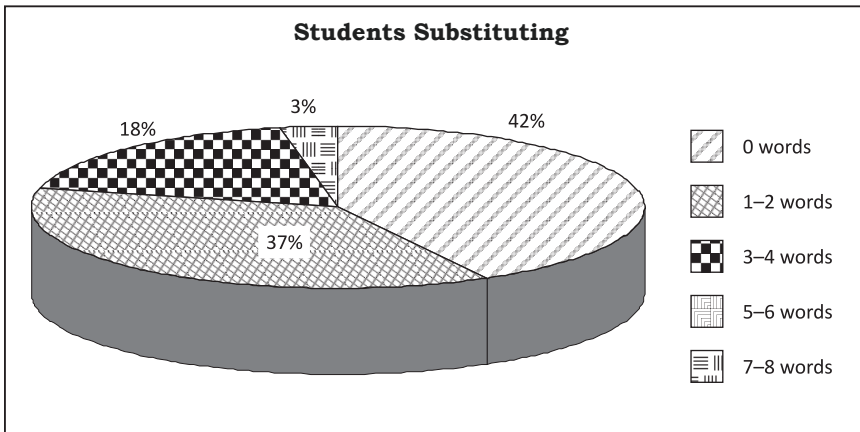
**Figure 7: Self-correction with respect to number of students**

beginner readers this may indicate the confusion between the words having similar spellings with same or different pronunciation along with being careless and over confident. The figure below pictorially represents the data for this error behaviour.

Possible explanation for this observation could be students' confidence in their own reading.

**10. Error behaviour Substitutions**

The error behaviour substitution is very different from the error behaviour mispronunciation or omission. In mispronunciation the word in the text and the word spoken by the child usually have some similarity and in omission the word or the text is completely ignored whereas in substitution the actual word or letter from the text is replaced by new words or letters. The analysis for substitution is given below.



**Figure 8: Substitution with respect to number of students**

As shown in figure 8 almost fifty per cent of the group hasn't exhibited this behaviour. The behaviour as and when observed denote individual problem. The data analysis failed to reveal any pattern in the error behaviour observed. Only four students were found to be reading "his" as "he" which could also be the case of mispronunciation as well as chance. While analysing data for this behaviour and also during the planning of intervention it is important to consider the words or the texts immediately before and after the words substituted. Often it has been found that the students tend to replace the words or the text with the words which are either being used frequently in daily life by the significant

adults or has some relation with some recent concept taught or discussed in the class.

### ***Inference***

The analysis above shows that the errors exhibited by the group are more or less of the individual nature, except for the three error behaviours namely ; mispronunciation, omission, and punctuation. The regular teacher teaching the group needs to focus on the loud reading with proper punctuation and more emphasis should be given on correct pronunciation.

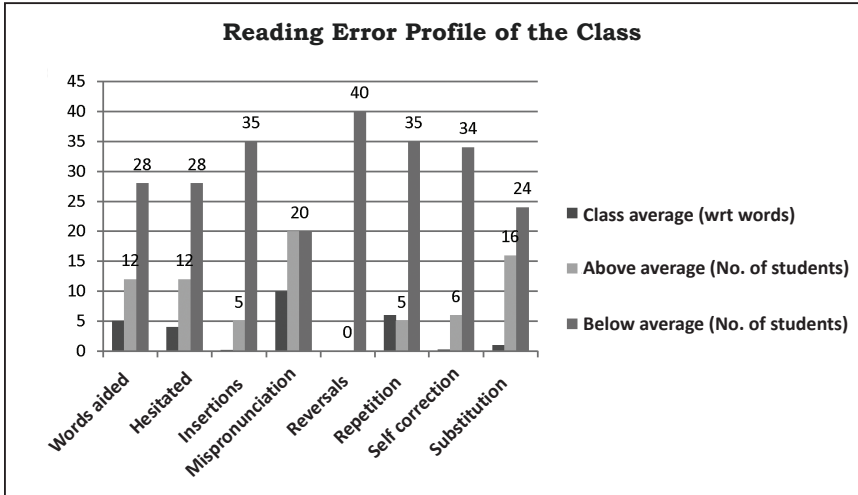
Hesitation while reading may denote a stage or situation wherein the child is trying to read a word with obvious efforts, like he/she will read the spelling first and then try to read it in parts and may be after that he/she may read the word correctly. The entire process may take few seconds and may not necessarily occur in the sequence described here. This error behaviour might be compared with another error behaviour “self correction”, the later may occur with the fast and the confident readers due to their carelessness. Another set of similar meaning error behaviours is mispronunciation and substitution. The former is the situation where “the” is read as “they”, and if the child reads “the” as “ cat” then this is clearly the case of substitution. In mispronunciation the children may read the words incorrectly but phonetically very close to the correct pronunciation.

The reading profile of the class in mathematical language can be shown as below:

**Table 4**  
**Reading profile of class**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Reading error behaviour</b>	<b>Class average (wrt words)</b>	<b>No of students (Above average)</b>	<b>No. of students (Below average)</b>
	Words aided	5.23=5	12 (30%)	28 (70%)
	Hesitation	4.175=4	12 (30%)	28 (70%)
	Insertions	0.2	05 (13%)	35 (87%)
	Mispronunciation	9.925=10	20 (50%)	20 (50%)
	Reversals	0	0	40 (100%)
	Repetitions	5.7=6	05 (13%)	35 (87%)
	Self Correction	0.25	6 (15%)	34 (85%)
	Substitutions	1.37=1	16 (40%)	24 (60%)

Pictorially the same can be represented as



**Figure 9: Reading profile of the class**

The figures above represent the class profile with respect to 8, out of the ten error behaviour chosen for the current study. The calculation for the error behaviour omissions wasn't possible as the students committed mistakes like removing the suffixes "s" or "es" whenever they appeared. Further, few students were also found to omit either entire paragraph or entire sentences.

Same was the case with the error behaviour punctuation; there were only three students who attempted to read with correct punctuation while the rest of the class completely ignored all the punctuation marks.

The maximum students exhibited error behaviour substitutions, hesitations, words aided, and mispronunciation thereby indicating a need for specialised teaching inputs for the entire class.

Individual student's reading error profile can also be created for the purpose of planning Individualised Education Programme (IEP) in the following manner.

**Table 5**  
**Individual student's reading error profile**

S. no.	Words Aided	Words Hesitated	Insertions	mispronunciation	Omissions	Reversals	Punctuation	Repetition	Self correction	Substitution
1	47 (5)	4 (4)	-	4 (9)	1/3 <sup>rd</sup> text	-	None read	1 (6)	1 (0.25)	4 (1)
2	22 (5)	11(4)	1 (0.2)	9(9)	Most suffixes	-	None read	-	-	1 (1)

The digits in the brackets denote the class average for the particular reading error behaviour. The table above gives a bird's eye view of the strengths and weakness of the two students with respect to the errors committed by them while reading. The recording of data in this manner is very useful for planning further individual intervention to improve loud reading skill of these children. These two students' had the highest frequency recorded for words aided. Moreover, one of them also omitted maximum text. These students made few mispronunciations; the reason for the same could be their hesitations in reading which was observed during the data collection. Pictorially the same may be represented as in Fig. 10.

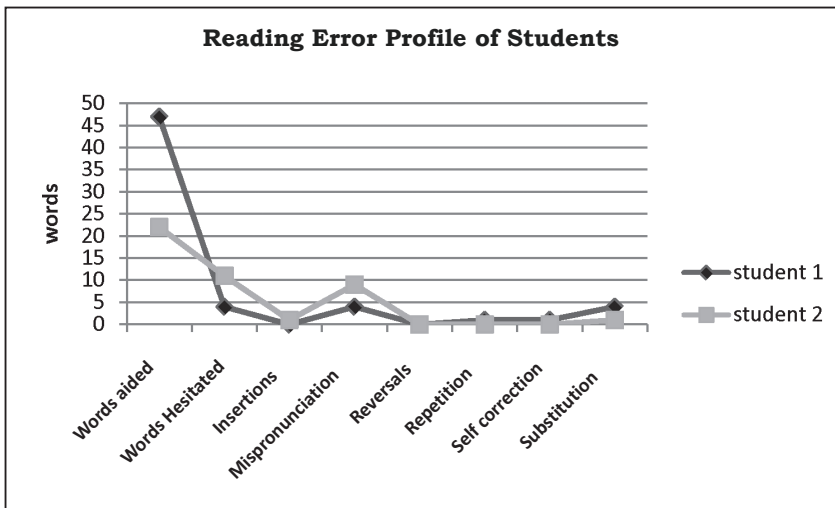


Figure 10: Loud reading error profile of students

### Conclusion

The informal assessment can prove to be a very useful tool in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the students related to any aspect of teaching learning. The only caution that needs to be taken care of is that it should be done in systematical logical and scientific manner.

The paragraphs above clearly indicates that for the sample group the intervention programme for loud reading improvement should be conducted at two levels namely

- The class as a whole
- Individualised Education Plans for the weaker students



The entire process described above was done without the use of standardised testing tools. The teachers can adopt this method for assessing the entry behaviour of their students, in keeping track of the learning, and also in creating the class as well as the students' profile. The above process may also be used to indicate presence or absence of dyslexia which is specific learning disabilities associated with reading. If a child reads with lot of reversals, insertions, substitutions and omissions, then there is a possibility of child being dyslexic but without formal professional assessment one should refrain from labeling the child and doubting his/her abilities.

The informal assessment of students done above doesn't create pressure on the students as both the assessor and the assessment environment is familiar to the student. It is time as well cost effective too.

A word of caution in the end, the assessment of the errors doesn't necessarily implies that the errors made by students had to be corrected in rigid and non flexible manner at the cost of their self expression rather it is a mere indicator of the point of reference from where the teachers had to begin their work.

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