

Same Language Subtitling (SLS) Project: Some Key Research Findings

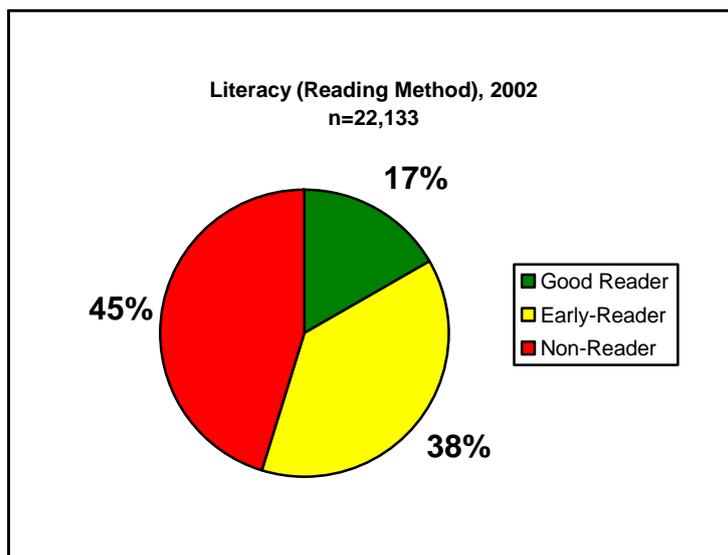
Problem

According to the last Census (2001), India's literacy rate was: 65.4%. This translates to roughly 300 million illiterate and 560 million literate people, over the age of 7. It also begs a critical question: How literate are our so-called "literate?"

We commissioned an independent five-state study by Nielsen's ORG-Centre for Social Research to measure literacy in two ways: i) using the census method of simply asking the head of the household, and ii) requiring every household member to actually read a simple paragraph at Grade 3 level. The data was collected by Nielsen's ORG-CSR and analyzed by the SLS team.

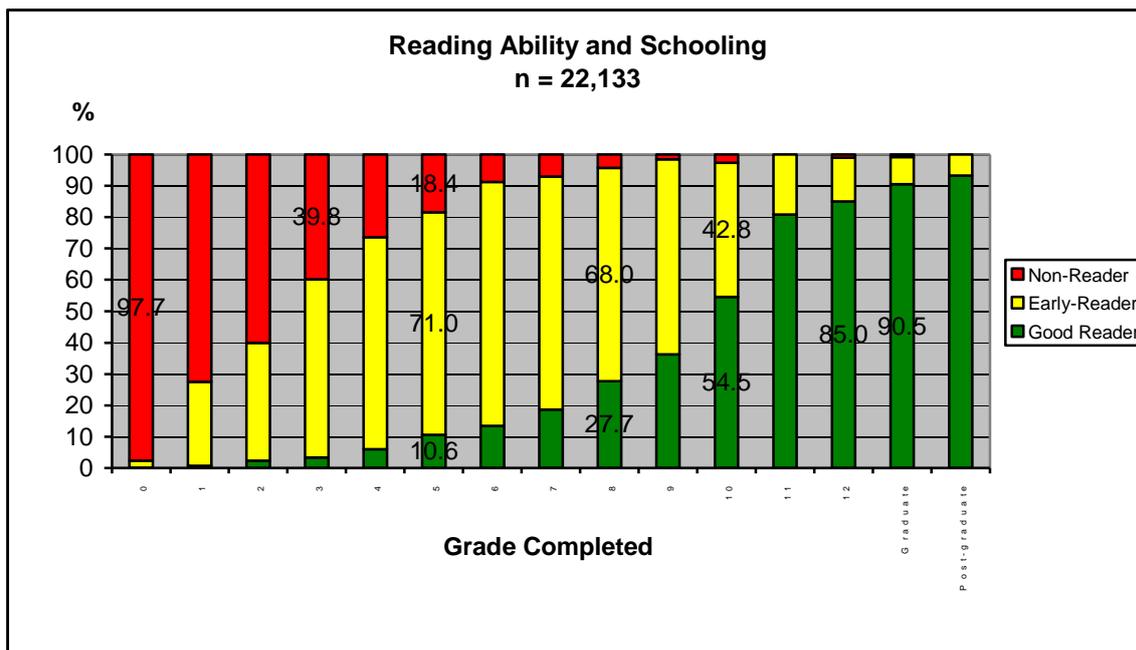
The literacy rate, of our relatively large sample of over 23,000 individuals from five states (aged 7 and above) turned out to be 68%, using the census method. Yet, by the paragraph reading method, the literacy rate was, at best, 55%. At best, because only 17% were fully literate and 38% "early-literate" – people with beginning alphabetic knowledge who were unable to read the simple paragraph.

Key Finding #1: A literacy rate of 68% by the census method actually implies: 17% literates, 38% early-literates, and 45% illiterates. Thus, India can be estimated to have 146 million fully-literate, 327 million early-literate, and 387 million non-literate people.



National policy-making is quick to count the over 300 million early-literate as "literate." State efforts in literacy predominantly succeed in transitioning illiterate people to rudimentary alphabetic knowledge but stop well short of achieving functional literacy.

Key Finding #2: Even after completing Grade 5, or primary schooling, only 11% become literate. 71% achieve early-literacy and 18% remain illiterate. Almost anyone who has completed at least one year of schooling is reported as "literate" when the census is conducted.



Primary education, or 5 years of schooling at present quality levels in India, is grossly insufficient to guarantee functional literacy. 71% of children with a primary education require substantial reading reinforcement to join the ranks of the functional literates. The census grossly overestimates the literacy rate, since most people call themselves “literate” as soon as they’ve completed one year of schooling or learned to write their name. More than half the people considered to be “literate” by the census, will not be able to read the headline of a newspaper.

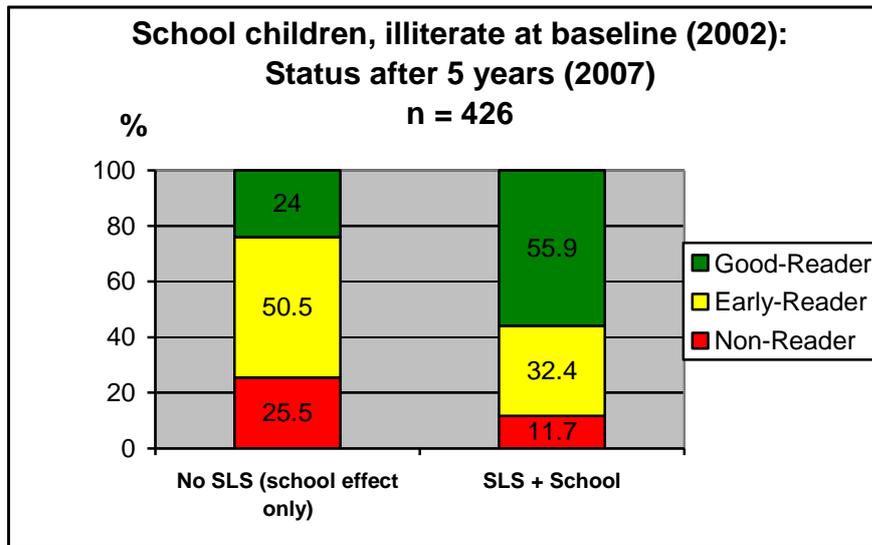
Impact of Same Language Subtitling on Reading Skills

Same Language Subtitling (SLS) primarily targets the more than 300 million early-literates, with the goal of transitioning them to functional literacy, through lifelong reading practice. In 2002, SLS was added to Rangoli, a nationally telecast program of Hindi film songs and continues presently.

Following a baseline measurement of the reading skills of a randomly drawn sample of 13,000 early-literate and illiterate people in 2002, we further commissioned two impact studies by Nielsen’s ORG-CSR. The reading skills of the same sample were re-measured by the exact same battery of reading tests. Our analysis contrasted those who were regularly exposed to SLS, because they liked to watch Rangoli, and others who had TV but rarely watched Rangoli.

Key Finding #3: We looked at the impact of SLS on school children who were illiterate in 2002, when SLS began on Rangoli. Purely from schooling, without any exposure to SLS, we found that 24% children became good readers after 5 years of schooling. But in the group of school children that was exposed to SLS, 56% became good readers.

Conversely, in the no-SLS group, 25% children remained illiterate even after 5 years of schooling. While in the SLS group, 12% remained illiterate.

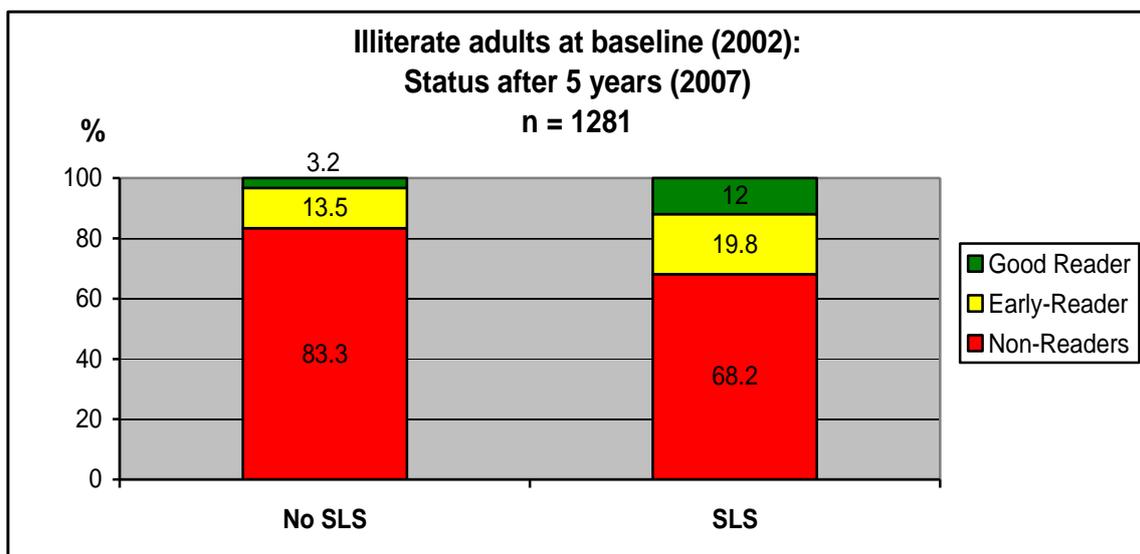


Thus, exposure to SLS more than doubled the percentage of children who became good readers and halved the percentage of children who remained illiterate. Essentially, a child who acquires in school, reading skills that are simultaneously practiced at home, becomes a much better reader.

Key Finding #4: The impact of SLS on children is also found in adult illiterates, although less pronounced. After 5 years, while only 3% illiterate adults became good readers in the no-SLS group, in the SLS group, 12% became good readers.

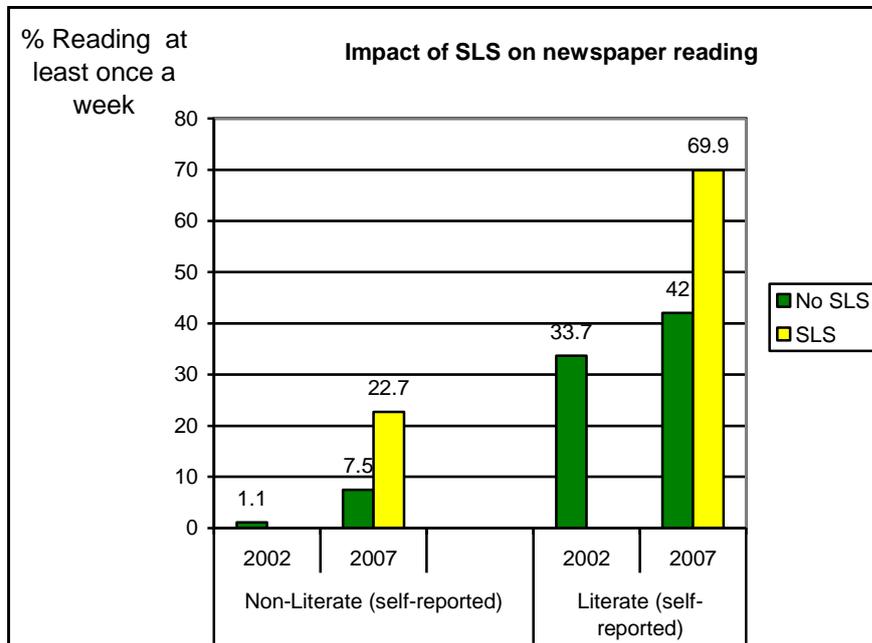
No-SLS group: 83% illiterate adults remained illiterate.

SLS group: 68% adults remained illiterate after 5 years of exposure to SLS.



Key Finding #5: Among self-confessed “literate,” five years of SLS exposure resulted in newspaper reading at least once a week, going up from 42% to 70%.

Among self-confessed “illiterates,” newspaper reading at least once a week, went up from 8% to 23%, with SLS exposure.



Impact of Same Language Subtitling on program’s popularity

Key Finding #6: SLS is preferred on song-based programming by 90% viewers. When there was no SLS on Rangoli, 27% reported to be regular viewers of the program. This went up to 40% when SLS was added to the program.

Ratings of TV programs went up by at least 15% when SLS was added.