

Research Article

**Importance of Reading in the Process of Learning**

Prof. Dr. K. Geetha<sup>a</sup>, Mrs. S.K. Meena Kumari<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Principal, Department of Education, Dr. MGR Educational & Research, Institute, (Deemed University), Maduravoyal, Chennai, India

<sup>b</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Education, Dr. MGR Educational & Research Institute, (Deemed University), Maduravoyal, Chennai, India

E-mail: <sup>a</sup>geetha.bed@drmgrdu.ac.in, <sup>b</sup>pcns.connect@gmail.com

**Abstract**

Focus of this study is on to bring out all aspects of learning that Reading helps one to achieve, more especially, how reading in comparison to listening enhances learning faster and enables acquire wider knowledge. The study also covers the science of reading and what exactly happens when reading is chosen as a means of learning. Being an important learning activity, aspects of creating interest in Reading are also brought in to educate the reader to engage in Reading activity, practice and benefit from it.

**Keywords:** *Reading, Listening, Learning*

**Method of research**

The research method adopted for this paper is the “study of reference books on the subject “Reading” to connect the knowledge of the authors whose books have been referred to the points of this research paper, and also compared to substantiate the effectiveness of reading over listening (See Reference section). The personal understanding (verified and checked) and the experience of the author of this study paper is also taken as a narrative with appropriate points of reference, in the paper. The relevant points are interpreted and substantiated through other works for which references are provided.

**Limitations to the Study:**

The study brings before the reader the views of the author who has long years of experience in educating children which also includes administrative capacities in which she worked. The views expressed by her and recorded in the paper herein are substantiated by the authors and their publications shown under the references of study which in number may be limited. While the topic has been well covered from all angles, there could be scope for more extensive coverage.

**Introduction**

Reading is one of the modes of learning for which the reader should be conversant with the language and the language vocabulary. Reading is technically decoding the text to understand the content. Through reading one can understand what the author has to say. Inadequacy in the language proficiency results in improper understanding of the subject. Hence reading brings out desired results only if the reader has reasonable amount of command over the language. Otherwise, there is also a danger of misunderstanding which is much more serious. Reading could be text reading or even reading of symbols – anything that has a meaning when decoded.

***“Reading is a cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning. Reading is a means of language acquisition, communication and sharing information and ideas. The symbols are typically Visual but may be tactile” [1]***

Reading enables us to know, understand and learn. Knowing, understanding and learning appear to be different words but mean “acquiring knowledge” at a broader level. They connote different levels in the process of learning.

Knowing is just to know what the term or the content means to an individual or what the person having that level of knowledge could do with it, whereas understanding is a little deeper level of knowledge which can connect to variety of associative information. In the understanding level, a word or a phrase read in a given content can connect one or more knowledge aspects through a temporary mind travel. That is, a word or a few words in the given text, when read, impact the mind of the reader leading the mind of the reader to connect to another similar knowledge aspects (Of course this happens even when listening). Sometimes the associative information linked could be situations also, which impact the mind through the word or the words read. In such cases there is often a chance of the reader to get the mind-shift from reading to thinking about an associative information or situation, leaving a gap in reading.

While knowing is more a process, understanding means both a knowledge level as well as actually process of knowing - an action happening. Learning connotes not only the process of knowing but also a level of knowledge – a quantifiable expression.

If the readers of the same passage / text / material are asked questions after they read, the answers of each of them would reveal the difference between one and the other. It is so because, the readers understanding is based on the vocabulary-based knowledge and the background experience which matter significantly. Hence the answers would be different for the same question. The understanding of extensive readers will be much deeper compared to those who are not regular readers. There is a serious element of difference that springs up here which is synonymic understanding. The usage of words - the same word in different contexts, phrases or situations would be different in their meaning. So it is found to be intriguing when certain readers answer, as their understanding will be different. [2]

Reading, as an activity, results in knowing, understanding and learning of a subject matter. Apart from the subject matter that is learned, it also helps one to strengthen the language in which the text is written. Reading improves knowledge usage and improves proficiency of the language used, subject of course to the quality of the content and the grammar aspects. In other words, if the content quality in terms of language is poor, it would not help the reader much, as a negative result also is possible.

## Results & Discussion

**Reading essential for Cognition** - Cognition is to know something and one of the cognitive processes for which is skilled reading. The child transits through a complex process from the age when it still has to acquire reading & writing skill to the age and stage when it learns to comfortably read and write. The behavioral study and the strengths identified and exhibited by a child before being able to acquire skilled learning would help us understand the reason for the later ability to read well or suffering impaired reading. It is also stated that the other skills that enable entry into reading relate to other knowledge aspects & skills that support comprehension. Studies say that while some aspects of reading are common, certain of them are due to environmental conditions, such as differences among the systems of writing and also the aspirant representing another language as native language.

**Brain Circuits specific to Reading** - Research studies reveal that neuro-imaging studies have helped successfully identifying the circuits in brain involved in reading. It was also identified as to how in dyslexics the same are found to be abnormal which are cited as reasons for them. Computational models are also said to be available now indicating the mechanisms that are related to basic reading skills. [3] . It is also referred that other skills such as spoken language and differences in learning and memory, motivation and other factors have a say on the reading skills. Since the incidences of impairments could be related scientifically to the brain circuits and their formation, it is said that intervention and remedial measures could be chosen for application. This clearly states that it is quite possible for reading skills to be set right if they are by birth found to be not all right. The studies thus zero in on the reasons and remedial measures for impairments in reading skills. [4] which is quite a healthy situation since being able to read raises the level of knowledge.

### Reading for Health too

“Reading books benefits both your physical and mental health, and those benefits can last a lifetime. They begin in early childhood and continue through the senior years. Here’s a brief explanation of how reading books can change your brain — and your body — for the better”. Reading strengthens the brain - A growing body of research indicates that reading literally changes your mind. Using MRI scans, researchers have confirmed Trusted Source that reading involves a complex network of circuits and signals in the brain. As your reading ability matures, those networks also get stronger and more sophisticated”. Brain scans showed that throughout the reading period and for days afterward, brain connectivity increased, especially in the somatosensory cortex, the part of the brain that responds to physical sensations like movement and pain”. [5]

**Reading skill – a complex process yet could be mastered** - It is thus said that learning to read is a complex process. Learning to read involves a cumbersome process of recognizing familiar words, decoding of the words not learnt before, reading using intonation to match the patterns of speech, engaging into right eye movements and also comprehending the text from the familiar words and understanding the meaning of unfamiliar words through context and referring the dictionary. For an experienced and skilled adult, reading is easy to perform with comprehension happening then and there, as the eyes of the reader move from word to word consolidating the meaning of the whole sentence deriving from the word meanings. [4]

**Reading more beneficial than Listening** - Though reading is a complex learning process in cognition, the debate on whether Reading is better to comprehend when compared to Listening, may tilt towards Reading to say that Reading is better to comprehend than Listening, though Listening has its advantages over Reading too. If we consider the advantages of reading alone, Reading scores over listening. Reading involves symbols which are visual – being a printed or written text. It is not just identifying the symbols and decoding but at the back of it there are several other factors such as earlier knowledge, reader's previous experience, the attitude of the reader and the language speaking community, since language is common link to connect and structure the social and community groups. The author under reference also states that there is a complex interaction between text and the one who reads. [6]

**Reading Speedier than Listening** - The other advantages that Reading has over listening is that distraction does not affect the reader much as it does to the listener, as listening is a linear function, whereas the reader could tread back to read the sentences again to capture what is said which the listener fails to benefit from. Secondly the listening expects the learner to be on real time mode to comprehend, whereas that is not the case with reading. Thirdly efficient reading could reach the pinnacle at 250-300 words per minute, whereas beyond 150-160 words in listening is a difficult exercise, since speaking beyond the speed of 150-160 words will be ineffective in quality. So listening as a break time activity or an alternate / substitute would be ideal and supportive to learning through reading. [5]

**Word constructs & word groups** - Acquiring reading skill requires a steady practice to develop and refine the skill. The reader aspiring to get skilled has to have creativity and skills to analyze critically. [5] Basics to acquire reading skills cannot ignore word construct models, grouping words that go together to establish and match the intonation and patterns of speech and capture of and stress on the subject - predicate parts. Reading thus draws a need to listen to good speakers of the language also. It is knowledge and application blended ideally to bring out sounds in the form of words and sentences with science to build it and emotion to fulfill it.

Readers in the process of advanced learning to acquire the skill develop the habit of “integrating the words they have read into their existing frame work of knowledge and schema”. There are other types of reading which involve – the so called speech based writing systems such as notation or pictograms / symbols – forming visual notations. [6]

**Readathons** - Holding Readathon sessions will be one of the ideal ways to inculcate the habit of reading in students. Readathon will not only engage small groups named after select author-personalities –who will assemble in one place for half an hour or so. Students are made to sit comfortably in a well ventilated classroom or under the shade of tree/s. All of them individually read for half an hour the book that they select and bring on the first day's session. They will continue reading the same book covering progressively the pages of content. Rules of Readathons being held by the author of the study in the institution regularly are:

- Readathon will be a once-every-week session.
- Absolute silence to be maintained
- Observers will be there to monitor – who will either be students or teachers

- Every student will have his or her own passage for reading – preferably of the level of their age with slight challenge built in to engage them into learning
- At the end of the session – 5 minutes before – each student will have to say at least 5 points about what they read – which will include learned components as outcomes too. The students can do this even looking at the reading passage. To facilitate testing quality of comprehension, teachers / monitoring students could be engaged to listen to what the students say. In a 10 minute session about 10 students could complete the exercise. If the groups are 5, 50 students would take the Readathon.
- They will write and bring a paragraph (8-10 sentences) of what they read and understood.
- Students change the reading material for every Readathon session or the book that they choose will have to be completed in a series of session, which means that they read the same book and continue to finish reading the book in a given time period. Target for students is 3 books a year.
- Performance of outstanding quality chosen and awarded

**Reading Comprehension Competition** - Reading comprehension Competition is another creative exercise that is used to inculcate reading habit. It is important to select right reading material and the time limit to read as a cut off is very essential. Challenge makes the session interesting. So every session should have something to win and appreciation as a Certificate for those who participate also to be a part of the session. Annual Competition can be an event pulling large number of students to participate and benefit from. It will be a great exercise to pull students to participate and learn various aspects of learning. Providing the students sample Reading Comprehension Competition would make them practice for the challenge which will bring a leap in learning. Free On-line tests are already available. But the competition could itself be conducted online to make the regulation of the competition quite efficient. Results also will be instant to help the organizers to hold Felicitation sessions. Other modes to create reading habits are – Reading & writing competitions; Speed reading competitions; Skimming and Scanning competitions.

It is quite possible to inculcate reading habits in the students who are not used to it by these methods. Challenge and awards make them opt for participation. It is sometimes needed to goad students to participate in the first few sessions which will then engage them into the habit. Schools are the ideal places to start these sessions.

### **Conclusion**

It could be therefore concluded that every student engaged into Reading as a habit prepares himself / herself to acquire skill in it to benefit immensely, since Reading enables great learning possibilities. Reading though is a complex process in the initial years of the child, it could be overcome with close supervision of the parents and teachers. Skilled Reading not only gets the child to efficient learning but also makes them enjoy reading for spending time usefully and in a relaxed mood. Reading is also established as an active engagement and the listening apart from its generic disadvantages, could also become a passive engagement thus becoming ineffective. Also since reading scores over listening, though listening has its exclusively advantages, reading could be chosen as an important part of every day. Teachers & institutions with the help of the parents could engage the children – at the school level – to

participate in Readathons, Reading Comprehension competitions and other events, which effectively enhance reading quality and speed, and have in them the spice in the form of Challenges and Awards. Since it is now conspicuous that the students in the twenty first century are more drifted towards the digital media for non-reading purposes, it becomes important to get them into the mood through effective ways of reading by making it a habit.

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