

## Reading: When and Why?

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### Abstract

*Reading is a very important activity in the life of any literate person who wants to keep abreast of events and ideas outside his or her immediate environment. According to Murcia (1991), reading is the most important language skill for academic success. Reading has become the realization of knowledge and education. Therefore, reading comprehension is very important in our complex daily life. When you read what someone else has written, you are communicating with that person. It is one of the basic language arts like listening, speaking and writing, and forms part of a complex information processing system. When we read, our eyes come in contact with words. These words are made up of symbols which are letters of the alphabet of that language.*

**Keywords:** literate, reading, motivation.

### **Effective Reading Comprehension**

The relevance of reading in the life of any literate person who wants to keep abreast of events and ideas outside his or her immediate environment cannot be over emphasized. According to Celce-Murcia (1991), reading is the most important language skill for academic success. It has become the realization of knowledge and education. Reading comprehension is very important in our complex daily lives (Tamsi, Zuhri & Kurniasih, 2013). When you read what someone else has written, you are communicating with that person. Reading is a language art just like listening, speaking and writing. It forms part of a complex information processing system. When we read, our eyes come in contact with words. The words are made up of symbols which are letters of the alphabet. There are other symbols that may be used to represent some aspects of the language, for example, the symbols used to represent information in mathematics or science such as the plus sign (+), multiplication sign (x), percentage symbol (%), and many more.

The words we read in print are actual samples of the language that we speak – they are the living words of the language. When we listen and hear a person speak, we do not listen to individual words, but full statement of utterances. Therefore, when we read the language that is written down, our attention is not on individual words but a stretch of words that gives us some information. Therefore, reading is like hearing the writer talk to us. When we read, we can hear the sounds of words, stretches of words, and statement which carry information to us. We think of the message or information and we react to it in our minds. We cannot talk to the writer immediately because he or she is not physically present in this situation. In this sense, however, the writer is communicating with the reader even though the reader does not respond the same as in a face-to-face conversation. Thus, Wilhelm (2013) defined reading comprehension as the capacity to perceive and understand the meanings communicated by texts. Reading may be said to operate at different levels:

- (1) Level of symbols
- (2) Level of concepts.

On the level of symbols, words are recognized, grouped and interpreted, but on the level of concepts, the recognized words call for meanings, experiences, and ideas that are commonly shared. The reader, therefore, follows the writer's line of thought, recreating in his mind the mental images or idea transmitted by the writer. Communication between the reader and the writer can be facilitated if the following are in place.

1. The reader can decode about 80% of the words, phrase and expressions in the text without using the dictionary.
2. The reader is familiar with the subject of the text.

3. The reader has adequate vocabulary in English to be able to deal with the text.
4. The reader is able to think along with the writer as he/she reads the text.

Therefore, reading comprehension as stated by Duke & Carlisle (2011) is a constructive process of meaning.

### ***Impediment to Effective Reading Comprehension***

According to Norman (2011) certain factors can impede reading comprehension. These are:

1. The reader's lacks of adequate understanding of the grammar, structure, and vocabulary of the language used. Although he sees several words, he cannot comprehend the text.
2. The reader is not familiar with the subject in the text.
3. The writer does not provide good logical sequence of thought in the text and so it has no pattern of development.
4. Although the reader is familiar with the subject of the text, the level of vocabulary and sentence structure is far beyond the level of the reader.
5. The reader often fixes his/her eyes on every word of the text.
6. The reader often loses attention and allows other distraction to block his/her concentration. Consequently, reading poses a lot of challenges to the second language (L2) learners.

### ***Purpose of Reading***

There are many reasons why people engage in reading. One of these reasons is to acquire information and new knowledge. This purpose embraces other specific purposes which form component of the overall purpose. For example, you could be reading a newspaper to obtain information. The kind of information you want may be the major news item and not details of these news item and the details related to it. Therefore, people read in order to:

1. To obtain information.
2. To acquire new ideas and new knowledge and skills.
3. To derive pleasure from new experience (entertainment).
4. To be critical of other people's ideas thoughts and action. Each person therefore has a different purpose for reading the same newspaper. The purpose for reading therefore determines the type of reading activity you undertake.

### ***What People Read***

People read so many things: school books, journals articles, professional books, newspaper, magazines, letters, circulars, posters, bills, sign post, advertisement, TV captions, emails, minutes of meetings, records of sales and stock, bank statement(s), novels and stories, forms to be filled, check(s), postal orders, doctor's prescription, road maps, traffic signs, operational manuals for equipment, directory, recipes, information booklets in hotels, and the labels on products.

### ***Types of Reading***

There are different types of reading that people engage in. These are: skimming, scanning, study reading, and critical reading.

#### ***Skimming***

Skimming is a type of reading in which the reader glances through the material quickly, in order, to have a general idea (Tamsi, Zuhri & Kurniasih, 2013). The reader does not rest his/her eyes on all the objects he sees for too long. The purpose is to quickly identify information in its broad form.

Examples:

- (A) Joseph wants to buy the New York Times Newspaper. He gets to the newsstand but, sees three newspapers (The New York Times, USA Today, and Los Angeles Times) before him. Joseph then opens each newspaper quickly and skims its pages looking for news headline. A news item in New York Times attracts him because it contains a long and detailed report of what he wants. He chooses to buy New York Times.
- (B) Mary is a student and wants to buy an English textbook. She goes to the bookshop and looks through the shelves to see the books displayed. She skims through the title of different English textbooks. The title of one of the English textbooks reminds her of the list of recommended books from her professor.

Her purpose is to decide whether the book is relevant to her course or not. This purpose requires her to look for the following information from the book:

Author

Year of publication

Edition

Table of content

Index

Random pages

A few sentences from the preface

Finally, Mary decides to buy the book or reject it, on the strength of the information she has had by skimming the book. In skimming, you may not have predetermined the information you are searching for, it is not really to locate a particular item of information. Although information is obtained from skimming, it is a broad information obtained from such an inquiry.

### ***Scanning***

Scanning is the type of reading which requires the reader to look for a specific point or information without reading the entire article (Tamsi, R., Zuhri, F., &Kurniasih, E. 2013). The required information is located at the shortest possible time. It requires rapid reading of the text in order to reach the major points that you required. In this way, it is possible for you to assemble a number of points you need about a given topic. Scanning is like looking for your child in a large crowd. You watch out for her features. You do not see other faces at that moment. Example:

Mike is a customer to Bank of America. He goes to the bank to deposit a check. The cashier returns the check to him saying he failed to sign his signature on it. When the Bank cashier accepts the check, he looks quickly for the following required information:

Date of issue

Name of drawer

Amount in words and figures

Signature of recipient at the bank

In the same way you can scan any given text in order to locate specific information with minimum time. When you scan, you skip details that you do not need at that time.

### ***Study Reading***

This is the most important type of reading activity the student is required to undertake during his/her learning process. The reader is often required to read and search texts in order to do the following:

- 1) Gather information on given topics.
- 2) Look for main points and supporting details.
- 3) Recognize the information in form of notes and make it part of his new knowledge.
- 4) Apply his new knowledge to deal with immediate and subsequent problems.
- 5) Learn to discriminate between acceptable facts or ideas and irrational propositions or mere opinions.

Study reading requires slower speed than when you are scanning or skimming, but you should learn to increase your speed so that you can read more materials. Reading speed is the number of words read per minute. The more material you can read the better informed you become because your knowledge and experience tend to increase rapidly too. Some researchers have stated that as your reading increases, so does your rate of comprehension.

### ***Critical Reading***

This is the type of reading that requires you to take the message you are reading and dissect it into pieces. It requires you to think along with the writer. The writer may be more experienced than you are and may have more knowledge on the subject than you have, but you have to develop your own power of thinking and reasoning. Sometimes, you may reason differently from the writer's own perspective. You may discover something new which the writer does not know, show and may even disagree with the writer's conclusions. Occasionally, you may misunderstand the writer because of your own weak comprehension of his thoughts in the text.

You have to analyze the parts, re-order them, interpret the writer's thoughts, arrive at your own conclusion, leave out unrequited details, and reject weak points. To do these, you need to master the nuances of the English language properly. At times, you need to go beyond the surface statements in order to reach their meanings. For example, if someone says to you "Christmas is just around the corner." You would not go looking for Christmas at the corner of your room or at the next bend on the road.

### ***Reading Skills***

There are many skills required in reading. These include:

Word perception skill

Literal comprehension skill

Affective skill

Reorganization skill

Word Perception Skill refers to reading for the purpose of recognition and identification of words and to reproduce identified words either silently or orally. The aim is to make sense out of what is read by constant practice in oral or silent reading. In the process, short and interesting passages can be prepared. Literary Comprehension Skill is the ability to read and understand information and ideas that are explicit. This means that you will read and understand what the author has written, find out inferential meanings, and finally fuse together newly gained ideas with the basic experience.

Affective Skill refers to the emotional behavior of the reader. This skill calls for the students to be emotionally sensitive to materials. Reorganization Skill requires the reader to be able to analyze and organize ideas explicitly stated in the passage in his own way. This will enable him to better comprehend the story. It refers to paraphrasing and summarizing as well translating statements contained in the passage.

### ***Reading Improvement***

The thought process of most teachers is how to improve the reading comprehension of their students. It is not that teachers lack the knowledge on how to teach reading, but that the students are operating at different levels of reading. An important aspect of teaching reading is getting students excited. When students are excited about anything, they are motivated to accomplish whatever you set before them. According to Yang (2016) motivation has important influence on students' use of reading strategies. Students apply several strategies such as making prediction of the words that they do not know, searching for words in the dictionary, and many others to help overcome the obstacle in their reading task.

Teachers, can improve their student reading by teaching skimming strategies. Since the purpose of skimming is to look quickly for some main items of information, teachers can apply the following steps stated by Arundel in Reading and Study Skill Lab (1999).

1. Read the title.
2. Read the introduction of lead paragraph.
3. Read the first paragraph completely.
4. Read the first sentence of each remaining paragraph.
5. Look for clue words, proper words, unusual words.
6. Read the final paragraph completely.

According to Arundel in Reading and Study Skill Lab (1999), another improvement a teacher can make in the reading process of his/her students is the teaching of scanning strategies. In scanning, the reader usually has a specific thing to look for. It might be a telephone number or a particular quotation in a book. These strategies are:

1. Keep in mind all the time what is the basis of your inquiry.
2. Anticipate in what form the information is likely to appear.
3. Analyze the organization of the content before starting to scan.
4. Let your eyes run rapidly over several lines of print at a time.
5. Read the entire sentence when you find the sentence that has the information you seek.

In conclusion, teachers should successfully implement skimming and scanning strategies for effective reading comprehension. In order to maximize the use of skimming and scanning strategies, students should continuously apply these strategies. Collaborative effort of the teachers and students will lead to reading improvement.

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