

## The Relationship between Reading Skills and Language Proficiency

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Doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v10i1p303

**Abstract:** Reading is an essential skill that helps readers obtain information, gain knowledge, and expand their perspectives. It is a process that involves readers both decoding and comprehending written materials and is crucial for personal growth. Due to its significant role in advancing learners' proficiency in the target language, reading plays a crucial role in language learning. It enhances vocabulary and grammar skills, improves comprehension skills, provides cultural knowledge and awareness, and serves as a motivator for learners to continue their language learning journey. This paper tries to explore the benefits of reading for the development of language skills.

**Keywords:** Reading, Interpret, Language Skills, Language Development

### 1. Introduction

Reading is an essential skill to derive meaning by means of interpreting written or printed materials. It holds an important place for personal growth, communication, and learning. However, reading is not just a process to decode a written text. It entails comprehension, analysis, and interpretation of the material. While reading, readers engage with the text, make connections and judgments by using their experiences, prior knowledge and ideas. Through reading, learners obtain a huge amount of information and ideas, which they can use to improve their lives, expand their perspectives, and increase their understanding of the world.

Reading is a significant aspect of education and personal development. Learners make use of reading to collect knowledge and enhance their critical thinking skills. Moreover, learners stand a better chance of gain insights into different cultures and acquire new perspectives on various topics by the help of reading. In addition to effects of reading on academic development, reading is also a source of pleasure and entertainment for readers. Reading introduces different worlds, and new characters.

Received: November 10, 2022

Accepted: December 27, 2022

Celik, B., & Altun, M. (2023). A Review of Listening Skills in Language Learning. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 10(1), 303-307.

By reading widely, readers can enrich their lives and broaden their understanding of the world. Also, reading provides imagination and creativity to readers. At the same time, reading is a great advantage to develop communication and writing skills. Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue that reading may contribute significantly to competence in a second language. There is good reason, in fact, to hypothesize that reading makes a contribution to overall competence, to all four skills.

Language learning is simply defined as promoting the ability to communicate in a foreign language. It is a challenging but rewarding experience that can open up new opportunities, broaden horizons, and facilitate connections with people from different cultures. Learning a new language involves acquiring not only the ability to speak, but also the ability to understand, read, and write in the target language. There are numerous benefits of language learning. In addition to its advantages of developing communication, language learning improves cognitive abilities, such as memory, problem-solving skills, and creativity. It can also provide a better understanding of one's own language and culture by contrasting it with others.

Language learning is a valuable experience that can greatly enrich one's life. Whether it is for personal growth, career enhancement, or simply for fun, language learning can provide a sense of accomplishment and help discover new opportunities for communication and connection with people from other cultures.

## **2. Literature Review**

Reading is considered one of the four primary language skills. Like listening, speaking, and writing, it is an essential part of language learning. It entails the ability to understand and interpret written texts, which can range from simple sentences to complex academic literature. Due to its significant role in developing learners' proficiency in the target language, reading plays a crucial role in language learning. Eskey (2005) states that "the relationship between reading and vocabulary is well documented and reciprocal" (p. 567). Reading is an essential tool for the improvement of vocabulary knowledge and grammar skills (Zhang, 2012; Mart, 2012). Learners are exposed to new vocabulary and sentence structures while reading.

The exposure to new words and structures greatly contributes to the enhancement speaking and writing skills. Furthermore, reading also helps learners understand how the language works, and how to apply the new grammatical rules and structures in their own writing and speaking. Reading is also a useful tool to enhance comprehension skills. Comprehension is the ability to understand what is being read, and it is a critical component of language learning. It is an active interaction between learner's prior knowledge of the context, the purpose of the reading text and the vocabulary and grammatical structures used in it (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Hollenbeck, 2011). The process of reading texts improves learners' comprehension skills, and helps them understand and interpret the messages of the spoken language. Without reading comprehension skills, learners cannot achieve better development in language learning (Clarke, Truelove, Hulme, & Snowling, 2013; Wong, 2011). It should be borne in mind that failing to interpret and comprehend the messages conveyed hinders communication.

Reading can also advance learners critical thinking skills. While reading, learners analyze and interpret texts, identify the main ideas and arguments, draw conclusions, and create meaning. Being involved in all these activities develop critical thinking abilities of learners. Learners with critical thinking abilities can

not only think clearly but rationally. Critical thinking abilities can help learners perform problem-solving and decision-making more effectively.

Reading can provide learners with cultural knowledge and awareness. Through reading learners can provide insights into the culture and customs of the target language. Learning the culture of the people who speak that language allows learners to gain a better understanding of them and their language. Learners can also learn about the history, values, and beliefs of the target culture. Furthermore, reading can be an enjoyable and engaging activity that can motivate learners to continue their language learning journey. Language learning might be a source of frustration for some learners; however, reading has the potential to turn reading into fun.

Language learning is a complex and multifaceted process that involves several skills, including listening, speaking, and writing. All these skills are all interconnected, and each one is essential for the enhancement of proficiency in a new language. For instance, listening is a crucial skill in language learning. Listening skills help us to comprehend spoken language and develop our vocabulary. Speaking enables us to communicate with others and practice using the language in real-life situations. Through listening we receive messages of the sender and through speaking we respond. In order to establish communication between the sender and the receiver, these two skills play a major role. Writing skills allow us to develop our grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. It helps us to structure our thoughts and communicate them clearly. Writing is a good way to express ourselves effectively and to communicate with others in writing.

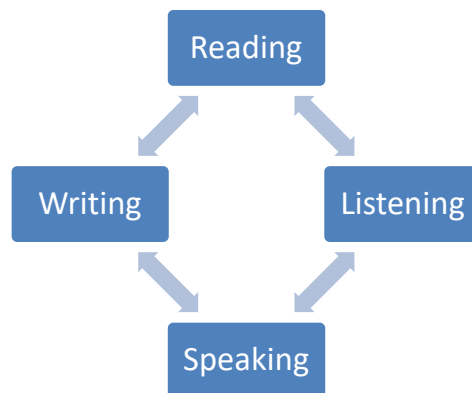


Figure 1: The relationship between language skills

Listening, speaking, and writing skills are all crucial components of language learning and interconnected. For the mastery of a language, learners need a good command of these skills. Each of these skills is necessary for developing proficiency in a new language. Reading serves as a basic building block for language learning. Learners can acquire the language elements they need for language development by means of reading. A great number of reading strategies are available to implement for language proficiency development.

**Previewing:** Previewing is an essential strategy to employ for effective reading. Through taking a quick look at the material before diving in helps learners to become familiar with the content of the text, the structure of the text, and the key ideas that will be covered. Getting a sense of these tools before reading

facilitates the comprehension of the text. In particular, this is a useful strategy for language learners who may struggle with unfamiliar vocabulary or complex sentence structures. Reading the title, the first paragraph, the last paragraph, and looking over the passage helps to prepare the reader for the content and makes it easier to understand the text as a whole.

**Skimming:** Skimming is reading the text quickly to get a main idea or gist. This strategy is useful when large amounts of text should be read in a limited time. Skimming can also be useful for language learners who are still developing their language proficiency because it allows them to see how language works in context. Reading the title, the introduction or lead-in paragraph, the first paragraph, subheadings by looking for the relationships among them, the first sentence of each remaining paragraph, and the final paragraph of the text will give readers a sense of the main ideas and concepts in the text which enable them to understand the text with ease.

**Scanning:** Scanning is a reading strategy that involves quickly searching through the text for specific information or keywords. This technique is especially useful for language learners who may be looking for specific vocabulary or trying to find answers to questions. While scanning, the readers should always keep in mind what he/she is researching for, and anticipate in what form the information will likely to appear in the text. In other words, scanning helps to develop the ability of readers to read for specific information.

**Guessing meaning from context:** Guessing meaning from context is the ability to infer the meaning of an expression using contextual clues. It is a useful strategy used to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases by using the surrounding text as a guide. For the learners who may encounter unfamiliar vocabulary and have difficulty in understanding the text, this strategy can be useful as it helps them to develop the ability to infer meaning from the text and can be a valuable tool for language proficiency.

**Reflecting:** Reflecting on the text after you finish reading is a significant technique in language learning. Thinking about the content of the text and what it means to you, making connections to personal experience, and summarizing the key ideas are useful techniques to develop language proficiency. At the same time, the implementation of this strategy contributes to the development of improving comprehension, increasing vocabulary, and improving critical thinking skills.

Reading is an essential activity for language learning, and the use of reading strategies can help to make it more effective. Previewing, skimming, scanning, guessing meaning from context, and reflecting are some of the most effective reading strategies for developing language proficiency. By practicing these strategies regularly, language learners can improve their comprehension, increase vocabulary, and develop critical thinking skills, all of which are crucial for language proficiency.

### **3. Conclusion**

Reading is one of the most effective ways to foster language development. It plays a major role in enhancing the vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension of a language. Reading helps to expand one's vocabulary. Through reading language learners are exposed to new words. They see how these words are used in context; thus, the exposure to new vocabulary improves their vocabulary knowledge and at the same time ability to use them in their real life. Moreover, reading helps to improve grammar and sentence

structure. The experience of reading helps learners to observe how sentences are structured, and how the rules of grammar are used in a text. In order to develop fluency, the understanding of grammar and sentence structure is crucial. Reading allows us to convey our ideas and thoughts clearly and coherently. Reading helps to develop comprehension skills. Learners experience different ideas, cultures, and perspectives while reading which helps learners develop critical thinking and comprehension skills. Learners benefit from these skills to analyze and interpret information, and to develop the ability to make connections and draw conclusions. All these tools are essential for language learners to communicate more effectively. In addition, reading is an enjoyable and engaging activity. As learners read widely, there is a chance to develop a reading habit which is indispensable for language development. The use of strategies while reading is effective in that they facilitate the comprehension of the reading materials.

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