

ARE BOOK LOVERS BETTER WRITERS?

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INTRODUCTION

Educational researchers in the linguistic field have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and proficiency in writing. In other words, a student, who is a good reader, is more likely to do well in his/her academic activities. S/he, too, can perform in examinations better than a student, who is a weak reader as s/he is competent in writing. Good readers can understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments, and detect implications. They know most of the words in the text already and they can also guess the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from the context through their experience and when they fail to do so, they can use the dictionary effectively so as to get the meaning. Generally, good readers can extract from the writing what is important for the particular task they are employed in and they can do it promptly. Educational researchers have also found a strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge. In other words, students who have a large vocabulary are usually good readers. This is not very surprising, since the best way to acquire a large vocabulary is to read extensively, and if a person reads extensively, s/he will become a good reader. At present, it is obvious that majority of the students are not involved in reading and as a result, they seem to be much weaker in writing. This is really a problem confronted by the present graduates. Hence, their reading habit should be improved in order that they will be able to promote their competence in writing.

Research Problem

Failure of the undergraduates to write effectively in English is the research problem. It is generally found that they commit numerous errors such as grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors when they write. This is a common issue among the majority of the undergraduates.

Objective

The primary objective of the study is to find out the contribution of reading for enhancing the competence in writing. Reading covers two significant aspects, which are ¹intensive and ²extensive reading. The secondary objective is to find out which aspect immensely contributes to improve the competence in writing, intensive or extensive reading.

METHODOLOGY

The samples were taken from the undergraduates, who study English as a subject for the General Degree at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. Out of them, 10 students were selected, who were good readers and another 10 were selected, who were not interested in reading. And later, they were tested on writing giving them an assignment for 30 minutes. Primary data were thus collected through a written test. Moreover, interviews, observations and structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data. In addition to that, a case study was also conducted. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied in the present study.

RESULTS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

When the data were analyzed, it was found that the students, who were good readers, commit much less errors when compared to the poor readers. According to the observation, the good readers very often use the library and internet. They are involved in more extensive reading, which means reading beyond their specific subject area. They regularly read magazines, journals and newspapers as well. It was observed that they always read at Periodical Section of the Main Library. However, the poor readers are usually present at the lecture and as soon as the lecture is over, they rush back home. They seem to have given their priority for some other personal matters. They are not at all interested in reading. They don't read even the prescribed texts either. Instead, they read only the simplified books or they depend on the notes, which they find in the teacher's web site. Performance of such students is absolutely a

¹ Reading relevant to the subject with great attention

² Not only the subject, but also other reading material related to the subject and general subject

failure. Their writing is horrible and they are weak in grammar, spelling and punctuation. They are also much weaker in their vocabulary as well. They also seem to be incompetent in reading comprehension. As a result, they fail to grasp the facts from a book, magazine or journal, which has been given as a reference activity. The students, who have improved their reading habits, seem to have overcome all those errors in writing to a greater extent. Good readers seem to be competent in grammar, spelling, punctuation, reading comprehension, vocabulary, cohesion and coherence. This indicates that reading is a tool for acquiring a language. Through reading, one can easily acquire all linguistic aspects such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation, reading comprehension, vocabulary, cohesion and coherence. Krashen (1985) emphasizes that acquisition of a language is more effective than learning it. It is obvious that through reading, the student spontaneously acquire almost all required elements for writing accurately as discussed earlier.

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