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## THE ROLE OF READING SKILLS IN IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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### Abstract.

Reading is considered one of the most important components of foreign language learning, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language. Through reading, learners gain access to new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and cultural knowledge. This article examines the role of reading skills in improving English language proficiency and discusses how systematic reading practice contributes to the development of other language skills. The paper also analyzes effective strategies for enhancing reading competence among EFL learners. The study emphasizes that reading is not only a receptive skill but also a key factor in overall language development.

**Keywords:** reading skills, English language proficiency, EFL learners, vocabulary acquisition, language development.

In today's globalized world, the English language plays a significant role in education, science, and international communication. As a result, learning English has become a priority for many students around the world. Language learning is traditionally based on four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, reading occupies a special place because it serves as a major source of linguistic input for learners. For students learning English as a foreign language, reading is often the most accessible and effective skill to develop. Unlike speaking or listening, reading does not always require immediate interaction or a language environment. Learners can improve their reading skills independently through books, articles, and online resources. Therefore, understanding the role of reading in improving language proficiency is essential for both learners and teachers.

This article aims to explore the importance of reading skills in English language learning and to highlight how reading contributes to vocabulary development, grammatical competence, and overall language proficiency. Reading is a complex cognitive process that involves decoding written symbols and constructing meaning from a text. It requires not only linguistic knowledge but also background knowledge, critical thinking, and interpretation skills. In language learning, reading is considered a receptive skill, yet its influence extends far beyond comprehension. Through reading, learners are exposed to authentic language use. Authentic texts help learners understand how words and grammatical structures are used in real contexts. This exposure allows students to develop a natural sense of the language and improves their ability to use it accurately.





Moreover, reading encourages learners to become more independent. When students read regularly, they develop strategies for understanding unfamiliar words and expressions without relying heavily on teachers or dictionaries. This autonomy plays a crucial role in long-term language development. One of the most significant benefits of reading is vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary knowledge is a key component of language proficiency, as it directly affects learners' ability to understand and produce language. Reading provides repeated exposure to words in meaningful contexts, which helps learners remember and use them effectively. When learners encounter new words while reading, they are able to infer meaning from context. This process strengthens memory and deepens understanding. Compared to memorizing word lists, contextual learning through reading is more effective and long-lasting.

In addition, reading exposes learners to a wide range of vocabulary, including academic and topic-specific terms. This is particularly important for university students, as academic reading materials help them develop the language skills required for their field of study. By reading well-structured texts, learners subconsciously absorb grammatical patterns and sentence structures. Over time, this exposure leads to improved accuracy in both writing and speaking.

Furthermore, reading has a strong influence on writing skills. Learners who read frequently become familiar with different writing styles, text organization, and cohesive devices. As a result, they are better able to express their ideas clearly and logically in written form. Reading helps learners understand how arguments are developed, how ideas are supported with evidence, and how conclusions are formed. These skills are especially important in academic writing, where clarity and coherence are essential. Although reading is classified as a receptive skill, it has a direct impact on productive skills such as speaking and writing. Reading provides learners with ideas, expressions, and background knowledge that can be used in oral communication. Students who read extensively often feel more confident when participating in discussions or presentations.

In addition, reading supports listening comprehension. Familiarity with vocabulary and grammatical structures gained through reading makes it easier for learners to understand spoken language. Thus, reading contributes to the balanced development of all four language skills. Studies have shown that learners who engage in extensive reading demonstrate higher levels of overall language proficiency. Extensive reading encourages learners to read for pleasure, which increases motivation and reduces anxiety associated with language learning. To enhance reading skills, teachers should apply various instructional strategies. One effective approach is the use of graded reading materials that match learners' proficiency levels. This allows students to read





with confidence and gradually progress to more complex texts. Teaching reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and predicting is also essential. Skimming helps learners identify the main idea of a text, while scanning enables them to locate specific information quickly. These strategies improve reading efficiency and comprehension. Prereading activities, such as discussing the topic or introducing key vocabulary, help activate learners' background knowledge. Post-reading activities, including summarizing and discussing the text, reinforce comprehension and critical thinking. The use of digital resources and online texts can further enhance reading instruction. Technology provides access to diverse and authentic materials, making reading more engaging and relevant for learners. In conclusion, reading skills play a fundamental role in improving English language proficiency. Reading contributes significantly to vocabulary development, grammatical awareness, and the improvement of writing and speaking skills. It also enhances learners' critical thinking abilities and supports listening comprehension. Given its importance, reading should be given greater emphasis in English language teaching. Teachers should encourage learners to read extensively and provide appropriate materials and guidance. By developing strong reading skills, learners can achieve higher levels of language proficiency and become more confident users of the English language.

In conclusion, the development of reading skills is a crucial element in achieving overall English language proficiency. Reading serves as a primary source of linguistic input, enabling learners to acquire new vocabulary, internalize grammatical structures, and become familiar with authentic language use. Through consistent reading practice, learners are able to enhance their comprehension abilities and gain deeper insight into how the English language functions in real communicative contexts. Reading has a significant impact on the improvement of other language skills. Learners who actively engage in reading activities demonstrate better writing organization, greater accuracy in grammar, and increased confidence in speaking. Reading also supports listening comprehension by reinforcing vocabulary recognition and structural awareness. As a result, reading contributes to the balanced and integrated development of all four language skills.

Additionally, reading promotes independent learning and critical thinking. When students analyze texts, interpret meanings, and evaluate ideas, they develop cognitive skills that are essential for academic success. Extensive reading, in particular, increases learners' motivation and reduces anxiety, making the language learning process more effective and enjoyable. Therefore, it is essential for educators to prioritize reading instruction in EFL classrooms and provide learners with appropriate materials and effective strategies. Encouraging regular and meaningful reading practice can significantly





enhance learners' language competence and help them become proficient and confident users of the English language.

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