

Original Paper

The Impact of the Reading Habit on the Writing Skills of Primary Students

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Abstract

Rosli et al. (2018) suggested that reading is an attempt to comprehend the writer's message, while Alnahdi and Aftab (2020) stated that it is a gateway to all other information, which may lead to understanding the world outside the text. Hence, Al-Jarf (2021) and Dadzie (2008) asserted that reading is a multifaceted cognitive process of comprehending words written in a textual form that allows readers to enhance their knowledge for personal growth and academic success. This study investigated the impact of the reading habit of the Grade Three students of a selected English Medium Private school, in Kandy, on their writing skills. Since reading lays the foundation for all the other skills in the English language, it is important to inculcate the reading habit from a young age. The research was carried out with a sample population of 30 students (from 03 classes), selected under the random sampling method. The class teachers of the three classes were also included in the study. The students were given a questionnaire that included 10 questions, under 4 criteria which would assess their level of reading habit. A separate questionnaire was given to the teachers that would assess the writing skill of the students under 04 criteria. Each questionnaire was then given scales to identify the level of reading habits as well as writing skills. The major findings of this study were that the students who have a good level of reading habits, have a good level of writing skills. The students who have a low level of reading habits, have a poor level of writing skills. It can be identified that reading is important to improve the writing skill of students. Inculcating reading habits within the student at a young age would help to create better writers for the future. Therefore, teachers should encourage students to improve their reading habits.

Keywords

reading habit, writing skill, improvement

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

English Language like any other language, has four skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking. All four skills are crucial in becoming better language learners, but reading impacts all other skills. The main focus of this study is on the question, of how the reading habit of students has an impact on their writing skills. The main aim is to identify the connection between the two skills, reading, and writing. The research is done with a group of Grade 03 students at a selected Private School, in Kandy. The conclusions are based on the information gathered from this research. In the Sri Lankan context, students are encouraged to read at a young age. Both government and private schools have library facilities the children are allowed to read and use reading materials. The use of libraries and the quality of the reading materials can differ from school to school and from area to area. The interest in reading may vary depending on different circumstances. Encouragement in reading should be done both from home as well as in school. This has a major impact on building up students' writing skills.

Reading produces better writers, is a well-known fact. As mentioned earlier reading allows students to become creative thinkers and to come up with new ideas. But, as educationists what we lack in our understanding is that there is a deep connection between these two factors. Therefore, we fail to give more emphasis on the reading habit. More encouragement should be given to the students to engage themselves in reading at a young age. If the necessary intervention is not done, it may create problems such as a lack of understanding of grammar, syntax, vocabulary, etc. This may also have a direct impact on the students' writing ability. Therefore, it is important to encourage students to the habit of reading.

The main aim of this research is to identify how reading habit impacts a student's writing skills. It will also find out if there is a connection between the two aspects. Information will be gathered using two types of tools and later analyzed and finally, findings will be presented. Reading and writing are two important skills in the English language, this study will benefit students, teachers, and anyone interested in education. It will help the teachers to improve the writing level of the students in terms of language learning. Good habits such as reading can be inculcated within the student at a very young age. The teachers can use the findings of this research to improve their students' English writing ability through reading. This research will contribute to the betterment of the younger generations, in terms of English Language learning.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Reading and the reading habit

According to Linse and Nunan (2005, p. 69), Reading is a set of skills that involves making sense and deriving meaning from the printed word. Pang, Bernhardt, and Kamil (2003, p. 6) stated that Reading is

about understanding written texts. It is a complex activity that involves both perceptions and thought. Reading is an important activity in mastering any type of language. Reading sets the foundation for other core skills in language learning. When the learners are good at their reading, they become better language learners. Reading allows the learner to understand and make meaning of a text. Therefore it can be highlighted that a reading habit is an important factor that has to be implemented at a very young age.

“Reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed it can last one’s lifetime” (Green, 2001), Gardner in his work in 2005 stated that reading habits could stimulate learners’ productivity and creativity. Accordingly, reading habits can set the background for learners to be more creative. Many research work support the idea that reading is an important factor in the language- learning process which enhances other skills.

1.2.2 Writing skills and the impact of the reading habit

Blanchard and Root (1998, p. 1) as cited in Mundriyah and Parmawati (2016) state that learning to write in a new language is not always easy.

According to Jusun and Md Yunus (2018, p. 470) “Writing is the most challenging skill to be learned and to be taught in an ESL classroom”. Writing is an important skill that requires much knowledge of sentence structures, syntax, grammar, and vocabulary. Writing skills can be enriched by the creativity and thinking skills of the learners. In order to improve creativity, thinking, analyzing, vocabulary, and other grammatical aspects, teachers can use reading as the best method. Reading serves the purpose of improving writing ability and previous research supports this fact. According to Saartik (2012, p. 2) process of writing cannot be ignored by the contribution of reading activity. Krashen (2016, p. 115) mentions that learning to write is not learned from writing, but rather from reading.

Therefore, it can be identified that there is a relationship between the reading habit and the writing skill of the learners. Linuwih and Winadhi (2020, p. 38) stated that reading habit is regarded as the most influencing factor in writing since people usually find out new ideas, facts, information, knowledge, and experience from reading activities. Reading helps learners to be more creative, generate new ideas, and find new information about different disciplines. These factors enrich the writing skill of the students and improve their writing ability.

Explaining further about the research work, Oriogu (2017) reveals that reading habit has a significant effect on the learners’ academic performance. The interconnection between the reading habit and the writing skill was significant in many previous studies. Many studies found that to learn how to write students need to read, by reading they could increase their vocabulary and they are confident in writing as well (Maula, 2005).

The importance of reading is emphasized by these studies, therefore it can be agreed that there is an impact on the writing skill and the reading habit of the students. This research supports the above idea. Reading and writing can be described as interconnected out of the four competencies. According to

previous studies done by Cho, K. S. and Krashen, S. (2016). What does it take to develop a long-term pleasure reading habit? Research summarized (Krashen, 2004, 2011) states, “Those who read more become better readers and better writers, have larger vocabularies and better control over complex grammatical constructions, and spell better”. Good readers become better writers and creative thinkers. Setyaningsih (2012) found that reading habits significantly affected writing performance in terms of achievement in vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, and writing product. Many of the studies that have been conducted in the past support the idea that reading habit has an impact on the writing skill of the student.

In learning English reading, writing, listening, and speaking are important skills. Out of these skills, writing is important to express ideas in words. Writing has become the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. Students find it difficult to brainstorm words and to use appropriate words in correct situations. The information obtained from reading can broaden and be used in writing. It will make the students more creative. There is much evidence to support that reading and writing are closely related. The more the students read, the more knowledge they will have.

Many studies highlight the fact that students should read, in order to learn to write. Reading habit is considered to be the most influential factor in finding new ideas, information, knowledge, and experience. Students need special skills in writing. The students should be able to use language appropriately, with accuracy, mechanical skills, organization, and vocabulary. Writing is an important skill in English. Therefore, it is crucial for students to improve their skills. Students should have the ability to transfer ideas into words. Reading helps in this process, by improving the student’s language, grammar, vocabulary, and style.

Considering the Sri Lankan context, even though reading is done in both government and private schools, a common complaint from the teachers is that students are unable to construct proper sentences, are not creative, and do not know to generate new ideas. In order to solve this matter, reading should be encouraged as a habit among the student. This will help the students to become better writers in the future. This study, therefore, identifies how the reading habits of the student impact their writing skills.

1.3 Objectives

Objectives of this study were;

- 1) To investigate if the writing skills of the students could be improved through reading.
- 2) To explore if it’s possible to inculcate reading as an important skill among students at a young age.

2. Methodology

2.1 Sample Group/Target Population

Grade 03 students of the selected Private School (there are three classes and a total number of 90 students. In each class, there are 30 students. A sample of 30 students was selected, (10 students from

each class.) as the sample.

2.2 Sampling Technique

Sample was selected randomly. Sample size 10 students from each class (total number of 30 students) from the selected International school.

2.3 Methods of Data Collection

Two separate questionnaires were given to the participants and they are guided on the procedure. Respondents were given the opportunity to answer all the questions with ease.

The first questionnaire was given to the target sample of 30 students, which gathered information on the reading habits of the sample. A separate questionnaire was given to the class teachers. The teachers were required to rate the students according to their performance in writing tasks completed in the classroom.

2.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Based on the findings of the questionnaires, the data was analyzed. Response rate was also be taken into consideration, which helped in reducing biasness. Data collected through interviews and observations were analyzed and presented.

2.5 Data Presentation

A sample of 30 students and 3 class teachers of grade 3 were selected for this study. Random sampling method was used to select the sample population. The sample included 15 boys and 15 girls. All of the students belonged to the same age category. Data was collected separately from students and teachers. The questionnaire given to the teachers covered the writing skill of the students, while the questionnaire given to the students covered their reading habits. Questionnaire 1, for the students, included 11 questions that identify their reading habits. Questionnaire 2, for the teachers, included 16 criteria to rate the students on their ability to write. The data collection took place within a period of two weeks.

This research enables the reader to understand how the reading habit impacts and influences the writing skill of young students. It will be very helpful for the teachers to understand the importance of reading, and how it contributes to the betterment of the writing ability of the students. The influence will have on the students will allow them to become better writers and creative thinkers.

2.6 Data Analysis

2.6.1 Identifying the influential factors on student's reading habits

The reading habits of the students were identified through the use of several criteria. The identified factors are;

- time spent on reading
- reading materials and types
- use of the library/ place of reading
- personal attitude toward reading

Table 1 and Figure 1 below present the analysis of the influential factors which were identified through this study, that have an impact on the reading habit of the students. Depending on the answers given by the students, each criterion was given a weightage.

Table1. Weightage on Criteria that Impact rReading

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Criteria	Percentage
Time spent reading	53%
Reading materials and types	36%
Use of the library	42%
Personal attitude toward reading	74%

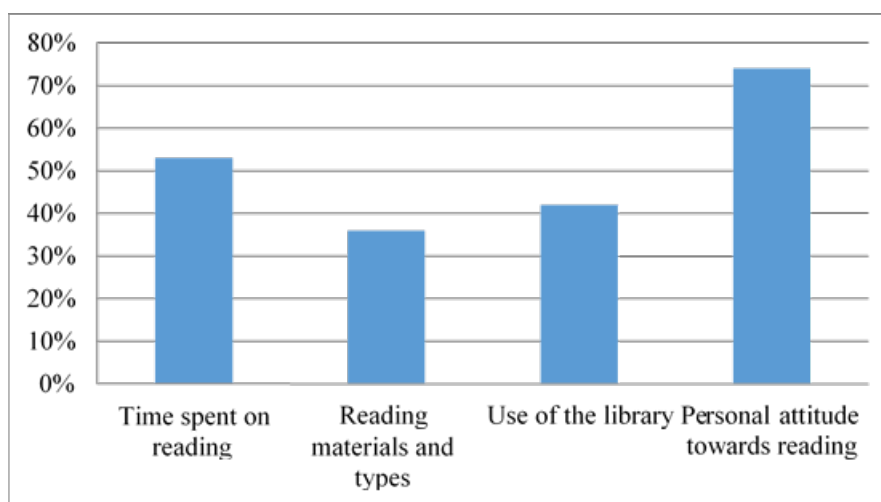


Figure 1. Overview of Criteria that Impact Reading

As per the data collected from the research, the most important factor that influenced reading was the personal attitude toward the reading habits of the sample. The use of the library was the least important factor according to the data.

Time spent on reading per day as well as how often they read for a week is the second influential factor that impacts their reading habit. More than 50% of the students spent 30 minutes or more reading every day. Therefore, we can identify that most students have a concrete habit of reading, on daily basis.

It can be identified that the students visited the school library 1-2 times a week which is also important to build up a healthy habit of reading. Having access to a library at a very young age helps students to become good readers in the future.

The type of reading material has the next impact on the reading habit. The type of material the students use is also important. Since these students are very young learners, they preferred to read books rather than other items such as newspapers and e-books. Most of the students preferred to read mystery and adventure stories while a few of them preferred to read series.

2.6.2 Reading habits based on the gender of the sample

The sample population of 30 students consisted of 15 boys and 15 girls of the same age. Depending on the data collected from the questionnaire, their attitude toward reading had a high impact on their reading habits.

Table 2. Attitude toward Reading, Based on the Gender

Criteria	Girls	Boys
Very much	12	4
Okay	2	5
Not much	1	6

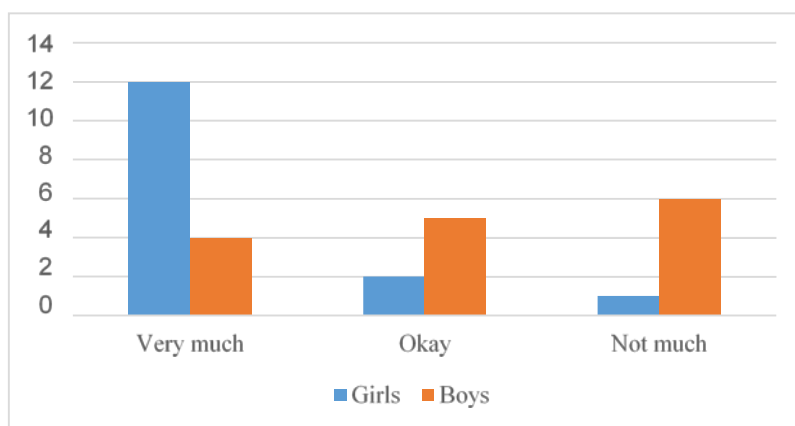


Figure 2. Attitude towards Reading, Based on the Gender of the Sample

According to Table 2 and Figure 2, the responses given by the target sample regarding the attitude toward reading are presented in this graph. It can be identified that the number of girls who are interested in reading is very much higher than the number of boys. The girls have a very high level of attitude towards reading while boys have a low-level attitude towards reading. 80% of the girls from the sample have a positive attitude towards reading. 6.6% of the girls have a negative attitude toward reading. When comparing it with the data obtained about the boys, 26% have a positive attitude towards reading, while 40% have a negative attitude towards reading. 33.3% of the boys thought that reading was okay while 10% of the girls identified reading to be okay. It can be identified that even though the reading habit of the overall students of the sample is at a high level, the attitude towards reading of the boys is negative.

2.6.3 Identifying the influential factors on students' writing skills

Marks were given to the questionnaires that were collected from the teachers. The questionnaire was developed under 04 main scales to identify the writing skill of the students based on the writing tasks done in the classroom. 16 individual aspects were rated, under the main scale. No separate writing tasks were given, but the students' performance during classroom writing tasks was taken into consideration. Depending on the writing tasks done in the classroom, the teachers rated the students. From the marks obtained from the questionnaires, the following data were collected.

Table 3. Weightage on Criteria that Impact Writing Skill

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Criteria	percentage
Attitude towards writing	45%
creativity and generating ideas	62%
Interest in different writing tasks	52%
Other abilities/skills related to writing	57%

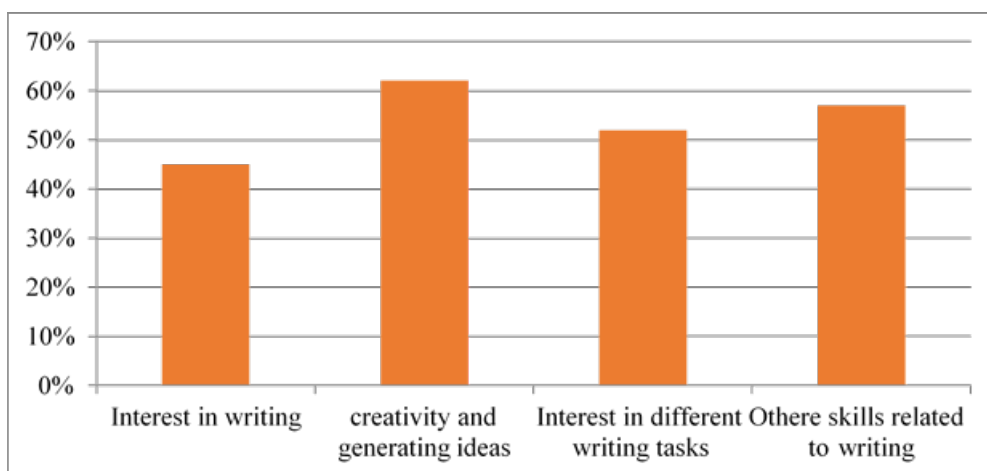


Figure 3. Overview of Criteria that Impact the Writing Skill of the Sample

It can be identified the criteria that have the highest weightage are creativity and generating ideas. 62% of students were able to be more creative and generate new ideas. 57% of the students had a high level of other skills related to writing skills. 52% of the students have a high interest in engaging in writing tasks. The selected International school uses a variety of writing tasks in the classroom. Students were given essay writing, book reviews, and story writing as writing tasks. The teachers had a very clear idea

about the student's level of writing ability. Based on the writing tasks given in the classroom the above data was collected from the respective class teachers of all 03 classes.

Most students in the classroom were able to read and understand the reading task, their ideas were clearly presented, they were able to construct grammatically correct sentences, and their written work was properly organized. Most students enjoyed taking part in book reviews and story writing.

2.7 Data Discussions

This section will elaborate on the data that has been collected and analyzed to emphasize the interconnection between them.

2.7.1 Standard of the reading habit of the students

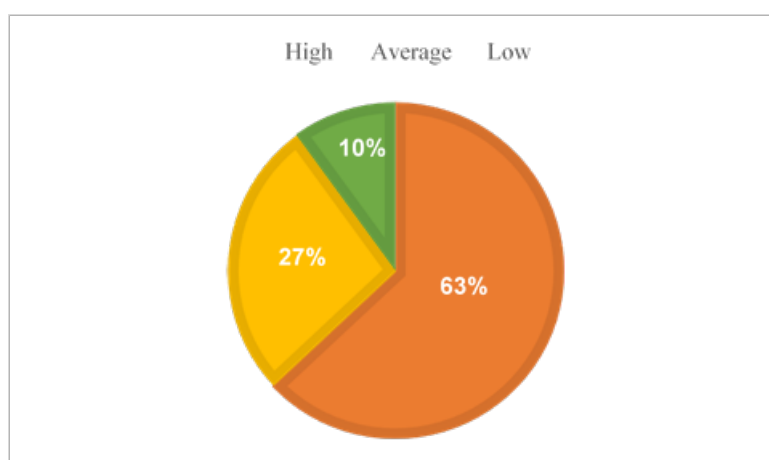


Figure 4. Level of the Reading Habit of the Sample Population

The questionnaire which was distributed among students was given marks based on a scale of 1-3, which will enable separating the sample population into three levels. Based on the score the sample population was categorized as having High, Average, and Low levels of reading.

After analyzing the data collected from the students it can be identified that the level of the reading habit of the students. 63% of the sample population has a high level of reading habits. 27% have an average reading habit while only a 10% have a low level of reading habit.

2.7.2 The impact of reading habit on the writing skill

The questionnaire which was distributed among students consisted of criteria that assess their reading habits. The parallel questionnaire which was distributed among their class teachers was named by the individual student who was included in the sample.

The measurement provided by the students regarding their own reading habits and the ratings given by their class teachers on their writing level helped to achieve the purpose of the study, identifying the impact of reading habits on writing skills.

As per the outputs of the questionnaires the students who maintain a considerable level of reading have ended up with satisfactory levels of assessment by their teachers. And the students who do not have good reading habits had fallen into unsatisfactory level assessment by their class teachers.

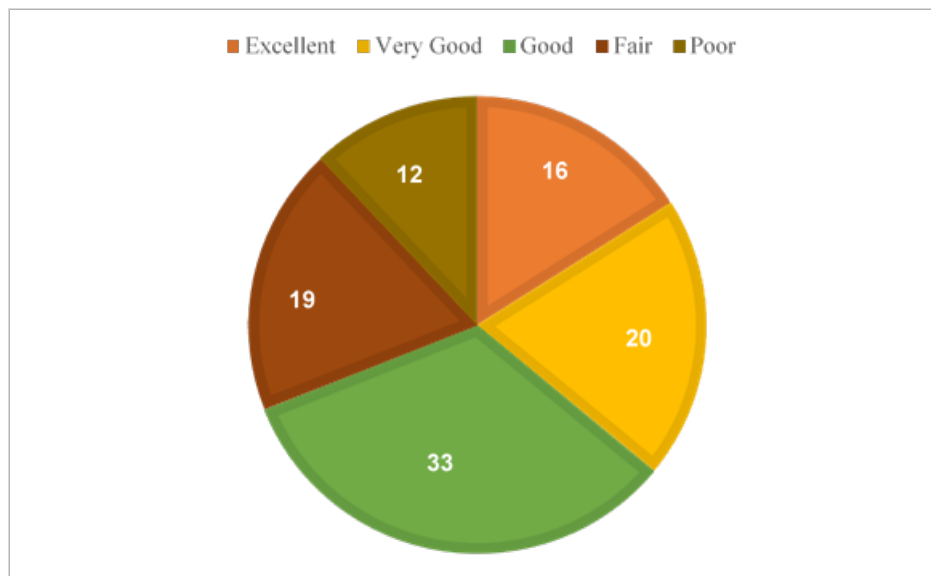


Figure 5. Impact of Reading Habit on the Writing Skill of the Sample Population

The questionnaires filled out by the class teachers were given marks based on a scale of 1-5. The results concluded that 16% of the sample population has excellent writing skills while 20% has very good writing skills. 33% have good writing skills. Another 19% falls into the fair category while only 12% fall into the poor category.

Considering the above data, it can be concluded that more than 60% of the sample population has good writing abilities and skills. According to the teacher's assessment of the students on their writing abilities, the highest influential factor is creativity and generating ideas.

Therefore, it could be agreed that the reading habit of the students has a major impact on their writing skills.

3. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to identify the reading habit of the students and how it impacts their writing skills. The sample population consisted of 30 students (of grade 03) and 03 class teachers. Two questionnaires were used to collect data. One questionnaire was given to the students, while the other was given to the respective class teachers. Each questionnaire was developed to identify and measure the criteria of each variable. The questionnaire which was based on reading habits, included criteria such as; time spent on reading, reading materials and types, use of the library/ place of reading, and

personal attitude towards reading. The second questionnaire which was given to the teachers included 04 criteria to rate the level of the writing skill of the students. The criteria included; Creativity and generating ideas, Interest in engaging in different writing tasks, other skills related to writing, and their attitude towards writing tasks.

According to the findings of the research, the sample population of the selected Private school had a high level of reading skills. In addition to that, the students had a considerable level of reading habits and were identified by their teachers as satisfactory writers. The students who did not have good reading habits had an unsatisfactory level of writing skills. It can be identified that the reading habit of the students has an impact on their writing skill.

Through this study, we can come to several conclusions. First, the students of this selected Private school have a very good level of reading habits. A positive personal attitude towards reading is the main factor that influenced them to have a high level of reading. The students spend more than 30 minutes per day reading and the sample population visited the library 1-2 times a week for reading which is also likely to improve their high level of reading habit.

The reading level of the male students is significantly low when compared with the level of the female students. A majority of the female students enjoyed reading very much, therefore they have a higher level of reading. Relatively the level of reading of the male students is low since their attitude towards reading is a negative one.

According to the teacher's evaluation, the students who have a high level of reading can generate more ideas and are more creative in their writing tasks. They have a high level of interest in different types of writing tasks, such as book reviews, essay writing, and story writing. It can be identified that reading different types of books in different genres also helps them to improve creativity and writing and generate new ideas.

When considering the interconnection between the reading habit and the writing skills of the students, it can be identified that the students who had a considerable level of reading were rated by their teachers as having a satisfactory level of writing skills. This included more than 60% of the sample population.

Therefore, it can be highlighted that if students are encouraged to read at a very young age, they will become better writers. It will help them to become better learners in the future.

4. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations can be presented for future scholars.

Reading is an important skill that improves all other skills of the English language. Therefore, teachers should always encourage students to read until it becomes a habit. Having access to the library and encouraging them to use it effectively is another crucial factor. Encouragement should be provided to

the students at all times. Building good reading skills at a very young age is important for students to become better writers. The teachers should also be able to create a better learning environment where students are allowed to use various skills and strategies and expose to new reading and writing situations. Reading provides the opportunity not only to gather knowledge but also to improve writing skills.

Considering the writing skill of the students, teachers must use activities and methodologies where reading becomes a part of the given writing task. Connecting both tasks together will allow them to make their writing abilities better at a very young age.

Based on gender, the reading habit of the boys should be improved since they have a negative attitude. Teachers must encourage them by using different strategies. The importance of reading must be emphasized to them as well as parental support should be gained.

Encouraging students into reading will make them better writers for future academics. Therefore, it is emphasized that such studies will help the relevant authorities related to education, to build better learners and language users, for the future.

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