

Reading Power Main Text

Hi, this is AJ. Time for the next lesson. Now this is one of my favorite topics by one of my favorite people so I want you to be extra happy, extra strong body and physiology for this one. So stand up straight. Get those shoulders back. Chest up. Breathe deep. Get that air going in there. Energize your body. Big, big, super big smile, huge smile. Make everyone think you're super crazy. Now move your body. Come on, get it moving now. If you're standing you just kind of wiggle around. Move those arms, move those legs. If you can, start walking. Get the blood going. Get that energy going. Let's go! Are you ready?

This lesson is called "The Power of Reading" and it comes from an article by Dr. Stephen Krashen. He's one of my favorite people in the world. Dr. Stephen Krashen is probably the number one expert on language learning and language teaching in the world. He is just an incredible professor, an incredible researcher, an incredible intellectual. He has done an incredible amount of research on the topic of learning languages. And today we're going to talk about just one part of his research. Really, Effortless English is based a lot on Dr. Stephen Krashen's research, all of the methods we use. But we're going to talk about just one particular method, one particular idea, very strong idea that comes from Dr. Stephen Krashen and his research and that is the power of reading. Specifically it's the power of pleasure reading. It's the power of easy reading. We'll talk about that more in a minute.

But first let me read a little bit from this article. Now this article, as you might guess, is about the power of reading. And Dr. Krashen did a lot of research about reading. Specifically about how do people, native speakers, and people learning foreign languages, how do they learn vocabulary? How do they get good grammar? How do they get excellent writing skills? One of the most important methods is reading. Reading for pleasure. Now when we talk about reading there are kind of two different ways to learn reading, even for small children, learning a native language. Now one method, the old method, is that you learn reading skills. So you have to study and analyze vocabulary, for example.

Spelling in English is very difficult and tough so we have to study that a lot in school. Well, we don't have to but often with old methods and old teachers we do. We study, study, study spelling. We study, study, study vocabulary. And we learn all these skills. We use all these textbooks to learn reading. And, of course, people learning new language, a foreign language, well guess what. You do the same things, right? You learn textbooks. You're reading all these textbooks and you're trying to learn all these "reading skills."

Now the other way, the other method, and this is the method, in fact that works much, much better according to Dr. Krashen's research, according to a lot of other research. It's just reading for fun, imagine that! And what that means is reading a lot of easy books. Now for children that might be comic books. It might be just children's novels. And it's just reading, reading, reading, in other words we learn to read by reading. We learn vocabulary from reading. We learn a lot of our grammar from reading. We learn our writing skills from reading. Not by analyzing and studying grammar. Not by trying to memorize vocabulary. If you read something very easy, you know most of the words. And then you find a new word, you don't need to memorize it. You will start to understand that word just because you understand the general meaning of the story. You understand the whole paragraph. You understand the sentence.

So that one word you can guess the meaning. And then guess what happens? You see that new word again somewhere else in the book. And then you start, it's in a different situation. A little bit different paragraph, a little bit different sentence, and now you're "Ah" you understand it a little more. Then you see it again in another paragraph, somewhere else in the book. And over time you will naturally learn that word. You'll never try to memorize it. You will never study it but you will learn it. You will know it forever. That's the best way to learn vocabulary. There's a lot of research about this. They compare people who try to memorize vocabulary with books, textbooks, that is. And then other people who learn just by reading easy books all the time. They're reading novels all the time. They're reading, reading, reading.

Which group of people learns more vocabulary faster? The readers, the people who are just reading for fun. They're just reading a lot of fun, easy novels and books. Those people have much bigger vocabularies than people who are actually trying to study vocabulary. It's the same for grammar. People who are studying grammar, study, study grammar rules, study grammar textbooks. And then other people who are just reading lots of novels. They're reading, reading, reading all the time. Comic books, novels, articles, stories, the readers have better grammar than the people who are studying grammar from textbooks. It's a huge difference. And the more you read over time, the bigger the difference. The better your grammar gets compared to people who are using textbooks. So this is a huge topic. It is so important.

So let me read a little bit from Dr. Krashen and then we'll talk a little more. Okay, this is from Dr. Krashen:

"When second language learners read for pleasure, they develop the competence they need to move from the beginning ordinary conversational level to a level where they can use the second language for more demanding purposes. Such as the serious study of literature, business and so on. When they read for pleasure they can continue to improve in their second language without classes, without teachers, without study. And even without people to converse with.

When we read we really have no choice. We must develop literacy. We rarely find well-read people who have serious problems with grammar, spelling and so on. They write acceptably well because they can't help it. They have subconsciously acquired good writing style as well as the conventions of writing. Our problem in language education, as Frank Smith has pointed out, is that we have confused cause and effect. We have assumed that we first learn language skills and then apply these skills to reading and writing. But that is not the way the human brain works. Rather, reading for meaning, reading about things that matter to us is the cause of language development."

So, very interesting, what does that mean? So what it means is that you don't first learn skills. You learn writing skills. You learn spelling skills. You learn how to do a sentence. You learn how to make a paragraph. And then later you can read and write well. That's exactly the opposite of what actually happens. What actually happens is you read and you read and you read. You read sentences. You read paragraphs. You read stories. You read books. You read novels. And after reading so much you subconsciously, you intuitively acquire, get, learn great reading skills, great writing skills, great vocabulary, great grammar. It comes from reading a lot for pleasure. The reading comes first. And, in fact, I would add listening to that. And Dr. Krashen adds that as well.

This article is about reading but, in fact, listening is the same thing. So when you're reading and listening a lot, that's the first step. And you need to do so much of it. You've got to read and listen for pleasure, for fun, a lot, a lot, a lot. Now the good news is you have to do it a lot but it's fun, it's easy. You're listening to stuff you like, so it's okay. You're reading stuff you enjoy. You're not thinking about grammar rules. You're not thinking about vocabulary. You're just reading and listening and enjoying yourself. You do that first, the grammar skills then come later. They come from the listening and the reading. The writing skills come from reading a lot. Your vocabulary comes from reading a lot and listening, too. Your pronunciation comes from listening a lot. It's the input that is the most important. And specific kind of input, it's got to be meaningful, real, enjoyable, pleasurable. So that's the power of reading.

Now I'm not going to talk about all the specific research studies in this book, but if you like get his book. The book is called The Power of Reading, that's the title, The Power of Reading. It's by Dr. Stephen Krashen. Now Stephen is spelled S-t-e-p-h-e-n. And Krashen is spelled K-r-a-s-h-e-n, so Dr. Stephen Krashen and the book title, The Power of Reading. You can get it on amazon.com. So if you want to see all the huge number of research studies at different universities around the world about this topic of reading and learning better grammar skills, better vocabulary, better speaking, better pronunciation. If you want to see the proof, the evidence, then get his book.

You can look at all the different studies. There's so many of them. But, y'know, if you trust me you can take my word for it. You can trust that I am trying to help you as best I can, that I really care about you. You can trust that this is in fact how it works. That if

you want to write well, if you want to have a great English vocabulary, if you want to have great English grammar you need to read and read and read. And what you need to read are novels. Novels are the key, easy novels.

So here's my rule. What does easy mean for you? My rule is you should not need a dictionary to read the book. So if you grab a, let's say you grab a book by Stephen King, kind of a famous writer in the United States. You get a Stephen King book, in English of course, and you start reading it but, oh, there's so many words you don't know. And you need a dictionary. You get your dictionary and you're looking up all these words. Well, it's too difficult for you. If you need a dictionary to understand it, it's too difficult. Okay, so, you know, put it aside and wait. You can read it later when your reading skills are higher. But for now find an easier book.

I recommend children's novels. I think they are a fantastic way to learn. You can get the Goosebumps books for example. There's a whole series. They're for kids. They're called Goosebumps. And there's, I don't know how many, there's probably 30 or 50 of them, okay? They're short and they're pretty easy. You can probably read them without a dictionary. What you should do is read all of them. Read all 30 of them. Read them, just enjoy them. Don't use a dictionary. If you see a word you don't know, just guess the meaning and keep reading. If you're wrong, it doesn't matter. You'll see that word again and again and again. Eventually you will understand that word. You won't need a dictionary. Just enjoy the story.

Another set of books I like are The Hardy Boys books. These are so old I read them when I was a kid. And there's another series of books called Nancy Drew. So The Hardy Boys books and the Nancy Drew books, another set of kids books, kids novels, they're fairly long but not too long, that are really great if you want to do a lot of pleasure reading that does not require a dictionary. So again, Nancy Drew books and The Hardy Boys books, and again, there are so many of them, 20, 30 or more in each series. You can read the whole series if you want to. And of course you can just go to any bookstore that has English books.

Look in the children's section or the young adults' section. Another series of books I like are by Roald Dahl, I think Dahl is D-a-h-l, if I'm right. Anyway, he wrote books such as Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, James and the Giant Peach. He's got a lot of books so you could look for some of those. And, of course, there are movies that go with those books so you could watch the movies, too, and listen to them. You can also get audiobooks. This is something I think is really great. If you can find an audiobook and a regular book you can read it and then you can listen to it at the same time. And again, using children's novels.

So read a lot of children's novels. And after you finish all The Hardy Boys books and after you finish all the Goosebumps books, then find a book maybe by Stephen King. OR maybe if that's still too difficult, then find something for young adults. And then read a lot of those books. Eventually, probably within one year's time if you're reading all the time, if you're reading every day, within one year you'll be reading adult novels. You'll

be reading the same books that I read for pleasure, for fun, that native speakers read. But don't start there. Go back and just start with children's novels and read and read and read. Your grammar will improve automatically and effortlessly. Your vocabulary will explode, it will increase so much so fast. You won't believe it. It's amazing. So please, follow this. Reading is so powerful but it has to be reading for fun, reading for pleasure.

Alright, I hope you enjoyed this topic. I'll see you next time.