

Effect of Age on Reading Comprehension, Reading Satisfaction, and their Correlates: From Adulthood to Old Age

Much research has been done on children's learning to read from a development point of view and normal adults' basic reading processes in cognitive psychology, yet surprisingly little work has examined older adults' reading comprehension. Because of the decline in some aspects of older adults' cognitive functioning, their reading comprehension performance and the relative roles of some perceptual-cognitive correlates of reading comprehension are likely to be affected. Furthermore, reduced comprehension could have a negative impact on the satisfaction or enjoyment they could derive from reading. The proposed research aims to fill this knowledge gap by examining the effect of aging on reading comprehension and reading satisfaction from adulthood (25 years) to old age (65 years and beyond), and comparing across age ranges the patterns of inter-correlations among reading comprehension, reading satisfaction, and some important correlates of reading comprehension such as visual acuity, Chinese character recognition, executive functions, and oral language comprehension. It is expected that both reading comprehension and satisfaction would decline with age especially for older adults 65 years and beyond. Visual acuity and executive functions may play a more important role in predicting reading comprehension for older than younger adults. The proposed study seeks to achieve these objectives by cross-sectionally comparing four age groups: 25 to 35 years, 45 to 55 years, 55 to 65 years, and 65 years and beyond. This research is important because information on older adults' reading comprehension in relation to its perceptual-cognitive predictors is currently seriously lacking; such information is essential to completing our understanding of reading across the life span and constructing a general theory of reading. Practically, since the aging population is growing fast, society is having increasing concern over the elderly's general well-being and quality of life. We think that reading for pleasure can be used as a low-cost means to promoting older adults' well-being, and a better understanding of the comprehension process and how it is related to reading satisfaction in this population constitutes the important first step to this endeavour.