

*Full Length Research Paper*

# The impact of functional reading instruction on individual and social life

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The functional importance of reading instruction with regard to society and individual is an undeniable fact. One of the essential goals of education is to actualize reading instruction which has a very important role in adopting the values of the contemporary civilization. Considering teaching, these educational goals which are based on a solid ground, reading instruction plays a very important role. With its philosophical, psychological, social, and anthropological aspects, reading is all the activities undertaken throughout life. Reading socializes, informs, and shapes the individuals' life. Moreover, reading is carried out to raise individuals who have communication skills, use language accurately, fluently, and effectively, have acquired reading habit and reading for pleasure, can think fast, have a strong perception, can interpret independently, have critical thinking skills, can analyse and synthesize, has broad horizons, have a certain cultural level, are attached to national and moral values, can empathise, and who are culturally and socially rich. The qualitative study which was conducted via literature review explored how reading instruction which plays a very important role regarding acquiring some skills such as individuals' self-realization, creating identity, and gaining understanding and comprehension is reflected functionally on social and individual life. In addition, reflections of reading instruction which has an important place in Turkish learning and teaching on individual and social life were emphasized and evaluations were made revealing their functional impacts on individual and social life. The factors which affect the individuals and societies while acquiring reading habit and reading for pleasure were examined and recommendations were made within this context.

**Key words:** Reading, education and training, individual, society.

## INTRODUCTION

The act of reading, a cognitive process, is a process of understanding, comprehending, and interpreting the written symbols and giving meaning to them. Reading has a great place in every field of education. The act of reading in education is one of the most important elements of the most reliable knowledge sources from

the past to the future. Reading is an activity of comprehension and interpretation of the signs which emerge as a result of vocalizing them by creating a meaningful whole through some symbols.

Reading is the process of seeing, perceiving, and comprehending a text with its words, sentences,

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punctuation marks and other elements (Oğuzkan, 1987: 37). Reading is a complex cognitive process which is composed of different components such as sight, attention, perception, recollection, vocalization, interpretation, synthesis, analysis, and explanation (Coşkun, 2002: 231)

Reading is to take a written code and turn it into meaningful sounds (Demirel, 2009: 50). Reading is an effective learning tool which not only appeals to children but everybody's world, develops everybody's thoughts and sensitivity and enables them to communicate with the society (Sever, 1997: 14).

Acquiring reading ability and reading habit is as indispensable as bread and water for every society and individual who forms the society at the present time when information age and life long learning dominate the world because reading is the most effective way of getting information. *"Reading habit which is considered to be one of the real development criteria of societies has a great place in human beings' life...Reading develops individual's different qualities and virtues, broadens his perspectives and world of thought, widens his horizon, makes the individual become aware of what he sees, and matures his feelings"* (Calp, 2010: 92). Reading is the primary factor which fosters individual's eloquence, communication skills, and cognitive skills, enables an individual to enrich his vocabulary, to speak language effectively, fluently, and accurately, to manage his time, to express himself, and to enrich his thoughts, feelings and fantasy world. *"Reading is a process of evaluating and interpreting the signs and symbols which are perceived by speech organs and eyes by the brain"* (MEB, 2006: 6). Reading is to learn the content of a written text, to understand, to comprehend, to learn, and to know what is told in the text (MEB, 1996: 2154). It is possible to evaluate reading as behaviour. The main goal of education is to have students gain desired learning outcomes. Reading is a complex process which consists of different actions of five senses and mind's effort to comprehend the meaning. We usually get what we learn via five senses: 1% by tasting taste, 1, 5% by touching, 3,5% by smelling, 11% by hearing, and 83% by seeing. According to these results, reading which appeals to eyes and ears has a very important share in learning like 94% and this demonstrates that reading which a skill in learning a language is very important (Aytaş, 2005). Reading is an individual activity and also an action which has a social aspect. Moreover, it is an introductory step to fit into society and to become civilized because reading is viewed as the requirement for development and progress in civilized societies and illiterate generation is a threat in underdeveloped countries (Demirel, 1999: 51).

It is accepted by everybody that we have had troubles about the act of reading which is as important as bread and water in any stage of our lives both as a nation and a society. Regarding reading culture and habit, when compared to countries where the rate of reading is quite

high, unfortunately Turkey is not at a desired level. The Western world knows how important reading, reading culture, and rich vocabulary are for an individual and they actualize strategies in this direction.

In the Western world, students' course books are prepared with 71000 words during the education for eight years. The number of words is approximately 40000 in Japan, 30000 in Italy, and 6000 to 7000 in Turkey. Our children think and speak with ten percent of 6000 to 7000 words. People who read, write, think with 71000 words and people who think and speak with ten percent of 6000 to 7000 words are not the same. This is the reason why the West gets ahead of us. Therefore, it is not adequate for us to be able to read and write as a nation. It is important that reading and writing become a need. Unfortunately, we are also among the countries which have the lowest rate of literacy. 95% of our houses do not have books or a library. In the West, there is one library for every 4,500 people. But in our country only one library is open for 64,000 people. 2,700 books in Germany, 1,700 in France, and 1,000 books in Japan are published for 1,000 people every year, but the number of books published in Turkey is only seven. According to the research conducted by Istanbul Technical University, it is revealed that 37,8% of the young people who graduated from university did not open books except for their course books (Bakiler, 2012: 63). Turkey has rather a low reading activity when compared to world average and this is an issue and a problem which need to be emphasized both individually and socially.

According to the figures (2012) from Turkish Republic Ministry of Culture and Tourism, it was determined that a total of 480,257,824 copies of books including the republications of the published books were printed in Turkey. 187 million copies of these books were distributed as textbooks to students free of charge. When that total number of books is considered, the text books have a substantial proportion. Specifically, the great number of books which are bought and read due to obligatory reasons such as textbooks, supplementary textbooks, exam preparation books, and English language teaching books should not lead to misunderstanding such as *"the number of books increases so the rate of reading books increase, too"* because buying a book does not mean reading it or having a reading habit. The individuals and societies with reading culture embody some qualities such as *being choosy*. Scientific research studies conducted revealed that there was a significant difference between the rate of going to the library in many countries in the world and in Turkey. This finding demonstrates that the desired reading culture in our country is undeniably at a rather low level.

Undoubtedly, education and reading instruction which nurtures it are the most important step of civilization, development, progress, and modernisation. The statistics present with a grim reality that reading, reading culture, and education are very important for an individual.

Although it is revealed that there has been an increase in the number of books published in the recent years, when compared to other countries it can be stated that we could not reach the level we desired regarding reading, reading instruction, and reading culture. Though the number of books printed has increased recently, it is not directly proportional to the time spared for reading. In this sense, individuals who do not have tendency to read and to go to school actualize reading activity in school and they are content with this reading activity. Within this context, textbooks used in education are very important.

Reading is the act of interpretation which shapes individual's world of feelings and thoughts, helps to get information, and broadens a person's point of view and horizon. Reading enables a person to give meaning to life and realize himself at the same time. Reading is a life-style. It is a life long activity. Reading differs from society to society. *Regarding that reading habit and reading for pleasure begin with primary education* will have a negative effect on pre-school educational activities. If it is considered that listening begins in mother's womb, specifically, gaining a reading habit and reading for pleasure is an important process for the formation of "books and reading" perception with the pre-school children of 36 to 72 months old. However, teachers and parents who are considered to be role models do not have the desired reading habit and culture, so this affects the pupils negatively. Therefore, these factors play a very important role in not creating a reading culture.

According to the research carried out by UNESCO, there is scarcely any reading habit in Turkey. We watch television, go online, but we do not read. While the rate of reading books in Europe is 21%, it is one person out of 10,000 in Turkey. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) reported reading habits in the world. According to the report, Turkey ranks 86<sup>th</sup> among the countries in comparison of reading rates. *"We usually read romances"* The research revealed that Turkish nation watch television on average 6 h a day and surf the Internet 3 h. Unfortunately, Turkish nation spare only 3 h to read books a year. Most of the citizens to whom TRT News interviewed do not remember the name of the last book they have read. Reading books is in 235<sup>th</sup> place on a list of things most valued in life by Turks (URL-1).

Although these statistics reveal some very important developments, they also reveal a grim reality. Parents who must be a role model to their children have a reading habit at very low rates in the information age where social media is so effective but reading decreases and this is a negative condition with regard to education of children and formation of reading habits with children. Family fulfils very important functions with regard to forming good reading habits in children and enabling social and cognitive development of children. Raising individuals who have language awareness and a wide imagination and express themselves very well can be actualized with

language acquisition and reading instruction. The act of reading must be regarded as a requirement and component which provides pleasure to become a permanent behaviour process for the individuals. Reading habit is a skill of life which must continue throughout the lives of individuals and societies. Educational activity must raise awareness for the acquisition of this skill. In line with these goals, the project called *"Reading Culture and Effective Language Use- It is time to read now"* (URL-2) was carried out by Board of Education and Discipline to create a conscious society through a cooperation between family and school by involving the entire society. In addition to this, *"A Workshop on Reading Culture and Vocabulary Development"* which was carried out with the contributions of academicians, educators, writers, and non-governmental organizations is very important due to being the first step of the project and raising consciousness of reading instruction with individuals and society. Making efforts to increase the rate of reading, functioning of libraries according to their purposes, popularizing reading habit and becoming a lifestyle, students' expressing themselves in the best way, using Turkish effectively, accurately and fluently, the act of raising awareness about reading, and creating an individual and a society having a high state of culture can be actualized by the act of reading and education is the only thing that will turn this activity into a habit and a lifestyle. While carrying out educational activities, one of the most important elements is undoubtedly reading and therefore, the ability to understand and explain what you read. Developed countries having a high state of culture and accumulation of knowledge materialize 60% of the information they have with reading. On the other hand, the rate of reading is rather low in underdeveloped societies. Therefore, lack of reading and lack of reading instruction draw the attention as the factors with most of the problems.

### **The purpose of the study and its importance**

This research study explored the functional impacts of reading instruction regarding individuals and society and which important functions reading instruction carried out considering the individual and society. Moreover, regarding its universal aspect, evaluations were made about why reading instruction is so important for each society and the functionality of reading instruction was explained with a different perspective. Scientific data revealed some problems which occurred when individuals and society gained reading habit and reading for pleasure and recommendations and evaluations were made considering the individual and social functions of reading instruction. The current period has more often been referred to as the information age and individuals and societies that are aware of importance of reading will inevitably succeed and develop scientifically and economically. Addressing

the functionality of reading instruction is important because it aims at shedding light on its examination with a different perspective.

## METHOD

Literature review, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study. A literature review is a process of studying what has already been written on a particular topic and gathering data. This method can help in the choice of topic and understanding of where their work is situated in the larger field (Karasar, 2005: 183). The literature review can also be a stand-alone form of qualitative research in which the knowledge generated by researchers, academicians, and practitioners were defined, synthesized, and evaluated systematically and clearly (Fink, 2005:3). Scientific sources such as books, articles, and theses composed the data of the research study. The data gathered was evaluated in line with the purpose of the study. The functional reflections of reading instruction on individual and social life were addressed with this method. Moreover, considering the universal aspects of reading instruction, a number of statistical data were revealed and the effects and importance of the functional use of reading instruction in Turkey on language, individual and social life were tried to be explained.

## Reading and its Importance

It is possible to evaluate reading as the total cognitive activities which are formed by the perception and comprehension of an individual. Reading is an interpretation process that is actualized both as a cognitive and physical activity. Moreover, it has very important qualities such as providing peace and happiness spiritually, and welfare to people. Some definitions about reading are given below:

Reading is an act of recognizing, identifying, perceiving, comprehending, and understanding words (Karakuş, 2002: 77). Reading is an activity that meets our needs about widening and deepening person's world of thought, enhancing accumulation of knowledge, and gaining pleasure (Tural, 1992: 126). Reading is the process of seeing, perceiving, and comprehending a written text with its words, sentences, punctuation marks and other components (Kavcar et al., 1995:41). Reading is a process that has an introduction, development stages, and a conclusion (Epçağan, 2009: 207). Reading is a complex process which is composed of various functions of eyes, sound and brain such as sight, perception, vocalization, understanding, and construction in the mind (MEB, 2005: 16). Reading is an exchange of views which is realized between a reader and a writer in a suitable environment (Akyol, 2009: 15).

Reading which promotes individual's cognitive ability and socializes the individual fulfils important roles during the individual's realization of himself. An individual makes his life meaningful by reading, learns different points of views, develops the skills of understanding, comprehen-

sion, analysis, and synthesis and thus enjoys life. In short, reading is a very important activity that what makes an individual, provides knowledge and opportunities for the individual to look at things from different perspectives, makes individual's life meaningful, and has a key role in developing his self-esteem. Reading is an activity of sense-making which fosters individuals' critical thinking, provides opportunities for them to look at things from different perspectives, and broadens their horizons. Human beings can express themselves with the number of vocabulary they have. Thus, there is a direct correlation between the importance an individual gives to reading and rich vocabulary. Moreover, there is a correlation between reading and the state of being spiritually and physically well. The act of reading, the main tool for an individual to realize himself, is the means of a manifestation of his existence. It is to attribute meaning to life. That's why the ones who do not attribute meaning to life do not have self determination to struggle in life and the development level of an individual and a society which an individual belongs to and the act of reading are interconnected. When industrialized countries are examined, it is revealed that their rate of reading is very high. This condition is not coincidental and it is possible to evaluate it as a cultural from past to present and a reflection of belief in science.

## Reading instruction as a means of Turkish teaching curriculum and language learning

Reading instruction aids students to gain basic skills such as enriching their vocabulary, their world of feelings and thoughts, to develop their reading skills, to read understand and comprehend any written text meaningfully, and to gain a habit of interpreting a text, to develop speed reading and ability of understanding with the students, and to gain reading habit and reading for pleasure. The aim of Turkish teaching curriculum is that students can read any text which they encounter in their every day life accurately and fluently with appropriate reading strategies, interpret what they read with critical viewpoints and make reading a habit (MEB, 2006: 3). Reading means to understand and to know. During the process of teaching and learning, fostering reading and comprehension skills depend on the development of the act of reading and reading instruction according to its aim. Reading is explained like that in Turkish curriculum guide: *"Reading is a process of evaluation and explanation of signs and symbols that are interpreted by brain via speech organs and sight. Reading skill enables a student to encounter new knowledge, events, situations, and experiences via reaching multiple sources of knowledge. Consequently, this skill involves a process which provides learning, research, interpretation, discussion, and critical thinking"* (MEB, 2006: 6- 7). The act of reading will enable individuals to acquire reading habit with their freewill without

depending on anybody and problem solution skills.

The most important point in Turkish and Turkish Language and Literature education is to make sovereign an understanding which canalizes an individual to behaviours that will enable him to enjoy reading, to enrich his feelings and fantasy world, to enhance his cultural level, and to glorify his personality. In order to actualize these goals, functional reading instruction plays the key role.

### Purposes of reading instruction

Every society or state prepares a set of curricula and implements them in order to raise individuals who are suitably equipped with social and cultural aspects, can express themselves, think independently, regards events critically, and have developed analysis and synthesis abilities. Within this context, reading instruction plays an important role for the acquisition of the specified behaviours. Literacy profile of a society is an important indicator of civilization for that society. Thus, some variables belonging to an individual who makes the society such as age, gender, marital status, geographical location, profession, education level and income status, education level of parents, and the rate of going to the library considerably affect reading, reading culture, and instruction. The attitudes of individuals towards these variables shape the individual's social life. The goal of reading instruction contains important functions within itself. The main abilities and habits which students are required to gain in reading instruction are;

- Comprehending that reading books is one of the ways of gaining knowledge.
- Choosing good books suitable to the level.
- Spending free time reading books.
- Speed, correct, continuous and meaningful reading; understanding what is read quickly and correctly.
- Enriching vocabulary.
- Developing eloquence by reading texts written in correct and good Turkish (Calp, 2010: 99).

Reading instruction is actualized within the framework of some goals: developing individual's ability to comprehend, evaluate, and interpret, explain the meaning of the words, enriching his vocabulary, reading accurately, fast, fluently, meaningfully, using the resources appropriately, making reading as one of the most important elements of his life, enriching his world of thought by broadening his horizons and creating a rich dream world, and making reading for pleasure and reading habit as part of his life. The goals of reading instruction identified for students are given as follows;

1. Students' understanding what they read correctly and quickly, enhancing reading aloud and silent reading by promoting their natural and meaningful reading habits,

2. Enrich students' vocabulary by developing students' interest in reading various topics and enhance reading for pleasure,

3. Have students acquire a good personality and a goal,

4. Make students think about aesthetic values by making them aware of the beauty of the works,

5. Assign students a movement which is useful to the sensitivity of first period of adolescence and steer these feelings to valuable and beneficial desires,

6. Have students gain knowledge about different topics and develop reading skills which various scientific and research studies required,

7. Make students love and enjoy good literary works, and have them gain the habit of spending their free time on reading,

8. Create and develop desire within students to love books and have books (Aytaş, 2003: 156-157). The act of reading with its many functions is the life itself and makes it meaningful, so it is a vital element as indispensable as bread and water which the individual and the society will never give up. Gündüz and Şimşek (2011: 29-30) listed the individual and social goals of reading: We feel the need to enrich our inner world, broaden our points of views, establish a good communication, exhibit the right behaviour, get rid of our prejudices, be tolerant, think creatively, regard concepts objectively, develop thinking skill, generate independent and original ideas, evaluate events, situations, and ideas healthily, have self-confidence, satisfy the curiosity to learn, being realized in the society, make people listen to you, have acceptance of ourselves by the society, enrich our vocabulary, make appropriate decisions, interpret nature and universe, be an irreplaceable and a wanted individual, perform analysis and synthesis, succeed in exams, and be more independent.

### Elements of reading

Reading, one of the fundamental elements of language teaching, involves the process of perception and interpretation via sense organs. Reading with its physiological, psychological, and sociological and cognitive aspects is a complex process. Reading skill constantly varies. It is not constant, it develops and changes. Therefore, what is more important in reading is reading accurately, that is, comprehension and explanation but not speed reading.

The aim of reading is to read the text accurately, understand it, and comprehend it. There are some factors which have an effect on perception and comprehension of the text accurately. Lack of education and incompetence depending on physical and cognitive elements of reading cause inaccurate actualization of reading. During the education process, teachers should take these factors into consideration and they should structure reading instruction according to them. The act of reading

which is performed to learn reading firstly turns into a life long process later. The barriers to reading must be eliminated in order to widen the borders of reading and the individuals must be taught how to eliminate these barriers (Kurudayıoğlu, 2007). The status of the individuals in the society which they belong to and reading culture and reading habit of the society affect the individual socially.

### Principles of reading

Reading is an interpretation process performed with a point of view that requires continuity. Thus, it requires a specific pattern or a very broad perspective and understanding which cannot be fitted into time. Reading is a component of some elements which have both cognitive and physical aspects. Hence, because it is a delicate subject, process of constructing meaning concerns the research field of many scientific disciplines. Reading which is so delicate and important must be performed regarding some principles.

Reading has five basic principles.

**Reading requires motivation:** Motivation is an important factor during the process of learning and developing reading. Readers who lack motivation are poor readers. Poor readers are careless, untidy, and scattered. Teachers take the responsibility of these poor students to help them focus their attention. These children's self-confidence must be boosted.

**Reading must be strategic:** A reader must behave according to the purpose of reading. The reader must distinguish between reading for examinations and reading for pleasure. He must regulate his strategies according to it. Reading masterpieces and a scientific text is different. Reading a short story or a poem and a scientific work is different. While you read the masterpiece for pleasure, a scientific work must be read regarding cause and effect relationship, so strategies must be generated.

**Reading is a process of constructing meaning:** Any kind of written resource is understood using a set of background knowledge. Inferring meaning from a text mostly depends on activating background knowledge.

**Reading must be fluent:** Reading fluency of readers depends on the sensibility to identify words. When compared to other readers, the ability of identification and differentiation of words take an important place for poor readers.

**Reading is a skill which regularly develops:** Based on the process, reading skill requires continuity and it is a life long pursuit. In order to realize it, we must spare a considerable amount of our time to reading. Rather than being more or less, its continuity is important (Akyol, Çağdaş Eğitim Dergisi (Contemporary Education Journal, Number: 233; in: Calp, 2010: 105-106).

Reading which has both individual and social aspects is a profound topic which cannot be understood without making an effort. Performing reading also requires a certain knowledge and accumulation of culture. Individuals who lack maturity and cultural level cannot acquire reading habit in real terms because performance of reading is formed with reading culture and reading habit. Reading must be actualized within the framework of a certain purpose. Starting reading activity is like a leaf which the wind blows away in a windy weather. There is no reading without purpose; if there is not a purpose, there is not comprehension and interpretation and if there is, it becomes vocalization. In this respect, as a society individuals must be encouraged to read both as a cultural value and a requirement of an instructional program. Otherwise, the act of reading is no longer strategic. Reading culture and habit can be materialized only with a good reading instruction. When the societies with reading culture are examined, it is detected that reading habit requires continuity. Therefore, within the framework of life long learning and in line with the principles of reading, a consistent and a continuous understanding of reading must be promoted both as an individual and a society.

### Reading habit in Turkey

The scientific studies revealed that we have problems about reading habit as a society and the majority of the society, both young and old, does not considerably value the act of reading. In other words, we do not have the desired reading culture as a society. Not adopting reading as a culture is the one of the main factors for the formation of this situation. The research conducted in the recent years reveal that Turkey, an industrialized and a developed country with advanced economy is not developed in terms of reading when compared to economy.

Turkey, one of the 16<sup>th</sup> largest economies in the world, must be at the same level of economic welfare in terms of reading instruction. Individuals and societies with lack of reading culture can not be successful. Scientific studies reveal that there are individuals in Turkey who have not read a book. Some of the other individuals who are not included under this category read 3 or 5 books and the others are included in the category of those who read a lot between 6 and 20 books. When these data are examined, if there were not textbooks in the school environment, many people would live on without reading books. Regarding the importance of textbooks in reading instruction, many scientists have made some observations:

The importance of textbooks in education increases due to transferring the eloquence of language by means of the texts in the text books and having students gain love for their native language. In addition to this, it is

revealed that textbooks which are particularly used in language learning have a very important share for children gaining reading habit (Huffman, 1998: 14). Özbay (2002: 37) stated that text books were the most important reference guides and revealed in his study that Turkish teachers substantially (% 94, 44) taught their courses sticking to their textbooks. Due to these considerations, it is stated that textbooks must be well - prepared to meet the higher expectation and needs.

Books and the texts which compose them are very important. In this regard, text books and texts and books which elementary school children had access when they first learn to read and write in their primary education are important determinants in terms of acquiring reading habit (Sever, 2003: 17). Turkish textbooks are the most important books. Students from the lower socio-economic levels have difficulty in finding books to read except for textbooks. In this case, the texts in the textbooks become the most important reading tools (Coşkun, 2003). Textbooks have important functions in reading instruction. Thus, it must foster students' reading habits and also it must aim to have the students gain skills of a wide range of emotional world, critical thinking, expressing what they think in the best way and having a literary taste.

One of the most important problems of Turkey is *the problem of illiteracy and sickness of illiteracy*. The statistics about reading and reading culture related to our nation and country is not very pleasant. This statistics reveal the dimensions of our sickness of illiteracy sadly.

Regarding the rate of population, 21% in England, 21% in France, 14% in Japan, 12% in the USA and 0,01 % in Turkey (one person out of ten thousand) read regularly. According to the United Nations Human Development Report, Turkey ranked 86<sup>th</sup> among 173 countries such as Malaysia, Libya, and Armenia in comparison of reading rates. While the Japanese read 25 books on average a year, the Swiss read 7 books on average, and the French read 7 books on average a year, 6 people in Turkey read one book a year. A Norwegian spends 300 times more time, an American 210 times more time, an English 87 times more time, and a Japanese 87 times more time on reading when compared to the time a person spares for reading in Turkey. The world average of reading is 3 times more time than the time we spare for reading.

A Norwegian spends 137 \$, a German 122 \$, a Belgian 100 \$, an Australian 100 \$, a South Korean 39 \$, and a Turk 0,45 \$ on books. The world average is 1.3 \$. While seventy-two thousands books in the USA, fifty-eight thousand in Russia, forty-two thousand in Japan, and twenty-seven thousand in France are published a year, only seven thousand books are published in Turkey.

The rate of reading magazines in our country is 4%, reading newspapers is 2%, listening to the radio is 24%, watching television is 95% (URL-3; Gündüz and Şimşek, 2011: 17-18). Many problems have been detected as the

reasons for not reading books. The main reasons are *economic, psychological, social, and cultural*. It is known that we are not at a level to sort out these problems. With the effect of mass media on people, individuals do not focus on reading. With the effect of technology, some activities which individuals like doing take the place of reading, occupy individuals and hinder reading; however, we should question ourselves as an individual and it is a scientific fact that looking for other things as responsible for everything does not help. Specifically, the main factors which affect reading negatively in our country where economic welfare increases are some negative approaches from the past and prejudices such as the low rate of literacy, lack of time, materialistic and pragmatic viewpoints, indifference, ideological obsessions and restrictions.

### **Functions of reading instruction regarding individuals**

The main purpose of education is to prepare individuals for life. Education plays the key role for individuals to harmonise with society by adopting their own cultural values. Thus, undoubtedly the main phenomenon which nurtures education is reading instruction during the process of individual' socialization, preparation of the suitable environment for education, and raising individuals according to the requirements of national education. Individuals must gain reading skills and habits and in line with this purpose, individuals who have developed skills of thinking, analysis-synthesis, comprehension, and evaluation and can make judgments can be raised. The main purpose of reading instruction which is actualized in this context is to foster students' understanding. It is only possible for an individual to gain critical, scientific, creative thinking skills, to define the era, to express oneself, to make one's life meaningful, and to establish a good relationship with the society with reading instruction.

Reading is a value which broadens individual's horizons, shapes his personality, and connects him to others. All societies develop some strategies to enable individuals to become readers. Reading which frees individuals in real terms protects them against ignorance and wrong beliefs. Among the goals of curriculum with this purpose in mind and Turkish National education is the statement "*individuals who will grow up can read, write, and speak Turkish accurately*" (Demirel, 1999: 51). Reading is an integration of activities which is based on a life long process. In this respect, it is the entire activities which carry out many functions during the formation of individuals' feelings, thoughts, and personality. Thus, reading is the most important component which introduces the individual's place in the society, and the reasons for his socialization and existence. Regarding an individual, the main purpose of reading instruction is to raise individuals who can think critically, express himself

freely, and exhibit effective expression. *“The formation of creative, productive and critical thinking and the creation of type of man who is knowledgeable, polite, respectful, civilized, and contemporary and bears the qualities of the era in which he lives will be realized with the acquisition of reading”* (İşeri, 1998: 3).

An individual who has acquired reading habit has many advantages. The individual who attributes meaning to life develops his self-confidence, broadens his horizon, and learns to regard events with different view points. He has a rich vocabulary and he gains the ability to speak effectively, accurately, and fluently. An individual who explores various feelings and thoughts with different acts of reading enables his socialization quickly. Individuals who spend most of their time with some non-advantageous and non-educational things instead of reading habit are doomed to lose. The way to increase individual's level of education is through reading. Increasing the rate of reading is very important with regard to raising awareness of the individual and the society.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reading is a process of comprehension and interpretation. It is an act which the individuals and the societies will not be able to give up throughout their life due to its functional aspects because *those who do not read / those who do not understand life cannot find the determination to struggle life*. Reading instruction primarily plays a very important role in individual's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. As a result, it is poetry of activities that continue life long. Because it is a learning activity which continues from birth to death, it must be based on scientific foundation and it must be approached in this context

The act of reading is not only an activity which is performed only in some courses. Reading must be important for all courses. Reading instruction is an important part of individual and social life which need to be accepted by each level of education first in formal and non-formal education institutions and then in public and private sector and finally by all layers of society. Reading culture and reading habit are not at a desired level in Turkey when compared to the Western world. Turkey has made progress in many fields; however, our country has not reached the stage it deserved about its citizens' awareness of reading instruction and this is really a major weakness of our society and nation. The scientific studies conducted reveal that regarding reading habit and reading for pleasure / reading culture, we are at a level which is incomparable to Europe as an individual and a society: Regarding the rate of population, 0,01% in Turkey (one person out of ten thousand) read regularly and according to the United Nations Human Development Report, Turkey ranked 86<sup>th</sup> among 173

countries such as Malaysia, Libya, and Armenia in comparison of reading rates, 6 people in Turkey read one book a year, time spared for reading in Turkey is rather low when compared world average, 0,45\$ is spent on books, and the number of books published a year are rather low when compared to world average. All these problems have negative effects on the formation of reading habit/ reading culture.

Parents, school, mass media, communication tools and the environment play a fundamental role for reading for pleasure and reading habit to gain a place in individual's life. There is a direct correlation between reading culture and habit and development and welfare level of a country and a nation. As a nation and a requirement of information age, the way to become an individual who is knowledgeable, polite, thinks freely, has developed critical thinking skills, presents creative and original ideas and has developed analysis and synthesis abilities is to be aware of importance of reading instruction. It can be stated that an awareness regarding reading for pleasure and reading habit / reading culture is not created in parallel with economic development in Turkey because the research studies conducted reveal that Turkish people spend at least 5 or 6 h in a day on watching television instead of reading and they pay less importance and attention to reading.

Reading instruction has many individual and social functions. It enables the individual to become socialized, be informed, think creatively, get rid of monotony in his life, excel in writing and speaking skills, and develop his ability of understanding and comprehension. An individual enhances his level of education with reading, socializes, broadens his horizon, speaks effectively and accurately, and communicates easily. It is possible to evaluate reading which is the most effective and the most fundamental tool of learning as the key for the intellectual development and reading habit as the key for adjusting to the society, considering events critically, building empathy, not being prone to violence, and living healthy.

Reading instruction and learning must be evaluated as a whole which cannot be separated from each other. Functionally, reading instruction activities is performed to raise individuals who are culturally and socially rich, have communication skills, can use the language accurately, effectively, and fluently, have acquired reading habit and reading for pleasure, can think quickly, have a strong perceptual ability, can interpret independently, have critical point of view, can analyse and synthesise, have a broad horizon, have a certain cultural level, can depend on national and moral values, and can empathise, have the ability of communication, can use the language accurately, effectively, and fluently, have acquired pleasure for reading and reading habit, can think quickly, has a strong perception ability, can comment independently, have critical thinking skills, perform analysis and synthesis, have broad horizon, have a certain cultural level, depend on national and moral values, and can



empathise. In this regard, the philosophical, psychological, sociological, and anthropological aspects of reading instruction are very important and they can not be ignored.

### Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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