COMPARING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SILENT READING VERSUS READING ALOUD IN COMPREHENSION DEVELOPMENT

COMPARAREA EFICACITĂȚII LECTURII ÎN GÂND FAȚĂ DE LECURA CU VOCE TARE ÎN DEZVOLTAREA ÎNȚELEGERII TEXTULUI

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Abstract: *As digital sources develop and students receive already synthesised information, their critical thinking and motivation to engage with complex texts diminish. It is therefore important for teachers and parents to implement effective reading strategies that restore active engagement. However, the decision of which reading strategy to adopt remains a debatable topic. This study evaluates the cognitive impact of silent and loud reading, determining which method more effectively fosters deep comprehension. Data were collected from primary and secondary school students at "Ioan Vodă" Theoretical Lyceum in Cahul through observational and experimental approaches. Participants were exposed to both modes of reading, using tests, handouts, and schoolbook exercises. The observational data indicate the teacher's preference towards reading aloud in lower grades, whereas employing silent reading in the 9th grade. 7th graders achieved high outcomes using either reading strategy, registering 95% during reading aloud and 92% during silent reading. The results for the 9th grade students vary slightly, with comprehension rates of 85.7% for silent reading and 77.9% for loud reading. Despite the predisposition towards vocalisation or internalisation of text, the results vary based on instructions and goals, and both reading methods should be applied.*

Keywords: *reading comprehension, silent reading, loud reading, skills, goals*

Rezumat: *Pe măsură ce sursele digitale se dezvoltă și elevii primesc informații deja sintetizate, gândirea lor critică și motivația de a se implica în studierea textelor complexe*

scad. Prin urmare, este important ca profesorii și părinții să aplice strategii eficiente de citire care să restabilească implicarea activă. Cu toate acestea, decizia privind strategia de lectură care trebuie adoptată rămâne un subiect controversat. Acest studiu evaluează impactul cognitiv al cititului în gând și al citirii cu voce tare, determinând care dintre aceste metode favorizează mai eficient comprehensiunea aprofundată. Datele au fost colectate de la elevii ciclurilor primar și secundar ai Liceului Teoretic „Ioan Vodă” din Cahul, prin abordări observaționale și experimentale. Participanții au fost expuși ambelor moduri de lectură, utilizând teste, fișe de lucru și exerciții din manualele școlare. Elevii din clasa a VII-a au obținut rezultate înalte folosind oricare dintre strategiile de citire, înregistrând 95% în timpul citirii cu voce tare și 92% în timpul citirii în gând. Rezultatele pentru elevii din clasa a IX-a prezintă mici variații, cu rate de înțelegere de 85,7% pentru citirea în gând și 77,9% pentru citirea cu voce tare. În ciuda predispozițiilor spre vocalizarea sau interiorizarea textului, rezultatele variază în funcție de instrucțiuni și obiective, iar ambele metode ar trebui aplicate.

Cuvinte-cheie: *înțelegerea textului citit, citirea în gând, citirea cu voce tare, abilități, obiective*

Reading is one of the main skills that contributes to learning, which is developed from an early age. As students transition from acquiring reading skills to learning by reading, the ability to extract, synthesise, and evaluate complex texts becomes their primary goal. Therefore, reading comprehension is an essential component in academic achievement and social implications. Nonetheless, not everyone can easily understand what is being read.

Reading comprehension is a complex task that coordinates several cognitive skills and abilities. Understanding a text takes into account a wide range of mental processes, including memory, attention span, and perception, as well as phonological awareness and rapid naming. Considering these, reading comprehension consists of two main components: decoding and language understanding. If the reader lacks in one of these areas, or in both, the comprehension process will be unsuccessful.

Adopting a reading strategy becomes a tool aiding comprehension. The two main methods of reading are silent reading and loud reading. To date, there has been little agreement on which reading mode is more effective for developing reading comprehension. Several scholars have demonstrated that students achieve higher understanding rates when reading silently and choose the silent way themselves. The noticeable benefits they opt for include the possibility to read rapidly without being distracted by noise. In contrast, Subedi, Sas and Adiarti point out the effectiveness of loud reading, not only for comprehension but also for increasing phonological awareness and motivation for self-expression. However, a number of studies on the topic have shown that comprehension is similarly affected by both modes of reading, permitting their use interchangeably. This paper examines the effectiveness of silent reading versus reading aloud in developing comprehension.

Data were collected through a mixed-methods approach, using observation and experiment as primary methods, during a four-week practicum from January 2026 to February 2026. Thirty-four students from the Theoretical Lyceum “Ioan Vodă” from Cahul, Moldova, participated in the study. The grades were selected using a judgmental sampling procedure. There were 17 students from 7th grade and 17 students from 9th grade studying English as a second language.

The qualitative data synthesised from the observation sheets provide an overview of how participants engaged with different types of reading. In the 3rd, 6th, and 7th grades, loud reading dominated, appearing as the primary form of reading requested by the teacher. In contrast, the observation sheet for the 9th grade examines the silent reading method. This

shift indicates a tendency towards developing internal information processing and encouraging critical thinking in higher grades.

High accuracy was observed in post-reading questions throughout all grade levels. The use of concept clarification questions (CCQs) proved that targeted questioning significantly enhances true understanding of the text. However, a consistent suspension of a few seconds was noted. This indicates the processing time when students synthesize the information before answering.

A summative written test was used to assess silent reading in the 7th grade. It included exercises such as true or false, complete question answering, and synonym identification. The results gave an average of 92%, which might further indicate that silent reading is an effective way of independent reading and a strong understanding of context.

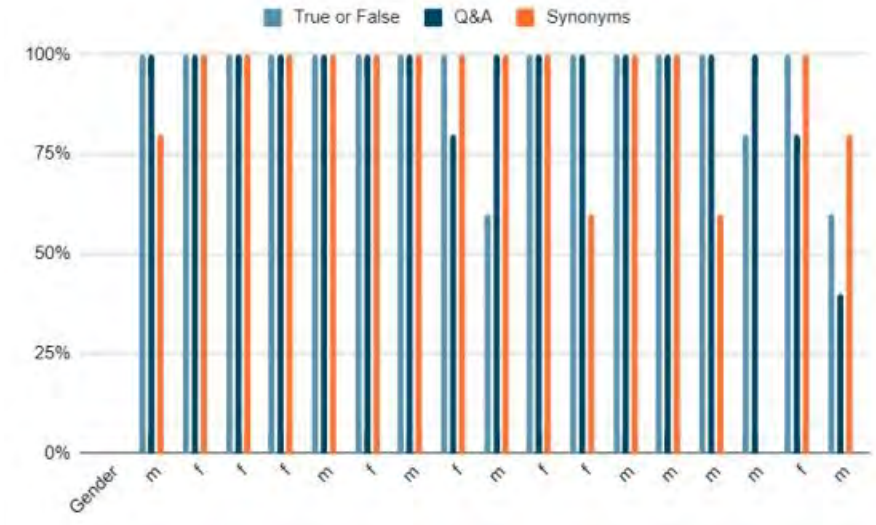


Fig.1. Silent Reading Comprehension Scores (Author 2026)

For measuring loud reading, the students had two different texts from their schoolbook read during two different lessons. The first text was assigned to be read aloud to three students and to fill in two blank spaces by selecting the correct words from a box. The second text was assigned to six other students with the same task of filling in the blanks, but this time they had to fill in one blank space each. The researcher observed the performance of the following characteristics: decoding, context, and pace.

Loud reading comprehension of both texts gave a 95% average score following the component weighting method (decoding * 0.30 + context * 0.50 + pace * 0.20). The results demonstrate 100% decoding rate. Context identification is not far behind at 94%, while the pace rate is slightly off, reaching 89%.

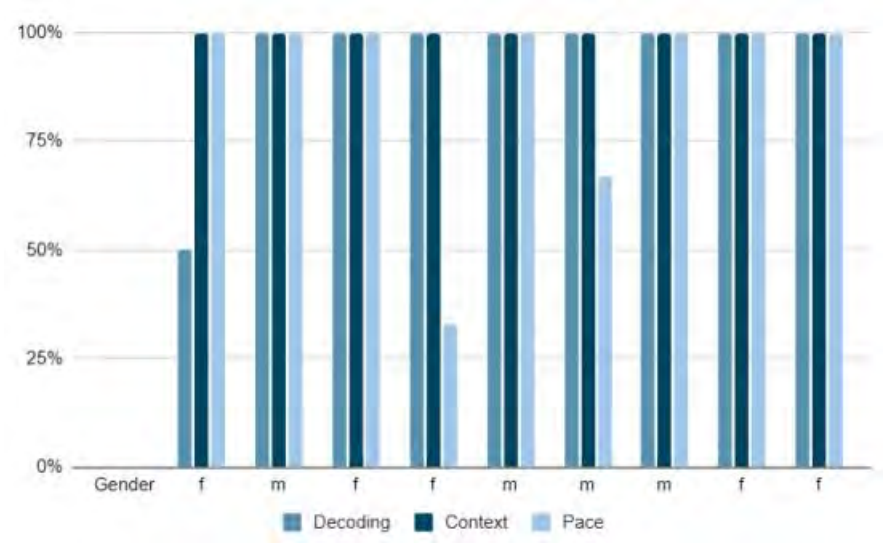


Fig. 2. Fill in the Blanks Performance (Author 2026)

The comparison between silent and loud reading outcomes reveals no significant difference in students' performance. Students achieved a 95% average during loud reading and 92% average during silent reading. Despite the 3% difference, which might suggest a tendency towards auditory processing, both reading methods are effective in the context of the 7th grade.

One method used to assess silent reading comprehension in the 9th grade was the use of handouts. For the first set, each pair received identical texts and instructions. First, the students were asked to read the text, which consisted of five paragraphs, fill in the blanks with the suitable sentence provided below the text, and underline the words (clues) that suggested their choices. Secondly, they had to correlate the headings with the corresponding paragraphs. After each task, the researcher checked the answers in frontal form and provided feedback, highlighting the correct ones. The results obtained from these instructions are summarised in Table 3.

Tab. 3. Paragraphs Correlation with Headings and Ideas (Author 2026)

Nr. of pair	Heading correlation	Ideas inserting	Nr. of clues suggesting the idea	Quality of clue
1.	5 / 5	4 / 4	4	4
2.	5 / 5	4 / 4	4	4
3.	5 / 5 (corrections)	4 / 4 (corrections)	3	2
4.	5 / 5	4 / 4	4	4
5.	5 / 5	4 / 4 (corrections)	5	4
6.	5 / 5	4 / 4	x	1
7.	5 / 5	4 / 4	x	1

From this data, we can see that the pairs were able to identify the missing ideas in the appropriate paragraph and attribute a heading to each paragraph, with minor corrections. However, even if the first two sections of the table register accurate answers for most pairs, the last section outputs lower rates. This leads to the conclusion that some pairs perceived the meaning only to some extent.

A different set of handouts was aimed at determining silent reading comprehension through coherence. The students were instructed to read the text and order the ideas by writing the numbers from 1-5 in the brackets, with number one being the first idea and number five the last. The data for this assessment were collected from 14 of 17 students.

The majority of the cohort (12 students = 85.7%) successfully reconstructed the text order. However, two students struggled during the sequencing task. Their performance was characterized by the use of correction tape and initial loop error. The low error rate (14.3%) suggests that the difficulties encountered while managing the task were on the individual level of recognition rather than instructional.

A simple statistical analysis was used to assess reading comprehension during loud reading in the 9th grade. After reading their own text, the students had to retell it to their partner, who was required to complete their table with the information they retained.

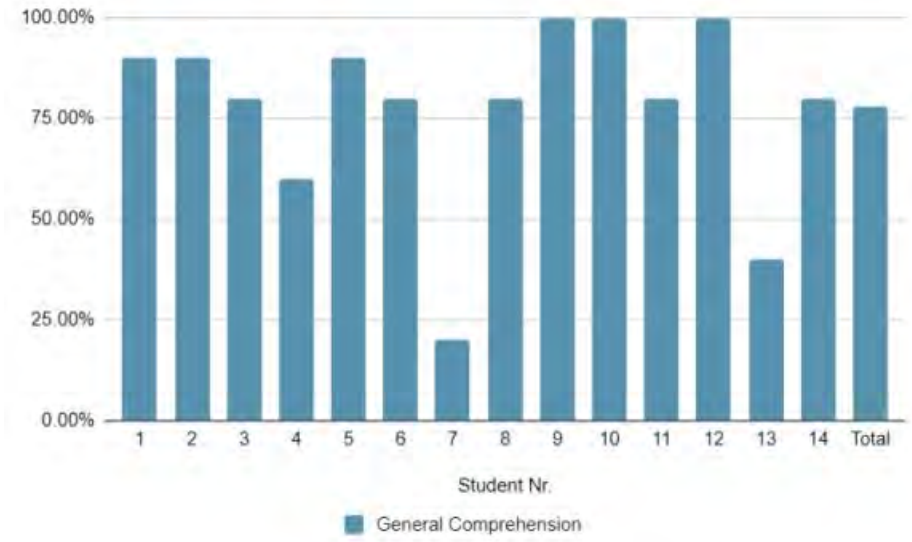


Fig. 4. General Comprehension Performance (Author 2026)

It is apparent from this graph that very few students managed to get a thorough picture of the context. The individual results record two students with a performance 50%<, while the rest of the class registers >50%. The pairs as a whole scored 77.9%.

After examining the data of both modes of reading for the 9th grade, a predisposition towards internalized processing can be detected. The students appear to achieve higher success rates when reading the context individually and then completing the task. It is important to consider that the result may vary depending on the complexity of the assignment.

Taken together, these results indicate that neither silent nor loud reading can be considered a superior strategy. Their effectiveness is a function of interactions between the reader’s cognitive development and the instructional requirements or the reading intent. This is why independent results differ from the average score. To optimize reading comprehension outcomes, teachers should consider implementing both approaches into their teaching practices, identify the struggles students encounter, and adjust the instructions based on individual characteristics. Students should experience both strategies and autoevaluate their potential to adopt the reading method that works best for them.

The major limitation of this study is the insufficient time to assess each reading mode more precisely. Additionally, the length of the lesson (45 min) required rational lesson segmentation, dedicating enough time for reading alongside other lesson stages. The sample

size limited the diversity of results, as classes consisted of 17 students each, some of whom were not present during the implementation of methods. An uncontrolled factor is the possibility that students were nervous during the lessons due to the presence of a new student teacher and observers.

A wider use of instruments and procedures, such as interviews, questionnaires, and in-text reading questions, may give a different outcome or reinforce the data. Considerably more work will be necessary to determine the effectiveness of the methods for a longer period in a similar setting and age group.

Ultimately, this paper has demonstrated that reading comprehension is not determined by a single mode of reading. A thorough state of goals, reading skill development, and cognitive effort is meant to overcome simple fluency and achieve cognitive processing, which will support academic success and day-to-day necessities.

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