

ABSTRACT

The brain is a complex structure and can be described in many different ways. Often, though, it is divided-for purposes of discussion-into three major components: portions concerned with basic bodily functions and survival; portions concerned with motivation and emotion; and portions concerned with such complex activities as language, planning, foresight, and reasoning.

The cerebral cortex-the thin outer covering of the brain-seems to be the part of the brain responsible for our ability to reasons, plan, remember, and imagine. In short, this structure accounts for our impressive capacity to process and transform information.

A question of psychological interest concerns the extent to which different orthographies impose different processing demands on the readers, especially with regard to the involvement of the two cerebral hemispheres.

Reading can be understood as an active, purposeful, and creative mental process in which the reader engages in the construction of meaning from a text-partly on the basis of new information provided by that text, but also partly on the basis of whatever relevant prior knowledge, feelings, and opinions that reader brings to the task of making sense of the words on the page.

Prior knowledge plays such a major role in this conception of reading.

It's really never too early to start reading to a child. For many children, reading has become the leisure activity of last resort. They dissociate reading with ditto sheets, workbooks, homework, and best scores. They develop a work book mentality about reading, carried on into adulthood.

The important of knowledge is especially evident in reading. Every reader knows it is easier to read a text on a familiar topic than on unfamiliar topic, even if the wording, grammar, and style are otherwise fairly similar. To explain this well-known effect, a cognitive theory must describe hoe the knowledge is represented in the reader's mind and what role the knowledge plays in the comprehension processes. Reading also requires other kinds of knowledge.