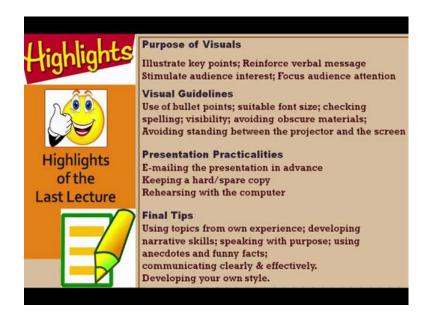
Developing Soft Skills and Personality Prof. T. Ravichandran Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Lecture – 47 Reading Skills: Effective Reading

Hello, hi, welcome back, to NPTEL mooc course, on developing soft skills and personality. This is Ravichandran, giving you this course, from IIT Kanpur, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. We are on week 8, module number 5, and lecture number 47.

For this module, I have kept, perhaps, the most important of all skills, you need to develop, and that is with regard to reading skills. I deliberately kept it towards the end, so that, either you pay lot of importance to the lectures I tell you at the beginning, or you pay good attention towards the wants, which are kept at the end. Although it is kept at the end, as you know, it is kept in the last, but not the least one, and it is very important in terms of developing your soft skills and personality also. Now in this module in particular, we cannot go deep into various accepts of reading skills, but I will focus on those techniques, that will give you various steps in terms of developing your reading, effectively, and once you develop it effectively, so then there are various aspects of reading, but to start with, let us see how you can develop your reading skills very effectively. And before I actually start, let us take a quick re-look, at wherever I taught you in the previous lecture.

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The previous lecture, it was with regard to presentation skills, and that was last lecture on presentation skills. I focused on the purpose of visuals, how you can use visuals separately, or visuals in terms of using it in PowerPoint presentation. So, I suggested that, the purpose of visuals, is first to be understood clearly. They are, to illustrate key points, reinforce verbal message, stimulate audience interest, and focus audience attention. And in that respect, I give some visual guidelines. Especially when you use PowerPoint, do not use long sentences, use bullet points, and the font size should be suitable, appropriate to the length of the auditorium, or the lecture hall, where we going to present it. You need to check spelling on each slides, you need to check the visibility, from long distance, and then, any kind of materials which will obscure, for instance long formulas. So, you should completely avoid.

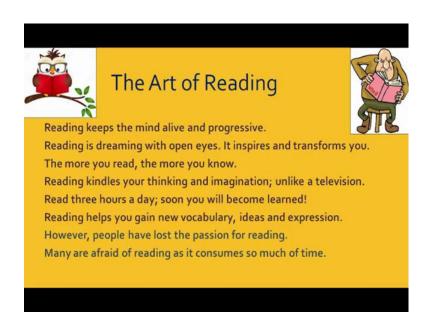
And when you give the presentation, you should avoid standing between the projector and the screen so that, your shadow does not fall in between, and then, it hides, and then people ask you to move away, which will very embarrassing for you. And certain presentation practicalities were also looked at, such as emailing the presentation in advance, keeping the hard or soft copy, on the form of copies in the pen drive, or even DVD, and printouts, and then slides, in the form of transparencies, if required. And if

possible, going to the venue, and rehearing with the computer, is going to be very helpful and beneficial in overcoming your initial nervousness.

Then I concluded with some final tips. I suggested that, you learn to use topics from your own experience, instead of all the time preparing and then going and delivering talks on somebody's suggestions. You should also develop narrative skills, you should develop your abilities to tell stories, small anecdotes, and the whenever you give a talk, understand that you should speak with a purpose. So, if you do not have any purpose, if you do not have something strong to convey, to the audience, do not go just there for fun. So, that is not a good idea. Once you become expert speaker, start using even your own anecdotes, and then, develop a sense of humor, by giving funny facts. And towards the end, I emphasize that you should always communicate clearly, especially the most important points, by which you begin your lecture, or talk, or speech. The first important point should we communicated very clearly, and throughout the speech, you should focus on effective communication, which I talk to you much before. Instead of using jargons, and complicated words, you should be simple, clear concise in communication.

Towards the end, I left you with the message that; you should also learn to develop your own style of presentation. Whatever I have said, these are all major guidelines, but when you do it, apply you your own mind, use creativity, develop your own presentation style, and once you develop your own unique presentation style, you will have fans following you, and then you will also get that standing ovation, applause, that I always tell you, that you visualize, before you start a speech. Now, to become a good presenter, you cannot just go there and say something, you need to read a lot. In fact, the quality of your presentation will directly depend on the quality of your reading, and reading itself an art.

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It is also a skill that you need to learn, develop, and craft it. What are some of the interesting aspects of reading? Reading actually keeps a mind alive, and progressive.

So, if you want to live a very active, progressive, live throughout, there is no end point to reading. You need to throughout your life, and career. The ideal reader is somebody, who reaches that last word, and then gives the last breath, till the time, he or she keeps reading something, and carries his or her favorite book, to that death bed. So, that kind of reading ability needs to be developed, when you read, you are actually dreaming with open eyes, because you are sharing the dreams of so many people, who try to inspire you, and who try to transform you. In fact, there are books, which have changed, the lives of many people, it can mold the minds of millions, and it can transform.

So, most of the ideas that I am gathering, and putting to you, are all gathered from books. Of course, I am adding my own practical experience, and practical tips, but then mostly it has come from my reading, which I have started from childhood. So, from that reading, I have gathered lot of materials, and you also know that, the more you read, the more you know, and knowledge is power, and its not only knowing, its also kindling your thinking and imagination, unlike watching a television. When you watch a television, people have already thought for you, that is why, when you watch a television show, just lying on

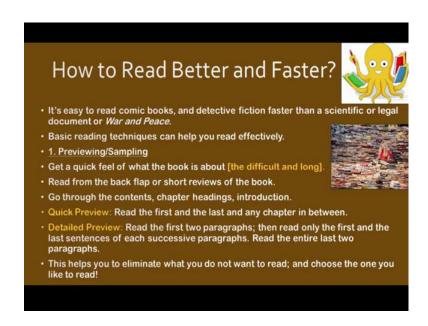
your sofa, you are called as a couch potato, that is, you have nothing to do with regard to thinking, or using your imagination, whereas, when you read a novel, it kindles your imagination, when you read a critical work, or even material that tries to provoke your thinking, your critical thinking is developing, your sense of discrimination, your ability to identify, what is right or wrong. So, these things are developed, when you read this.

So, I would suggest, that you should read at least 3 hours a day. This could mean, including newspapers, magazine, some important documents, as well as, reading a novel, or a reading a personality development book, or reading anything that interest you. Because soon you become learned, you will become a scholar, you will become a renowned speaker, you will become renowned writer, will become renowned communicator. Reading also helps you to gain new vocabulary, gain new ideas, gain new expression, which you never thought was possible for you.

You find new ways of communicating your ideas, because you identify in reading, you understand how words can be used in different context. But what is the sad part of modern day life, that is, fast paced, and then completely influenced by media, and the reading itself as come to e-book, and then mobile reading. So, what has happened is, people have lost the passion for reading. If you remember, before TV, people were so much interested in reading, and people were waiting for the books to come. So, they were eagerly waiting for serials, but now the passion is lost, because you various ways of reading, but at the same time there are equally competing wants, sometimes more tempting and interesting wants, which occupy our time, and then mental space, and it is not letting us do reading properly.

Many are afraid of reading. This is want I want to tell you, that some of you, or even most of you, are actually afraid of reading, because you think that it consumes so much of your time, and you say that, where is time, I do not have time now. It is for those of you in particular, and in general, about developing this art of reading. I am going to give you some very time tested techniques for developing your reading, in a better and faster manner, what are those techniques?

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Now, the first one is, previewing and sampling. Now why should we use this? If you understand the way you have started reading, you would have realize that, when you read comic books, it was rather very easy to read, or some detective fiction, like Sherlock Holmes, even if the words are bit difficult, but you are able to read it much faster. But when it comes to some scientific document, research article, or a legal document, or a huge novel like war and peace, you reading speed has reduced, it has considerably slow down, and its scares you, you wonder how, how can I read this? Its looks like, I will take a life time to read this kind of novel, and this kind of material. If it scares you, it only means that, you are a slow reader, and you have not learned some basic techniques of reading faster, and better.

Reading wisely, also implies reading smartly. So, you need to learn some smart techniques. Instead of struggling, laboring to read something fully, you only need to know, what is to read fully, and there are certain things which we can completely eliminate, or leave it. The first technique, that is previewing or sampling, which almost tells one and the same thing, what is does is, in case when you are faced with this kind of overwhelming situation, where you have to read through some 50 books, or 50 project reports, and they have to select 1 out of that. When only 1 is going to be useful to you, and you have to identify that; now how do you do that? When you have so much to,

access to, and then select one, that will be relevant, then you can do this previewing, or sampling.

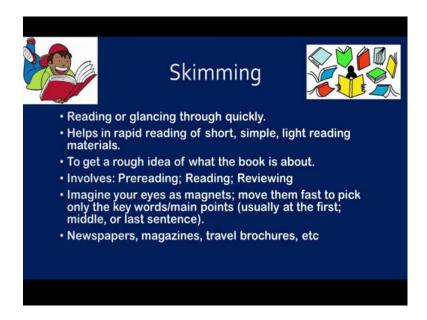
So, you do this, when something is very long, and very difficult to read, and normally it is done, to give you, or get a quick feel of what the book is about, what the report is about. If it is a book, what you can do is, if it is printed, you can just first take a quick preview of what is there on the back flap. So, the back flap is on the back side of the cover, where some reviews or some brief idea, about the plot of the book is mentioned. Short reviews of the book are also there, either in the back flap, or in the inside cover. So, short critical reviews are also mentioned. So, those things will give you some idea first, as whether you can go through further or not. We can also go through the contents, the chapter headings, and then the introduction.

For a quick preview, what you need to do is, you should read the first and the last, and any chapter in between, that is, the first chapter, and the last chapter, and one of the chapters, the chapter in the middle, in between, for a quick preview. But then, you also wanted detailed preview, then within that first, last, and any chapter in between, you can also go for one detail method, that is read the first two paragraphs, read the first two paragraphs, of all the chapters now, and then read only the first and the last sentences of each successive paragraphs. So, each paragraphs, the first two, you are reading in each chapter, the first two paragraphs are read, and after that, the first line and the last line of the following paragraphs, and then when the chapter is about to end, read the last two paragraphs, then go to the next chapter, read the first two paragraphs, and read only the first and last sentence of each successive paragraphs, and read the entire last two paragraphs, then go to the next chapter. Now in this way you get a detailed preview.

What is the advantage of this? As I said, if your PhD supervisor has asked you to read hundred dissertations, and select one, that you can model on. So, you need not read whole hundred, word by word, but you can do this preview. So, this helps you to eliminate what you do not want to read, and choose the one you like to read. What you do not want to read, you can quickly eliminate by previewing, and you can select the one, that is important, and you can do, for example, the other techniques, which I am

going to tell you, and then you can read in detail, as what you want from the book. What is the next technique?

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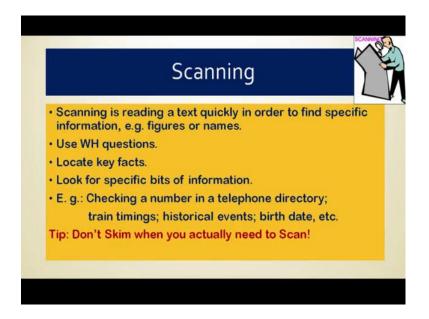


The next one is skimming. Now once you are decided, that you will read a book, now you can go for skimming, but skimming is generally use for reading or glancing through quickly. It helps in rapid reading of short simple light reading materials, like for example, newspapers, magazines, and travel brochures. So, you just skim. So, what is today's important news? So, if you are interested in sports, you just directly go to sports page, and see, whether somebody won the Olympic medal, or not. So, you just want to see that news, or who won against to whom, in this match. So, you just go to that one, and you just quickly start reading that one. So, skimming helps you to get a rough idea, of what the book is about, and it involves three stages, that is this pre-reading stage, proper skimming, that is you try to do a kind of preview, and anticipate, what you are expecting in this, and then you read, quickly, take quick look, and also you quickly review, in your mind, what is it about, you reflect on it.

Now, how to do this in a very effective manner? Imagine that your eyes are like magnets, and then move the eyes very quickly, very fast, and when it is moving quickly, here and there, so it should pick the keywords, main points. Now where do find these keywords,

main points? Usually in a sentence, there is one core word. So, if you remove that word, its not giving proper meaning, in terms of content, in terms of idea, it is there, and sometimes, these core words, keywords, are on the first sentence, one, in the middle sentence, and one in the, last sentence of a paragraphs. Often they are also called as topical sentences, if we can catch them, and if we can get the keywords from these wants, you will skim very quickly, because you will understand it, then you will now the gist, that is the overall idea, of what you are going to read, very quickly. So, sometimes, you may be struggling, and then you may be feeling frustrated to read something, because you do not do skimming, you may be reading in a very old method, word by word, which is actually, a rotten way of improving your speed in terms of reading. So, you are skimming, especially if it is light, and if you want to read something very rapidly.

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Now, the next technique is scanning. Now what is scanning? Scanning is reading a text quickly, in order to find specific information, especially, for example, you want to get some figures, or names, or numbers, or year, from long passage, from a long text, how do you do that? Now use WH questions. Who is he? Who is the person that I am looking for? Where is he placed, London, New York, where is he. Look for the place, what is he doing, and what time is he leaving, what time is the train leaving, the timing, what is the

number of the bus that I am suppose to catch, what is the gate in which this flight is going to takeoff. So, look for specific bits of information. When you actually scan, as when you do it while checking and number in a telephone directory, or check for train timings, or look for historical events, which year this happened, or even when you look for somebodys birth dates, or some details, when you go to some biographical material, available on that person.

Now, scanning is usually done to look for only specific bits of information, and then, read a text quickly, and only to find specific information. What is the tip I should give you here? Do not skim, when you actually need to scan, and do not scan, when you actually need to skim. What does that mean, sometimes you have to look for only one word, one number, and then do not read by word, the entire paragraphs, and then look for that number. So, use your eyes, like a scanner. as if you are x-raying, and you have to going to get that one word through your x-ray eyes. So, just get that out. So, that is scanning. So, now, when you have to skim, then you do not read very quickly, and try to get that bit of information, there you try to understand the content. Here you are not actually concerned about the content; here you are just looking for some important piece of information.

So, these two are important techniques, especially if you want to save lot of time, and depending on the questions that you have. Even the questions which are answering in assignments, we can use this skimming scanning method, when your, when you are sometimes go back, and then look for specific bits of information in the video, or even the questions, you can first skim, and then you can scan for some important pieces of information there, which you should look for. Questions like, who is the author of this quotation, four names are given, now you need to look for one particular name that you heard before, or you need to cross check from the video, but this is in terms of looking at video, as a kind of reading, but actually this is used in actual text book reading, as I said, like reading or identifying number from telephone directory, you can do this.

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Clustering (for speed/comprehension)

• Don't read a sentence word by word or letter by letter:

An---apple---a---day---keeps---the---doctor---away.

A-n--An---a-p-p-le-apple---a---d-a-y-day---k-e-e-p-s-keeps---t-h-e-the---d-o-c-t-o-r-doctor---a-w-a-y-away.

- Train your eyes to see words in groups/clusters: 3 or 4 words at a glance!
- · An-apple a-day keeps-the doctor-away.
- · An-apple-a-day keeps-the-doctor away.
- An-apple-a-day keeps-the-doctor-away.

Now, that next interesting technique is Clustering. Now clustering is something you need to practice, you need to develop, if you want to really increase your reading speed, and develop your comprehension also. Now in scanning, as well as skimming, you really do not develop comprehension, comprehension is the understanding part, your ability to interpret the meaning correctly. Now what kind of reading method is you following some of you? Some of you may be reading a sentence, word by word, or even worse, letter by letter. Now take for example, a simple sentence like, an apple a day keeps the doctor away, how some people read a simple sentence like this, the reading habit, they read an apple, a, day, keeps, the, doctor, away. An apple a day keeps the doctor away, An apple a day keeps the doctor away. Now worst then this, there may be still some people, who may be still habituated, to read letter by letter and then go for word by word, example, a n, an, a p p l e apple, a, d a y, day, k e e p s, keeps, t h e, the, d o c t o r, doctor, a w a y, away. An apple a day keeps the doctor away.

Now, you can easily understand, this the rotten way of developing your reading speed and it is not going to help. This method us to stop, how can you stop this? Use the clustering method for speed and comprehension. How do you do this? Train your eyes to see words, and groups in clusters, just group them, and then your eyes should again attract them in groups that is 3 or 4 words at a glance. You can do it like this, an apple a

day keeps the doctor away. So, when you see this like this, apple a day keeps the doctor away. So, you can read it fast, and then some people can group much more words, an apple a day, keeps the doctor away. So, an apple a day keeps the doctor away. So, when you look at quickly these ones, and some people are faster, they can even put 4 weeks, a, 4 words together. An apple a day, keeps the doctor away. So, two groups are formed, in a single sentence. Eyes just attract them in groups, and then identify the meaning in terms of groups, and then link the meaning very quickly.

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Clustering (for speed/comprehension)

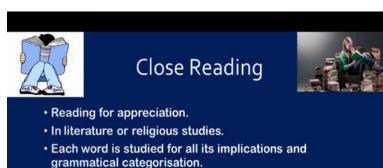
- · Each one groups words differently!
- Try with slow speed at first a piece of writing
 Check the comprehension by reading again in normal speed.
- Try with increased speed another piece
 Your speed increases when you realize that you have not missed anything in the second normal reading!
- · Don't be disappointed; practice regularly!

But some interesting factor about this, and what you should be doing. Understand first, that each one groups works differently, as I was showing that three different people can group the words, in three different manner, in less or more in each groups, but at the same time, words themselves can be groups in different manner, and how do you develop this skill which is a very important skill, first you choose to sit in a place, where nobody will disturb you, and select a piece of reading. Now try with slow speed at first, one piece that you have selected. Now using this grouping method, clustering method, you identify the words in groups, and then read it at your own slow pace, but compare to the previous normal one, bit faster.

Then ones you finish it, it should be a new unknown passage, now go to the passage, the piece of writing a again, and see whether you have understood it correctly, and this time you read it in normal speed. Now if you think that you have understood almost correctly, then increase the speed, select another unknown piece, unknown passage again, read it very fast by grouping, once you finish the reading, stop it, recheck your comprehension in your normal speed, to check whether you have to missed anything, your speed will increase, the moment you come to the realization not missed anything, in the second normal reading, and in due course of time, you will not need any second reading to check whether you have understood it correctly or not, because would have trained your eyes, to group the words, and get the meanings also appropriately in the first grouping itself.

But having said this, I should also tell you, you should not feel disappointed, if it does not happen to you over night, because you do not gain anything that easily, without hard work. You need to practice regularly, you need to practice that with different pieces of writing, and all the time, first reading at a faster pace, second reading at a normal pace, the same one, and comparing whether you have understood correctly or not, and go for higher speed, and reach the highest one to what you thing is the optimum possible, when you reach that, and then start reading everything in groups. So, whether it is newspaper, whether it is magazine, whether it is novel reading, when your train your eyes to read that quickly so you will know that, you are able to read much better books, which you thought were difficult ones, and much faster than before.

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- · Every word is scrutinised for inner and in-depth meanings.
- Connotative/Contextual meanings than the denotative one.
- · Deep and enhanced understanding of the book.
- · Offer a new interpretation or clear a misunderstanding.

One more technique that you need to develop, when you become a sophisticated reader, when you are able to read that a higher pace, is this close reading; what is this close reading? Although it may not be that relevant to some of you at this stage, but close reading is something that you need to develop, once you become a kind of ardent reader of books, specially novels literature stuff, or any deeply philosophical ideas if your reading, and which needs lot of thinking. So, then you have to do close reading. Close reading is done for appreciation, interpretation of ideas, adding to existing meanings, usually it is done in literature, religious studies, philosophical studies, where there is a possibility, that you can interpret this same sentence, in more than 10 11 ways, and then, even then something is missing.

Somebody can always add new meaning to what is there already. And each word is studied for all its implications, and even grammatical categorization, how it is functioning, by violating some grammar rules, and by following something and placing this word here, in this position, how is it making a different meaning. So, what is happening when the word is kept in the end, end focus, what is happening when it is kept in the beginning? How a writer is trying to fore ground or background a word, how a writer is trying to play with original meaning of the word, in this contest. So, every word is scrutinized, for inner and in depth meanings.

And then generally these readers, who are similar to critics, there not satisfied with the denotative meaning. Denotative meaning is the dictionary meaning. When you look at fire so, you know, fire is something that, when you light a stove, fire comes, and then when you light a match box, fire comes, and then you put your finger, it burns you. That is what is fire, denotative meaning but fire in literature can mean passion, can mean very strong inner feelings can mean desire. So, this is the connotative meaning. And in a context, so it can also mean something else, depending on the context, who is using, and then, in which context the users are using it, it can mean something. So, the close reading people try to actually look at the connectetive and contextual meanings, rather than just a denotative one. In fact, they read between the lines; read between the words, they just want to see what is missing, how they can give some more connections.

It also gives overall, a very deep and enhanced understanding of the book, the novel, the research material, or, or kind of article written. When you read a novel for instance, in close reading, we can also offer a new interpretation completely, or even clear a misunderstanding, what people have not understood before, in your close reading, you can bring in some new insights, and make people understand that also.

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Remember . . .

Follow two golden principles in reading:

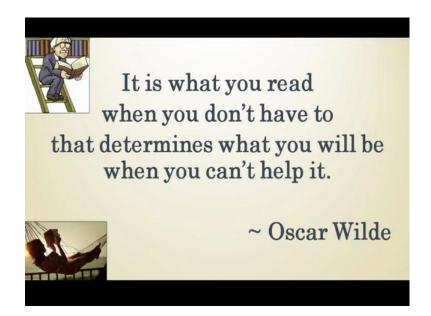
- 1. GET ADDICTED TO READING!
- 2. IF YOU START ANYTHING;

So, now these are the major techniques. As a concluding thought, I just want you to remember, that you should follow two golden principles in reading. One, I was telling you that, do not develop any bad habits, which will give you addiction, but then, I just will give you an exemption, if you can develop one addiction, and which is actually good habit, addiction in terms of reading. Let reading become a kind of addiction. There are famous writers who cannot sleep, if they are not surrounded by books, those writers cannot like get up and, if the newspaper is not there, they feel disheartened. They, all the time, need to read something.

All the time, when they are sitting in the train, when they are waiting for bus, when they are in the rest room, even when they are bathing, so one hand they keep the book, when they are inside their bath tub. So, they do not lose a single minute, even when they are eating, they keep reading and in fact, they do not stop reading. Now that kind of addiction is something that you need to develop, because for all the reasons I have said, only by developing reading, you can develop all other skills. So, whether it is presentation, or writing, or communicating effectively, or developing your overall personality, reading plays a very crucial role, it is a crux of the matter, and you need to pay attention, and develop addiction for, ah, reading its a very healthy addiction.

And the second golden rule, principle, that you need to keep in mind is, when you start reading something, particularly, it can be anything, any, any reading material, it can be newspaper, or this thing, finish it. So, when you start reading a novel, do not leave it in between. In fact, ideally speaking, create time, you access that this novel is going to take three hours time, three hours you keep away from TV, away from people, away from mobile, select a secluded place, and identify whether anybody will disturb you, and ensure that nobody disturbs you, and then start it and finish it, and then you come back to your normal work routine area. So, if you start anything especially in terms of reading, finish it.

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And the concluding point in terms of quote from a famous writer, Oscar Wilde, and it is worthwhile to remember. He says that, it is what you read, when you do not have to, it means, today, when I ask you to read, for example, Stephen Coveys, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, you read, thinking that it is relevant for you, to develop your personality, relevant for the exam, and all that. It is what you read, when you do not have to, when there is no exam, nobody is asking you do anything what will you read.

Whether it is a highly classical novel, or some trivial matter, or some useless staff, what is that you are interested that in reading, when you do not have to, when there is no compulsion, the teacher is not telling; you need not pass any exam, what is that you will read? That determines, for Oscar Wilde, what you will be, when you cannot help it.

What does he mean by that? What you will be, when you cannot help it? Is that, at one point of your time, whether you want it or not, you are going to become somebody, you would, you initially wanted to become an astronaut, but you end up as a clerk, in a government office. So, again, all dreams you had, but finally, you become somebody, an Oscar Wilde says that, and that becoming somebody finally, is determine by what you read, when you do not have to, that is the extra reading, the reading that is done for pure

pleasure, the reading that is done for your curiosity. So, that is something that is going to determine your final becoming, your final personality. So, keep that in mind.

So, pay attention to what you read, when you have to, and at the same time, pay equal attention or even more attention, to what you do not have to read, when, when there is no compulsion on you, to read. So, with this thought, so will go to the last lecture, in the next one, and having said this, at least start reading one book, from today, and then try to finish at least a book in a week, or you target even a month, and then, maintain a healthy habit of writing, how many books are you reading. Whatever book it may be, of your choice, it can be novel, it can be short story, poem, it can be just non-fiction, it can be related to travel writing, it can be related to car, and then it can be related to some bike mechanism, whatever is interesting to you, read it, and as I said, at least read for three hours, soon will you become a very learned person.

So, wish you all success, using reading and the reading tips that I have given. Thank you so much, for watching this video. See you in the next lecture.