

Extensive reading: The affective and linguistic development

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at reviewing literature on extensive reading and its benefits in affective and linguistic domains. Extensive reading with its humanistic characteristics such as autonomy is theoretically and empirically beneficial to readers' affective and linguistic development. After reviewing large array of sources related to extensive reading particularly journal articles, this study reveals that extensive reading is effectively able to enhance readers' reading proficiency and their affects such as reading motivation and attitude although few studies result in opposite results. The findings imply the needs to incorporate the extensive reading program into school curriculum for students' linguistic and affective enhancement.

Keywords: Extensive Reading; Autonomy; Affective and Linguistic Development

INTRODUCTION

Reading plays an important role in our personal development as it allows us to get information from large variety of sources and learn from them. In academic context, reading is indispensable part of students' life since they have to deal with a bulk of learning materials and other academic-related assignments requiring them to have good reading ability. This implies that if they have good reading ability, they have better chance to succeed in their academic life (Guthrie, Wigfield, Humenick, Perencevich, Taboada, & Barbosa, 2006)

In general, reading is classified into *intensive* and *extensive reading*. Intensive reading is an instructional approach to reading involving learners to read texts in such detailed way with certain learning goals. This suggests that the teacher takes maximal control over reading-related activities and objectives. Meanwhile, *extensive reading* refers to a way of teaching as well as learning reading in which students are required to read large number of reading texts relevant to their linguistic ability (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). To a higher extent, the definition reflects the extensive reading characteristics include *reading autonomy*, *reading within linguistic levels*, and *reading in a large number of pages* (Day & Bamford, 1998).

Autonomy is an important construct in learning. It refers to students' competence to be responsible for and control their learning (Holec, 1983). This implies that the students should be responsible with their own learning progress. Myriad research has been carried out to investigate autonomy particularly researching the relationship between autonomy and language proficiency (e.g. Dafei, 2007; Sakai & Takagi, 2009; Ghorbandordinejad & Ahmadabad, 2016). Dafei (2007), for instance, conducts a study looking at the relationship between the students' autonomy and their proficiency involving 129 non English major in China. The finding indicates that students' autonomy and their level of proficiency were correlated both linearly and positively. In similar vein, employing correlational design involving 400 participants, Ghorbandordinejad & Ahmadabad (2016) unveil that students' autonomy and their achievement positively and strongly correlated as indicated by *r* value. This further suggests that when the autonomy is enhanced, the language proficiency improves

Furthermore, *the reading autonomy* allows readers to select the texts in their interest, enabling them to be well engaged and foster their reading motivation. Autonomy itself is

principle need of any individual (Ma, 2009) and fulfilling such need very likely generate motivation (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2008). Deci and Ryan (1985) coined motivational construct called Self-Determination Theory (SDT) postulating that learners' motivation is enhanced when one of these factors is promoted in learning i.e. autonomy, sense of competence and relatedness among students. Furthermore, motivation plays a crucial role in language learning. Ushioda (2002) further maintains that motivation has significant predicting power to success in language learning; thus, the motivation resulted from the autonomy given in extensive reading program might make them read larger number of pages which subsequently develop their reading skill (Dzulfikri & Saukah, 2017).

Moreover, the *reading autonomy* may also enable them dive into the text they read, allowing them understand both the text and target language culture better. This situation possible paves positive reading attitude toward reading and the language (Day & Bamford, 1998). The better attitude toward the target language may lead them to dip into the texts of the target language and thereby better proficiency in target language might be achieved.

In addition to reading autonomy, extensive reading also has other important characteristics *reading within linguistic levels* or commonly referred to *i-1*. This implies that the students especially the beginning readers are suggested for reading within their linguistic level for better confidence and motivation (Day and Bamford, 1998). Arnold (2009) reveals that readers tend to read easier text but later they read more difficult texts because of their growing confidence after attending his reading program.

Moreover, reading a large number of texts, as one of key characteristics of extensive reading, may enable readers to employ different strategies in reading, improve background knowledge, etc, and these play a key role to reading skill development. Reading comprehension is a complex process involving myriad aspects (Dagostino & Carifio, 1994; Grabe, 1991; Hudson, 2007). Those aspects include past reading experience, reading strategies, reading approach, background knowledge, etc. In relation to reading strategies, several studies demonstrate a significant relation between reading strategies and comprehension in reading; even certain strategies are powerful to predict reading comprehension (e.g. Saeedeh, 2013; Huang & Nisbet, 2014). Moreover, Hudson (1982; 2007) claims that learners' background knowledge is able to compensate learners' vocabulary deficiency in reading comprehension.

Furthermore, extensive reading enable students to encounter myriad vocabulary both specific and general words, making them able to improve vocabulary mastery. The knowledge of word is crucial in reading comprehension. In line with this, Laufer (1989) contends that the degree of learners' reading comprehension, to a greater extent, is affected by their vocabulary mastery. Furthermore, Laufer (1989), Swaffar (1988), as well as Nation (1993) suggest readers to master 5,000 words to understand general texts. These all imply that threshold level of word mastery is needed to comprehend a text (Schmitt, 2000; Nation 2001). In more general sense, Maximo (2000), Read (2000), Gu (2003), Nation (2001) claim that vocabulary has key role for development of language skills. Nunan (1991) further proposes that language use will not be successfully performed without sufficient vocabulary.

To conclude, theoretically, extensive reading offers benefits either *linguistically* and *affectively*. The linguistic benefits resulted from extensive reading include the improvement in reading proficiency and vocabulary enlargement. Furthermore, this type of reading also may pave students' affects such as motivation and reading attitude.

The theoretically beneficial effects of extensive reading seem to attract scholars to conduct research in this domain. Very many studies have been seeking to investigate the extensive reading impacts to both **affective aspects** such as students' reading motivation, attitude and on **linguistic domain** including students' vocabulary and reading comprehension. However a very little attention is given to investigate both the affect and effect development as the effect of extensive reading.

METHODS

This study employs library research or systematic literature review, seeking to reveal theoretical and practical advantages of reading extensively. Theoretical benefits of reading extensively are obtained particularly from books or other literatures exploring the extensive reading benefits. Several resources attempt to review the benefits of extensive reading from psychological perspective especially when trying to unveil extensive reading impacts in affective domain.

Meanwhile, to unveil extensive reading advantages, the researcher seeks to review empirical studies concerning extensive reading impacts to readers' language skill development such as on students' vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension development etc. The reviewed studies might have different research method such as experimental, correlational, ex post facto or qualitative studies pertaining the investigated issues.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After searching literatures, books, articles on the benefits offered by extensive reading both affectively and linguistically, the researcher found both issues as follows:

Pertaining affective development, the literatures confirm that extensive reading theoretically and empirically is able to develop students or readers' affects. The psychological perspective affirms that this type of reading is humanistic in nature since extensive reading give readers' autonomy which is one of s important needs of every individual. The development of readers' affects, to some extent, proceeds from positive attitude, leading to growing motivation.

The positive development of affect further paves its ways to linguistic skill development including larger vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension development as well. Moreover, several studies seek to investigate both affective and linguistic domains and further unveil that this type reading has managed to enhance both aspects. The studies examining both aspects, linguistic and affect, separately also confirm that extensive reading enable readers to achieve better language skill and positive affect development. In fact, both aspects are inextricably interwoven in language teaching and learning.

Research into the domain of affect particularly observes the effects of extensive reading on student's feeling such as readers' motivation. Myriad studies uncover positive impact of extensive reading on reading motivation (Elley, 1991; Judge, 2011; Takase, 2007; Ro & Chen, 2014; Robb & Susser, 1989; Karlin & Romanko, 2010; Nishino, 2007; Matsui & Noro, 2010; Ro, 2013; Mason & Krashen, 1997). Karlin and Romanko (2010), for example, who seek to examine readers' affects using survey research design unveil that the research participants responded the survey items positively based on principles of self-efficacy. Similarly, Robb and Susser (1989) reported growing motivation in second language reading for students in Japanese university. Also, employing correlational design, Takase (2007) demonstrates that first and second language motivation predict significantly the research participants' reading comprehension. This further reflects that extensive reading has successfully develop both readers' affect and linguistic development. Using qualitative research method to capture the voices of participants, Nishino (2007) study involving two girls as research participants uncovers that their reading motivation improves particularly because of the pleasure they gain from extensive reading which subsequently enhance their second language reading accomplishment. Also found a relationship between motivation and extensive reading accomplishment.

In more recent studies, Ro (2013) recruited a single unmotivated student in second language reading as measured through a questionnaire. But after attending extensive reading program, her motivation increases gradually as seen in the follow up questionnaire result. Surprisingly, by the end of the program, her motivation and attitude toward second language reading dramatically improves. Still, trying to look at the affective aspect, Matsui and Noro (2010) held the 10-minute extensive reading and attempted to observe the effect of the program on the research participants' motivation. They found that both experimental and control groups had better motivation after the treatment, but the participants attending the extensive reading

program also experienced self-confidence improvement in reading second language even though uniquely anxiety and poor attitudes related to English were also found.

Another affective factor of L2 reading widely investigated as the effect of extensive reading is students' *reading attitude*, feeling which encourages individuals to read or not. (Alexander & Filler, 1976). Reading attitude is likely an important construct which also affects language skill development; hence this construct has managed to attract scholars in this domain to research this issue (e.g.; Junko, 2004;; Crowford 2001; Hitosugi & Day, 2004; Nishino, 2007). Their findings confirm that research participants' reading attitude develops positively after attending this reading program. Junko (2004), for example, examines students' reading attitude using survey after they join extensive reading program. Her study demonstrates that the research participants experience growing positive attitude toward second language reading. *However*, those studies do not investigate further how their reading attitude develops throughout the program. *On contrary to positive findings*, Damanhuri' study (1999) on effect of extensive reading on students' attitude does not result in positive attitude which is partly because the materials provided by the Ministry of Education are not interesting to them and difficult to understand.

In short, several studies suggest that extensive reading program positively affects both readers' reading attitude and motivation. However further studies need to be carried out concerning what extensive reading aspects affect them positively how they affect them. Furthermore, the inconsistency in finding also suggests for the need to do further research to justify the extensive reading program real effects.

Beside affective aspects, myriad studies reveal that learners' language skills including reading comprehension positively develop through extensive reading (e.g. Iwahori, 2008; Al-Nafisah, 2015; Jang, Kang, & Kim, 2015; Shew, 2003; Nakanishi, 2015; Mason, 2004; Mermelstein, 2014). Mermelstein (2014) study, for example, found that the experimental groups achieved better reading comprehension than that of the control. This study implies that extensive reading plays a significant role in learners' reading development. Employing meta-analysis, attempting to summarize large number of studies, Nakanishi (2015) also unveils similar results in which those involved in extensive reading outperform in reading comprehension.

Even though large number of studies reveal positive efficacy of extensive reading, some studies on extensive reading reveal that extensive reading is not effective to improve students' reading comprehension (e.g. Gao, 2004; Lai, 1993;). Lai (1993), for instance, did an experimental study involving huge number of research participants from 8 secondary schools, comparing the effect of conventional reading and extensive reading. The findings demonstrate that only 1 school of the extensive reading group outperformed in the study. This finding suggests that reading extensively for global understanding does not likely improve students' reading comprehension. Similar findings were obtained in Gao's study (2004) which seek to observe the effect of extensive reading on students' reading comprehension, attitudes, reading speed as well as motivation. In terms of reading comprehension the extensive reading group did not achieve better text comprehension compared to the control group. Hence, the researcher came to conclusion that the effect of extensive reading is not well justified.

Another language competence resulted from extensive reading is *vocabulary* mastery. The nature of extensive reading requiring readers to extensively allows them to encounter words in multiple exposures may lead to better retention (Harmer, 2004). Also, by reading words or sentences in context, readers might be able to deduce meaning of unknown items easier. This nature of extensive reading has drawn attention researchers in vocabulary acquisition (Pigada and Schmitt, 2006; Huang, 2007, Horst, 2005; Pitts, White, & Krashen, 1989; Day et al 1991; Waring & Takaki, 2003; Web & Cheng, 2014; Nation and Wang 1999). Pigada & Schmitt's study (2006) demonstrates broader effects of extensive reading in linguistic domain. Their findings reveal that not only does students' vocabulary develop, but their spelling and grammatical knowledge also have progressed. Further, their study confirms that reading extensively offers broader chance for linguistic development including vocabulary. These findings are also corroborated by Huang's study (2007). Similarly, Web & Cheng (2014)

employing the experimental design involving sixty-one Taiwanese participants uncover the benefits of extensive reading language development particularly in mastery of vocabulary. They argue that reading large number of texts allow them to encounter myriad words and learn them. However, Waring & Takaki's (2003) study found that the extensive readers will soon lose their vocabulary they acquire from extensive reading since their reading purpose is primarily for pleasure rather than for learning vocabulary.

In summary, the studies investigating language skills mostly employ quantitative design and find positive effects offered by extensive reading on language skill development; but the issue on how the ER program enhances their language skill is not addressed. The inconsistency is also still found, suggesting for further research to validate this study.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Extensive reading offers substantial benefits in both affective and language skill development even though few studies demonstrate contradictory findings. However reading scholars came to agreement that reading larger number of pages allows readers to gain benefits linguistically and affectively. In affective domain, myriad reviewed studies unveils that extensive reading has successfully paved readers' affective development including growing motivation, enhanced self confidence etc.

In terms of linguistic development, myriad studies demonstrates the benefits of extensive reading to build readers' language skill development such as improved reading comprehension, enhanced vocabulary mastery, and better grammatical knowledge as well. These findings may encourage the curriculum developer to integrate extensive reading program into reading curriculum.

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