Extensive Reading With EFL Learners at Beginning Level

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Introduction

In many SL/FL settings like that of Taiwan, reading instruction at the secondary level is still focused on a close study of vocabulary and grammar (known as the intensive reading approach), but it has been argued that such a type of language lesson is not reading at all (Alderson & Urquhart, 1984; Robb & Susser, 1989). Because students lack reading practice in their learning process, it is not surprising that they have not developed an ability which allows them to read extensively and fluently outside the classroom. This raises the important issue as to whether an alternative instruction method would be more effective. An extensive reading (ER) approach appears to be the most appropriate option for improving students' language proficiency and reading ability. Despite successful research and a growing interest in ER in many Asian countries, such as Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore, extensive reading has not received as much attention as it might in the English teaching circle in Taiwan.

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is defined as a means of giving students "the time, encouragement, and materials to read pleasurably, at their own level, as many books as they can, without the pressures of testing or marks" (Davis, 1995, p. 329). The important characteristics of an extensive reading programme can be summarised as follows (Bright & McGregor, 1977; Hedge, 1985; Nuttall, 1996):

- Students can access a variety of interesting materials;
- They read a large quantity of printed materials;
- They have freedom to choose or change books;
- They read at their own pace for pleasure or information;
- They can engage in a tension-free and enjoyable learning environment;
- They are giving opportunity to experience real-life reading.

In such an environment, a large quantity of reading practices contributes to English language acquisition, freedom of choice stimulates motivation to read, and interesting

materials foster a positive attitude. Recent research has consistently provided evidence for the effects of extensive reading on language learning at different ages and in many ESL/EFL settings. The reported benefits are manifold, especially in the following five aspects:

- Improvement in reading comprehension (Davis, 1995; Elley, 1991; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Krashen, 1993; Lai, 1993; Nation, 1997)

- Development of positive attitudes (Camiciottoli, 2001; Constantino, 1995; Dupuy, Tse, & Cook, 1996; Robb & Susser, 1989)

- Increase in reading speed (Bell, 2001)

- Development of vocabulary acquisition (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Coady, 1997; Nation, 1997)

- Development of grammatical knowledge (Elley, 1991; Elley Mangubhai, 1983; Tudor & Hafiz, 1989)

It should be noted that graded readers have been used as the only type of reading materials in previous research in SL/FL settings. However, there is an argument that books for native English-speaking children (BNESC) should be included in many SL/FL programmes. With the same advantages as graded readers, they provide for similar important factors— "entertainment, information, learning to read, and becoming hooked on books" (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 61). As yet, the effects of BNESC on ESL/EFL learners' language learning are unclear, and research as yet has not addressed this issue.

Research Questions

In short, the present study aimed at to address the following questions:

1. Will ER help beginning EFL learners obtain gains in vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension?

2. Does ER promote reading speed?

3. What impact does ER have on EFL learners' attitudes?

4. What difficulties do the students have during reading?

5. How do the students feel about their achievement?

Since the present study was focused on the effects of ER on EFL learners, I was also interested in students' reflections on the selected books in relation to their reading progress during the experiment. Thus, the present study looked at the following:

6. What are their reasons for choosing which books to read?

7. Are they satisfied with the books they had read?

Method

Subjects

Three classes of Grade-2 students, aged 13-14 years old, at I-Jea Junior High School in Tai-Nan County, Taiwan, participated in the study. They were all native speakers of Chinese (Mandarin) and had a year of English language learning as a foreign language in their secondary education. That is, their English proficiency was at a beginning level and they had only experienced reading 100-word texts in the textbook which are constructed linguistically for second language learners. They had attended four 45-minute English lessons per week for two consecutive semesters (September-January and February-June).

Materials

A class library of 57 graded readers and 55 books for native English-speaking children was set up; the book selection was based on a questionnaire survey on reading preferences completed by 763 junior high school students in Taiwan (Sheu, 2001). Graded readers at beginners' level were chosen, and books for native English-speaking children which were at a similar readability level to the graded reader assessed by Fry's Graph (1977) were selected. A pilot study in which a sample collection of 26 graded readers and 31 books for native English-speaking children were assessed by students to see whether the book selection met their expectations, was conducted. The results of the pilot study showed that the selected books seemed appropriate, and the students were interested in reading them.

To answer research question 1, six parts of the Cambridge Key English Test (KET) were selected and then divided into pre- and post-test (a total number of 20 questions in each test). Each test contained vocabulary (6 matching questions), grammar (7 multiple-choice questions) and reading comprehension (7 true or false questions). All three groups were given the tests before and after the experiment, and the tests were administered in students' normal class time; 25 minutes was allocated.

As to research question 2, Nuttall's (1996) assessment was adopted in this study to measure reading speed. The calculation formula is x (the number of words in the text) divided by (the number of minutes the student spent in reading the text) equals (the reading speed in words per minutes, wpm). Taking text readability, students' familiarity with the topic, and text length into account, six texts were selected from *"New Year Around the World"* (2000) published by Oxford University Press. The texts were also analysed by using the Flesch/Kincaid readability formula in terms of the comparability in text length and text difficulty, and then the six texts were divided into two tests (pre-test and post-test).

A 15-minute questionnaire in Chinese with a brief explanatory letter written in Chinese with regard to the aims of the study, and the procedures to be followed, was administered in the classroom. Questionnaires were conducted before and after the programme to assess students' attitudes toward learning English and reading, and their reactions to the books and the programme, (research questions 3, 4 and 5).

To address research questions 6 and 7, a book record was used for students to write their reasons for choosing books (before reading), time spent on reading and pages read each time (during reading), and reflections on the stories and satisfaction with their choices (after completing a book).

Procedures

The three classes were divided into two experimental classes and one control class. One 45-minute lesson per week was specifically allocated for the three classes. No extra reading was required outside the classroom.

The experimental classes

The two experimental classes exposed learners to two different inputs respectively: reading graded readers (GR), and reading books for native English-speaking children (BNESC). The books were kept in a box in the teachers' room; they were taken into the classes before the periods set for the reading programme and were displayed on tables. The students were free to choose any book they would like to read or to change it for a new one if they wished. When they finished reading or changed a book, they were asked to complete the reading record. If they could not finish reading a book, the book, along with their reading records, were kept in a separate place for them to read during the next reading time. Although dictionaries were made available, students were encouraged to ask peers or the teacher for the meaning of unknown words.

The Control group

In the control group, the teacher reviewed part of previous English lessons that the students had difficulties to understand. Then she gave time to students to memorize vocabulary and grammatical rules, and gave them exercises in the reading textbook, or self-study and practice books. These exercises included gap-fills, multiple choice and true/false items.

Results

Language Proficiency Test

In order to establish the comparability of the three groups, a one-way ANOVA was conducted, and the analysis confirmed that there were no significant differences between the three groups in the pre-test ($F = .145$, $d.f. = 53$, n.s.). Descriptive statistics of the language proficiency and reading speed tests are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the results of the *t*-test showed that the GR ($t = 5.793**$, $p < .005$) and the BNESC group ($t = 5.988**$, $p < .005$) achieved a significant level of improvement in language proficiency. By contrast, there was no gain in score in the control group. In fact, their post-test score was lower than that of their pre-test ($t = -3.675**$, $p < .005$).

When the students' performance on each part of the test was examined, other interesting findings appeared. The test scores of the GR group had increased and statistically significant levels of improvement could be found in all three parts; whereas, the students in the BNESC group made a significant improvement in the grammar and reading comprehension tests. For the control group, the students did less well in all the three parts on the post-test, and more importantly, there was a significant drop of score in the vocabulary measure ($t = -4.680**$, $p < .005$).

Reading Speed Test

Table 2 shows that there was a statistically significant improvement in reading speed for all three groups between pre- and post-tests reading speeds were counted in words per minutes, wpm). This indicates that both types of treatments (extensive reading and normal reading instruction) are effective in developing learners' reading speed. The statistical results also showed that both experimental groups made larger gains than the control group. Given that the GR group obtained the lowest score on the pre-test, an even more impressive result is that the degree of increase of the GR group was higher than the other two groups.

Table 1

Means of Pre- and Post-Test of Language Proficiency Test, and Results of *t*-tests

	Reading Comprehension	Vocabulary	Grammar	Total Score
GR group				
Pre-test	2.47	3.32	3.74	9.11
Post-test	3.79	4.37	4.47	12.63
Gains	+ 1.32	+ 1.05	+ 0.73	+ 3.52
sd	1.29	1.18	1.33	2.65
T-value	4.435**	3.897**	2.421*	5.793**
BNESC Group				
Pre-test	2.00	3.86	3.29	9.14
Post-test	4.07	3.93	4.50	12.50
Gains	+ 2.07	+ 0.07	+ 1.21	+ 3.36
sd	1.82	1.33	1.63	2.0
T-value	4.265**	.201	2.795*	5.988**
Control Group				
Pre-test	2.43	3.24	3.14	8.80
Post-test	2.14	1.80	2.67	6.62
Gains	- 0.29	- 1.44	- 0.47	- 2.18
sd	1.65	1.40	1.99	2.73
T-value	-.795	- 4.680**	- 1.096	- 3.675**

* = p <.05; ** = p < .005

Table 2

Means of Pre- and Post-Test of Reading Speed Test, and Results of *t*-test

	GR group	BNESC group	Control Group
Pre-test	59.7	98.6	85.2
Post-test	95.8	136.0	118.6
Gains	+ 36.1	+ 37.4	+ 33.4
sd	32.4	25.1	48.7
T-value	6.780**	4.128**	3.820**

** = p < .005

The Questionnaire

Learners' Attitudes

As shown in Table 3, 75.7% of the students in the GR group expressed that they liked the ER programme or liked it very much, compared with 52.9% in the BNESC group and 51.5% in the control group. The table also suggests that the GR group ($\bar{x}$ = 2.79 out of 4) held a more positive attitude than the other groups, though a one-way ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the three groups in their attitudes toward the treatment (F = 1.454, d.f. = 99, n.s.).

Table 3

Students' Attitudes Toward the Treatments

	GR group(N=31)	BNESC group(N=34)	Control group(N=33)
I like it very much	3.0%	14.7%	3.0%
I like it	72.7%	38.2%	48.5%
I do not like it	24.2%	41.2%	45.4%
I do not like it at all	0	5.9%	3.0%
Means	2.79	2.66	2.52

The descriptive statistics of students' attitudes toward learning English and reading before and after the experiment are shown in Table 4. In the GR group, there was no change between before and after the treatment. However, the proportion of positive attitudes toward learning English decreased in the BNESC and Control groups after the experiment. Moreover, when a *t*-test was carried out, the results also showed a statistically significant decrease in the two groups. The table also shows a drop in the students' attitudes toward English reading, but there were no statistically significant differences.

Table 4

Attitudes Toward Learning English and Reading (*t*-tests) of the Three Groups

	Means (before - after)	*t*-value	df
Attitudes toward Learning English			
GR group	2.818 - 2.818	.000	64
BNESC group	2.853 - 2.324	-3.369**	66
Control group	2.455 - 1.939	-2.957	64
Attitudes toward Reading			
GR group	2.818 - 2.606	-1.381	64
BNESC group	2.853 - 2.529	-1.894	66
Control group	2.333 - 2.182	-0.926	64

**= *p<.005*

The Two Experimental Groups' Reading Difficulties

Table 5 shows the perceived difficulties that students reported before and after the treatment. The percentages of language problems in the two experimental groups after the experiment increased sharply, (most likely because of a large quantity of reading and their language proficiency). Declines in those who said they had "no interest," found the materials "boring," or said they had "no confidence" after the programme indicates the benefits to students of exposure to a variety of reading materials and reading them extensively. By contrast, in the control group the proportion claiming to have "no interest in reading" and "no idea of how to read" rose. Moreover, 18% of the students in the control group had less confidence after the programme. All these could relate to the limited access and experience which learners have to written English in their normal English lessons. When reading purpose was considered after the programme, most students were unable to associate reading with their daily life, and thus this suggested that reading was perceived as a school subject rather than a reading activity.

Table 5

Difficulties Encountered by the Students in the Three Groups

	GR group(N=31)		BNESC group(N=34)		Control group(N=33)	
	before	after	before	after	before	after
Language problems	48.4%	70.9%	47.1%	73.5%	39.4%	42.4%
No interest in reading	45.2%	32.3%	50.0%	35.3%	36.4%	60.6%
Boring materials	32.3%	16.2%	26.4%	14.7%	24.3%	27.3%
No time/too much homework	32.3%	25.8%	23.5%	20.6%	36.4%	30.3%
No confidence	32.3%	19.4%	32.4%	11.8%	24.2%	42.4%
No idea of how to read	22.6%	16.2%	32.4%	35.3%	36.4%	51.5%
No suitable materials available	12.9%	22.6%	23.5%	35.3%	21.2%	9.1%
No purpose	6.5%	22.6%	8.8%	20.6%	9.1%	30.3%
Lack of background knowledge	0.0%	16.2%	14.7%	35.3%	9.1%	9.1%

Students' Assessment of Achievement

Before the treatment, students were asked to predict what areas of achievement they thought they would improve in, and the areas where they thought they had improved after the experiment. The results are shown in Table 6. The vast majority of the students in the three groups thought that they had extended their vocabulary, while only the two experimental groups said their reading ability had improved. In addition, more than half of the students in the BNESC group thought they had improved their grammar; however, the students in the other groups did not share this view. Given that the two experimental groups reported they established confidence in reading after the experiment, one important finding is that the percentage of the GR group has increased sharply by more than 50% (from 22.6% to 77.4%). Moreover, nearly half of the students in the GR group said that they had learnt about other cultures, whereas less than one third of the students in the other groups held this opinion.

Table 6

Students' Assessment of Achievement

	GR group (N=31)		BNESC group (N=34)		Control group (N=33)	
	before	after	before	after	before	after
Extend vocabulary	32.3%	87.1%	82.4%	88.2%	75.8%	93.9%
Improve reading	71.0%	64.5%	81.8%	67.6%	51.5%	39.4%
Develop a reading habit	32.3%	32.3%	38.2%	29.4%	27.3%	24.2%
Improve grammar	54.8%	32.3%	67.6%	55.9%	42.4%	33.3%
Know other cultures	45.2%	80.6%	58.8%	32.4%	51.5%	21.2%
Establish confidence in reading	22.6%	77.4%	35.3%	52.9%	24.2%	18.2%
Improve listening	51.6%	19.4%	61.8%	32.4%	42.4%	33.3%
Improve speaking	67.7%	16.1%	70.6%	32.4%	60.6%	39.4%
Improve writing	51.6%	12.9%	58.8%	29.4%	42.4%	30.3%

Book Record

Students' Reasons for Choosing Reading Books

As can be seen in Table 7, the topics of the books which were interesting to the students in the two groups was the most common reason in choosing which books to read. While the students in the GR group took interesting cover page of books as the second common reason, the teacher's or their classmates' recommendation was the case in the BNESC group.

<u>Table 7</u>

Students' Reasons for Choosing Books to Read

	GR group (n=217)		BNESC GROUP (n=249)	
	n	%	N	%
Interesting topic	74	34.1	70	28.1
Interesting cover page	42	19.4	44	17.7
The story is short	31	14.3	16	6.4
The book looks good	22	10.1	0	0
I have read the book in Chinese already	16	7.4	4	1.6
It looks special	7	3.2	0	0
Randomly choose	7	3.2	40	16.1
Teacher/classmates recommend	6	2.8	60	24.1
Interesting Illustrations	5	2.3	8	3.2
Learning something new	3	1.4	0	0
vocabulary looks easy	1	0.4	0	0
Learning vocabulary	0	0	1.	0.4
Interesting story	0	0	8	3.2

Students' Reading Process

Table 8 shows the pages that the students read and the time they spent on reading each time. In the first book, the students in the GR group spent 35.4 minutes on reading only 7.3 pages, but in the 7th book, they took 22.5 minutes to read 17.9 pages. For the BNESC group, the students took 18 minutes to read 17.5 pages of the 1st book; however, in 16.8 minutes, they could read 26.7 pages in the 8th book. It should be pointed out that the number of the pages and the amount of the time were developed gradually in the GR group, but they undulated in the BNESC group. This inconsistency in the BNESC group may result from the inconsistency of the actual vocabulary and reading levels of the children books. More analysis is necessary here.

Table 8

Number of Pages the Students Read and the Time Spent on Reading

Book	GR group		BNESC group	
	Pages	Reading time (minutes)	Pages	Reading time (minutes)
1	7.3	35.4	17.5	23.0
2	7.9	32.9	22.0	21.0
3	9.9	30.6	19.8	19.1
4	10.1	32.3	24.2	20.9
5	11.9	31.6	22.2	17.4
6	13.3	26.1	26.6	17.1
7	17.9	22.5	24.9	18.0
8	17.3	18.8	26.7	16.8
9	20.0	18.3	24.8	13.0

Students' Satisfaction with Reading Books

When the students were asked whether they would recommend the books they had read to their classmates, 76.1% of the students in the GR group said that they would do so, compared with 56% in the BNESC group. Table 9 shows that 91.3% of the students in GR group said that the books they had read were excellent, good, or satisfactory; 82.4% in BNESC group said so. As can be seen, a *t-test* revealed no significant difference between the two groups in their satisfaction with the books ($t = .996$, *d.f.* = 448, n.s.).

Table 9

Students' Overall Satisfaction with the Books They Read

	GR Group (N=209)		BNESC group (N=241)	
	N	%	N	%
Excellent	28	13.4%	43	17.8%
Good	57	27.3%	58	24.1%
Satisfactory	110	52.6%`	96	39.8%
Not so good	10	4.8%	32	13.3%
Poor	4	1.9%	12	5.0%
t-value	.966			
df	448			

Discussion and Implications

In the early stages of learning to read, access to a variety of interesting materials is essential for learners to develop a life-long reading habit. However, if they have not acquired sufficient knowledge of the language (second/foreign) and reading skills, ESL/EFL beginners are unlikely to read on their own or continually. Nevertheless, if learners are given the choice of reading materials that appeal to them and the materials are also linguistically appropriate, an extensive reading programme can create a situation where ESL/EFL beginners can read for meaning and pleasure.

Our results indicated that extensive reading is beneficial to EFL beginners, and the type of reading materials students read does have different effects on their language development. Students who were exposed to interesting English books performed significantly better on almost all parts of the language proficiency tests, than those who focused on intensive reading, studying vocabulary, and grammar. When we come to consider the effects of the type of reading materials, an interesting finding was the significant improvement in vocabulary proficiency in the GR group. This served to indicate the success of the natural exposure and repetition of vocabulary as contained in graded readers, in learners' vocabulary acquisition. The BNESC group's gains on the grammar test were surprising. The variety of grammar roles contained in the books for native English-speaking children might contribute to this difference. Further research is needed here. By contrast, those who did not read extensively did less well on the post-test of language proficiency. Most importantly, the significant drop in the vocabulary test scores seemed to prove the insufficiency of the textbook in enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition. On the basis of these results, two implications for the implementation of extensive reading programme could be made.

The Adoption of ER in the School Syllabus

By and large, the results of this study provide support for the importance of adopting extensive reading programmes in the school syllabus. Authorities who focus mainly on one traditional teaching approach, as is the case in Taiwan, Japan, and other East Asian countries, should realise what benefits an ER programme can bring to language learning, and should encourage their learners to read extensively outside the classroom. Moreover, by providing a new way to access written English and a different type of language input from that of normal classes, an ER programme could also create a positive context where learners experience reading as they might do in their daily life. If intensive and extensive reading can cooperate, learners are more likely to benefit and can discover the treasure of reading for themselves.

The Use of Books for Native English-Speaking Children

Having controlled language and information, EFL graded readers have been used effectively in many ER programmes. Moreover, this study has demonstrated that books for L1 learners could make a significant, perhaps complementary, contribution to ESL/EFL learning. With this in mind, organizers or teachers should be aware of the potential of such books for language learning and the rich variety of L1 materials available to them, and then apply them to their teaching wherever appropriate. For attracting learners' attention and maintaining their interest, when books for L1 learners are considered, it is imperative for teachers to take extreme care about the physical features and the level of the language. Compared with the wide range of information about graded readers (see Hill, 1997, 2001; Eastment, 2002) available for teachers survey reviews of the materials for L1 learners will expand our understanding of the potential of such materials.

Students' growth in confidence and their awareness of other cultures were of great interest as shown in Table 6. However, these rewards did not have a positive impact on students' attitude development. Although students were not asked directly why their motivation and attitudes had changed after the experiment, it is possible to speculate on the causes. One reason may be that the programme did not begin by introducing extensive reading strategies. This may have led to a lack of confidence in reading effectively and extensively, and so, students gradually experienced reduced interest in English learning and reading. Secondly, there has been discussion about the usefulness of encouraging activities in ER programmes. In fact, such activities were not used in this study, and thus, students may not have been able to find sufficient incentive to participate in the ER programme. These two causes raise two implications: learner training and encouraging activities.

Learner Training

It is possible that since students may not have acquired adequate skills, they were unable to exercise other strategies which were necessary for extensive reading, and may have relied only on the bottom-up decoding approach they learned in normal English lessons. Inevitably, the more books they read the more difficulties they may have encountered. If it is determined that this was indeed the case, one way of improving this is to have several lessons aimed at facilitating essential strategies for extensive reading before the introduction of an ER programme (e.g., Day & Bamford, 2002), so that students are able to use strategies whenever and wherever necessary. If students could detach themselves from their experience of language practice, eventually, they would be more likely to exercise their reading ability and to experience reading for meaning and pleasure. While students receive grammar-translation based instruction in most of their

normal English lessons, we as teachers have to address this and to encourage students to use new skills in their reading.

Encouraging Activities

Apart from reading records, no other follow-up activities were used in this study. The intention was to see whether reading books for interest only had any positive impact on students' attitudes toward learning English and reading. Even though the books were interesting and the students were happy to be involved in the ER programme, neither their views on learning English, nor their attitudes toward reading changed. It seems therefore necessary to employ activities which could encourage their participation and foster their motivation. These activities might include book reading reports (Leung, 2002; Hayashi, 1999; Lai, 1993), short summaries (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs, 1999), creating reading materials (Davidson, Ogle, Ross, Tuhaka & Ng, 1997), discussion (Constantino, 1995; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Elly, 1991), role play or retelling (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Lituanas, Jacobs & Renandya, 1999), wall charts (Lai, 1993), and games (Elly, 1991; Lai, 1993). It is worth mentioning that Jacobs, Davis and Renandya's (1997) book, which includes successful ER programmes from 11 different countries, provides a superb resource on strategic activities to improve ER programmes.

Given the fact that the level of language was slightly difficult for the students, it is also possible to speculate that an inappropriate level of text in relation to the learners' proficiency may have contributed to the decline in students' attitude development. Demanding texts may have compelled them to focus on vocabulary and grammar for comprehension, with the result that ER became a language problem-solving activity similar to that experienced in the English lessons where they were unhappy already. Thus, effective ER programmes rely heavily on the teacher to make good judgment about the purchase and use of appropriate reading materials and rely as well on the teacher's ability to effectively guide students in their choices. Considering that students' answers to what attracted their attention to choose books to read and their rating on book satisfaction proved that the book selection met their expectations, it is undoubtedly true that most series of GR in this study have succeeded in being attractive by using a colourful and glossy appearance. However, although all series have titles which cater to beginners, the students still have the impression that these readers are slightly difficult for them. This indicates a need for materials developers to continue writing more materials for learners at the lower level. Of course, writing or rewriting good stories at this level is a difficult task. One change which has occurred in all Oxford series is to include a glossary which lists words necessary to the story. Background

notes have also been added to enhance relevant schema and top-down reading processes. (Hill, 1997).

Nevertheless, the materials used in this study which were slightly above students' current language proficiency seemed effective in developing students' language proficiency, and this seemed to support Krashen's "*i* plus 1" theory (1985). However, there appears to have been a negative backwash on the development of the students' attitudes toward reading. One way to reduce students' reading difficulties is to provide "*i* minus 1" materials (Day & Bamford, 1998, p.16), containing the level of language slightly below students' current proficiency. Since students can manage the language, they can read for meaning and with confidence—and motivation will be improved. Future research should therefore be conducted on the respective contributions of "*i* minus 1" and "*i* plus one" materials. A comparison of the effects of these two types of reading materials could then provide important information about selecting appropriate books.

Conclusion

This study has shown that ER programmes can be successfully implemented with ESL/EFL beginners in a traditional learning setting where the grammar/translation-based method monopolizes reading instruction. The effects of ER on learners' language development and the functions of creating a reading situation where students are able to choose and read for meaning and pleasure are evident. Obviously, these cannot be achieved by the current intensive reading approaches. Since ER has received little attention in many ESL/EFL teaching situations like that of Taiwan, Davis (1995) is right to remind us as English language teachers of the inadequacy of excluding ER in our teaching situation by saying that

> Any ESL, EFL, or L1 classroom will be the poorer for the lack of an extensive reading programme of some kind, and will be unable to promote its pupils' language development in all aspects as effectively as if such a programme were present (p. 329).

In the early stages of learning to read, access to a variety of interesting materials is essential for learners to gradually become competent readers and develop a healthy reading habit. However, we should also be aware that the level of difficulty of the materials might discourage the students from associating English reading with a pleasurable activity. This tendency could be reduced if students were trained to use effective reading strategies. Moreover, though students were pleased to see the teacher's role in the modeling of reading, with no stimulating activities (i.e. group-discussions and pair reading), reading itself may remain tedious. Adding all these points together, the

more of these conditions are met in an ER programme, the more benefits our students are likely to get, in terms of language development, love of reading, and life-long habits.

Note

1. However, a current study in progress, building on the one reported here, would not appear to confirm this. The causes of attitude change seem to have been the lack of strategy training and encouraging activities discussed above as these aspects were introduced with a positive effect on motivation.

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