The Application of Reading Station to Enhance Reading Motivation for English Majored Sophomores at a University in Vietnam

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Abstract

It is obvious that reading outside classroom plays a key role in enhancing English majored students' study. This study aims at investigating students' attitude towards the employment of extensive reading as a reading station to enhance reading motivation at a university in Vietnam. Accordingly, 30 sophomores majoring in English were chosen to participate in the study for semi-structrured interviews. The findings indicated that reading habit formation and motivation, improvement in gaining vocabulary, and reading speed are the benefits that reading station brought back to reading. In contrast, the participants in this study considered heavy workload and ineffectiveness, and distraction and laziness as the downside of reading station in the reading classroom. It is hoped that the results of this study would contribute to the area of teaching reading. Besides, the researcher would be ready to conduct more research related to reading station for more contribution to the field.

Key words*: Reading skills, reading comprehension, extensive reading, reading station*

I. Introduction

Reading comprehension is not only the ability to fully comprehend the content of a text in an appropriate and effective manner, but it also includes the capability to provide answers to questions that are comprehensive in nature and relevant to the text (Brown, 2000). This refers to the involvement of linguistics and cognition in reading. Obviously, the task of reading texts in English language is of great difficulty as students expect to understand the text entirely. A large number of books about techniques for improving reading emerge to help students master such skill. However, two popular reading models known as top – down (Goodman, 1967) and bottom – up (Smith, 2004) are suggested more than ever for readers. The understanding of reading in a second language was significantly influenced by these models, which had a significant impact. For the purpose of efficiently interacting with text, they presented two distinct ways simultaneously. The procedures that were carried out from the top down included higher-order activities such as collecting the overall meaning of the text and making use of pre-existing mental structures or prior information in order to improve comprehension. The bottom-up processes, on the other hand, included activities that are typically considered to be more foundational. These activities included the identification of particular words as well as the derivation of meaning from the meanings of words or phrases. One of these metaphors progresses from the reader to the text, while the other progresses from the text to the reader. Both of these metaphors gave a clear illustration of the different routes leading to the smooth process of reading.

Reading station refers to the different platforms that students are able to utilize to read texts (*Reading Stations*, 2024). Accordingly, extensive reading (ER) is a topic recommended by a large number of students (Warring & McLean, 2015).

The popularity of ER books has existed for the past 2 decades which were labelled from A1 to C2 to suit readers' reading proficiency and are available in both hard copy and online versions (Warring & McLean, 2015). ER is regarded as a method to motivate students to cultivate a reading habit, enabling them to acquire knowledge across diverse domains while enhancing their fluency and reading speed. Students can select any reading materials provided that match the text levels through the application of extensive reading approaches.

According to Warring and McLean (2015), ER enhance four main skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Regular reading extensively enables students to acquire knowledge across diverse subjects and enhance their vocabulary. In a related perspective, Abedelqader and Salameh (2017) asserts that extensive reading (ER) offers three primary advantages to students: enhancements in reading fluency, writing proficiency, and an increase in student motivation. Moreover, extensive reading (ER) is considered more efficacious than conventional reading, as students are permitted to select and engage with their preferred materials, provided these texts are in the target language they are learning. The implementation of Extensive Reading (ER) in English Language Teaching (ELT) has gained global popularity owing to its benefits. A comparative research undertaken

by Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009) to examine the efficiency of extensive reading in second language acquisition. It is concluded that ER exhibited discernible advantages when reading resources are unrestricted. In the Indonesian setting, a case study conducted by Ferdila (2014) demonstrates that extensive reading (ER) is essential in English Language Teaching (ELT) classes due to five primary advantages: engaging activities, an enjoyable learning environment, enhancement of vocabulary, improvement in reading comprehension, and increased reading motivation. Furthermore, the participants convey a favorable disposition regarding the integration of extensive reading in English language teaching courses. Do and Dinh (2020) conducted a qualitative study to investigate learners' opinions on online extensive reading throughout the COVID-19 online learning session. The results indicate that learners possess a favorable disposition towards extensive reading about the diversity of topics, the suitability of texts and levels, the use of extensive reading routines during the research phase, and the convenience of the extensive reading program. Likewise, Do and Dinh (2020) and a collaborator have examined the effects of ER on students' autonomy. The findings indicate that ER practice not only fosters learner autonomy but also promotes skills in decision-making, goal-setting, time management, and self-assessment. Moreover, most pupils indicate that their reading speed has improved.

Vietnam is currently integrating with various countries both regionally and globally, leading to an increased necessity and popularity of English among the Vietnamese population. The learning and teaching of English hold significant importance in the education and training sector across the nation. Increasing attention has been directed towards reading skills, regarded as essential for educational and professional success. Reading serves not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity but also as a method for consolidating and expanding language knowledge. The activity is paramount in any language class, serving not only as a source of information and enjoyment but also as a means of consolidating and expanding language knowledge. However, the number of students concerning reading extensively is still limited.

Hence, this study aims to investigate the views of teachers and students on the use of extensive reading as a reading station in an ELT context. Accordingly, two research questions are developed to examine this issue.

- *How do Reading Station influence the reading motivation of English-majored students?*
- *What challenges do English-majored students face when engaging in Reading Station?*

II. Literature review

Definition of extensive reading

According to Levy (2016), ER is an instructional strategy that encourages students to participate in extensive reading with the goal of improving fluency in English or another foreign language. This straightforward strategy is based on the idea that actual reading is the most effective way to improve reading skills. What distinguishes ER is that it gives students the option to choose the type and quantity of reading materials. Nonetheless, educators must ensure that the chosen material meets the pupils' reading abilities. This strategy provides numerous benefits to students. For example, it allows people to absorb the essential message of a text while also enjoying and satisfying their reading. Furthermore, students are not required to complete every book they choose; educators employing the ER approach allow students to abandon a book if they believe it is too difficult or uninteresting.

Similarly, ER is defined as a method by which instructors impart reading skills to their students in an effort to raise the level of language competence exhibited by those students across a wide range of textual and visual resources (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). The idea that students participating in ER are required to read a huge number of books or articles quickly lends credence to this (Carrell & Carson, 1997). While Grabe and Stoller (2011) advocate for a focus on language competency, Carrell and Carson (1997) argue that reading for broad understanding, rather than specific language proficiency, is the best goal for pupils.

In a different vein, Warring and McLean (2015) present an alternative view of extensive reading as a strategy for second language acquisition in which students read several engaging but relatively easy novels without paying close attention to the grammar or vocabulary. They are also worried that researchers mainly look at how well their respondents understand the concepts and meanings in the text to determine if they are engaging in "extensive reading".

As a whole, ER might have multiple meanings depending on the specific circumstances. Either a method of teaching and studying to improve pupils' language skills or just reading a lot of books to broaden one's horizons are various definitions of ER. Whatever it is, ER helps students develop reading habits, which is a crucial component of effective teaching and learning.

Benefit of extensive reading

According to Richard (2015), in an extensive reading strategy, learners are motivated to read for similar reasons and in comparable manners as native language readers. This distinguishes extended reading from conventional classroom practices and academic reading. Complete comprehension, in fact, any certain degree of understanding, is not an ideal. The emphasis on reading outcomes transitions from comprehension attained or knowledge acquired to the reader's individual experience. The nature of a reader's engagement with a text is

determined by the intent behind their reading. In comprehensive reading, the student aims for adequate comprehension to achieve a specific reading objective, such as acquiring information, enjoying a narrative, or passing time.

Due to the consistent practice of reading, ER has been shown to provide a number of benefits, including the enhancement of reading speed, fluency, and vocabulary. These benefits have been demonstrated by (Bell, 2001). The reason for this is that when kids read on a daily basis, they become comfortable with the vocabulary and are able to pronounce the words without any hesitation. As a result, after a set amount of time, both their reading speed and their fluency would have significantly seen significant improvements. A significant improvement in the kids' vocabulary can be shown when they discover the appropriate method. It's possible, for instance, that some students would be interested in learning vocabulary through the use of mind maps, while others might be more in favor of using synonyms or acronyms.

It is proposed by Bell (2001) that ER not only restores students' motivation but also gives them the ability to exercise learner autonomy. When students engage in face-to-face learning in the classroom, they are obligated to read the required books and materials that have been provided to them by the instructor. When they are given the opportunity to select the materials that are recommended by the instructor, on the other hand, they will be more motivated to participate in the program and will be more independent in their academic pursuits.

According to Bell (2001), one of the advantages of ER is that it helps improve linguistic ability in areas such as writing, speaking, listening, and comprehension. Research conducted by Bell (2001) has shown that those who regularly engage in the activity of reading novels for the sake of reading tend to be better at listening in addition to speaking. According to the viewpoint of Renandya et al. (1998), pupils who are unable to read are unable to compose their work with grammar structures that are both complicated and flexible. Consequently, after pupils have improved their reading comprehension, they will also see improvements in their writing and grammar skills.

Researchers from all across the world have varying perspectives on the benefits of ER when it is applied in their own situations. In a nutshell, the most widely recognized advantages of ER are the enhancement of reading comprehension, the acceleration of reading speed, the enhancement of motivation and learner autonomy, and the enhancement of linguistic proficiency.

Disadvantages of extensive reading

ER is plagued by a number of issues, the most significant of which is that students are lacking in vocabulary, which is the most significant obstacle to reading comprehension (Utama, 2019). Even though it is commonly assumed that ER gives students the freedom to select the resources they wish to read, students continue to claim that the items that were given to them were too challenging to pursue in order to comprehend the content of the texts. In addition, students who have low academic levels have difficulty comprehending poetry or stories that are found in literature.

Besides, students have a tendency to be reluctant to read if the subjects that are discussed in the books and materials that are recommended to them do not fall within their areas of interest (Fitria, 2023). This is another disadvantage of ER. There is a wide range of preferences among students when it comes to emergency situations; some students may regard space exploration to be the most important topic for reading, while others may be more interested in adventure. It is possible that the themes covered in the textbook do not align with the interests of the students. After teachers have implemented an ER program in the classroom, it is best to recommend to students that they select books or materials that are closely related to the themes being covered. This provides students with the knowledge and vocabulary that corresponds to the lessons being taught.

Students often have trouble locating credible resources, which is another issue with ER. Because they help students acquire knowledge and vocabulary in the real world, exposure to authentic materials is vital in an EFL context (Fitria, 2023). The ER program encourages students to read widely at their level of comprehension, regardless of the books' veracity, in order to build their reading comprehension skills. A problem arises when pupils miss out on opportunities to learn the lexicon and grammar patterns used by native speakers.

According to studies cited in (Net, 2022), some students report feeling uninterested in ER when asked to read the assigned English materials. This is because of the reliance on translation apps or websites and the limited vocabulary. On top of that, coercing some students into an ER program might be an uncomfortable experience for them. Consequently, these pupils engage in shallow reading comprehension and complete the accompanying exercises.

Undoubtedly, every issue presents both advantages and disadvantages, and ER is no exception. Specifically, the implementation of ER in various circumstances will give rise to new challenges. The deficiencies in vocabulary, reluctance to engage with authentic information, and diminished enthusiasm in reading are prevalent issues in extensive reading (ER).

Reading motivation

Motivation is pivotal to students' academic success since the idea pertains to the satisfaction and sense of belonging that students experience in relation to school. Martin (2009) characterized motivation and engagement as the determinants of the knowledge kids acquire in school and as indicators of the effort they invest in their learning. Wigfield et al., (2014) define motivation as the will, resolve, desire, and intent to engage in a specific endeavor. It is frequently characterized in relation to an individual's views, values, and objectives for an activity. It is evident that language students possess a clear objective they aspire to attain. Nonetheless, an intriguing topic is whether they possess the same type of motivation.

Wigfield et al., (2014) noted that readers can be motivated for both intrinsic reasons (operationalized as curiosity, involvement, and preference for challenge) and extrinsic ones (recognition and competition). Intrinsically motivated learners may become engaged in learning due to the task itself, while extrinsically motivated learners may engage in learning to seek rewards or satisfaction from sources other than the task itself. They underscored the fact that individuals may possess varying levels of reading motivation and various forms of motivation.

III. Methodology

Participants

This study involved 30 sophomore students majoring in English. The cohort comprised 19-year-old students, consisting of 20 females and 10 males. The internal English test results indicated a competency level of B1+ according to the CEFR system. The convenience sample method was employed to provide optimal comfort for both participants and the researcher.

Materials

The materials being used for the reading station were any book series with either hard copy or online version. However, the requisite for such material books was that the books must be labelled with B1+ or B2 so that students did not find it too easy or difficult to read.

Data collection and analysis

This study employed a qualitative methodology to examine university lecturers as well as English majors' views towards ER as a reading station. Semi-structured interviews were done with the most convenience for the students. Furthermore, the researcher would document the interviews prior to transcribing, coding, categorizing themes, and evaluating the data.

Procedures

The duration of this intervention was 10 weeks. In the initial week, the researcher introduced the ER program as a reading station to the participants and distributed the consent forms. The researcher guided participants to select an appropriate reading level with little unfamiliar vocabulary to enhance their reading comprehension. Additionally, participants were required to compose a brief paragraph summarizing their weekly insights gained from the reading materials.

IV. Findings

Reading habit formation and motivation

Of the 30 students included in the ER program, 11 asserted that the program facilitated the development of a weekly reading habit. The excerpt below serves as a clear illustration.

> *"The ER program in English classrooms facilitated the development of a weekly reading habit. This was a beneficial habit for me as I had never engaged in it previously. Whenever I read, I endeavored to comprehend the texts comprehensively and contemplated the subject matter. I experienced an increased motivation to learn English."* (S1)

Besides, the participants in this study also reported that they were more motivated when joining the extensive reading program provided by the teacher.

> "I have consistently desired to study English; nevertheless, my lack of motivation and uncertainty on the starting point hindered my progress. Participating in the ER program allowed me to select materials pertinent to my areas of interest and delve into captivating knowledge. I was also more motivated and self-assured in completing duties and responding to my English teacher's inquiries." (S2)

Improvement in obtaining vocabulary

Seventy percent of all participants stated that their reading skill was better than before.

> "The routine of reading each week allows me to better comprehend the reading texts. I have learnt a lot of new words and interesting structures which enter my long-term memory and I can recall when necessary." (S3)

> "Reading and reporting a favorite text weekly not only help me remember a variety of vocabulary but also apply such new words in speaking out loud or writing an essay." (S4)

Improvement in reading speed

Reading speed is an issue concerned by some participants. They claimed that after 10 weeks of reading extensively, their speed was more improved in comparison with the previous semesters.

> "Before joining this reading program, my reading speed was quite slow. Whenever I read a text, I need to read several times to understand it properly. After I established the routine of reading weekly, I set my reading time and try to comprehend the text as fast as possible. The result was that I could understand the content by reading once only." (S5)

> "I don't know why I am scared of reading long texts. If someone gives me a text of about 1000 words, I will scan my eye without understanding the text thoroughly. Since I was assigned to read extensively, I was able to choose the topic I like which made me more engaged in reading. Gradually, my reading speed was also improved."(S6)

Workload and ineffectiveness

On the other hand, workload is a problem that the students in the current study stated.

> "I study 21 credits for this semester which means I have a lot of homework and assignments to do. Hence, this weekly reading habit is absolutely a burden for me and I feel really stressful." (S7)

> "Since I have to do a lot of assignments due to the requirement of each subjects, it is hard for me to complete my weekly reading with all my effort. Therefore, I just do it in about 15 minutes to make sure that I have something to submit." (S8)

Distraction and laziness

Several participants in this study expressed that distraction and laziness played a significant role in preventing them from reading extensively.

> "When I was determined to sit down and find something to read, my friends texted me on various social platforms. Then, I was distracted and my motivation to read has gone." (S9)

> "My biggest problem is laziness and it really matters my study. Though I am aware of the significance of studying, I always think that "Oh, I still have time and no need to be hurry." Then, I just spend time doing something that are not really necessary." (S10)

V. Discussion

This study examined students' awareness of ER during 10 weeks of applying ER program in an ELT context. Obviously, the findings of this study concerning the positive sides of ER program were in line with the previous work of Bell (2001) and Renandya et al., (1998). The interviews with participants indicated that the majority of students exhibited a favorable attitude towards extensive reading, attributing this to the development of reading habit formation and motivation, improvement in gaining vocabulary, and reading speed. Thus, it is important for teachers to promote weekly reading habits amongst students to enhance their success. This occurs because if students cease reading, they will revert to the initial stage. Educators may enhance the variety of graded reading materials by encouraging students to contribute their resources or by facilitating brief discussions on extensive reading prior to introducing new lessons. Additionally, educators may employ incentives like bonus points to encourage greater student participation in extensive reading.

This study also identifies negative attitudes towards ER, attributed to heavy workload and ineffectiveness, and distraction and laziness. Suggestions for teachers is to create diverse online quizzes to enhance students' vocabulary by reinforcing the words found in reading texts. This can be accomplished using various platforms, including Quiz, Quizlet, and Google Forms. Furthermore, establishing an online group through familiar social networks such as Facebook, Zalo, or Google Classroom is effective. Teachers can also establish guidelines for these groups to restrict irrelevant discussions.

VI. Conclusion

Overall, this research investigates the application of reading station to enhance reading motivation among students at a university in Vietnam. The study's findings, bolstered by empirical data and examined within the existing literature, underscore the positive impact of reading station on students' motivation for reading in English. The study conducted at a certain university in Vietnam proves that such findings are relevant not only to such context but also to other university contexts. A reading lesson plan emphasizing the use of reading station, along with appropriate pedagogical approaches by reading teachers, will significantly enhance students' reading motivation. Once students are interested in reading station, they would be intrinsically motivated to engage in reading practice. English language teachers, particularly those focused on reading skills, should recognize the advantages of reading station in university settings where students' reading motivation is notably deficient.

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