

The Effects of Reading Instruction on Recreational Reading Behaviors and Attitudes of EFL Learners

Mustafa Altun

Ishik University

Email: mustafa.altun@ishik.edu.iq

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Abstract

This study tackles the question of whether reading instruction has any effect on recreational reading attitudes and behaviors of EFL learners. The study used a recreational reading questionnaire as a pre-and post-test for three groups of students who were taking a reading course at their second year undergraduate studies at Ishik University. The course aimed to enhance students' comprehension and fluency skills in reading. The same questionnaire was utilized both at the beginning and at the end of the course to see the changes in attitudes and behaviors of students towards recreational reading. It was found that as EFL learners were significantly exposed to reading instruction, they developed positive behaviors and attitudes towards recreational reading.

Keywords: Fluency, Enhance, Comprehension, Skills, Development, Progress, Content

Introduction

The instill a culture of casual reading for learners of the English language is a vital duty for teachers and students alike, who for the former desire for their students to progress in their acquisition of the English language, and for the latter to successfully achieve their target of mastering English. Likewise, reading habits and academic achievements are highly correlated and interdependent upon each other. It is a general reality that reading allows for "obtaining meaningful and desirable knowledge" as it plays the role of a "weapon" for students to advance in their educational studies (Owusu-Acheaw 2014, page 2). Hence, in the context of education, and more specifically English language learning, casual reading habits act as a means for "effective learning" and overall educational success. (Owusu-Acheaw 2014, page 3). It is for this reason therefore that traditional institutions which provided English tuition were famed for demanding casual reading from their students.

In the modern context, however, casual reading may not necessarily be a habitual task in students. The traditional reading habits evident within students and others alike, and the strong demand for casual reading outside class hours by teachers towards their students has

become “a thing of the past” (Owusu-Acheaw 2014, page 3). Palani (2012) believes the prevalence of television is mostly the cause of such a deviation.

Thus, it is essential that casual reading is to be promoted and heartened in students. Naturally, students who may not feel confident and content in their reading capacities may be disheartened towards reading practices outside school hours. It is therefore important on the teacher’s behalf to encourage students to partake in this practice. The provision of reading based courses in the teaching curriculum is believed by this study to be a major strategy to achieve this task and in doing so will unearth positive changes in attitudes and behaviors of students towards recreational reading.

Literature

A vast literature exists which proposes that the provision of reading instruction and comprehension is highly linked to recreational reading. The study of Pitchette (2005) indicated that students who possessed lower levels of learning proficiencies were inclined to insignificant levels of time attributed to reading English texts. Likewise, high capacity learners were significantly higher in terms of casual reading habits. Similarly, the likes of Constantino (1995) proposed within his own studies revealed that classes which provided a 20-minute causal reading session at the beginning of all beginners and intermediate course programs significantly increased levels of confidence, which as a result provides for an impetus to students to gain a causal reading culture beyond formal course instruction.

Teachers, however, have experienced much difficulty in extending the process of reading beyond the classroom (Scott & Compton 2007). The traditional and less successful manner of doing so is for all students to read a set text as part of the competency building curriculum. This however doesn’t “provide a lot of room” in the practice (Scott 2007, page 1). Certain issues arise, including the fact that students have varying tastes and whence students are imposed to read a set book only due it being a requirement of the course will invalidate the ability to promote casual reading practices outside of the classroom. Changing a student’s interest is a near impossible task and the attempt of such is against the norms of modern society (Scott 2007, page 1).

For extensive reading practices to be successfully employed it is required certain points to be considered and properly formulated. Shaffer proposes that a wide variety of texts provided to be chosen from. As aforesaid, the interests of students vary, and therefore if they are not provided with an extensive list in which they can choose a topic to their liking may already harm the effectiveness of employing reading practices in the classroom (Bamford & Day 2004). Scott (2006) within his employment of reading courses to promote casual reading made use of a strategy in which a minimum of 30 pages are to be read every two weeks. If the students find the chosen book to be uninteresting after reading its first five pages, he/she is allowed to change books. The five pages which have been read are still added to the 30-page count. Accordingly, texts are required to be “engaging and compelling” and that being interesting may not be adequate. By purposing the reading up on “pleasure, information, and general understanding” (Bamford & Day 2004, page 73) will consolidate this aim. Furthermore, the language competency levels of the designated books must be within their capacities, and throughout the reading experience, the teacher acts as a guide to the students. This will require a teacher monitor student performance, explain objectives in a coherent manner, and most importantly participates with the student rather than cultivating a passive role.

In conclusion of the research conducted by Scott (2006) to promote casual reading beyond class time, 70-75% of the students complied successfully participated in the activity, and 10-11 students had personally stated to their teacher that their reading competencies and skills dramatically increased, and by means of such, a “pleasure-reading habit” had been formed (Scott 2006, page 7).

Research METHOD:

Reading courses held in Ishik Universities’ English language teaching program is aimed to enhance students’ comprehension and fluency skills in reading. In the conclusion of the first reading class that was held at the beginning of the semester of 2016, which lasted for 16 weeks, a written survey was conducted for the students. The study used a recreational reading questionnaire as a pre-and post-test for three groups of students who were taking a reading course at their second-year undergraduate studies at Ishik University. 60 students partook in the survey.

The four questions in the survey were the following;

- 1) Do you read books?
- 2) How often do you read books?
- 3) If you read why do you like to read?
- 4) Top 10 reasons why students do not read.

Essentially, the same survey was provided to students at the end of the second reading course. The aim of this was to make a comparison between the two periods and to ascertain as to whether a positive correlation towards casual reading exists as a consequence of the provision of reading based subjects in English learning courses.

FINDINGS

1. Do you read books?

Before	%	After	%
21		56	

21 out of 77 students said yes in the first survey. In the second given survey a large increase in the number of students who read occurred, it went from 21 students to 56 this means that 35 students had a change in attitude and behavior towards recreational reading. This question had a very large change in numbers after the period of time between the first and second survey. This lead to positive results and an increase of interest in reading among the students.

2. How often do you read books?

	Everyday	Almost everyday	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Almost never
Before	3	5	21	9	2
After	8	8	12	15	1

On survey one, 3 people answered every day, but in a survey two there was an addition of 5 more people for ever day readers, which makes it a total of 8 people and an increase occurred. The option almost every day received a 5 for the first survey, but in the second survey, it increased by three people making it an 8. For the first survey, 21 people answered that they read only once or twice a week, but the second survey saw a decrease in the number from 21

to 12. The option once or twice a month received a number of 9 students in the first survey, but the second survey received an increase moving it from 9 students to 15. Almost never in a survey one received a 2 in the first survey and 1 in the second survey. From looking at the statistics, I believe that the increase of people who read every day and almost every day shows great improvement.

3. If you read why do you like to read?

	Before	%	After	%	Difference	%
For fun	5	6.49350649	11	8.47	6	4.62
To spend time	6	7.79220779	9	6.93	3	2.31
For motivation	8	10.3896104	16	12.32	8	6.16
To escape	3	3.8961039	5	3.85	2	1.54
Because I am bored	3	3.8961039	4	3.08	1	0.77
Its exiting and relaxing	13	16.8831169	16	12.32	3	2.31
To learn something	27	35.0649351	30	23.1	3	2.31
To learn a language	25	32.4675325	28	21.56	3	2.31
To improve my English language	21	27.2727273	26	20.02	5	3.85
Others	2	2.5974026	2	1.54	0	0

The most popular answer for the first survey was to learn something it came in with 27 people. Not falling that far behind with 25 votes is to learn languages. To improve my English language received 21 votes and because it is exciting and relaxing got 13. The other options got less than 8 votes for survey one. Survey two had the same results for which options were the most popular, but there was a slight increase in the numbers to learn something increased by 3 votes making it 30 as did to learn languages which turned 28. To improve my English language went from 21 to 26. From looking at the most popular choices, it seems that most students read in order to improve their knowledge and understanding. From the results of the second survey the interest of reading for knowledge has only grown.

4. Top 10 reasons why students do not read:

	Before	%	After	%	Difference	%
1. Reading makes me sleepy	18	13.86	6	4.62	12	9.24
2. I don't have time to read	7	5.39	4	3.08	3	2.31
3. I can't sit for that long time	8	6.16	5	3.85	3	2.31
4. It is not enjoying, it is boring	9	6.93	3	2.31	6	4.62

5. I watch TV and play video games a lot that I can't read books	6	4.62	3	2.31	3	2.31
6. I am busy using social media	5	3.85	3	2.31	2	1.54
7. The books I like to read are not available	4	3.08	1	0.77	3	2.31
8. Reading is a waste of time	4	3.08	1	0.77	3	2.31
9. I hate reading	2	1.54	2	1.54	0	0
10. My school doesn't have a library	2	1.54	2	1.54	0	0

When the students were asked why they do not read the top answer was that it makes the sleepy it received 18 votes, but in a survey two we see a decline in number when it comes down to a 6 with a difference of 12. The second popular choice was that it is boring and not enjoyable coming in with 9 votes, but in survey two the result decrease to a mere 3. I can't sit for long periods of time and I don't have time to read have the results of 8 and 7 in the first survey, but the second questionnaire revealed a decline in three in both options making them 5 and 4. The other options had less than 7. Looking at the statistics of the surveys for why people don't read and seeing the difference the decrease in numbers shows that with time people may have grown more accustomed to reading on a regular basis.

Conclusion

Certainly, the promotion and involvement of reading based class subjects within school curriculum are a vital matter for the better achievement of ESL students as it is a means to promote casual reading habits. As all components of English language learning are intertwined and interdependent upon each other, the effects of causal reading habits will strengthen its other related organs of speaking, listening and writing, providing for an acquisition of further vocabulary, better comprehension and familiarity with the logic and nature of the English language.

With the articles, research, upon comparison and analysis of the two surveys conducted with the designated students, it has become evident that a positive increase and likewise a positive correlation between the provisions of reading based instruction is linked with casual reading habits of students. It is apparent that students who are provided with an avenue to increase their reading capacities are more inclined and motivated to read outside of their classroom and with personal desire rather than as a result of formative assessment by the teachers' behalf.

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