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Date : 23 June 2012
EXTENSIVE READING AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS ON READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS AMONG YEAR 5 STUDENTS OF
SK TAMAN BUKIT TIRAM

PURANEE A/P GOBAL @ GOPAL

This project report is submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirement for the award of
The degree of Master of Education (TESL)

Faculty of Education
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

JUNE 2012
I declare that this project report entitled “Extensive Reading and its Effectiveness on Reading Comprehension Skills among Year 5 Students of SK Taman Bukit Tiram” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The project paper has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

Signature : .............................

Name : .............................

Date : .............................
This piece of work is dedicated to my loving parents, Mr & Mrs Gopal Rajamah,
sisters, Kanmani Gopal and Kumutha Gopal, my little angel Shruti.
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ABSTRACT

This current study investigates the effect of extensive reading in using graded readers as a learning approach in improving reading comprehension. The study explores the effectiveness of extensive reading and whether it is instrumental in improving reading comprehension skill. This study also seeks to answer if extensive reading helps in promoting positive attitude among students to read. This study is based on comprehensible input theory where students engage in a large quantity of reading materials to achieve reading comprehension. The sample of this study consist of 40 students from year 5 students of Sk Taman Bukit Tiram. The treatment was administrated for four months which consists of extensive reading of graded books for two hours each week. A quasi-experimental design was used to measure the effectiveness of extensive reading in enhancing reading comprehension. Mean and standard deviation were performed on the data to test the research questions that were derived from the study. The results of the data analysis revealed that using graded readers in extensive reading setting helped in improving reading comprehension of students. This was seen in terms of the marks that were obtained in the post test. Extensive reading also helped in promoting positive attitude towards reading and this was seen through the analysis of questionnaire. Implication for future research and classroom practice were discussed. Some recommendations for future research were also indicated.
ABSTRAK

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The term “extensive reading” was originally coined to distinguish it from “intensive reading” (Palmer, 1968). According to Day & Bamford (1997), reading large amount of text with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the material is extensive reading. In other words, learners read to get the meaning of the text rather than the meaning of individual words or sentences. Many years ago a person was considered literate if he was able to read words without necessarily comprehending them. Such was the influence of the behaviourist and structuralist schools of thought and the audiolingual approach.

However, the influence of cognitivist theory of learning has shifted the emphasis to reading with comprehension and to critical reading. The reader must not only read, but he must comprehend what he is reading and critical reading involves the higher order skills (Jacobs, 1993). These skills are developed through extensive reading because in reading the person’s mind is constantly engaged as he interacts with the text, and he ‘deploys’ his resources as he reflects upon the realities of life mirrored in the text he is reading (Prabu, 1987). Over the years schools have adopted various strategies and approaches to intensify and strengthen their reading programs.

The most important program that have yielded significant results in terms of improving student’s comprehension and critical thinking is the extensive reading program (Lituanas, 1997). The advantages of extensive reading for both first and
second language learners are well researched and widely known in many countries including Asian countries (Krashen, 1993; McQuillan, 1994; Ng, 1988, 1994a, b, 1995; Anderson, 1996; Elley, 1996b; Coady, 1997; Day & Bamford, 1997; Jacob, Davis & Renandya, 1997; Yu, 1993, 1997a, b).

A few of these programs which had achieved success were, The Book Flood Project for 11-12 year old developed by Elley and Mangubhai (1993) in the Fiji Island, The extensive reading scheme in Form 1/Middle One in Hong Kong which were implemented in 115 schools (Kwan, 1988), the Education Department (ED) reading Scheme developed by the Institute of Language Education in Hong Kong which had been implemented in 49 schools, the extensive reading program for primary schools in Singapore (Ng, 1988, Elley, 1988), the Reading Scheme in New Zealand for immigrant Polynesian children, the English Language Reading Program in Malaysia for secondary school students, the Extensive Reading Scheme Pilot Project in Hong Kong (Yu, 1993) and the Reading and English Acquisition Program (REAP) in Brunei.

In Malaysia, the inclusion of a reading-enriched curriculum is clearly articulated in the Malaysian Primary and Secondary English Syllabus (2001). This can be seen through the introduction of reading programme such as ‘The Structured Early Reading Programme’ which aims to inculcate a love for reading at a young age. Schools are also given ‘big books’ to be used with students through an extensive induction programme (UNESCO, 2004). In 2004, the Malaysian Cabinet decided that Contemporary Children’s Literature (CCL) should be introduced in Year 4, 5 and 6 as a further effort to instil positive reading habits among the young school children. In this research, the elements of extensive reading adapted where the teacher will conduct the extensive program during the class and book selection are prepared by the teacher according to the pupils reading level. The pupils are also allowed to borrow the books to read at home.
1.2 Background of the Study

The problem of having poor readers is that the student who have adequate word recognition skills, but who do not understand what they read is a global concern. Research conducted by Sloat, Beswick and Willams (2007) proved that poor reading comprehension is still a major problem as students fail to learn reading during primary level. In Malaysia, the problem remains the same. Reading is a major component of the English curriculum of Sekolah Kebangsaan Bukit Tiram. More class time is allotted to it than to the other components such as listening, speaking and writing.

Despite the emphasis that has been given on reading, the problem continues to plague the teachers as more and more students got low scores in the school and national achievement tests in English. One of the variables responsible for this problem is that students have limited access to reading materials (Greaney, 1996). Most of them come from poor families which cannot afford to buy reading materials. Beside from this, students’ motivation to read is low because they feel only extrinsic needs for English such as passing exams, getting a degree and getting a job later. This type of motivation according to Gardner and Lambert (1992) is less effective because it is not rooted on the personality of the learner.

Another cause of low proficiency in reading is failure to incorporate extensive reading in the curriculum. While intensive reading develops skills and strategies in reading, it by itself, is inadequate (Ellis & McRae, 1991). Exam pressure poses another obstacle to extensive reading implementation, especially when exam measure only discrete skills, neglecting consideration of students’ attitude towards reading. For extensive reading to be effective it must be
incorporated in the curriculum and adequate class time should be allotted to it. To regard it as an “optional extra” is to deprive the students of the treasures of knowledge and wisdom which can only be gained through extensive reading of books, magazines and newspapers (Yu, 1993).

According to Yu, if extensive reading is part of the curriculum and class periods are devoted to it, students will take it more seriously. They will no longer regard reading as a passive, boring extra-curricular activity. Furthermore, if it is part of the curriculum, teachers can help the students to acquire the ability to read and work independently by monitoring their progress, advising on books and by giving them encouragement and feedback. Therefore they should be given time to read. Alloting library hours to read is not enough. Yu stresses that without a reading program in the curriculum, many students reading tend to be spasmodic, haphazard and unrewarding, which result in them giving up reading eventually. On the other hand, a good reading program implemented under the guidance of the teachers in the class will help the students to gradually progress towards individualized and independent reading and learning.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Extensive reading was firstly introduced in Malaysia in 1976. Extensive reading was introduced formally in school to encourage the reading habit among Malaysian students and to increase ESL proficiency. The Education Ministry initiated extensive reading that complement classroom reading programme. At present, the examined
The issue of English proficiency has always been of concern among Malaysian teachers, academics, and Ministry of Education officials because students' lack of proficiency in English deprives them of the opportunities open to those who are able to use the language well. This is especially so for primary school students, whose failure rate in national standardized English examination, were twice (Mohd Asraf, forthcoming). From the view and experience of researchers in teaching primary schools students in Malaysia, it had appeared that students have trouble understanding comprehensons and it mostly stems from their lack of mastering the reading skill. Some primary school pupils find it difficult to read and understand despite the fact that reading is indispensable. The students show a carefree attitude towards reading and reading is considered as not part of their culture. These conclusions are based on a long history of research in which attitude and achievement have been consistently linked (e.g., Purves & Beach, 1972; Walberg & Tsai, 1985).

Furthermore, English teachers’ attitudes towards and practice of extensive reading in Malaysia was lack of attention. Urquhart and Weir state (1998:195) ‘many teachers see one of their key roles in the reading classroom as expanding vocabulary knowledge and developing learner’s ability to continue to increase their vocabulary’. Such a view that reading feed language learning fails to promote extensive reading skill. Furthermore, according to Day and Bamford (1998), one of the most rational reasons is that many teachers believe that intensive reading alone will produce good, fluent readers. As a result, through years of learning to read in English, students have managed to learn large amount vocabulary and grammatical rules by heart, but
they cannot read well enough for information or pleasure. Hence, the present study will investigate whether reading, if built into class time, improves reading comprehension skills and also promotes reading, besides shedding further light on how extensive reading affects student’s attitude on extensive reading.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness extensive reading in enhancing reading comprehension of year five students who belonged to the remedial reading classes of Sekolah Kebangsaan Taman Bukit Tiram, Johor and also to determine students’ attitudes towards extensive reading. The extensive reading is selected for this research in order to help students to become better and confident readers and to enhance their comprehension skill. Good things happen to students who read great deal in the English language. It helps them to become better and more confident readers and their vocabularies get richer. In addition, they develop positive attitudes toward and increased motivation to study the language. Extensive reading helped students to examine their general reading habits and attitude, as well as their feelings about reading in the English language. It also gives insights into students’ reading preferences and their attitudes toward reading in the second language for enjoyment and learning.
1.5 Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to determine whether a relationship exist between extensive reading and reading comprehension through the use of graded reading materials and at the same time explore the attitudes of the students towards reading after the extensive reading program.

1.6 Research Questions

The present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are there differences in the pre-test mean raw score between the extensive reading and non-extensive reading group in reading comprehension?

2. How do the extensive and non-extensive reading groups compare in their post-test mean raw scores in reading comprehension?

3. How do the extensive and non-extensive reading groups compare in their pre-test and post-tests mean gain scores in reading comprehension?

4. Does extensive reading program promote positive attitudes towards reading among the students?
1.7 Significance of the study

Innovations in reading instruction provide information about effective, researched based and resources for all who are involved in helping children learn to become successful readers. For example innovations in reading instruction such as extensive reading open a lot of possibilities for ensuring adequate help towards improving students’ comprehension. The results of this study also enable the curriculum planners to assess and redefine curricular goals and instructional objectives. It provides a baseline for structuring a reading program which incorporates extensive reading. For the teachers, this study would provide the teachers a framework for organizing extensive reading classes and stimulate them to provide varied opportunities for the development of comprehension skills.

Furthermore, the gain in motivation and attitude are equally impressive. The study showed how attitudes changed toward reading in English. In addition, it helped students to develop positive attitudes toward reading and develop the habit of becoming lifelong readers. They also became an effective readers, comprehenders and critical thinkers. One the hand, extensive reading programme implemented under the teacher guidance helped the students to gradually progress towards individualized and independent reading and learning. Lastly, the findings of this study encouraged parents to read with their children and encourage them to buy books which their children like to read. It motivated them to provide financial as well as emotional assistance to their children.
1.8 **Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This experimental study was only conducted for a period of four months from July 2011 until October 2011 at Sekolah Kebangsaan Taman Bukit Tiram, Ulu Tiram, Johor. The subjects of the study were year five students classified as poor readers belonged to the two remedial reading classes namely, 5 Cerdik and 5 Dedikasi. A total of 40 students, 20 from the experimental group and 20 from the control group consisted as subjects of the study. This study was limited to determining the effectiveness of extensive reading in improving reading comprehension of year 5 students of Sekolah Kebangsaan Taman Bukit Tiram and it mainly focused on the statistical analysis of their achievement in reading comprehension.

1.9 **Theoretical Framework**

Exposure to comprehensible language through extensive reading is an effective way to enhance students’ comprehension. The theory which underpins extensive reading’s effectiveness in terms of enhancing comprehension is Stephen Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis which stresses that acquisition of a second language is facilitated if students are given enough comprehensible input and when learning is conducted in a tension-free environment. Input Hypothesis is a theory of second language acquisition which believes that “we acquire language in one way: by understanding message. We acquire language when we obtain enough comprehensible input.
Krashen’s (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis states that in anxiety-producing situations, there is an affective filter which acts as a mental block preventing acquirers from fully utilizing the input they receive. But when the filter is low or down, the acquirer can fully comprehend the message and use the input to enhance his language competence. According to this hypothesis, in a low anxiety environment, that is, an environment where students feel relaxed and at ease, they learn better. This condition is met in extensive reading since students read books of their own choice according to their interest and they read them at their own pace and level. They do not make conscious effort in reading since they are not required to take tests. They only read for pleasure and for enjoyment.

Krashen (1990) argues that reading is the primary source of competence in writing, style, grammar, as well as vocabulary and spelling. He cites the example of “good thinkers” who became great because they read a great deal. Furthermore, he says that we need to encourage a great deal of free reading, for it stimulates language development and makes a significant contribution to cognitive development. What he means by free reading is reading for interest and pleasure and at the same time engaging in problem solving, which terms a “real enterprise”. In his theory, Krashen deemphasizes conscious learning.

Three theories (Perfetti, 1987) that account for the problem of poor reading comprehension have been postulated. The first is that students have difficulty in word recognition or due to inadequate vocabularies, they may be able to decode