



دور القراءة الموسّعة في تطوير مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية للمتعلمين الليبيين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

The Role of Extensive Reading in Developing English Vocabulary for EFL Libyan Learners

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الملخّص:

بشكل واسع تدرك القراءة الموسّعة الوسيلة إلى التقدّم في اللغة الإنجليزية في إطار تعلّم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية و كلغة ثانية ؛ لأنها تساعّد المتعلمين على بناء المفردات وتطوير مهارات فهمهم في القراءة. القراءة لغرض المتعة وإعطاء المتعلمين الفرص لاختيار ما يريدون قراءته هو ما يجعل القراءة الموسّعة الأكثر فاعلية في تعلم مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية. وهذه الورقة تُعيد النظر في أهمية القراءة الموسّعة عامة ، وكذلك أهميتها خاصة في تعلّم مفردات اللغة الانجليزية، وتركّز هذه الورقة - أيضا - على كيفية إعداد برنامج للقراءة الموسّعة الذي يمكن تطبيقه في الفصول الدراسية الليبية. والقواعــد الأساسية لأي برنامج قراءة موسّعة الذي اقترح من قبل دي و بام فرد (1998م) ، وكيفية اختيار المعلمين للمواد المعدة لاستخدامها في هذا البرنامج أعيد النظر فيها - أيضا - .

Abstract:

Extensive reading is widely recognised as a vehicle to English proficiency in EFL and EsL settings as it helps the learners to build their vocabulary and develop their reading comprehension skills. Reading for pleasure and the learners having the chances to choose of what they want to read is what makes extensive reading more effective in learning English vocabulary. This paper reviewed the importance of reading extensively in general and for developing English vocabulary learning in specific. It is also focused on how can adapt an extensive reading program to be implemented in EFL Libyan classrooms. The principles of any extensive reading program which are suggested by Day and Bamford(1998) and how can teachers choose the materials intended to be used in this program were also reviewed.

Key words: extensive reading, developing vocabulary, EFL learners

Introduction:

One of the major skills in improving first and second language learners' proficiency is reading as it is the appropriate vehicle for language acquisition. It is also highly recommended by researchers and teachers in second and foreign language learning and teaching. For instance, Krashen (1993: 23, cited on p. 38 in Renandya & Jacobs 1998) has this to say:

“Reading is good for you. The research supports a stronger conclusion, however. Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers.

In Libyan context English is taught as a foreign language and the learners do not have any language exposure other than the classroom. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to maximize the time intended for learning English and adapting a way that encourages the students to learn the language in and out of the classroom. Nation (2001: 155) claims that "the use of reading and other input sources may be the only practical options for out of class language development for some learners," especially in EFL contexts.

The main problem in our Libyan schools and universities is the learners do reading intensively rather than reading extensively, nor do they do a combination of two ways of reading. From personal experience, learners lack much of vocabulary and this deficiency in vocabulary affects negatively in our students progress in English language learning specially in speaking and writing. So it is obligatory to create a program that helps our students to maximize their vocabulary. The only way for that program which is ignored in Libyan context is the extensive reading. Past research studies highly recommended the extensive reading for boosting English vocabulary and encouraging students to learn the language in general (Pazhkh & Soltani, (2010) and Benettayeb (2010).

From all of these reasons, this research paper reviews the importance of extensive reading in learning English as a foreign language. Moreover, this research explores how can create and implement extensive reading program in Libyan classrooms to achieve better goals from extensive reading and developing English vocabulary in specific.



What is the extensive reading?

Before we can get deeper in extensive reading and its benefits, drawbacks and how can we establish an extensive reading program in Libyan context, we need to discuss some themes that has a relation with reading skill in general.

What is reading?

Reading is one of the basic receptive skills which regarded as a source of information and a key to do progress in other skills (writing, and speaking). Benettayeb (2010)p.21 stated that ‘reading is a key to language acquisition, a key to learning, more than that a key to information’. Moreover, ‘reading is private. It is a mental or a cognitive process which involves a reader in trying to follow and respond to a message from a writer who is distance in space and time.’” Davies 1995,p.1. From this definition, reading can be conceived as a type of skill done autonomously and a work involving the reader to do mental and cognitive processes to share the information with the writer.

In language class learners do two types of reading: intensive and extensive reading. Intensive reading is a type of reading done under the supervision of the teacher and involving the learners to read short and difficult texts and analysing their language, for example looking for word meaning and language structures of the text. The main aim of intensive reading is enhancing learners’ ability to comprehend the messages from the word and meaning clues. Scrivener (2005) defined intensive reading in the classroom is ‘reading texts closely and carefully with intention of gaining an understanding of as much details as possible’p.188. This means reading the same short text over and over again to study it in details getting the correct interpretation for the words. Benettayeb (2010) claims that intensive reading is intended for skills recognition rather than for producing language features. Therefore, learners need to read extensively to sustain the skills attained from intensive reading.

Extensive Reading

This type of reading is what we do in everyday life, fluent, faster reading which involves often reading longer texts for pleasure, entertainment and general understanding, but without digging deeper in details of the text. We keep reading even if we did not understand some words or small sections unless the understanding have been broken down in this case we go back and read them again Scrivener, 2005.)

Extensive reading defined by different researchers in the field of second and foreign language learning. For instance Pazhakh and Soltani (2010,p.389) defined it as “reading that exposes learners to large quantities of material within their linguistic competence”. Benettayeb (2010,p.22) referred to extensive reading also as “the outside reading pupils do on their own, with no help or guidance from the teacher, it means “ rapidly reading book after book”. what is more Richards and Schmitt 2002, cited in Yamashita (2008,p.193) and Richaards, Platt, & Platt, (1999) extensive reading means reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary, structure and to encourage a liking for reading”. ER can be defined as ‘the independent reading of a large quantity of material for information or pleasure’.Renandya and Jacobs (1998) p.188. From all of these definitions extensive reading means reading large quantities of materials for the purpose of pleasure, general understanding, encouraging students to build the habit and a liking of reading and developing the knowledge of vocabulary and structures.

The significance of vocabulary learning

Vocabulary learning is one of the fundamental elements in EFL and ESL contexts. vocabulary can be defined as the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do. Students without adequate vocabulary cannot manage to understand others or express themselves. The common quoted sentence from Wilkens (1972) ‘ while without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed’ pp.111-112. Moreover, naturally students understand the significance of vocabulary for their language learning. For instance Schmitt (2010) stated that “learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books’p.4. Larsson (2014) also stated that students conceive the significance of improving their vocabulary in order to express themselves and communicate in writing and speaking, influencing their grades as well. Hence, it is greatly essential for students to acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge and improve their own personal vocabulary learning strategies in order to build up their fluency and expressions in English Schmitt (2010).



although the vocabulary acquisition can be facilitated by explicit instruction in word meanings by drawing attention on the form and the meaning of the words (Kweon & Kim (2008), it is obvious from literature in L1 and L2 that large stock of vocabulary are acquired incidentally, i.e, by engaging students in reading, listening speaking or writing activities, and the number of words acquired intentionally are very few (Hulstijn, 2001). Incidental vocabulary learning refers to ‘the learning of vocabulary as the by-product of any activity not explicitly geared to vocabulary learning, with intentional vocabulary learning referring to any activity aiming at committing lexical information to memory’ Hulstijn, (2001) p.266. Three benefits can be gained from incidental acquisition. The first one is that while reading, learning words occurs. Secondly, the contextualized input assists in learning richer sense of a word. Thirdly, learners could develop their collocations and colligations that are difficult to gain in learning English as a foreign language (Bahns & ELdaw, 1993 in Kweon & Kim (2008)

However Hulstijn,(2001) argues that it is not sufficient or necessary to expand vocabulary efficiently by just encountering words in context and extensive reading as recommended in L1 and L2 teaching. A variety of de-contextualization skills can be applied by readers and writing down word information met while reading. This is in line with results from Larsson,(2014) study that learners do not prefer one method of learning vocabulary over the other (intentionally or incidentally), even they do acquire vocabulary incidentally very effectively.

The benefits and drawbacks of extensive reading

The powerful impact of extensive reading on language learning has been recognized in many research studies. As learners read more as more vocabulary and grammar can be attained from the text often unconsciously. Consequently, the learners overall linguistic confidence seems to be enhanced due to expanding language knowledge. Subsequently, this will develop learner’ skills in other language aspects. However, this may be true if the learners have chosen the text by themselves and being appropriate and engaging for them Srivener (2005).

What is more, Day and Bamford (2004) and Bell,(2001) cited in Pazhakh & Soltani, 2010) insisted to include extensive reading in L2 and FL curriculum . As there are new evidences on the robust role of extensive reading on

learners' L2 and FL development. Reading extensively cannot improve reading ability only, but it can increase learners' whole language proficiency (spelling, grammar, vocabulary and writing). Moreover, current principles for second and foreign language pedagogy are in line with reading extensively. For instance, Schmitt (2000) has one of the significant reasons for sustaining ER which is a large number of teachers believe that reading intensively only will not create good and fluent readers. He added that various experimental and quasi-experimental researches have approved the advantages from ER and have appraised the utilization from extensive reading in EFL and ESL classroom for the purpose of gaining motivation and attitudes.

Bell,(2001) reported that reading rate and general language proficiency can be gained from reading extensively. Further, extensive reading impacts the writing proficiency. This affect primary and university students (Asraf & Ahmad (2003).

A huge amount of research studies appreciates extensive reading for expanding vocabulary knowledge and the significance of reading in developing L2 proficiency. Reading extensively assists the learners to become better readers. The learners would become better readers as they read more. Learning new vocabulary is an integral part in extensive reading. Therefore, vocabulary can be learnt primarily through reading extensively due to encountering words over and over again in context (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, (2005).

Moreover, Pazhakh & Soltani, 2010 were conducted a study on the effect of reading extensively on learning vocabulary and positive attitude towards reading, they concluded that learners' vocabulary in their experimental group was increased through extensive reading when they were involved in an extensive reading program for ten weeks more than in the controlled group who are involved in conventional reading lessons. The reason behind this difference is due to exposing experimental group to more extensive reading than in controlled group. Adding to this, their study concluded that learners have good attitudes regarding reading enjoyment and increasing vocabulary knowledge. Various factors led to these students' positive attitudes. One of these factors is the appropriate material provided for the students' language proficiency level. Subsequently, as learners can read the story without much difficulty in comprehending the word meaning, as they do not encounter new



words in the story. The second factor in helping students to get positive attitudes towards reading is that vocabulary gained from extensive reading have been increased. Consequently, students could read and understand better due to the vocabulary knowledge development.

The deep knowledge of vocabulary is an important factor in lexical inference. Nassaji (2006) in study showed the evidence. Those learners who have high deep vocabulary knowledge used specific types of strategies effectively than the learners who have lower deep vocabulary knowledge. This evidence supports the research which showed that L2 readers' ability to make use of context clues is highly affected by learners' vocabulary knowledge Frantzen (2003)

As far as extensive reading is highly advocated by researchers and teachers, there are some claims on its effectiveness. For example, the results from Putri & Husada (2008) informed that there is not any improvement in vocabulary from extensive reading with a limited period of time (two months). It is difficult to learn a language and attempt to understand it in written texts, therefore a program of a long period need to be implemented in order to get the mastery of vocabulary. What is more, the reading ability can be achieved more quickly than the linguistic skills. It is recommended to incorporate direct instructions for acquiring linguistic skills Yamashita (2008).

The comparison of many research studies shows that reading is so important as the written texts full of vocabulary more than in spoken ones Nation, (2001). Pazhakh & Soltani, 2010 claims that large number of L2 and FL learners do not enough exposure to L2 print (through reading) to develop their fluency, nor do they exposed to rich exposure to boost their vocabulary. These reasons have led to include extensive reading components in various Esl/ EFL programs as a complement for frequent language classes.

The principles of an extensive reading program

The necessity to introduce extensive reading programs in EFL Libyan classrooms is urgent. As mentioned earlier, Libyan learners lack the opportunity for English exposure especially outside the classroom. Even in the classroom, they do not have much of the classroom time to be exposed to English to learn vocabulary, other aspects and skills of language. The main problem which is the basic in this research is that learners in different stages of educational system in Libya suffer from insufficient vocabulary that help

them to communicate and interact whether with their peers in the classroom or outside the classroom when they meet some foreigners who are speaking English. Therefore, incorporating extensive reading in EFL and ESL language classroom curriculum is insisted by Richards & Renandya (2002). The fundamental aim of ER programs ‘to get students reading in the second language and liking it’ Day and Bamford, (1998), p.6. Day and Bamford(1998) summarized the key features of good ER program as follows p-7-8:

1. Students read large amounts of printed material,
2. Students read a variety of materials in terms of topic and genre;
3. The material students read is within their level of comprehension,
4. Students choose what they want to read;
5. Reading is its own reward,
6. Students read for pleasure, information and general understanding,
7. Students read their selection at a faster rate,
8. Reading is individual (students read on their own);
9. Teachers read with their students, thus serving as role models of good readers;
10. Teachers guide and keep track of student progress

Renandya and Jacobs(1998) argue for not implementing extensive reading in second language classrooms even when teachers have the knowledge of its educational benefits. Day and Bamford (1998) stated that one the main reasons is the teachers’ common belief about intensive reading, which is doing intensive reading only makes the learners good and fluent readers. In intensive reading, learners do study short and difficult texts in details supervised by their teachers in order to assist the students in comprehending the deep meanings from the text, to improve reading skills and increase the learners’ knowledge in vocabulary and grammar. Furthmore, Renandya (2007) stated that a significant number of teachers still feel uncomfortable for less controlling the process of teaching and what is happening in the classroom. However, Renandya and Jacobs(1998) claim that implementing and concentrating on one approach allow little opportunities for applying the other approaches. This will ‘produce skilled readers but not skilled readers’’. (Day and Bamford, 1998)



Extensive reading materials

Always it is thought that extensive reading means reading authentic material. Authentic material defined by Adams (1995) p.4 as “any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching”. There is a huge research in favour for using authentic material in L2 and EFL classrooms for promoting learners’ motivation and interest in language learning (Soliman, 2013, Harmer,2007). Moreover, Berardo (2006) stated that many research studies recognizing the benefits from authentic material, reading development as learners exposed to new vocabulary and expressions Young,1999 , Leow (1993)

There is nothing without argumentative thoughts. In spite of the majority of researches insisting on using authentic materials in EFL classrooms, there is partly agreement on this. What students read and can understand is one of the fundamental factors in the success of extensive reading program. Hardly, student can read for pleasure which is the main role of extensive reading if they have difficulties in understanding each word. Therefore, learners should be provided by the material that are specifically written and accessible for our students or by chance. What is called by Day and Bamford (1998:61) ‘ language learner literature’ are usually known as graded readers or simplified readers. They are samples of simplified fiction and non-fiction books. Because the writers and adopters work with limited lists of vocabulary and grammar points, these books will succeed. As a result ,students will read appropriate material for their level easily and confidently Harmer (2007).

There is a great deal of arguments for encouraging student to read actively a lot in English language inside and outside the classroom. Harmer (2007) argues that it seem contradictory to tell students to read a lot without providing them with a program which involves a suitable material , guidance, activities and resources , for instance constant or movable libraries of books. Some ideas recommended by Scrivener (2005) P.189.

1. Providing a library of readers (i.e books of stories or other content published specifically for learners to get extended exposure to English) , magazines, newspapers and leaflets, etc.
2. Training learners how to select suitable reading material and how to read it.
3. Creating a book club.

4. Allowing sections of classroom time purely for students to read.

Conclusion

To sum up, from this research it can be concluded that undoubtedly the role of reading in general and extensive reading in specific cannot be recognised in EFL and ESL settings. As extensive reading lead to better proficiency in most skills and aspects of English language learning. This research presented also that reading extensively is highly recommended for improving vocabulary for EFL learners specially in incidental vocabulary as learners choose what they interest them and what available in terms of level and pleasure. That is why in Libyan context should incorporate extensive reading programs in our schools and universities urgently as our learners lack much vocabulary that assist them to interact and do other skills perfectly. This does not mean ignoring the role of intensive reading in EFL classroom and in developing learners' vocabulary. As extensive reading lead to more vocabulary exposure and intensive reading leads to more consolidated vocabulary learning.



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