

The impact of an extensive reading program on young EFL learners

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, extensive reading has been found to have potential positive effects on learners' language proficiency and their motivation in either second or foreign language learning. This study aimed to investigate the effects of incorporating an extensive reading program in a regular English classroom curriculum in a junior high school. With the use of graded readers, the study intended to analyze whether extensive reading has any impact on learners' vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, learning motivation, and attitudes. Two tests used to measure students' vocabulary included the Nation's 1000 vocabulary level test and a vocabulary test based on the Basic Competence Test (BCT), a high school entrance examination for junior high school students. An elementary level GEPT reading comprehension test and two other questionnaires used to evaluate learners' motivation and attitudes were also employed. Participants of this study consisted of two classes of second grade students at a junior high school in central Taiwan. Two classes were randomly assigned as an experimental group and a control group. They were all instructed by the same English teacher and the same textbooks in regular classes. They received the same amount of regular English instruction, except that the class assigned as the experimental group received a supplemental extensive reading program, which was an extra 30-minute class meeting twice a week for a total of 12 weeks. Results of this study showed that after participating in the 12-week reading program, students in the experimental group made a significant improvement in their vocabulary acquisition. They not only had higher motivation in learning English, but also had positive attitudes toward the extensive reading program. Students tended to become more engaged in English reading and, had increased confidence and interest in learning English in school. In addition, they gained great satisfaction from being able to read independently and extensively. Although the effect of conducting the extensive reading program on reading comprehension was not significant, participants' in the experimental group gained higher post-test scores on reading comprehension.

Keywords : extensive reading、 graded readers、 vocabulary knowledge、 reading comprehension、 learning motivation、 attitude

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