PROMOTING EXTENSIVE READING IN EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

It is widely believed that people become good readers through reading, and that learning how to read should mean a focus of attention on the meaning rather than the language of the text. Extensive reading involves students reading long texts or large quantities for general understanding, with the intention of enjoying the texts. In this article I shall discuss importance of promoting extensive reading in EFL classroom and to look at new ways to encourage students to read as well as ways to expand their skill base through extensive reading.

Keywords: Reading, extensive reading, reading log, comprehensible input, language competence, vocabulary growth.

INTRODUCTION

It is know that extensive reading (ER) is always integrated in teaching foreign languages as it offers a lot of benefits both for teachers and learners. Most EFL teachers use extensive reading approach to develop writing skills through reading logs based on the selected novels or stories. Writing reading logs are required continuous assessments of the reading course which is of the courses of Pre-service Teacher Training (PreSETT) Curriculum in Uzbekistan. The course Reading is taught for 6 semesters within three academic years at university. Each syllabus and assessment specifications of the course Reading set aim, objectives, indicative content, approaches of teaching and learning, learning outcomes and assessment specifications. During each semester students must fulfill several tasks based on their reading over the semester as a part of continuous assessment. For example: there are various reading logs during the semesters. There are different ways of completing reading logs. Extensive reading logs involve reading long pieces of text. As learners read, their attention and interest vary – they may read some parts of the text in detail or they may skim through other parts. Extensive reading is rapid reading for main ideas of a large amount of text. For extensive reading log students have to fulfill several tasks based on their reading over the semester as a part of continuous assessment.

Reading Log 1: Critical review of an extract from a novel
For this entry you will have to read extracts from a novel or short story (50-100 pages minimum in length) and write a critical review. Include the following points:
- Title and author of the novel
- Brief summary of the novel
- Reflection on the novel
- Critical analysis of the novel

Criteria for critical review of a novel extract:
- Ability to give a brief summary of the plot
- Reasons for enjoying or disliking the story (e.g., plot convincing or not, identifying with characters or not, relevance of "message" in the story)
- Recommendation for another reader

(taken from *Assessment specifications: Reading2*)

Reading Log 2: Critical review of professional article

For this entry you will have to read and write a critical review of a professional article .You can take professional articles from magazines in print (for example, English Teaching Professional, Modern English Teacher) or on-line (e.g.www.teachingenglish.org.uk). In your review include the following points:

- Title, author, magazine, date of issue or URL and date accessed
- Brief summary of the article
- Critical comments on the article

(taken from *Assessment specifications: Reading2*)

Reading Log 4: **Review report**

For this review report you will have to choose a novel (see suggested novels for reading) and write a review report (minimum 500 words) focusing on the social, cultural and historical background of the novel. In your report include the following points:

- What did you read (title, author)?
- Brief summary of the plot.
- Identify social, cultural and historical background of the novel and give evidence from the novel.

(taken from *Assessment specifications: Reading3*)

Materials and Methods

Richard Day (2002), Philip Prowse (2002). Maley (2008) have investigated key characteristics of ER.

➢ Students read a lot and read often.
➢ There is a wide variety of text types and topics to choose from.
➢ The texts are not just interesting: they are engaging/ compelling.
➢ Students choose what to read.
➢ Reading purposes focus on: pleasure, information and general understanding.
➢ Reading is its own reward.
➢ There are no tests, no exercises, no questions and no dictionaries.
➢ Materials are within the language competence of the students.
➢ Reading is individual, and silent.
➢ Speed is faster, not deliberate and slow.
➢ The teacher explains the goals and procedures clearly, then monitors and guides the students.
➢ The teacher is a role model…a reader, who participates along with the students.

The researches of Waring (2000), Day (2002), Bamford (1998), Paul Nation Krashen (2004) show the benefits of ER which is more effective way to develop learner autonomy where readers can start and stop reading at any time. ER offers comprehensible input, enhances language competences, increases motivation of gaining world of knowledge and vocabulary growth and improves writing skills as well.

ER offers comprehensible input, if the selected reading is carefully chosen according to learners' levels; it activates the language items they have already know and extend it. The only reliable way to learn a language is through massive and repeated exposure to it in context: precisely what ER provides.

Another benefit of ER extends beyond reading. There is 'a spread of effect from reading competence to other language skills: writing, speaking and control over syntax.' (Elley 1991) Thus, reading will improve all language skills, not just reading.

Most students believe that reading will help them to acquire the knowledge of world, broad their horizons by reading. It means that ER opens windows on the world seen through different eyes.

Experiences show that vocabulary is not learned by a single exposure. ER allows for multiple encounters with words and phrases in context thus making possible the progressive accretion of meanings to them. By presenting items in context, it also makes the deduction of meaning of unknown items easier. There have been many studies of vocabulary acquisition from ER (Day et al 1991, Nation and Wang 1999, Pigada and Schmitt, 2006). Michael Hoey's theory of 'lexical priming' (Hoey 1991, 2005) also gives powerful support to the effect of multiple exposure to language items in context.

There is a well-established link between reading and writing. Basically, the more we read, the better we write. Exactly how this happens is still not understood (Kroll 2003) but the fact that it happens is well-documented (Hafiz and Tudor 1989) Commonsense would indicate that as we meet more language, more often, through reading, our language acquisition mechanism is primed to produce it in writing or speech when it is needed. (Hoey 2005).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researches on language learner reading show how extensive reading feeds into improvements in all areas of language competence. ER helps both learners and teachers to refresh the language. ER offers us a lot benefits where it develops learner autonomy, comprehensible input, enhances language competences, increases motivation of gaining world of knowledge and vocabulary growth, improves writing skills and motivation for reading books all the time.

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