

The teaching of reading in English in Taiwan: A case study involving sustained silent reading

Chee Su

Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages,
900, Min-Tzu 1st Road, Sanming District Kaohsiung, 807
Taiwan
[suchee@mail.wtuc.edu.tw]

Abstract

Krashen (1992) has proposed an approach to the teaching of reading in second/foreign languages which he refers to as 'free voluntary reading' (FVR). This is essentially in-class 'sustained silent reading' (SSR) conducted according to a number of 'principles'. This approach has now been used for several years in various institutions in Taiwan. The aims of the research reported here were (a) to evaluate, in the context of an English reading program conducted in a Taiwanese educational institution, the effectiveness of this approach in relation to both reading comprehension development and attitudes towards reading in English, and (b) to determine whether there was any correlation between the effectiveness of the program in particular instances and students' learning styles. The results indicate that although the students who were involved in a free voluntary reading program did express increased interest in reading in English and although their progress (in terms of reading comprehension development) matched that of students following a different reading program after one year, their progress after two years of exposure to the programme was significantly lower than that of the students following a skills-based reading program. No correlation was found between student learning style preferences and the effectiveness of the free voluntary reading program.

Introduction

Free voluntary reading (FVR) involves, according to Krashen (1992), reading because you want to. There are no book reports, no questions at the end of chapters, and no looking up every unfamiliar word. It means putting down a book you are not enjoying and choosing another one instead. It is, according to Krashen, the kind of reading that highly literate people do obsessively all the time. The general principles of a free voluntary reading program (p. 33) are:

- a print-rich environment
(The classroom should have a well-designed bookcase whose books are consistent with students' background and reading ability);
- self-selected books
(Students should select books or reading materials according to their own interests and without teacher intervention);
- modeling of reading by teachers
(Teachers' approach to reading should be positive since this will have a positive impact on learners' attitudes towards the value of reading and help to promote a good atmosphere for reading in class);
- literature discussion groups
(Students should be encouraged to reflect on their reading through shared discussion); and

- read-aloud activity
(Teachers should read aloud to their students a passage from the book they are reading and talk about why they chose to read it and what they like about it since both listening to and discussing books is one way of encouraging students to read).

Considerable claims have been made in relation to the effectiveness of sustained silent reading and free voluntary reading. Thus, for example, Elley (1991) has claimed that in eight out of ten long-term studies conducted over a period of more than one school year, sustained silent reading (SSR) led to better reading performance than more direct approaches to reading instruction, and Krashen (2004) has claimed that in 50 out of 53 comparisons, students who engaged in sustained silent reading for a certain number of hours each day did as well or better in a reading test than students who attended a regular reading class.

As Graddol (2006, p.13) observes, “[the] current enthusiasm for English in the world is part of the complex process of globalization”. English is growing in significance as an international language and as a *lingua franca* in a number of countries for most of whose citizens it is not the mother tongue. With the growth of multinationals and outsourcing, its use as a business *lingua franca* has increased and it remains the dominant language of the internet. Effective reading in English is therefore an increasingly important aspect of global citizenship. Any claims that are made in relation to the effectiveness of particular approaches to the development of reading skills in the case of language learners are therefore of considerable interest to teachers of English as a second or foreign language, particularly where the approach suggested is one that is essentially non-interventionist and, therefore, makes fewer demands on teachers than many other approaches to reading.

In 2002, Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages, the only college in Taiwan with a primary focus on foreign language learning, decided to conduct a study involving free voluntary reading. That study involved learners in its five year college program. Two first year English major classes (involving students of between 16 and 18 years of age) were selected to make up an experimental group and a control group. Each group had two hours of English reading each week. The experimental group was exposed to free voluntary reading; the control group was provided with skills-based reading instruction. The aims of the study were (a) to evaluate the comparative effectiveness of free voluntary reading and skills-based reading instruction in relation to both reading comprehension development and attitudes towards the programme, and (b) to determine whether there was any correlation between the effectiveness of the program in particular instances and students’ learning styles. The specific research questions were:

In the case of a group of high beginner level students of English, does reading practice for two hours each week over a two year period in the form of free voluntary reading (involving materials that reflect students’ interests and level of language proficiency) lead to improvement in students’ reading comprehension and, if so, how does that improvement compare with any improvement made by a similar group of students who are involved in a skills-based reading program for the same number of hours each week over the same period of time?

Do the students who attended the free voluntary reading programme rate it more highly than skills-based reading programmes they have attended?

To what extent, if at all, do students' learning style preferences affect their ability to benefit, in terms of improvement in reading comprehension, from the free voluntary reading program referred to above?

Critical review of selected literature on approaches to the teaching of reading in a second/ foreign language

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the most common approach to teaching English was what is referred to as the 'grammar translation method'. Central to the grammar translation method was the translation of texts from the source language, focusing on vocabulary items and points of grammar as they arose in the texts. A primary goal of language learning was to be able to read literature written in the target language, and students who could translate were considered to be successful language learners. Reading and writing skills were considered to be superior to listening and speaking skills, and written language was considered more important than spoken language. Reading was viewed as a decoding process that involved recovery of the meanings embedded in a text rather than hypothesis-formation. Meanings were assumed to be an expression of/ product of the writer's intentions. Vocabulary and the rules of grammar were emphasized, and little or no attention was paid to other aspects of discourse construction and comprehension (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 23). Thus, the entire process was data-driven. The grammar translation method was not designed to develop students' capacity to use the target language communicatively, and there is little to suggest that it was effective in doing so.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, what is referred to as the 'audio-lingual method' became popular. The primary focus of this method was grammatical competence. Learners were trained to listen to and imitate sentence patterns. Language learning was considered to be primarily a matter of habit formation, and teaching centered on repetitive pattern practice, with drilling as a central element. The focus was on form, and many of the repetitive practice drills involved meaningless sentences divorced from context. So far as reading was concerned, the emphasis was on reading aloud rather than developing strategies which focused on meaning. The underlying belief was that the more often something was repeated, the stronger the habit became, and, therefore, that repetition led to effective language learning (Skinner, 1957). The teaching of reading continued to be data-driven; comprehension continued to be seen as involving little more than decoding the information which was presumed to reside in texts.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the work of Noam Chomsky began to have a major influence on linguistics and, although less directly in the first instance, on language teaching. Chomsky's focus was on first language acquisition rather than second language learning (Chomsky, 1965), however, his argument that language acquisition was a creative process involving the discovery and use of language rules had an impact on language teaching. It led to the replacement of a behaviorist approach to language learning by one that has frequently been described as a 'cognitive code-learning' approach. As Carrol (1971) observes, cognitive-code learning theory underlies an approach to language teaching that encourages learners to discover, through exposure to the target language, the formal rules of language and the

appropriate contexts for their use. Discovery, rather than habit formation, was the priority. The focus moved from deduction (a process involving the derivation of instances from general rules) to induction (a process involving the derivation of general principles from particular instances). Even so, reading skills instruction continued to focus for some time on decoding. Gradually, however, the focus shifted to an emphasis on developing appropriate strategies for deriving meanings from texts in relation to aspects of context such as purpose, genre, intended readership, co-text (the surrounding text), and the general social context in which particular texts had been written (Samuels & Kamil, 1984). It was recognized that reading involves drawing upon existing knowledge and understanding.

As Goodman (1967) has observed, the fact that there is redundancy in language means that reading is a selective process. Language cues are used selectively in an ongoing process of prediction and hypothesis formation. As some hypotheses are tentatively confirmed, others are rejected, refined or replaced. Thus, reading can be seen as a psycholinguistic guessing game involving the interaction of text, context and thought processes. It involves detecting clues, then guessing, confirming, rejecting, or refining tentative decisions (Goodman, 1967; Kozloff, 2002, p.4). In connection with this, Smith (1994) proposed what he referred to as 'redundancy theory'. Graphophonic, syntactic and semantic information all make a contribution to the derivation of textual meaning. However, in processing the large amount of information available to them, readers need to be selective. They therefore "[make] use of prior knowledge, using something that is already known to eliminate some alternatives and thus reduce the amount of visual information that is required" (pp. 61-62). Goodman's (1967) reading model and Smith's (1971) redundancy theory began to have a significant impact on approaches to reading instruction. However, as Eskey (1973) and Saviile-Troike (1973) have observed, approaches to reading continued for some time to be largely based on a decoding model, a model which underestimated the active contribution of the reader in formulating meanings. This point has also been made by Clarke (1979) and Widdowson (1978, 1983), who insisted that any model of reading should emphasize the active (rather than passive) role of the reader and the importance of the interaction between reader and text. They saw successful reading as a creative process.

In the 1970s, the concepts of 'communicative competence' and 'communicative language teaching' began to have an impact. The notion of 'communicative competence' was initially formulated by Campbell and Wales (1970) and Hymes (1971). Hymes' theory of communicative competence includes four central areas: knowledge of rules (formal possibility); understanding of the constraints on the application of these rules in particular contexts (implementational feasibility); appreciation of contextual appropriacy; and understanding of the performative role of utterances (i.e., the illocutionary component of speech acts). This approach shifted the emphasis in language teaching from a focus on formal rules to one in which formal rules played just one part and were seen as contributing to a model in which other aspects of language were considered to be equally important. Approaches to defining 'communicative competence' have changed over time. What is, however, common to them all of them is an emphasis on rules of use as well as rules of grammar.

Out of the concept of ‘communicative competence’ arose the concept of ‘communicative language teaching’ (CLT) (Shih, 2001). The term ‘communicative language teaching’ has been used in a number of different ways (see, for example, Beretta, 1998; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1998; Howatt, 1984; Kumaravadivelu, 1994). However, fundamental to all of them is an emphasis on “teaching that encourages learners to engage in meaningful communication in the target language – communication that has a function over and above that of language learning itself” (Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 2002, p. 16).

The concepts of ‘communicative competence’ and ‘communicative language teaching’ have had a profound effect on the teaching of English as a second or foreign language, including the teaching of reading. As Widdowson (1978, p. 144) notes, communicative competence involves much more than linguistic competence. It involves, for example, being able to understand the relationships of meaning that hold between sentences and larger units of text. It also involves discourse processes, that is, the processes involved in producing and comprehending texts which are both coherent (make sense) and cohesive (include devices such as repetition and subordinating conjunctions that link the various parts of a text together).

In the late 1970s, Coady (1979) proposed a second/ foreign language reading model, fundamental to which was the belief that comprehension was the outcome of interaction between the reader’s background knowledge, his or her conceptual abilities (general intellectual capacity) and a range of process strategies (subcomponents of reading ability). This was one of the models that represented the beginning of a truly top-down approach to reading, one that recognizes that text processing involves inferences rather than simple decoding. Thus, readers were seen as active participants, using prior experience and background knowledge to make predictions and draw inferences. It was no longer simply a reader’s existing linguistic knowledge that was seen as being significant, but also his or her general knowledge and processing abilities.

The top-down approach has had a profound impact on first and second language reading theory. In the last twenty years, schema theory, which is consistent with a top-down processing model, has also played an important role in reading research. Fundamental here is the argument that “new information, new concepts, new ideas can have meaning only when they can be related to something the individual already knows” (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, p. 553). As early as the 1930s, Bartlett (1932, p. 206) observed that “schema arise from the learners’ previous encounters with their environment, and serve as the basis on which newly learned information is organized in memory”. That is, previously acquired knowledge (background knowledge) plays an important role in language comprehension. Making sense of a text therefore involves a process of “‘negotiation’ or ‘construction’ between writers and readers” (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, p. 555). As Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1977, p. 369) argue, “every act of comprehension involves one’s knowledge of the world”. Efficient comprehension requires readers to go beyond the information which is explicit in a text; it requires readers to make active use of schemata to interpret that information.

According to the principles of schema theory, interpreting events involves mapping available information onto an appropriate schema which is already stored in memory

(Chandler, 1995). This principle invokes *two* models of information processing, both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' processing. Bottom-up processing is data-driven: it starts with the 'lowest level' of information - sensory data - and moves towards the 'highest level' - meaning structure. Top-down processing, on the other hand, is theory-driven or conceptually-driven: it starts with the 'highest' level of analysis - meaning structure. Schemata are hierarchical networks of concepts and links, from the most general at the top to the most specific at the bottom. As Rumelhart (1980) notes, both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processing occur simultaneously at all levels. Bottom-up processing ensures that readers will be sensitive to information that is new or unfamiliar. Top-down processing involves the use of background knowledge or contextual clues to interpret incoming data.

Two different kinds of schemata are involved in reading comprehension: 'formal schemata' (background knowledge of the formal rhetorical organizational structure of a text), and 'content schemata' (background knowledge of the content area of the text) (Carrel, 1983). The first type of schema is 'text-based'. Readers need to make use of text-based schemata in order to comprehend different social genres such as short stories, newspaper articles and scientific reports. They rely particularly heavily on text-based schemata when they are not familiar with a subject area. Content schemata are engaged when readers have background general knowledge of content areas. For example, background knowledge of computer science in general will be used to make inferences about an article dealing with a particular area of computer science with which a reader is not, or is not wholly, familiar. Carrel (1983) has argued that lack of content knowledge and of formal schemata is the main reason why second or foreign language learners have difficulty in interpreting written text.

Research on schema theory led reading specialists to develop an 'interactive' reading model (Rumelhart, 1977; Stanovich, 1980), one which attempts to combine the strengths of bottom-up and top-down models, the two processes (bottom-up and top-down) being simultaneously engaged. Thus, readers combine top-down processing skills with bottom-up processing skills in order to make sense of text. In fact, high-level top-down processing skills can compensate for areas of potential difficulty relating to gaps in syntactic or lexical knowledge and understanding. They are therefore particularly important for readers who are second or foreign language learners. The less adept readers are at top-down processing, the more they will rely on bottom-up processing such as word recognition and syntactic structure. This is one reason why it is often particularly difficult to teach second language learners to process text quickly and efficiently, a skill that is very important for those who plan to study an academic subject through the medium of a second or foreign language. According to Stanovich (1980) and Paran (1997), interactive processing involves compensatory strategies, one type of processing taking over wherever there is a problem with the other type, the most effective readers being those who perfect both their top-down and bottom-up processing skills (Eskey, 1988). Thus, reading strategies, such as predicting, guessing the meaning of words from context and scanning and skimming are at least as important as knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure, and paying attention to the semantic clues provided by cohesive devices is at least as important as recognizing the role that such devices can play in syntactic structure.

As theories about the nature of effective reading have changed, so has the teaching of reading in second and foreign language learning contexts. However, no single theory of reading has gained universal acceptance by researchers or practitioners. As Samuel and Kamil (1984, p. 188) point out: “The developer of a model of reading has only a limited knowledge base to draw upon, and this knowledge base is influenced by the scientific philosophies and studies dominant within the historical context in which the model was developed”. The scope of models is therefore limited by their ‘partial specifications’ (Mosenthal, 1984). Those who construct reading models inevitably view the reading process from different perspectives, so none of those models can account for all reading phenomena. Teachers of reading need to be aware of this. They also need to be aware of the implications of particular models, in practical terms, for the teaching of reading in the context of second and foreign language learning. Since no single model is complete, no single model should be considered adequate on its own. Reading instruction should therefore be inclusive: it should draw upon different models at different stages of learning in accordance with language proficiency, overall student needs, the specific purposes of a reading programme and students’ learning style preferences.

It remains the case, however, that reading is an interactive process and that reading practice is fundamental to the development of effective reading strategies. As early as the 1970s, Smith (1971) argued that students benefit from extensive independent reading since the more reading they are engaged in, the more likely they are to develop effective reading strategies. If, therefore, students are provided with reading materials appropriate to their interests, background knowledge and understanding, they should be in a good position to develop the skills they need to become effective readers and also to expand their existing linguistic repertoire.

In this context, it is relevant to consider the claims that have been made for free voluntary reading and sustained silent reading.

Appellate (1978) has claimed, with particular reference to high school students, that outstanding writers are those who are fond of reading for pleasure, and Salyer (1987) has observed that those who read more in a second language also write better in that language. Furthermore, several researchers have observed a positive correlation between accuracy of spelling and quantity of reading (see, for example, Alexander, 1986; Anderson et al., 1988; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Foertsch, 1992; Goodman & Goodman, 1982; Haggan, 1991; Krashen, 1985, 1989). There are also studies that have demonstrated a positive correlation between reading ability and the development of grammar and vocabulary (see, for example, Elley, Barham, Lamb & Wyllie, 1976; Nagy, Herman & Anderson, 1985; Saragi, Nation & Meister, 1978). However, there is a considerable difference between the claim that extensive reading has a positive impact on language development and the claim that extensive reading is an effective substitute for skills-based reading instruction.

Elley and Mangubhai (1983) have reported that students of English as a foreign language in Fiji who were involved in a free voluntary reading programme for two years in grades 4 and 5 outperformed their peers in both writing and grammar tests. Elley (1991), reporting on a study involving approximately 3,000 children (aged 6 to 9) in Singapore, has observed that those who were exposed to free voluntary reading outperformed those who were exposed to a traditional, skills-based reading class in

tests of reading comprehension, vocabulary, oral language, grammar, listening comprehension, and writing. More recently, Mason (2003) has claimed that a group of second language learners in Japan who used a combination of free voluntary reading and summary writing acquired as much English as a group whose summary writing was followed by correction and rewriting. Krashen (1992, 2002, 2004) has claimed that there is a positive correlation between free voluntary reading and reading comprehension. He has also observed that in 38 out of 41 studies, students exposed to free voluntary reading were found to do *as well, or better*, on reading comprehension tests than students who had received reading skills-based instruction (Krashen, 1992, p. 2), and that in 50 out of 53 comparisons, readers exposed to free voluntary reading programmes were at least as good as those in traditional instruction, and nearly always better and never worse than when the studies were long-term ones (longer than one school year) (Krashen, 2004).

It is not surprising to find that a reading program (of whatever type) can lead to improvement in reading comprehension. However, the claims that have been made for the efficacy of free voluntary reading raise a number of important issues associated with (a) the nature of the testing involved, including reading comprehension testing, and (b) the nature of the skills-based reading instruction to which other students were exposed, particularly in view of the fact that a number of studies appear to indicate that the benefits of free voluntary reading are not as profound as has sometimes been claimed. Thus, for example, Machet and Olen (1996), in a study conducted in two South African elementary schools and involving students in years four to six, found that control groups (not involved with free voluntary reading) demonstrated better reading comprehension than experimental groups (involved with free voluntary reading). Furthermore, they found no correlation between degree of improvement in reading comprehension and the quantity of free voluntary reading done in the experimental group.

Two studies involving free voluntary reading that were conducted in Taiwan are inconclusive. Su (1999) reported on the replacement of 25% of a skills-based reading course by free voluntary reading in the case of students in the third year of a five-year college programme. She found that this had neither a positive nor a negative impact on reading comprehension. More recently, Lee (2005) has reported an experiment involving three groups of college freshman readers. *Group 1* was exposed to free voluntary reading only; *Group 2* was exposed to a combination of free voluntary reading and intensive vocabulary instruction; *Group 3* was exposed to neither. Although *Group 1* students performed better overall on a cloze test and slightly better on a vocabulary test than *Group 3* students, *Group 2* students out-performed *Group 1* students overall on both.

A wide range of factors affect reading readiness. These include perceptual, cognitive, social, emotional and motivational factors. Since language teachers cannot know for sure that their students are ready to assimilate any reading strategies they are taught into their reading strategy repertoire, they cannot be sure that the teaching of reading strategies will necessarily always be effective. It may be partly for this reason that Krashen and Terrel (1983) proposed an approach that is in many ways counter-intuitive, one that is largely non-interventionist – the free voluntary reading program. This proposal has a great deal in common with claims made by these writers (Krashen, 1982, 1985; Krashen & Terrell, 1983) - that comprehensible input in the

presence of a 'low affective filter' is the primary causal variable in second language acquisition and that there are natural sequences in second language acquisition that are activated by comprehensible input. However, as Gregg (1994, p. 82) has demonstrated, claims such as these have been shown to be "either clearly false or trivially true". In particular, the latter claim "cannot be operationalized or tested since the stages of acquisition to which it is related are left undefined in Krashen's work" (Pienemann, 1985, p. 47).

A number of writers, including Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) and Krashen (1985, 1989), have cited literature that, they claim, supports the hypothesis that comprehensible input is the critical factor in motivating second language acquisition. However, as Ellis (1994, p. 287) observes, these studies simply support the contention that "learners need to understand input in order to learn from it", something that is quite different from the proposition that simply comprehending input will result in acquisition in the case of second languages.

Bearing all of this in mind, teachers would do well to be cautious before accepting that a free voluntary reading programme will improve reading comprehension as much as, or more than, a programme that is specifically designed to teach reading strategies. In connection with this, it is interesting to note that the United States National Reading Panel has reported that they could find no clear evidence that encouraging children to read more in school improves overall reading achievement in first language learners (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

According to Oxford (2004), teachers who are aware of the learning styles and strategies and the existing linguistic knowledge of their students can select reading materials that are strategy-enriching. This is an attractive proposition so far as many language teachers are concerned. However, unless this approach is accompanied by instruction in reading strategies that is based on the extensive reading research that is now available, there may be a danger that it will simply lead to the reinforcement of students' existing reading strategies, rather than to their refinement and expansion or, at best, to a slower rate of progress than would have been achieved with direct intervention in the form of reading strategy instruction. Practice is an important part of all learning, and there is no reason to suppose that this is different in the case of reading. However, effective practice generally needs to be preceded by effective instruction, and there is no obvious reason why this should be different in the case of reading. The critical question here is therefore whether the practice of reading, on its own, leads to marked improvement in reading strategies. If not, we need to be wary of researchers, such as, Krashen (1992, p. 23), who advocate extensive reading but have little to contribute to the debate on effective reading strategy instruction.

Language teachers, as well as teachers of other subjects, are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of research on learning styles. Thus far, however, awareness of learning style preferences has not generally been reflected in the design of experiments relating to reading.

Reid (1995) defines 'learning style' as "an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills" (p. viii). Based on cognitive, affective and physiological traits, at least twenty-one components

of learning style have been identified (Keefe, 1979), and it has been claimed (Dunn, Gemake, Jalali & Zenhausern, 1990) that most individuals have between six and fourteen strongly preferred traits. Characteristic strengths and preferences are divided into three major categories: *cognition-related*; *sensory-related*; and *personality-related*.

According to Kolb (1984, p. 25), perception and processing involve concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation and reflective observation. His earlier learning style model (Kolb, 1976) was designed to identify learner strengths and weaknesses and classifies students on the basis of how they respond to and internalize information. In line with this, McCarthy (1980) distinguishes between divergers (concrete, reflective), assimilators (abstract, reflective), convergers (abstract, active), and accommodators (concrete, active). The characteristics of each, as outlined by McCarthy, are outlined below:

Type 1: Diverger (concrete, reflective). Divergers learn through looking at and thinking about events that take place in real life and by listening to the experiences of others. They respond well to a course whose materials relate to their experience, interests and future careers. A typical question might be: *Why do I need to learn this?* To teach type 1 students effectively, instructors need to function as motivators.

Type 2: Assimilator (abstract, reflective). Assimilators like to do lots of research and read lots of theory; they prefer reading, lectures, and thinking things through. They respond well to information presented in an organized and logical form and benefit from being given time for reflection. A typical question might be: *What do I need to learn?* To be effective with students of this type, instructors need to function as experts.

Type 3: Converger (abstract, active). Convergers like working within a clear structure and in a practical way; they like to experiment with new ideas, simulations and practical application. They learn by doing rather than watching. Learners of this type like having opportunities to work actively on clearly defined tasks and to learn by trial-and-error. A typical question might be: *How does this work?* To be effective with this type of learner, instructors should function as coaches, guiding practice and providing feedback.

Type 4: Accomodator (concrete, active). Accomodators learn things by making mistakes and by discovering things for themselves; they enjoy taking risks and may act on intuition rather than on the basis of logical analysis. This type of learner likes to apply course material to new situations and to solve real problems. They tend to disregard authority. A typical question might be: *What if...?* To be effective with this type of learner, instructors need to maximize opportunities for students to discover things for themselves.

Since the effectiveness of free voluntary reading in particular cases may relate to particular learning style preferences, the research reported here attempted to take learning styles into account.

The experiment

The experiment reported here was conducted at Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages in Taiwan over a period of four semesters, beginning in the first semester of the 2002 school year and ending at the end of the second semester of the 2003 school year. The subjects were 16-18 year old students majoring in English who had completed at least three years of instruction in English at junior high school and were in the first year of junior college. All of them were involved in a programme of study that included, in the first year, a conversation and pronunciation course, a listening and writing course and a reading course. The experiment related to the last of these, that is, the reading course. One class, a class of 54 students, made up the experimental group (EG); another, a class of 52 students, made up the control group (CG). All of the students involved had had some experience of skills-based reading instruction in the past.

The students in the control group were provided with a reading skills-based programme (50 minutes twice a week) which included identifying the main ideas in sentences, paragraphs or longer reading passages, summarizing, using context to guess the meanings of unknown words, anticipating and making inferences. Synonymy, antonymy and word formation were also the focus of attention from time to time.

The students in the experimental group followed a free voluntary reading programme, similar to the free voluntary reading programme described by Krashen (1992), the only differences that were noted at the beginning of the programme being the fact that (a) there was no bookcase in the classroom, and (b) no read aloud activity. The absence of read-aloud activity was related to the age of the students (older than those characteristically involved in free voluntary reading), the range of proficiency represented, and the range and diversity of student interests. The absence of a bookcase in class was due to practical considerations (including classroom size) and the perceived need for a wider range of choice than could be accommodated by a single bookcase. In fact, the college library was expanded to include large quantities of high-interest texts such as graded readers, novels and picture story books for teenagers and children. However, in spite of these slight differences, the context in which the research was conducted was very similar to that of FVR:

- Students read in class for approximately fifty minutes twice a week;
- Students were given time to choose their own reading materials from the wide range available in the institution at which the research was conducted;
- Students were encouraged to share books and to discuss their reading;
- Students were expected to maintain a reading log;
- The teacher modeled reading by engaging in reading at the same time as the students.

The students in the experimental group selected their own reading (including books, magazines, comics and newspapers). The level of these reading materials varied widely, as did the subject matter. There was no limitation on students' choice of reading materials and there was no restriction on changing reading materials: students who found a particular text too difficult, or who simply lost interest in it, could abandon it and select a different text. Reading took place mainly in a regular

classroom but students could move their chairs or desks outside of the classroom into the corridor, the corner of the class, or anywhere within in the teacher's area of vision. The teacher spent much of her time reading but occasionally moved round the classroom, asking and answering questions about the reading materials. The physical environment was quiet and the atmosphere relaxed.

Three research instruments were included in this study: a pretest-posttest instrument (CSEPT), a perception survey, and a learning style survey. The CSEPT, including its reading component, was administered as a pre-test (before the programme began), a post-test (after two semesters of the programme) and a follow-up test (after four semesters of the programme) to students in both the experimental and the control groups. CSEPT was developed by the Taiwan Language Training & Testing Center (LTTC). It is used by universities and colleges to place students in appropriate class levels and to evaluate students' learning. It has three components – listening, usage and reading. The listening component measures students' ability to understand spoken English; the usage component measures their ability to recognize language that is appropriate for standard written English; the reading comprehension component measures their ability to understand short passages that could occur in instruction manuals, newspapers, and magazines. The test takes 90 minutes to complete – 25 minutes for listening, 30 minutes for usage and 35 minutes for reading. The total possible score is 360 points (120 points for listening comprehension, 120 points for usage and 120 points for reading comprehension). The difficulty of the CSEPT is estimated to be approximately 0.60 (Language Training and Testing Centre, 2003). In terms of face validity, the CSEPT meets student expectations with respect to the types of language material they are likely to encounter at their stage of learning and the types of skill they are likely to need to use in relation to that material. The reading section of the CSEPT was used to evaluate the reading ability of the students. The total score of CSEPT (including the listening, usage and reading) was used to represent the students' English proficiency.

A post-programme perception questionnaire constructed by the researcher was administered to students in the experimental group. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 15 statements. In the context of a 5-point Likert scale format, the students were asked the extent of their agreement or disagreement with these statements. The second part of the questionnaire contained 4 open-ended questions. Also administered to students in the experimental group was Kolb's learning style inventory.

The findings

Only those students who completed all parts of the reading programme and were involved in all of the testing (50 in the experimental group; 46 in the control group) are included here.

Students' performance in the pre-test, post-test and follow-up test

There was no significant difference¹ between the average pre-test scores of the experimental group (42.58, with a standard deviation of 21.01) and the control group (38.67 with a standard deviation of 17.62).

A paired samples t-test was used to analyze the difference in the pretest, posttest and follow-up test scores of both groups. These were found to be significant, indicating that in the case of both the experimental group and the control group, overall

performance improved. The t-test results for the changes between pretest and posttest scores were -4.97 for the experimental group and -7.74 for the control group. The t-test results for the changes between pretest and follow-up test were -9.03 for the experimental group and -12.54 for the control group. These results indicate a significant improvement in test scores irrespective of the nature of the reading programme.

In order to eliminate the impact of students' initial test scores on the analysis of the experimental data, an ANCOVA analysis was conducted, the pretest scores serving as a covariate. The same approach was adopted in the case of a comparison between the follow-up test scores of the experimental group and the control group, the pretest scores serving as a covariate. Although the adjusted posttest mean score of the experimental group (53.47) was slightly lower than that of the control group (56.93), the difference was not a significant one ($F=3.32$, $p=0.076$). There was, however, an interesting difference between the two groups in the case of the follow-up test scores, with the adjusted follow-up mean test score of the experimental group (65.92) being significantly lower than the adjusted follow-up mean test score (71.72) of the control group ($F=6.16$, $p=0.015$). These findings relate, however to overall language proficiency (to the extent that CSEPT can be regarded as a test of language proficiency) rather than reading ability.

Students' improvement in reading comprehension after one year and two years of the reading programme was determined on the basis of their scores in the reading comprehension section of the CSEPT. Pearson product-moment correlation and a simple linear regression model were used to analyze the relationship between students' English proficiency (as measured by the CSEPT) and students' reading comprehension (as measured by the reading comprehension section of the CSEPT). A correlation coefficient of 0.72 was observed between English proficiency improvement and reading comprehension improvement after one year of the reading programme; a correlation coefficient of 0.80 was observed after two years of the reading programme. That is, there was found to be a positive correlation between improvement in language proficiency overall and improvement in reading comprehension. Thus, the conclusions reached in relation to overall proficiency improvement also apply in the case of reading comprehension.

Students' perceptions of the free voluntary reading programme

The responses to the perception questionnaire of students who attended the free voluntary reading programme are provided in *Table 1* below (in which FVR = free voluntary reading and SB = skills-based, and in which the questions, given to the students in Chinese, have been translated into English). Note that students in the experimental group were able to compare their experiences in that group with their experiences in reading skills-based courses they had participated in in the past.

Table 1: Perception Questionnaire responses

Question	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Mean	Standard deviation
The content of the FVR class was more practical than SB classes I have attended.	15.6	35.6	35.6	8.9	4.4	3.49	1.01
The content of the FVR class met my personal expectations.	32.6	45.7	13.0	2.2	6.5	3.96	1.07
My reading comprehension ability improved as a result of the FVR class.	26.1	47.8	13.0	8.7	4.3	3.83	1.06
The FVR class allowed me to work at my own pace.	19.6	60.9	4.3	8.7	6.5	3.78	1.07
I adjusted to the FVR class and worked effectively.	17.4	32.6	39.1	8.7	2.2	3.54	0.96
There were more interactions between the teacher and students in the FVR class than in SB - courses that I have attended.	2.2	26.1	58.7	10.9	2.2	3.15	0.73
I was satisfied with the teacher's feedback during the FVR class.	2.2	19.6	65.2	13.0	0	3.11	0.64
Discussion with the teacher helped me to understand what I was reading in the FVR class better than it did in SB classes that I have attended.	4.3	30.4	50.0	13.0	2.2	3.22	0.81
The FVR class supported my interests.	26.1	45.7	15.2	10.9	2.2	3.83	1.02
I could easily get reading materials for the FVR class.	34.8	47.8	4.3	0	13.0	3.83	1.26
The learning environment of the FVR class was more comfortable than it was in the case of SB classes that I have attended.	28.3	50.0	6.5	6.5	8.7	3.91	1.18
It took me more time to do independent reading in the FVR class than to do reading preparation for SB classes I have attended.	13	39.1	28.3	15.2	4.3	3.41	1.05
I had a greater sense of achievement in the FVR class than I did in SB classes I have attended.	19.6	43.5	26.1	6.5	4.3	3.67	1.01
My general knowledge increased as a result of the FVR class.	19.6	54.3	10.9	4.3	6.5	3.85	1.05
The FVR class was more effective than SB classes I have attended.	21.7	34.8	30.4	8.7	4.3	3.61	1.06

Very few students (approximately 17%) reported having any difficulty sourcing materials for the free voluntary reading class (although responses to the open-ended questions indicated that they did not always find these materials to be appropriate). Furthermore, the majority of the students (78.3%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the free voluntary reading class met their expectations, that the learning environment was more comfortable than in the case of skills-based courses they had attended (78.3%), that their general knowledge increased as a result of the class (73.9%), and that their reading comprehension ability improved (73.1%). Furthermore, the majority agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the free voluntary reading class was more effective than skills-based reading classes they had attended (56.5%), that it was more practical (51.2%), that it supported their interests (71.8%), allowed them to work at their own pace (80.5%) and that it gave them a greater sense of achievement (63.1%). Half of the students reported that they adjusted to the free voluntary reading class and worked effectively (50%). Not surprisingly, given the overall aims of the free voluntary reading class, fewer than half reported that discussion with the teacher had helped them to understand what they were reading better than in skills-based classes they had

attended (34.7%), that there were more interactions with the teacher (28.3%), or that they were satisfied with the teacher's feedback during the class (21.8%). Overall, apart from issues relating to teacher feedback and involvement, it appears that there was a high level of satisfaction with the free voluntary reading class.

There were four open-ended questions in Chinese. Each of these (translated into English) is listed below followed by a discussion of student responses.

In your opinion, what are the advantages of learning through the free voluntary reading programme and how did you benefit from it?

In responding to the question above, the majority of students indicated a clear preference for a free voluntary reading programme as opposed to a skills-based reading programme, with three quarters of them indicating that they had appreciated the opportunity to select their own reading materials. In connection with this, it is interesting to note that two of the students reported that they had become better acquainted with aspects of English culture through their reading, three reported that they had found better ways of expressing themselves in English, one that his confidence in his ability to learn English had increased, and one that a choice of books that included colourful pictures had put her in a good mood for reading. However, a large number of the students indicated that their lack of familiarity with some of the vocabulary they encountered had hindered their comprehension and some reported that they had paid little attention to their reading because there was no test. Indeed, two indicated that they had fallen behind in their reading because they spent time preparing work for other classes.

What problems or difficulties did you experience when you were engaged in the free voluntary reading programme and what are your suggestions for improving its impact on learning?

In response to the question above, a number of students indicated that they enjoyed reading by themselves but preferred not to be interrupted with requests by the teacher to share their responses to their reading with others. Some indicated that they had been unable to share their responses because they had had difficulty in understanding the content of their reading material. Some indicated that they had been reluctant to continue reading where they encountered difficulties in understanding the content. A number also indicated that they had become impatient, particularly when reading lengthy articles. A number of the students indicated that they had experienced difficulty in finding reading materials that were suitable in terms of their reading level, some also indicating that they believed that there were insufficient reading materials in the library. Two students reported that the classroom environment had not, in their opinion, been appropriate for extended reading, one of them suggesting that the library would provide a more appropriate context for reading, especially as students would then be able to choose and exchange reading materials whenever they wished. One student suggested that there should be background music; one said that free voluntary should take up only half of the class time, the other half being taken up by skills-based instruction. Among the suggestions made by many of the students for improvement of the free voluntary reading programme were the following (with over one third of the students including the first item in the list). The teacher should:

- supply reading lists that include materials appropriate to the different reading levels of the students;
- assign a few books to be read by all of the students as this would (a) improve the level of discussion, and (b) make it easier to get help from the teacher;
- set up discussion groups to (a) increase students' interest in reading and (b) improve their understanding;
- provide shorter materials for reading in order to (a) increase motivation, and (b) help those students who were otherwise unable to finish reading the materials they selected;
- provide more help where students experienced difficulty in reading.

Can you suggest ways of making sure that students in a free voluntary reading programme become genuinely involved in it?

In response to the question above, a number of students indicated that they believed that a simple reading log that included three or four sentences of reflection and/or appreciation was not useful and suggested that this be replaced by regular oral or written reports on students' favorite books (including plot summary, introduction to the characters, etc.). Among the advantages they listed were that this would (a) provide a useful introduction to reading materials for other students, and (b) help the teacher to determine whether students had read the complete work. In general, the students indicated that sharing their responses with others would increase their motivation (although the response of some students to other questions indicates that was not a universal view). One student indicated that performing a play based on a favourite book might be another way of checking on understanding, and three students indicated that they believed that a good way of checking on understanding would be to provide a quiz.

What do you think the role of the teacher should be in the case of a free voluntary reading programme in relation, in particular, to motivating and interesting students?

In response to the question above, many of the students again indicated that they would like the teacher to provide a reading list that included materials appropriate to their reading levels, something that would resolve the problems they had in finding appropriate materials. Many also indicated that they would like to learn more about what the other students had read and about their responses to these reading materials in the form of regular oral reports (by individuals or small groups), something that could guide their own selections. Also common to many was the opinion that the teacher should talk about some of the books she had read so that the students would have an opportunity to hear the teacher's opinions and comments, something that they considered potentially motivating. A few students suggested that for at least some of the time all of the students should be asked to read the same materials, collective reading and sharing being considered to be potentially motivating. Once again, one of the students indicated that the sustained silent reading programme should take place in the library. Although one student suggested that the teacher should spend more time reading, two indicated that they would prefer that she did nothing in class except ensure that everyone was suitably occupied.

The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to analyze the relationship between the students' perception scores and improvement in their reading comprehension

scores. Improvement in students' reading ability was determined by calculating the difference between their pretest and posttest reading comprehension scores and between their pretest and follow-up test reading comprehension scores. The results indicated that there was no significant correlation between positive perception of the sustained silent reading programme and improvement in reading comprehension over a one year or two year period.

The free voluntary reading programme: Student learning styles

With reference to completion of Kolb's learning style inventory, all except four of the students in the experimental group were assigned to one of four learning style types: divergers (14); assimilators (15); convergers (6); accommodators (7). An ANCOVA with the pretest scores as a covariate was performed in order to determine the reading scores of students assigned to different learning style types. The Pearson product-moment correlation was then used to determine whether there was any significant relationship between learning style types and improvement in reading comprehension. In the event, there was found to be no such significant correlation. It would appear to follow from this (at least so far as Kolb's learning style inventory is concerned) that a free voluntary reading programme is neither more nor less advantageous in terms of reading comprehension improvement in the case of any particular learning style preference.

Discussion

I have reported here on an experiment involving two groups of students over a period of two years. Both groups followed similar English programmes during these two years except in the case of the reading component of the programme in which one group (the experimental group) followed a free voluntary reading programme and the other followed a skills-based reading programme.

At the beginning of the experiment, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups of students in a test of listening, usage and reading (CSEPT). After one year, and again after two years, there was a significant improvement in the mean test scores of both groups (including the mean score in the reading component of the test). However, although there was no significant difference *between the two groups* in terms of overall mean score or mean score in the reading component of the test *after one year*, there was a significant difference *between the two groups* after two years, with the experimental group (involved in a free voluntary reading programme) making significantly less improvement overall and in terms of the reading component of the test than the control group (involved in a skills-based reading programme). It should be borne in mind that these differences may not have been directly attributable to the primary difference between the groups with which this particular experiment was concerned (in this case the nature of the reading programmes in which the two groups were involved). This is almost always the case in experiments involving human subjects in which a range of variables cannot be controlled. Even so, the results strongly suggest that the free voluntary reading programme was less effective (after two years) in improving reading comprehension than was the skills-based reading programme.

No correlation was found between learning style types and improvement in reading comprehension in the case of students following the free voluntary reading programme. Although this suggests that that a free voluntary reading programme is neither more nor

less advantageous in terms of reading comprehension improvement in the case of any particular learning style preference, it must be borne in mind that this may relate to the nature of the learning style inventory used in this case.

Student responses to the closed question section of the perception questionnaire indicated a generally high level of appreciation of the free voluntary reading programme. However, responses to the open-ended questions indicated some interesting reservations and difficulties. Thus, for example, a large number of the students appear to have had difficulty making inferences about meaning (perhaps because of a lack of inference-based instruction) and some had difficulty in maintaining their motivation in the absence of tests and the higher level of teacher intervention that tends to characterize language teaching in Taiwan (and in many other parts of the world). Students' responses to these open-ended questions also suggest that the programme with which they were provided was different in a number of ways from free voluntary reading programmes as advocated by Krashen (1992), something that may have had some impact on the outcomes. Thus:

- the fact that so many of the students referred to difficulties in finding reading materials that were appropriate to their reading levels, would have appreciated a reading list with level indicators and would have liked to have more opportunities to select different reading materials suggests that the unrestricted use of the college library in relation to materials choice and use of a classroom (some distance from the library) for reading may not have been a good idea;
- the fact that some students indicated that they would have appreciated hearing the teacher's views on books that she had read suggests that the teacher did not, in this case, share her opinions about her own reading with the students;
- the fact that so many of the students indicated that they would have appreciated oral reports on/discussion of their reading by other students rather than short book logs indicates that there were no discussion groups.

Finally, it is relevant to note that although the responses of students to the closed-questions indicated a general preference for sustained silent reading over skills-based reading instruction, some of the responses to the open-ended questions suggest a preference for a programme that incorporates aspects of both. In one case, this point was made explicitly. In other cases, it emerges from a consideration of the implications of the suggestions made, including the suggestions that the teacher should assign a few books to be read by all of the students and should provide more help when students experienced difficulties.

Conclusion

The results of this experiment suggest that a free voluntary reading programme may be as effective in the short-term (over a one year period) as a skills-based reading programme in the case of language learners but that may be less effective over a longer term (two years).

Endnotes

1. The significant alpha level for all statistical tests was set at .05.

References

- Alexander, F. (1986). *California assessment program: Annual report*. Sacramento: California State Department of Education.
- Anderson, R., Wilson, P., & Fielding, L. (1988). Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 23, 285-303.
- Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beretta, A. (1998). Attention to form or meaning? Error treatment in the Bangalore Project. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23, 283-303.
- Campbell, R., & Wales, R. (1970). The study of language acquisition. In J. Lyons (Ed.), *New Horizons in linguistics* (pp. 242-260). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Carrel, P. L. (1983). Some issues in studying the role of schemata, or background knowledge, in second language comprehension. *Reading in a foreign language*, 1(2): 81-92.
- Carrel, P. L., & Eisterhold, J. C. (1983). Schema theory and ESL reading pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 18, 553-573
- Celce-Murcia, M., Dornyei, Z. & Thurrell, S. (1998). On directness in communicative language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32, 116-119.
- Chandler, D. (1995). *The Active Reader'* (pp.1-22). (Selected lecture Notes, University of Wales, Aberystwyth). Retrieved March 1, 2006, from: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Modules/MC10220/active.html>
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge MA: MIT University Press.
- Coady, J. (1979). A psycholinguistic model of the ESL reader. In R. Mackay, B. Barkman, & R. R. Jordan (Eds.), *Reading in a second language* (pp. 5-12). Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Dunn, R., Gemake, J., Jalali, F., & Zenhausern, R. (1990). Cross-cultural differences in learning styles of elementary-age students from four ethnic backgrounds. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 18, 68-93
- Elley, W. (1991). Acquiring literacy in a second language: The effect of book-based programs. *Language Learning*, 41, 375-411.
- Elley, W., & Mangubhai, F. (1983). The impact of reading on second language learning. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 10, 53-67.
- Elley, W., Barham, I., Lamb, H., & Wyllie, M. (1976). The role of grammar in a secondary school curriculum. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 10, 5-21
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eskey, D. (1973). A model program for teaching advanced reading to students of English as a foreign language. *Language Learning*, 23(2), 169-184.
- Eskey, D. (1988). Holding in the bottom: An interactive approach to the language problems of second language readers. In P. Carrell, J. Devine, & D. E. Eskey (Eds.), *Interactive approaches to Second Language Reading* (pp. 93-100). Cambridge: New York.
- Foertsch, M. (1992). *Reading in and out of school*. Washington, D. C.: U.S. Department of Education.
- Goodman, K. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist*, 6, 126-135.
- Goodman, K., & Goodman, Y. (1982). Spelling ability of a self-taught reader. In F. Gollasch (Ed.), *Language and literacy: The selected works of Kenneth S. Goodman*, 2 (pp.135-142). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Graddol, D. (2006). *English Next. Why global English may mean the end of 'English as a Foreign Language'*. The English Company (UK) Ltd (digital edition): British Council.
- Gregg, K. (1994). Krashen's theory, acquisition theory and theory. In Barasch, R. & James, C. (Eds.), *Beyond the monitor model* (pp. 37-55). Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle.
- Haggan, M. (1991). Spelling errors in native Arabic-speaking English majors: A comparison between remedial students and fourth year students. *System*, 19, 45-61.
- Howatt, A. (1984). *A history of English language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hymes, D. (1971). *On communicative competence*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.
- Keefe, J. W. (1979). Learning style: An overview. In J. W. Keefe (Ed.), *Student learning styles: Diagnosing and prescribing programs* (pp. 1-17). Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- Kiany, G. R. (1997). Personality and language learning: the contradictions between psychologists and applied linguists. *Review of Applied Linguistics*, 111-136.
- Kolb, D. A. (1976). *The learning style Inventory: Self-scoring test and interpretation*. Boston: Mcber & Company.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Krashen, S. & Terrell, T. (1983). *The natural approach to language acquisition in the classroom*. Oxford; San Fransisco: Pergamon/Alemany.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *Input in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Krashen, S. (1989). We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the Input Hypothesis. *Modern Language Journal*, 73, 440-464.
- Krashen, S. (1992). *The power of reading: Insights from the research*. Englewood, CD: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.
- Krashen, S. (2002). The comprehension hypothesis and its rivals. In *Selected Papers from the Eleventh International Symposium and Book Fair on English Teaching/Fourth Pan-Asian Conference* (pp. 395-404). Taipei, Taiwan: Crane Publishing Company.
- Krashen, S. (2004). Free voluntary reading: New research, applications, and Controversies. *PAC 5 Conference* (pp. 16-19). Vladivostok, Russia: Far East English Language Teachers' Association.
- Language Training and Testing Centre. (2003). *2003 annual report*. Taipei, Taiwan: Language Training and Testing Center.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. & Long, M. (1991). *An introduction to second language acquisition research*. New York: Longman.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Lee, S. Y. (2005). The robustness of extensive reading: Evidence from two studies. *The International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 1(3), 13-19.
- Machet, M., & Olen, S. (1996). Determining the Effect of Free Voluntary Reading on Second Language Readers in South Africa. *International Association of School Librarianship XXV the Annual Conference*, Jamaica.

- Mason, B. (2003). *A study of extensive reading and the development of grammatical accuracy by Japanese university students learning English*. Unpublished Ed.D., Temple University, Osaka, Japan.
- McCarthy, B. (1980). *The 4Mat system: Teaching to learning styles with right/left mode techniques* (2nd ed.). Barrington, IL: EXCEL.
- Ministry of Education (New Zealand) (2002). *French in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Mosenthal, P. (1984). The Problem of partial specification in translating reading research into practice. *Elementary School Journal*, 85(2), 199-227.
- Nagy, W., Herman, P., & Anderson, R. (1985). Learning words from context. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20, 233-253.
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: an evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups* (NIH Publication No. 00-4754). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Oxford, R. (2004). Changing the Face of EFL Instruction through Learning Styles and Strategies. Selected papers from *the Thirteenth International symposium and Book Fair on English Teaching*, (pp.1-10).
- Paran, A. (1997). Bottom-up and top-down processing. *English Teaching Professional*, 3, 11.
- Pienemann, M. (1985). Learnability and syllabus construction. In K. Hyltenstam, & M. Pienemann (Eds.). *Modelling and assessing second language acquisition* (pp. 23-76). Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.
- Reid, J. (1995). *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1980). Schemata: The building blocks of cognition. In R. J. Spiro, B. C. Bruce, & W. E. Brewer (Eds.), *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension* (pp. 33-58). Hillsdale, N.J: Erlbaum.
- Rumelhart, D.E. (1977). Toward an interactive model of reading In S. Dornie (Ed.), *Attention and performance* (pp. 573-603). New York: Academic Press.
- Salyer, M. (1987). A comparison of the learning characteristics of good and poor ESL writer. *Applied Linguistics Interest Section Newsletter, TESOL*, 8, 2-3.
- Samuels, J., & Kamil, M. (1984). Models of the reading process. In P. D. Pearson, R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *The handbook of reading research* (pp. 185-224). New York: Longman.
- Saragi, Y., Nation, P., & Meister, G. (1978). Vocabulary learning and reading. *System*, 6, 70-78.
- Saville-Troike, M. (1973). Reading and the audio-lingual method. *TESOL Quarterly*, 7(4), 395-405
- Shih, Y-H. (2001). Communicative language teaching: Grade 1 to 9 English new curriculum. *English Teaching and Learning*, 3, 5-21.
- Skinner, B. F. (1957). *Verbal behavior*. New York: Appleton Century Crofts.
- Smith, F. (1971). *Understanding reading: A psycholinguistic analysis of reading and learning to read*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Smith, F. (1994). *Understanding Reading*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Stanovich, K. E. (1980). Toward an interactive-compensatory model of individual differences in the development of reading fluency. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 16, 36-71.

- Su, C. (1999). Effect of free voluntary reading program on English reading performance. *Wenzao Journal*, 13, 81-97.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching language as communication*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1983). *Learning purpose and language use*. London: Oxford University Press.