

THE IMPACT OF EXTENSIVE READING ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE
PROFICIENCY AND MOTIVATION TO READ

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Dedicated with love to
My Family

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the development and implementation of an extensive reading (ER) programme to enhance English Language proficiency and motivation to read among fourteen-year old students in a secondary school in Malaysia. The nine-month study utilized an experimental design where the 120 participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group (59 students) and a control group (61 students). The experimental group was engaged in a weekly 40-minute scheduled class time where extensive reading was carried out in school while the control group read in their free time. Both groups were provided with the same reading materials. The effectiveness of the programme in developing three aspects of students' language proficiency - vocabulary, general language proficiency and reading comprehension was measured using three instruments which were the vocabulary, cloze and comprehension tests. An affective questionnaire was designed to assess change in motivation to read and structured open-ended interviews were conducted on 20 students to elicit feedback on the effectiveness of the ER programme. Results from t-test paired-samples and independent samples showed that the experimental group improved in the vocabulary, cloze and reading comprehension tests while the control group did not show any improvement. However, there was no significant difference in motivation to read in both groups. The results suggest that monitored ER scheduled during a weekly class time where students read comprehensible articles should be made part of the curriculum. This can be achieved through the proposed Collaborative ER Model.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk membangun dan melaksanakan program *extensive reading* (ER) bagi meningkatkan penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris dan motivasi membaca dalam kalangan pelajar berumur empat belas tahun di sebuah sekolah menengah di Malaysia. Kajian selama sembilan bulan berbentuk eksperimen melibatkan sampel seramai 120 orang pelajar dan telah dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan: eksperimen (59 pelajar) dan kawalan (61 pelajar). Kumpulan eksperimen yang telah dipantau terlibat dalam sesi pembacaan mingguan 40 minit manakala kumpulan kawalan yang tidak dipantau membaca pada masa lapang mereka. Kedua-dua kumpulan dibekalkan dengan bahan bacaan yang sama. Keberkesanan program ini berdasarkan tahap penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris para pelajar dalam tiga aspek - perbendaharaan kata, kecekapan berbahasa dan pemahaman dan dinilai dengan menggunakan tiga instrumen iaitu ujian kosa kata, melengkapkan teks dan ujian pemahaman. Borang soal selidik afektif telah digunakan untuk menilai perubahan motivasi membaca. Sesi temu bual menggunakan set soalan yang sama melibatkan 20 orang pelajar juga telah dijalankan untuk memperoleh maklum balas tentang keberkesanan program 'ER'. Keputusan *t-test paired samples and independent samples* kumpulan eksperimen yang dipantau telah menunjukkan peningkatan bagi kosa kata, latihan melengkapkan teks dan kefahaman manakala kumpulan kawalan yang tidak dipantau tidak menunjukkan sebarang peningkatan. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak terdapat perbezaan signifikan bagi motivasi untuk membaca bagi kedua-dua kumpulan ini. Hasil kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa pendekatan program 'ER' bagi pelajar yang membaca artikel dalam sesi pembacaan mingguan yang dipantau seharusnya diterapkan dalam kurikulum Bahasa Inggeris. Penerapan unsur ini dapat dilakukan menerusi Model Kolaboratif 'ER'.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ER	-	Extensive Reading
EFL	-	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	-	English as a Second Language
L1	-	First language
L2	-	Second language
NILAM	-	<i>Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca</i>
SSR	-	Sustained Silent Reading
USSR	-	Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language in the 21st century is a challenging task. One of the challenges is getting learners to read in the target language. As reading is a crucial building block of success at school, at work and in society (Feiler, Andrews, Greenhough, Hughes, Johnson Scanlan and Yee, 2007; Gee, 2007; McCarty, 2005), many global surveys have been conducted to investigate and compare the performance of schools and education systems. One of them is the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which assesses 15-year old students in three main subjects - Mathematics, reading and Science every three years. Each cycle places a special focus on one of the key subjects and reading was the focus in the years 2000 and 2009. The 2009 PISA survey in 65 countries reported a general decline in students' reading engagement. A comparison of the percentage of students reporting that they read for enjoyment dropped from 68 percent in the year 2000 to 63 percent in 2009 (PISA, 2009). According to a member of the PISA Task Force,

The general decline in engagement in reading is a major concern, given that there is a very strong association between engagement and reading performance, and engagement can, to some extent, reduce the negative effects of socioeconomic status on reading performance. It is also a matter of concern that almost four-in-ten students report that they never read for enjoyment.

(Shiel, 2010)

Classrooms are key sites for inculcating the habit of reading. However, the common practice in reading lessons is to treat texts as vehicles for the presentation, practice, development and consolidation of language points, rather than for the encouragement of reading itself. Schools have also not succeeded in cultivating the reading habit among students in the classroom as the method used in the reading lesson does not incorporate reading for pleasure. Lessons focus too much on language development than on reading per se.

Extensive reading (ER) which is based on the well-established premise that we learn to read by reading can be incorporated in the classroom and can be an essential component of the reading methodology. ER involves students silently reading large amounts of texts and these reading materials are usually at levels that permit students to gain at least a fair understanding of what they are reading without assistance (Jacobs and Gallo, 2002). Comprehensible, simplified, pleasure-driven, high-interest reading materials can be used for the development of language proficiency. The benefits of ER programmes for first and second language (L1 and L2) learners are well documented (Coady, 1979; Day and Bamford, 1998; Elley, 1996; Krashen, 1993; Macalister, 2008; McQuillan, 1994; Nagy, Anderson and Herman, 1987; Yu-Li, 1999; Yu, 1993) and there is overwhelming evidence that students engaging in free reading progress faster in language and literacy development. Studies thus far have shown that students typically improve in tests of reading comprehension and vocabulary in both first and second language acquisition and foreign language development (Krashen, 2004). Krashen's input hypothesis (IH) theory argues that reading is the means to achieve language competence:

We acquire language by understanding messages more precisely. Comprehensible input is the essential environmental ingredient to language acquisition, the best hypothesis is that competence in spelling and vocabulary is most efficiently attained by comprehensible input in the form of reading.

(Krashen, 1989:440)

Despite this strong, widely disseminated evidence supporting ER, implementation of some extensive reading programmes has been less successful.

Jacobs (1998) notes that in many less developed countries, ER programmes face challenges such as the lack of reading materials and teachers' limited knowledge of ER. Constraints in implementing ER also exist in developing nations and one of these constraints includes the high expectations of administrators, students and parents who require teachers to cover the entire syllabus and to complete every page in the textbook and every exercise in the workbook. This leaves little or no time for ER, which is relegated to the status of a luxury or optional extra (Yu, 1993).

Fritze and Rowan (2005) believe that two main problems teachers face when implementing an ER programme include limited access to books at the appropriate level and the lack of conducive learning environments for reading inside the classroom. Green (2005) reports that in order for students to value reading and commit personal time to reading they must see that the teacher is willing to commit class time to it. Other studies on ER for instance Hafiz and Tudor (1989) and Williams (2007) do not show positive effects on language development. Among the reasons cited for this were the inappropriate levels of books selected for the students and teachers not prioritising time for ER. Teachers' beliefs about ER and attitudes towards ER also play an important part in deciding how they make corresponding decisions in the classroom, which in turn, may influence their students' views of ER and the reading programmes.

Thus, despite the many benefits that can be obtained by students from an ER programme there are challenges in implementing a successful ER programme.

1.2 Background of the Study

Over the past decades, there have been many changes in education policies and an increasing level of attention on reading in Malaysia. The recently launched Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has set the goal for Malaysia to be in the upper third of countries participating in the programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) by 2025. In the 2012 PISA report, the reading scores for Malaysia plunged to an average of 398 while in the previous report, known as 2009+,

where Malaysia participated for the first time, students had recorded a score of 414. The 2009+ report was an expanded version of the 2009 results that tested new entrants in 2010. It reviewed the reading scores of 522, 000 students across 74 countries involving nearly 4,999 students from Malaysia. Malaysian students ranked 55th out of 74 countries in terms of reading literacy in 2009 (Business Wire, 2011) but in 2012 it was ranked 59 out of 65 countries (PISA, 2012). The reading test assesses an individual's capacity to understand, use, reflect on and engage with written texts in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential and to participate in society. The 2009+ results revealed that:

Students in Malaysia attained an average score on the PISA reading literacy scale that was below the average attained in all OECD countries and equivalent to the average scores estimated for Brazil, Colombia, Miranda-Venezuela, Montenegro, Thailand, and Trinidad and Tobago. In Malaysia, 56% of students are estimated to have a proficiency in reading literacy that is at or above the baseline needed to participate effectively and productively in life. This compares to 81% in the OECD countries, on average.

(Business Wire, 2011)

The PISA 2009+ and 2012 reading scores are consistent with the results of previous studies conducted in Malaysia on the issue of unsatisfactory reading habits among Malaysians. Two landmark studies conducted by Long and Porter (1984) and Small, Smurthwaite and the National Library of Malaysia (1998) revealed the lack of reading inclination among Malaysians. The nationwide survey findings by Frank Small and Associates complement the findings of two 1995 studies conducted by Ambigapathy on school and university students in Penang. The latter revealed that secondary school and university students' reluctance to read materials other than that related to academic topics was confirmed by the nationwide findings by the National Library on Malaysians spending 30 minutes a week reading a newspaper and reading an average of two books per year.

A study carried out by the Technology Education Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia in November 1997 (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1997),

also showed that the reading habit among school students was still at a low level. In a study carried out in eight schools in the states of Selangor and Perak, the reasons students cited for not reading were lack of time, uninteresting reading materials and lack of motivation. Table 1.1 shows the reasons reading was still at a low level among primary and secondary school students.

Table 1.1 : Reasons for Low Reading Levels (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1997)

No.	Reasons	Percent (%)
1.	No time	70.30
2.	Reading is boring	49.70
3.	Prefer to play	38.64
4.	Books are not interesting	38.33
5.	Not enough books	31.67
6.	Prefer to watch television and listen to the radio	29.09
7.	Tired	26.88
8.	Uncomfortable / noisy environment	26.67
9.	No opportunity to go to the library	24.39
10.	No interest in reading since young	23.64

The major reason students cited for not reading was lack of time. This is because the reading activity is not scheduled into the timetable and there is no teacher supervision. Besides that, about 50 percent of the students do not find reading enjoyable. This could be because the books are not suitable and there is no guidance from teachers when students select their reading materials. In addition, the environment for reading was not conducive for some students. Finally, it seems that the reading habit has not been properly inculcated when students were younger. These reasons indicate that there are some shortcomings in the implementation of the reading programme at school level.

Studies by other researchers also had similar results. Asraf and Ahmad's (2003) study on an extensive reading programme conducted in three rural secondary schools in Malaysia found that students in rural schools can and do benefit from extensive reading. However, they also suggested that the success of a reading programme depended on several factors, namely: how teachers are able to motivate students to read; how the programme is organized and implemented; and how students' reading is monitored. It also depended on how teachers themselves felt about extensive reading. Unless the teachers are convinced that extensive reading is beneficial in improving English language development among their students, they are not likely to invest the effort needed to make the programme a success.

In their study, Asraf and Ahmad (2003) requested that teachers of the respective classes select the reading books. They reported that on average, the students had difficulty with at least two words in almost every sentence of the book they were reading. They noted that as the students read the books, they looked up words that they could not understand in dictionaries. They highlighted two important aspects in ER: a) appropriate selection of reading materials and, b) the need for comprehensible reading materials. This seems to indicate that teachers need to choose materials that are comprehensible so that students will not need to constantly refer to a dictionary. These observations showed that when students did not select their own reading materials, they had to consistently refer to dictionaries as they were required to read texts beyond their linguistic level.

Krishnan *et al.* (2009) also highlighted the weaknesses of teachers in encouraging students to read. They reported that schools appear to have been unsuccessful in producing students with good English Language proficiency primarily because they did not succeed in getting students to be interested in reading. However, if teachers were to succeed in inculcating a positive attitude towards reading, students will be more motivated to read.

These studies show that the reluctance to read is not necessarily due to a lack of reading skills but due to the attitudes and reading culture that have not been adopted by students in their daily lives. This situation known as "*aliteracy*"

(McDuffee, 2004) is a condition in which a person is able to read but is indifferent or reluctant to read whether for academic or knowledge enrichment purposes. The Malaysian government especially the Ministry of Education has taken certain measures to address the problem. One of them is to foster a culture of reading through training and guidance while an individual is still in school. It is one of the four objectives of the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM), which reads: “At the end of the secondary school English Language programme, the students should be able to read and understand prose and poetry for information and enjoyment” (Ministry of Education, 1989:46).

The Malaysian Ministry of Education designed a curriculum to inculcate the reading habit among Malaysian students as reading plays a vital role in improving language proficiency. The two-pronged curriculum move in 1989 resulted in literature being offered as an elective subject as well as a component of the English language subject. Literature has also featured in Malaysian ESL classrooms through large-scale school reading programmes initiated by the Ministry of Education such as the First Readings in Literature, The New Zealand Readers Project, the English Language Reading Programme (ELRP) in 1976, the Class Reader Programme (CRP) in 1989, and finally, the literature component in English language in 2000 (Ali and Jayakaran, 2000). The Ministry of Education had also collaborated with the Centre for British Teachers (CFBT) for the Reading Kit programme.

The CRP made the teaching of literature more deliberate by allocating a specific period in the secondary school timetable for it. In a bid to arrest the decline in literacy rate as well as to make examination-oriented Malaysians take heed of the need for exposure to literature, the introduction of the literature component in the national and English language curriculum requires students to read literary texts which are tested in major public examinations. 20 percent of class time [one period out of five per week is allocated for the literature component (Kementerian Pendidikan, 2000).

After the CRP, another programme was introduced in schools to cultivate the reading habit among Malaysians and to increase ESL proficiency. In 1999 the

Malaysian Ministry of Education implemented a reading programme called “*Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca*” (NILAM or “The Pulse of Knowledge is the Reading Habit”) which integrates all reading activities in schools with the aim of encouraging reading and inculcating the reading habit. It is a mandatory programme for all primary and secondary schools (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1997) and is the current reading programme conducted in schools. The NILAM programme is divided into two stages. The first stage, “*Jauhari*” provides facilities for students to borrow books with the aim to develop skills for reading and to instill the reading habit. The second stage, “Reading Partner” is for students who have read 100 books and are nominated to become a “Reading Partner”. The objectives of this stage are for these students to guide and motivate other students to read. Appendix A shows a model of the NILAM programme.

The design and implementation of the NILAM programme does not include a scheduled time in the school timetable. Students read storybooks when they are free and record the information in their NILAM Reading Record books (Appendix B). The programme requires that teachers provide workshops and guidance for students so that Reading Partners can inform and encourage other students to read the stories they have read. Teachers award marks to Reading Partners for the number of activities (story telling, reading together, books discussed, and books lent to friends) that they have carried out. This recognizes that language is social and dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981). More importantly, it is a way to monitor students' reading and to check if the literature-based component has achieved the Ministry's aim to inculcate the reading habit outside the language classroom.

In spite of the initiatives taken by the Ministry of Education to introduce ER in the school system, the reading habit among Malaysians (as shown in the surveys) is still low. Hence, implementation of ER programmes requires careful planning to make it successful. According to Waring (2006), ER should not only be seen as supplemental or optional, but as a core and indispensable part of all language programmes. The aim of ER is for students to read or listen to massive amounts of comprehensible language within their comfort zone and to build fluency. Reading fluently allows students to read more which provides them with opportunities to

notice and acquire additional knowledge about language features. Probably the most important benefit of being exposed to massive amounts of text is the opportunity for students to consolidate the language learnt discreetly in formal grammar lessons. Reading extensively is the only way in which students can get access to the target language at their comfort level, read something they want to read, at the pace they feel comfortable with, which will allow them to encounter the language sufficiently enough times to pick up a sense of how the language fits together and to consolidate what they already know.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The benefits of ER in L2 are substantial and extremely well documented (Day and Bamford, 1998; Elley, 1991, 1992, 1998; Horst, 2005; Krashen, 1993; Mason and Krashen, 1997b). Krashen (1993) believes that L2 students acquire knowledge about language incidentally through reading and this can be achieved with more enjoyment and less stress. For L2 students, ER can provide the quantity and exposure to the language patterns and promote language development.

Even though many teachers know and have read about the benefits of ER for developing L2 students' language proficiency and are convinced of its value, many may not know exactly how to put those insights into practice and hence do not incorporate ER into L2 reading instruction. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) highlighted time and competing curricular expectations, limited resources and student resistance for the underuse of ER in the classrooms. In many secondary settings, detailed and exhaustive government-imposed standards must be practised and assessed during an academic period. Consequently, reading extensively or for pleasure is rarely included in such lists of curricular requirements. Language curricula tend to focus on academic literacy skills (through intensive reading and composition instruction), not on encouraging students to read in large quantities for meaning and enjoyment or for personal growth (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009).

These issues are also not new to the Malaysian education system where the same challenges of limited time, resources and student attitudes are encountered. The present five periods a week for English language lessons in Malaysian secondary schools are allocated for comprehension, grammar, summary, vocabulary, essays and literature components. In order to counter-balance the examination-oriented school curriculum, the NILAM Programme is designed to monitor students' leisure reading, and acknowledges reading of both fiction or non-fiction material. The NILAM programme implemented in schools requires students to read books (outside class time), write a brief summary of the book and submit their NILAM record books. Teachers collect and mark the record books every one or two months. There is hardly any teacher supervision and guidance while students read. It is also difficult to verify whether students had actually read the books because the summary they write could have been fabricated or copied from other sources. As the implementation of the programme is not explicitly monitored, it is difficult to ascertain if students had actually read the books.

The reading materials used are another shortcoming in the current NILAM programme. The study by the Technology Education Division (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1997) reported that about 50 percent of the students found reading boring. This is probably because students were not only required to read full-length storybooks but also had to choose from the books provided by the school without any teacher supervision. A variety of comprehensible and interesting reading materials are necessary for students in a reading programme but this requirement is rarely achieved as many schools have budget constraints. The reading materials must be appropriate to students' language level because if the books are too easy they will not feel challenged and will not be interested in reading, whereas if the books are too difficult the students will become frustrated because they are unable to understand what they are reading (Yu, 2003). Hence, appropriate and a variety of reading materials are important factors that must be taken into consideration for an ER programme to be successful.

Another crucial factor in encouraging students to read is the environment in which the reading programme is carried out. In the NILAM programme, students are

required to describe points in mind maps and give their opinion on the text read. This task does not allow the students the opportunity to read for enjoyment as it requires intensive reading and analysis. Thus, there is a need for ER programmes to reduce both teacher demands on the student and student demands on the text to achieve the objectives of fluency and speed as well as comprehension. If the student finds a book too difficult to enjoy, he or she should not be made to complete reading it, instead the student should be allowed to change the book. In other words, motivation and attitude variables are crucial in second language reading instruction, especially in ER programmes.

It is also evident in the NILAM programme that the teacher's role is hardly defined except for the administrative part of collecting and recording the number of books students have read. Yu (2003) identifies the crucial roles of the teacher as monitor/facilitator, motivator/enthusiast, and administrator to ensure the success of an ER programme. Hence, teacher orientation is necessary to create a conducive reading environment as to what specifically a teacher has to monitor and what specific aspects of administration should be managed.

The impact of the NILAM programme on English Language proficiency has not been carried out since its implementation in 1999. There are only two NILAM reports on students' reading habit. The first report in 2003 by the Teacher Centre (PKG) and Education Resource Centre (SERC) showed that the percentage of students who successfully followed this programme was still low. The number of secondary students who participated in this programme was 1,189,992 (62.5 percent) of the total secondary school student enrolment (1,903,557) (Bahagian Teknologi Pendidikan, 2003). Of these, only 194,574 (16.4 percent) secondary school students achieved '*Jauhari*' level and 41,187 (5.8 percent) secondary school students achieved Reading Partner level.

The second report in 2004 which was commissioned by the Educational Technology Division, Ministry of Education assessed the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its objectives of encouraging children to read and the efforts made by the schools to inculcate the reading habit. A survey was administered using

stratified random sampling method, on a sample of 3738 teachers and 8010 students from selected public primary and secondary schools throughout the country (Ali *et al.* 2005). It reported that rural secondary school students regarded the NILAM programme positively. In general, they believed that the NILAM programme can foster good reading habits. The report, however did not have any empirical data on the effects of the NILAM programme on language proficiency.

The report also highlighted that secondary school teachers still had doubts on the resources and space available to implement the NILAM programme. 71.8 percent of the teachers reported that they still required training in terms of time, interest and confidence in implementing the NILAM programme at their schools. It is evident that the teachers' roles in the implementation procedures were not explicitly explained.

The preceding discussion shows that while there is provision for an ER programme i.e. NILAM in the current Malaysian school education system, the existing programme has some limitations which may affect its intended benefits. These limitations become more obvious in comparison with some of the characteristics of successful ER programmes. Firstly, there is no clear mechanism to ensure actual reading is done. Allocating time for reading emphasizes the importance of reading and provides the opportunity for students to gradually progress towards individualized and independent reading and learning. In Singapore, The Reading and English Acquisition Programme (REAP) for primary schools and the Project to Assist Selected Schools in English Skills (PASSES) for secondary schools provide time for the students to practice and develop their reading skills (Loh, 2009). Another study that incorporated time into the school timetable for ER was by de Morgado (2009) where ER was implemented during class time for a duration of 45 minutes once a week on a fixed day.

Another limitation in the NILAM programme but available in other successful ER programmes is the availability of interesting, comprehensible reading materials. Appropriate reading materials are beneficial for second language learners because they are effective in enhancing comprehension and language development.

Exposure to books, newspapers, magazines and the Internet enables students to acquire a large amount of comprehensible input. It widens their vocabulary and develops their interest in and love for reading. For example, Fader (1976) in the “Hooked on Books” approach highlighted two key concepts – saturation and diffusion – which shed further light on what makes ER programmes successful. Saturation means to surround students with books, magazines and newspapers while diffusion refers to the responsibility of every teacher in every classroom to motivate students and make their classroom attractive by displaying books to capture the students’ interest and to encourage them to read. Day and Bamford (2002) state that when learners are reading material that is well within their linguistic ability, for personal interest, and for general rather than academic purposes, it is an incentive to reading fluency. This and other characteristics of successful ER programmes by Day and Bamford (1998) are shown in Appendix C.

Another setback of the NILAM programme in comparison with other programmes is the absence of active and supportive teachers. Chow and Chou (2000) in evaluating Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) in reading classes highlighted two key elements for a successful ER programme: i) teacher as a role model and ii) ownership and community of readers.

Successful ER programmes also place great emphasis on a positive classroom environment and ongoing reading experience. A tension free environment creates positive attitudes toward second language reading. When students read material well within their linguistic ability, they have a choice of what to read, and are not forced to read topics which do not interest them. In addition, they have the freedom to stop reading when they want to. By choosing what to read and enjoying it, students’ motivation to learn will increase, which will then improve their acquisition of the target language (Robb and Susser, 1989).

Another reason for creating a tension-free reading environment is it promotes fluency in reading. Nuttall (1996:127) notes, “speed, enjoyment and comprehension are closely linked with one another.” She describes the vicious circle of the weak reader as someone who reads slowly, does not enjoy reading, does not read much,

does not understand and reads slowly. She believes that extensive reading can help readers enter instead the cycle of growth. The virtuous circle of the good reader is one in which the reader reads faster, reads more, understands better and enjoys reading. Appendix D illustrates the vicious and virtuous cycles.

The discussion shows that under certain conditions, ER programmes could have beneficial effects on language development and learner attitude towards reading. However, the present implementation of ER (through the NILAM programme) falls short of the theoretical underpinnings of a successful ER programme because the facilitative conditions of the ER programme are not convincingly managed or monitored. Moreover there have neither been any known attempts to consciously manipulate the facilitative conditions of the ER programme nor any empirical study on the effects of ER on students' English language proficiency. Hence, this study aims to implement the facilitative conditions in a monitored and unmonitored ER environment by investigating the effects of creating a teaching and learning environment for ER and also its effect on students' second language proficiency.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theory which underpins the effectiveness of extensive reading in terms of enhancing language proficiency is Krashenof 's (2003) 'Comprehension Hypothesis' (also known as the Input Hypothesis [Krashen,1991]) which stresses that acquisition of a second language is facilitated if students are given enough comprehensible input, and when learning is conducted in a tension-free environment. The Comprehension Hypothesis states that we acquire language by understanding messages and we acquire language when we obtain comprehensible input. In extensive reading programmes, students will be immersed with a large quantity of various reading materials that are easy to understand and interesting which provides a great deal of comprehensible input.

Besides reading materials, the environment for reading is equally important. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1993) states that in anxiety-producing situations, there is an affective filter which acts as a mental block preventing learners from fully utilizing the input they receive. But when the filter is low, the learner can comprehend the message, he or she can use the input to enhance his or her language competence. This means that in a low-anxiety environment, that is, an environment where students feel relaxed and at ease, students learn better. This study rests on the theoretical belief that ER can create a low anxiety environment conducive for second language acquisition if students are allowed to read books of their own choice i.e. according to their interest and they read them at their own pace and level. They do not make a conscious effort in reading since they are not required to take tests. They only read for pleasure and for enjoyment. The present practice in the NILAM programme where students have to read lengthy books and write synopsis in fact denies the learners of the right environment for ER.

The theoretical framework defines and illustrates the key concepts and issues that underpin the research problem and approach formulated for this study. It helps the researcher focus on specific issues that are closely linked to ER and also enables the researcher to examine the impact of ER on English language proficiency and motivation to read. The theory and practice that is closely linked to the ER study can be described as

... an approach to learning to read a second language, extensive reading may be done in and out of the classroom. Outside the classroom, extensive reading is encouraged by allowing students to borrow books to take home and read. In the classroom, it requires a period of time, at least 15 minutes or so to be set aside for sustained silent reading, that is for students – and perhaps the teacher as well – to read individually anything they wish to.

(Day and Bamford 1997: 7)

Day and Bamford (2005) also assert that ER is reading large amounts of material to get an overall understanding of the text focusing on the meaning of the text rather than the meaning of individual words or sentences. In other words, the immediate focus is on the content being read, rather than on language skills (Lituanas et al. 1999). In line with this, the reading materials in this study are comprehensible,

interesting and varied single-page articles and books. Hence, when students read these reading materials, they are immersed with comprehensible input. In addition, when students choose reading materials of their interest as well as their linguistic competence, this increases their motivation for learning and fosters them to engage in sustained silent reading (Day and Bamford, 1998; Hitosugi and Day, 2004; Krashen, 2003; Nation, 1997; Pigada and Schmitt, 2006; Susser and Robb, 1990; Taguchi et al., 2004). Based on the reading materials students read, this study analysed the type of reading materials preferred and the quantity read. In terms of motivation to read, Waring (2006) believed that ER played an important role in developing a positive attitude toward reading and motivating students to read more. Robb and Susser (1989) viewed that by reading what they choose, students' motivation to learn will increase, which will in turn benefit their eventual acquisition of the target language.

More specifically, this study is based on the framework or model that specifies the variables of monitored ER on the provision of time to read, actual reading carried out and availability of comprehensible input in relation to development in language proficiency. In this ER programme, the main difference between the two groups was the allocation of time for reading. The investigation was to compare two groups: one that was allocated time to read in class and the other without any class time allocation. In other words, this study explored whether time that was monitored and supervised (the Monitored Group) allowed students to read more and would result in better language proficiency and higher motivation to read. Hence, the objectives were to compare ER in monitored and unmonitored environments and their effect on enhancing students' language proficiency and motivation to read. Figure 1.1 shows the ER framework of the study.

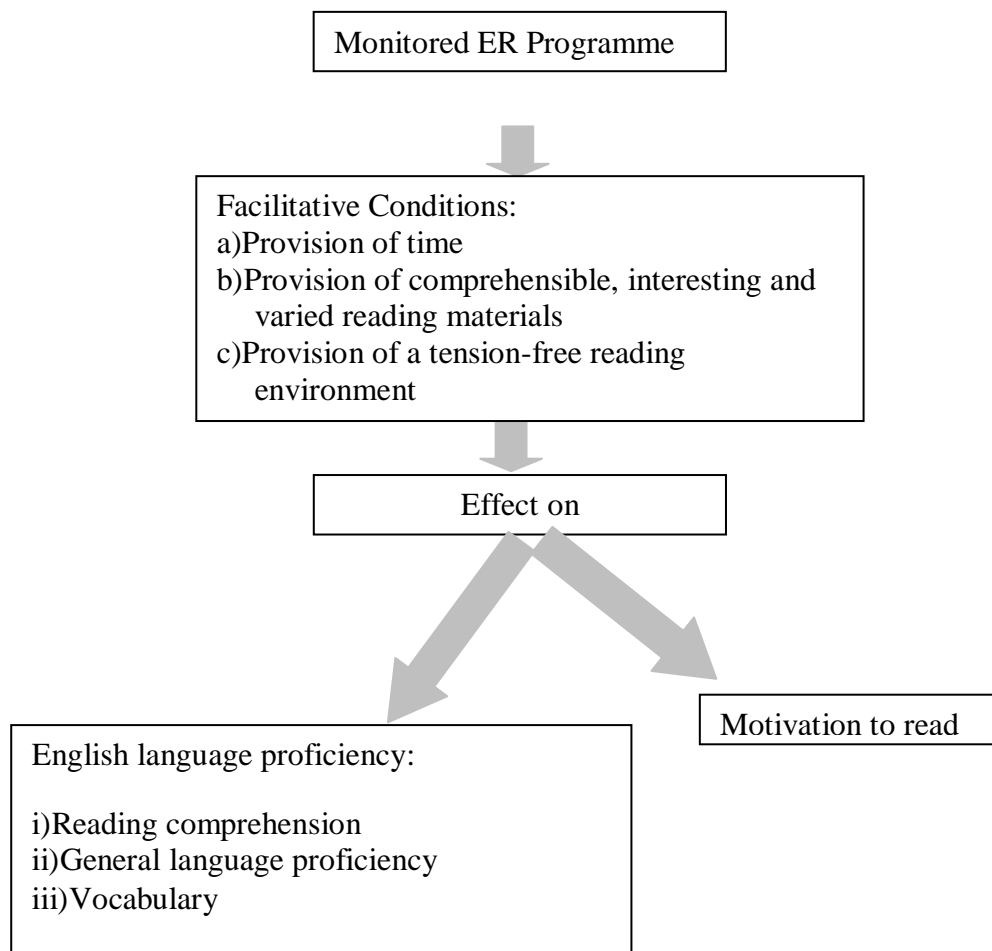


Figure 1.1:ER Framework

The framework is based on the following facilitative conditions that should be present in an ER programme:

- a)the theoretical assumption that ER of interesting, comprehensible input promotes language acquisition and further enhances motivation to read
- b)the belief and conviction that in a second language context, ER does not happen by chance. ER has to be carefully nurtured through a supportive environment in which students are provided with comprehensible and interesting reading materials, allocated specific reading time and provided with support and

encouragement. ER, in short, has to be monitored to ensure that learners actually have access to and read comprehensible reading materials

c)the belief that if ER is not monitored to ensure the availability of reading time, support and encouragement from teachers, the benefits of ER on language proficiency and motivation to read will not be achieved

This study therefore attempts to control the crucial (independent) variable of “monitored ER” and to observe its effect on (the dependent variables of) language proficiency and motivation. Figure 1.1 shows the relationship between the independent variable of monitoring ER and the dependent variables, namely, the students’ English Language proficiency and motivation to read.

This study drew from the facilitative conditions of ER reported in the literature and attempted to design a programme through active management of an ER programme in a monitored environment. For ER to be effective it must be incorporated into the curriculum and class time should be allocated to it. This means that the ER programme is included in the timetable, i.e. allocating a period of about 40 minutes a week for ER. If ER is part of the lesson, students will no longer regard reading as a passive, boring extracurricular activity or to regard it as an optional activity, where students read when they like. Providing time to read results in reading and no other accountability such as report writing or answering comprehension questions is required. This means that by having a scheduled time for ER, teachers will be able to monitor and supervise the activity. Teachers play a crucial role as role models who must guide and assist students with their selection of reading material in a monitored ER programme. Thus, this study explored the influence of monitoring ER which captured the role of the teacher that monitors, supports and ensures availability of suitable materials in a stress free environment on language learning and motivation to read.

This study also explored whether reading comprehensible materials in English, on a regular and consistent basis and in sufficient quantity in a tension free environment had make a difference in the English Language proficiency and motivation to read for the students. This research looked into the role of teachers and

compared the conditions for an ER programme that was monitored (scheduled into the school timetable) and one that was unmonitored. It also identified which aspect of language proficiency was developed as a result of ER.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- 1 . To investigate the impact of monitored ER and unmonitored ER in enhancing students' language proficiency in the following areas:
 - i)reading comprehension
 - ii)general language proficiency
 - iii)vocabulary
- 2 . To investigate the impact of monitored ER and unmonitored ER in enhancing students' motivation to read

1.6 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are:

- 1 . What are the effects of monitored ER and unmonitored ER on students' test results in reading comprehension?
- 2 . What are the effects of monitored ER and unmonitored ER on students' test results in general language proficiency?
- 3 . What are the effects of monitored ER and unmonitored ER on students' test results in vocabulary?
- 4 . What are the effects of monitored ER and unmonitored ER on students' motivation to read?

1.7 Research Hypotheses

The predicted results of the four research questions are as follows:

Ho: There is no significant difference in students' test results in reading comprehension between monitored ER and unmonitored ER.

Ho: There is no significant difference in students' test results in general language proficiency between monitored ER and unmonitored ER.

Ho: There is no significant difference in students' test results in vocabulary between monitored ER and unmonitored ER.

Ho: There is no significant difference in students' motivation to read between monitored ER and unmonitored ER.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study designed an ER programme that adheres closely to the ten characteristics for a successful ER programme highlighted by Day and Bamford (1998). The main aim of the ER programme was to encourage students to read as much as possible and one of the important elements of the reading programme was to make available comprehensible reading materials that was suitable for the students and within students' linguistic ability and interests. This was achieved through single page reading materials and also books. These reading materials were from different genres that were obtained from newspapers, magazines and the internet and were contributed by students, teachers and the researcher. An important element of the reading materials was that the reading materials were comprehensible and interesting for the students. In line with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1993), there were no post-reading activities. Two groups of students: monitored ER and

unmonitored ER, were provided with reading materials for nine months. The Monitored ER group was provided with a scheduled time to read within the timetable while for the unmonitored ER group, there was no scheduled time for students to read and they read when they were free. These facilitative conditions were part of the ER programme but the study did not make comparisons between the ER programme and the NILAM programme currently being implemented in the school.

The main aim of the study was to examine the effects of the ER programme on students' English language proficiency. As English is a second language for all of the students, extensive reading is one of the ways that can help students improve their language proficiency. English language proficiency was measured through reading comprehension, general language proficiency and vocabulary. Another aim of the study was to measure the effects of the ER programme on motivation to read. In other words, the study explored whether provision of comprehensible and interesting reading materials in a tension-free environment, would make students interested in the reading materials and read them. The study focused on the effects of ER on students and their views on the ER programme and did not take into consideration the teacher's perspective on the programme. It also did not make comparisons between the intensive and extensive reading lessons.

Data gathered in this study were a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Reading comprehension test, cloze test which measured general language proficiency and vocabulary test were administered to measure English language proficiency while the affective questionnaire which measured motivation to read are the primary data. Qualitative data from the interviews, the article report and reaction report are used as secondary data to verify and provide insight into the ER programme. In this quasi-experiment design, quantitative data were given more emphasis compared to the qualitative data based on the research questions of the study. Such exploration which is grounded in actual classroom practices can provide useful information when adopting particular teaching and learning strategies. The findings from both these data enabled the researcher to identify the specific requirements to implement ER programme in the classroom.

The participants of this study were from two students from a premier school. The 120 students from intact classes were randomly selected to be in the monitored and unmonitored ER groups. The students enrolled in this school were selected students and they had obtained either an A or B grade in their *Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah* examination. All the students were involved in the NILAM programme. The data collection period was carried out over a nine-month period. Group average scores were examined for all the instruments and no individual scores were compared.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This study increases awareness on the complexity of implementing ER in the classroom and the vital roles played by administrators, teachers and students. These groups will be better informed in creating, implementing and managing an ER programme because merely introducing the programme without having clear goals for each group will not create the expected results. Thus, this study showed the need to promote clear objectives of ER among the stakeholders.

This study also explores the facilitative conditions that are necessary to implement ER in actual classrooms. They provide innovations in the provision of reading instruction to ensure adequate help towards improving students' second language proficiency and motivation to read. This is because there has been limited research on how these facilitative conditions affect students' English language proficiency. This focus provides valuable insights into pedagogical beliefs for educators to evaluate and consider when restructuring and reviewing the current methods of teaching reading.

In the local context, there has been various shifts in English Language teaching. Thus, the present study on improving students' English language proficiency is in line with the current concern on strengthening the English Language teaching and learning strategies in schools.

1.10 Definition of Terms

This section defines the terms used in this study.

Extensive reading (ER) – The reading of many books and short articles from magazines, newspapers and the Internet for pleasure and enjoyment at levels that permit students to gain at least a fair understanding of what they are reading without assistance (Jacobs and Gallo,2002). In the context of this research, the term ‘pleasure reading’ is used interchangeably with ‘extensive reading’.

Reading comprehension – Refers to the ability to interact and get meaning from the articles read. It includes the ability to identify details, make inferences and draw conclusions. It tests reading comprehension based on Bloom’s Taxonomy that has a range of lower and higher order reading comprehension skills. It is also in line with the form two curriculum specifications which include identifying main ideas, cause and effect situations and drawing conclusions.

General language proficiency – This term refers to the students’ general mastery of the English language. This includes implicit knowledge of the use of various features of the language in context.

NILAM - The current reading programme implemented in schools by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in 1999.

Monitored ER – An ER programme with a scheduled class time incorporated into the timetable for students to read in the presence of the class English Language teacher.

Unmonitored ER–An ER programme without a scheduled class time for students to read and not incorporated into the timetable.

Tension free reading environment – Krashen (1993) states that in an ER environment where students feel relaxed and at ease, students learn better hence in this study the phrase means reading environment without any post-reading activities where students are free to select their own texts and stop reading if they find a text uninteresting or too difficult.

1.11 Conclusion

ER has been introduced and implemented in many countries and at various language proficiency levels to enhance second language acquisition. However, there are many factors that need to be considered when implementing an ER programme, namely the provision of a scheduled time in the timetable for students to read. The objectives of the study are to investigate the effects of ER on students' reading comprehension, general language proficiency, vocabulary and motivation to read.

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