

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: The current article aims at providing general information about the importance of foreign languages and reading for language learning. The article provides detailed information about extensive reading as well as opinions of different experts in this sphere.

Key Words: language learning, scientific literature, literacy skill, language proficiency, extensive reading, acquisition, motivation, frustration;

As it known to everybody the total number of languages in the world is from 2500 to 5000. Learning foreign languages isn't an easy thing. Nowadays it's really important to know foreign languages, especially English. Everyone, who knows foreign languages can speak to people from other countries, read foreign authors in the original, which makes our outlook wider. Language learning is a long and slow process that takes a lot of time and efforts. Foreign languages are absolutely necessary for people nowadays, because of our growing international contacts with other countries. There are many reasons, why we begin to study foreign languages. One studies a foreign language to be able to communicate with other people who speak this language, other study it for future career. If we are planning to travel to countries where the language we can speak is spoken, we can communicate with other people there and understand what they are saying to us. If we are working in any branch of science, we naturally wish to read scientific books and magazines in other languages to raise our professional level. Making business nowadays also means the ability of speaking foreign languages. The ability of speaking one or two or even more foreign languages helps people from different countries to develop mutual friendship and understanding. We can also read foreign newspapers and magazines and understand films in foreign languages without any help and translation.

As we mentioned above the English language is a wonderful language. It's the language of great literature. It's the language of William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and others. Half of the world's scientific literature is in English. There are different ways of learning languages, learning by listening, learning by writing as well as learning by speaking. Reading is one of the most effective ways of learning languages and popular skill amongst all ages of learners. Reading, as has been mentioned, is generally regarded as the "basic" literacy skill, and it is difficult to conceive of an adult who could write reasonably but could not read at all. So reading is really common way of to improve learning languages.

Reading books by different writers and poets and scientific literature really helps to improve our knowledge of learning languages and language proficiency.

Rather than consider the language proficiency thresholds necessary for "successful" reading, language pedagogy has tended to look at how reading may improve language proficiency. "The best way to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live amongst its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it," proclaims one of the experts of this sphere Nuttal.[1]

Extensive reading (i.e., independent reading of relatively long self-selected texts with minimal teacher intervention) has long enjoyed such support. (We omit here consideration of intensive classroom reading, where reading is incidental to language or skill development.) Theoretical justification for extensive reading comes from Krashen's input hypothesis, another expert in this sphere, which suggests that the crucial factor in second language acquisition is exposure to adequate amounts of comprehensible input. However, research into the effects of extensive reading has yielded mixed results. [2]

Studies of incidental vocabulary learning through extensive reading have been frequent. While most experts have yielded positive results but others such experts as White, & Krashen have revealed little vocabulary learning, and the intuitively appealing notion that extensive reading will increase reader vocabulary is clearly subject to other conditions. [3]

Most experts claim that extensive reading resulted in improvement in the readers' linguistic proficiency. Less positive research findings are reported by Lai (1993) in one of the largest investigations, which involved 18 schools in Hong Kong. Lai does, however, suggest that the program benefits those students who otherwise have little exposure to English, and also benefits high ability students with high motivation. [4]

According to Hafiz & Tudor, other research findings on the effect of extensive reading on writing are generally positive: a number of studies claim it improves writing, but there is, surprisingly, no strong evidence that it improves spelling. The view that extensive reading promotes positive attitudes to reading is widespread, although attitude assessment does not seem to have been carried out in a rigorous manner. [5]

While claims for the potential of extensive reading are intuitively appealing, it would appear to be difficult for programs to meet all the conditions necessary for "success." To cite but two of these, at the cultural level, extensive reading presupposes the acceptability of reading as a leisure activity, while at the linguistic level, the vocabulary demands of the text relative to the vocabulary knowledge of the reader is a crucial factor. Some experts suggest that some 98 percent of the text's vocabulary has to be known to prevent reader frustration. The traditional answer to this has been the production of simplified and simple reading texts, but "matching" of individual texts and readers in terms of language and interest is problematic.

To sum up, reading especially extensive reading is really effective in language learning. Extensive reading or independent reading of relatively long self-selected texts without teacher intervention can help learners not only to improve their outlooks but also to reach language proficiency and improve their writing skills as well as their vocabulary. So learners, who are interested in reading literature, can have such a great opportunity to reach language proficiency themselves.

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