

The Impact of Extensive Reading on Grammatical Mastery of Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract—This research is intended to deal with The Impact of Extensive Reading on Grammatical Mastery of Iranian EFL Learners in Bushehr city, Iran. Grammar is not only structure of language but also is the heart of language. Language without of its heart cannot be alive. Reading is defined as a visual process. It is the ability to see symbols clearly with eyes. It is a perceptual process – perception meaning that readers thought processes is able to take these symbols and to invest them with meaning. Reading as one of the language skills plays a vital role in English foreign language settings. The population of this study consisted of 40 male English language learners studying English at Educational and Cultural English Language Institute from Bushehr city in Iran. They were in the age range of 15 to 16. After the administration of Language Proficiency Test, the subjects divided into two experimental and control groups; each group consisting of 20 homogeneous students. In the treatment period, the experimental group of the students was instructed for forty five days. This paper showed that there is a significant difference between the both experimental and control groups in answering to the post-test questions and these are the participants in experimental group that had better performance than the participants in control group.

Index Terms—Iranian EFL learners, English as foreign language, extensive reading, grammatical mastery

I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research paper is to investigate the Impact of extensive reading on grammatical mastery of Iranian EFL Learners in Bushehr city, Iran. In the history of human being language has always been the tool people use to shape their ideas and communicate with others. In any language, the basic unit of the language is grammar. Freeman (2003, p.13) said that " grammar is an area of knowledge that linguists and language teachers study". With regard to this project, in generally, reading as one of the four language skills can be the most important skill for the foreign students over the world and particular, for Iranian foreign students, because; they have not the opportunity to contact with English native speakers to get knowledge of the language. Berg (1977) argued that language can be used as one of the major important vehicles of learning to read. However, time and again, it has been indicated which one's ability to read and make meaning out of the printed page depends upon one's language facility and past experience. He added that some factors such as lack of effective techniques and practice, without a direct translation between word symbol and comprehension; thus a word is compared to one in the more mother-tongue or common spoken language, insufficient background , technical details as another factor demand a reading slowly and finally factor is visual problems caused of poor reading habits. Ziahosseiny (2009, p.117) indicated that reading is a process of perceiving information through the eye. He added that" the process of reading involves extracting three levels of meaning from the printed patterns: 1) Lexical meaning, that is the semantic content of the words or group of words; 2) Structural meaning which we derive from interrelationships among words or from the order of words; 3) Social –cultural meaning, that is the evaluation that native speakers of the language attach to the words or group of words. Linse (2005) mentioned that "reading is one of the language skills that involve making sense and deriving meaning from the printed word (cited in Khansir and Gholami Dashti, 2014). Birjandi et al (2006, p 211) argued that "reading is a basic skill through which students at a higher level can learn to read great quantities of authentic materials and to read for communication".

Richards et al (1992, p. 133) mentioned that" in language teaching, reading activities are sometimes classified as extensive and intensive". They made differentiate between extensive reading and intensive reading. They defined extensive reading as reading in quantity and it is used to get a general understanding of what is read. It used in order to cause development of good reading habits, to make vocabulary knowledge and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading. According to them, intensive reading is usually used for a slower speed, and requires a higher degree of understanding than extensive reading. Ziahosseiny (2009) argued that extensive reading can be made the basis for oral reports to the rest of the class, or full class discussions in later stages of language development. It can also be the source for written compositions in which students deal with specific issues arising from the material in the book. Day and Bamford (1998) mentioned many the benefits of extensive reading are used in second language learning. One of the benefits of extensive reading is development of a positive attitude toward reading in a second language, in addition;

they believed that motivation to read and increased reading fluency along with knowledge of grammar and get in vocabulary and finally, the writing improvement in the second language can be used as the benefits of extensive reading. Krashen (1993) indicated that extensive reading not only improves reading comprehension and increases vocabulary, but also improves grammatical performance and output. Nattal (1982) argued that extensive reading can be used in order to promote good reading habits in English foreign language or English second language teaching as it provides comprehensible input for the learners, providing the reading materials are easy enough to allow them to read without difficulty (cited in Khansir and Bafandeh , 2014,p. 267).

Jackson (1985, p. 1) indicated that "the English word grammar derives ultimately from the Greek *gramma*, meaning a 'letter'. He added that in classical Greek and Latin the word *grammatica* referred to the general study of literature and language". Ur (1996, p. 75) argued that grammar is sometimes defined as the way words are put together to make correct sentences. Fromkin et al (2003) mentioned that the grammar of a language includes of the sounds and sound patterns, the basic units of meaning such as words, and the rules to combine all of these to form sentences with the desired meaning. They added that every human being who can speak his language, he can know his grammar of language. Khansir (2008) mentioned that grammar plays a vital role in language teaching. Language teachers and specialists of language argued that that grammar can help language students in order to develop their linguistic competence as part of communicative competence.

In Iranian language classroom situation, reading almost trained intensively, and the teachers used grammar translation method to teach grammatical rules which has created negative attitudes among the students. Khansir and Tabande (2014) argued that in Iran, English text books are basically designed to improve the student's knowledge of grammar. Grammar translation method in English classrooms is used by teachers. Building up the student's vocabulary and reading comprehension ability is the main purpose of the present Iranian English text books. Although there are different factors that may contribute to problems related to learning grammatical rules, using an suitable strategy of reading practice may have some effects on improving the grammatical activities of the students and making the practices more attractive to the students. Khansir and Gholami Dashti, (2014) argued that the role of reading comprehension among Iranian students is very important and they feel that need more information about it in order to get knowledge of English Language for using it in their real life situation. However, reading comprehension passages are considered as an important method in foreign language setting, especially in Iran". This paper followed questions and hypotheses as follows:

- 1) Does exposure to grammatical structures through extensive reading improve learners' mastery of grammar?
- 2) Is there any significant difference between studying grammar traditionally and learning grammar through extensive reading?

H01: Exposure to grammatical structures through extensive reading does not improve learners' mastery of grammar?

H02: there is not any significant difference between studying grammar traditionally and learning grammar through extensive reading.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several scholars, who studied the extensive reading language as a second or foreign language, have reported interesting findings:

Khansir and Bafandeh (2014) examined the Study of Effect of Extensive Reading on Enhancing Reading Comprehension and Word Recognition of Iranian Learners. In their study, 90 Iranian EFL students from Bordkhun high school, in Iran participated and divided into the experimental and control groups. Each group contained fifteen able readers, fifteen average readers and fifteen less able readers based on their reading comprehension and vocabulary scores in a multiple choice test. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant difference in reading comprehension ability and vocabulary recognition between the experimental and control group at the level. Dupay (1997) studied on extensive reading of learners who were studying French as a second language. The result of the study showed that extensive reading expanded the readers' vocabulary knowledge, increased reading comprehension and built reading confidence. Hayashi (1999) studied extensive reading in Japan country. The outcome of the study showed that extensive reading provided students with a good background knowledge, vocabulary growth, and an increased motivation to read. In addition, the learners could read fluently and discover reading strategies by themselves. Day and Bamford (1998) argued that extensive reading could help provide essential language elements for English foreign language and English second language students. By the use of extensive reading, both vocabulary and language structure could be learnt incidentally for learners and thus the learners repeatedly encounter both the vocabulary and sentence patterns. Tutwisoot (2003) studied on the extensive reading of Matayhom learners were studying at Assumption College Nakhon Ratchasima. The population for this study was fifteen Matayhom students from the science and mathematics program. In this research work, reading comprehension test, a Daily Reading Form, a Book Report Form, an Observation Form, and a questionnaire were used as research tools in order to get the purpose of the study. Finally, the outcome of the research work showed that the population of the study was satisfied with the organization of the extensive reading program and the materials provided. The research project recommended that the extensive reading program could help to develop the students reading comprehension skill.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The population for this paper was 40 male English language learners studying English at Educational and Cultural English Language Institute from Bushehr city in Iran. They were in the age range of 15 to 16. After the administration of Language Proficiency Test, the students divided into two experimental and control groups; each group consisting of 20 homogeneous students.

B. Instruments

The instruments used in the research included English Language Proficiency Test and Grammar Mastery Test. The English Language Proficiency Test was designed to elicit assess the participant's level of proficiency in English. The test consisted of 50 multiple choice vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension items. The Grammar Mastery Test is a kind of grammar test that was used as a post-test in this study in order to test the grammatical mastery of the participants in both experimental and control group. This test consisted of grammatical structures namely, Simple Past, Object Pronoun, Adverbs of Frequency, and Determiners. Thus, in this research, two kinds of books used as the research materials. The first one was 'Connect Book' that was taught for the both groups and the second one consisted of two books that were devoted to the experimental group for extensive reading. These books consisted of 'The Hat by John Escott and The Little Woman' by Louisa May. The researchers selected these books based on the subjects' level of knowledge and interests, and they included full range of the four grammatical structures that the researchers intended to do this project.

C. Procedure

To achieve the purpose of this paper, the procedures were adopted: Administration of English Language Proficiency Test and Grammar Mastery Test and Analysis of collected data. The General English Proficiency Test (Transparent) consisted of 50 multiple choice vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension items. This test was selected in order to assess the students' level of proficiency in English language. In conducted of this question, the researchers piloted the question for the target group with the same level. Thus, fifteen learners in the target group, in the English Language Institute from Bushehr city in Iran, with the same level and similar characteristics to populations of this study participated in the pilot study. The General English Proficiency Test was found to be appropriate for the participants' performing level. Its reliability through the K-R 21 formula turned out to be .89 for the subjects of this paper. After Administration of English Language Proficiency Test, the learners divided into two experimental and control groups; each group consisting of 20 homogeneous learners. The investigators developed and administered the Grammar Mastery Test as the main test of this project. It is worth noting that in order to test the reliability of this research test; the researchers selected 15 students and administered a pilot study and calculated the reliability of this test through KR-21 formula. The reliability index of this test was 0.96 which is considered as high level of reliability. After the students divided into two experimental and control groups. For about 45 days, three 75 minutes' sessions each week, the subjects studied the materials. In experimental group, at first the researchers selected two story books based on the students' English language level and interest and before each session, the learners should read one chapter of one of those selected books at their home with their own pace and paraphrase that chapter of the story book before they come to class. At the beginning of each session and before teaching the course book in experimental group, the researchers asked two or three students to give lectures about one unit of the selected reading books and discussed about different aspects of the story to make sure that all of the students comprehend the general meaning of the story. These books were selected based on the students' level and interest and included full range of the four grammatical structures that the researchers wanted to teach. Then the subjects studied their textbook (Connect Book) and did some of the grammatical exercises in their books. At the end of the course, the experimental group covered four lessons of 'Connect Book' as well as 9 units of 'The Hat' and 9 units of 'The Little Woman'. On the other hand, the control group studied 'Connect Book' traditionally and a mixture of Grammar Translation and Audio-Lingual Method was used by their researchers. Finally, each group was given a forty-item post-test to evaluate subjects' mastery of the four grammatical points. In the Post-test, 10 items were devoted to each grammatical structure: 10 items to Simple Past, 10 items to Object Pronoun, 10 items to Adverbs of Frequency, and finally 10 items to Determiners. The data obtained from the post-test scores of both experimental and control groups were analyzed in terms of mean (X), standard deviation (SD), and t-test using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) program version 16 for Window.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the Impact of extensive reading on grammatical mastery of Iranian EFL learners in Bushehr city, Iran. In this paper, descriptive statistics and t-test results of the research test administered to the students. In addition, the results of this study have been done after 45 days instruction for both control and experimental groups. Table 1 and figure 1 showed the mean scores of experimental and control groups in term of simple past test. Based on this table and its figure, the score of the experimental group is higher than the mean score of the

control group and the significance level is equaled to 0.001 which is lower than 0.05. It suggests a significant superiority of the scores of experimental group over those of control group.

TABLE 1:
COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES OF CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS FOR SIMPLE PAST CATEGORY

Group Statistics				
groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	40	14.0875	.25032	.03958
experimental	40	15.0375	.13337	.02109

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	5.452	.022	-21.183	78	.001	-.95000	.04485	-1.0392	-.8607
Equal variances not assumed			-21.183	59.49	.001	-.95000	.04485	-1.0397	-.8602

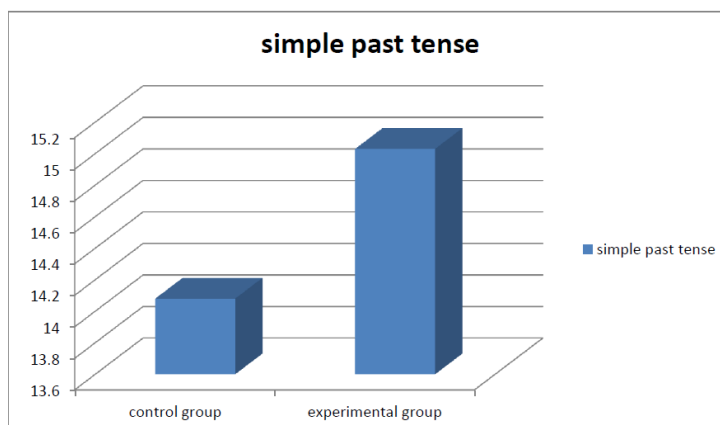


Figure 1: comparison between the mean scores of control and experimental groups for simple past category

Table 2 and figure 2 showed the results of experimental and control groups regarding the objective pronouns test. As it is shown in table 2, the mean score of experimental group is higher than that of control group and the significance level is equaled to 0.002 that is lower than 0.05., there is a significant difference between the participants of both groups in answering to the post-test questions of objective pronouns and the experimental group outperformed the control group in objective pronouns test.

TABLE 2:
COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES OF CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS FOR OBJECTIVE PRONOUNS CATEGORY

Group Statistics				
Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error M
Control	40	14.3125	.41890	.06623
experimental	40	15.2375	.45273	.07158

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.133	.717	-9.485	78	.002	.92500	.09753	1.11916	.73084
Equal variances not assumed			-9.485	77.53	.002	-.92500	.09753	1.11918	-.73082

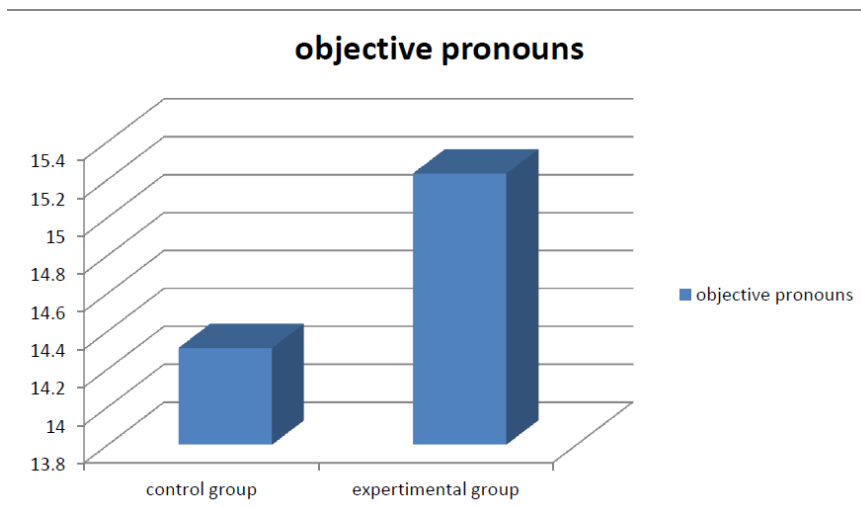


Figure 2: comparison between the mean scores of control and experimental groups for simple past category

Table 3 and its figure showed the results of the experimental and control groups regarding to adverbs of frequency category. Based on the results, the mean score of experimental group is equaled to 15.93 and the mean score of control group is equaled to 15.02 and the significance level of these two groups for this grammatical category is equaled to 0.001 which is lower than 0.05. So, there is a significant difference between the participants of both groups in answering to the post-test questions of adverbs of frequency category and the experimental group had a better performance than control group in answering to the questions of adverbs of frequency.

TABLE3:
COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES OF CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS FOR ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY CATEGORY

Group Statistics				
Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error M
Control	40	15.0250	.15811	.02500
experimental	40	15.9375	.83349	.13179

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	76.98	.001	-6.803	78	.001	-.91250	.1341	-1.179	-.6454
Equal variances not assumed			-6.803	41.80	.001	-.91250	.1341	-1.183	-.6417

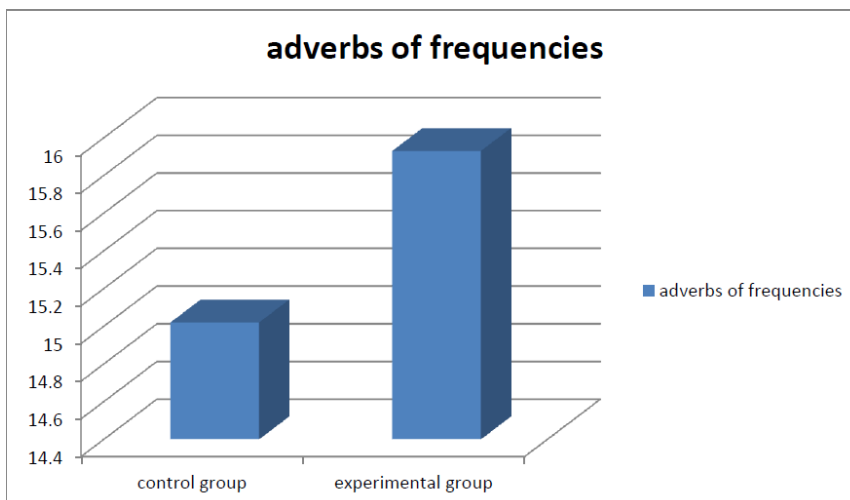


Figure 3: comparisons between the mean scores of control and experimental groups for adverbs of frequency category

The scores of the participants in both groups are presented in table.4 and its figure 4. As it is shown in this table, the mean score of participants who answered to the determiners test in control group is 15.11 and the mean score of participants in experimental group is 15.81. Based on t-test results of comparing the scores of the two groups, the significance level of the scores of both groups at significance level of 0.05 is equaled to 0.001. This showed that there is a significant difference between the participants of both groups in answering to the post-test questions of determiners test and thus, the experimental group had a better performance than control group.

TABLE 4:
COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES OF CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS FOR DETERMINERS CATEGORY

Group Statistics				
Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error M
control	40	15.1125	.23986	.03792
experimental	40	15.8125	.88931	.14061

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	115.30	.001	-4.806	78	.001	-.70000	.14564	-.98994	-.41006
Equal variances not assumed			-4.806	44.64	.001	-.70000	.14564	-.99339	-.40661

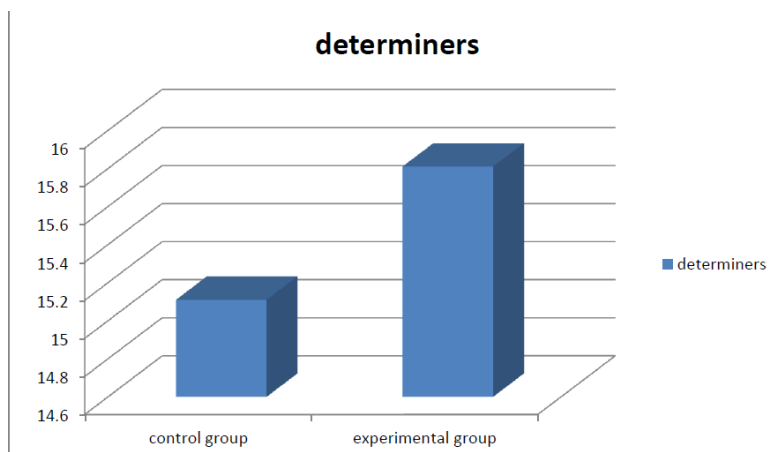


Figure 4: comparisons between the mean scores of control and experimental groups for determiners category

Discussion

In Iranian educational setting, the role of grammar and reading have always been important for Iranian EFL students and they have to pass the grammar and reading examinations in order to get promotion in their education process. In this research, it was also important to examine the concept of reading and the role of extensive reading on the Iranian learners' mastery of grammar. According to Falk (1978, p386), "reading is an active interaction of adults' knowledge of their language with material, printed or written, they perceive visually". He added that the aim of reading is to comprehend meaning. Extensive reading as one of teaching techniques in reading skill can be used for the foreign students in their target language to read materials for their enjoyment and purpose without their teachers' guidance.

V. CONCLUSION

In this research paper, two hypotheses are designed to achieve the purpose of the objective of the study. The first hypothesis was exposure to grammatical structures through extensive reading does not improve learners' mastery of grammar. Based on the scores of the subjects in this study, there is a significance difference between the two groups in answering to the post-test questions. So, the first null hypothesis is rejected and extensive reading cause the improvement of grammatical mastery of English language learners. There is not any significant difference between studying grammar traditionally and learning grammar through extensive reading was the second hypothesis of this paper. The outcome of this hypothesis also showed that there is a significance difference between studying grammar traditionally and learning grammar through incorporating extensive reading into teaching curriculum. The second null hypothesis is rejected.

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