

The Relationship between EFL Learners' Extensive Reading and English Language Proficiency

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Abstract—The present study aims at investigating the effects of extensive reading (ER) on language proficiency of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. A Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered to 106 male and female university students. The participants were selected as intermediate learners and were divided into three groups (one control and two experimental groups). During the ten sessions of the treatment, ten short stories (authentic and simplified) were provided to the two homogenous groups (two experimental groups). The first experimental group received authentic reading texts and the second experimental group received simplified reading texts, while the participants of the control group followed the ordinary reading course at the university. All three groups received post-tests administered after the treatment. The results of the t-tests revealed that there is no significant difference in reading scores across the posttest between two experimental groups. The results of ANOVA also revealed that there is a significant difference between the scores of the control group and experimental groups' participants. Based on the interview result after the post-test, all of the participants (100%) agreed that they had positive attitude toward extensive reading after participating in the treatment sessions. The study suggests, however, students' curriculum courses should include extensive reading texts in order to develop EFL language proficiency.

Index Terms—extensive reading, simplified texts, authentic texts, graded readers

I. INTRODUCTION

In the field of language teaching and learning, numerous studies have been conducted that shed some light upon different aspects of reading comprehension (Atkins, 1998; Coady & Huckin, 1997; Harley, 1995; Hatch and Brown, 1995; Huckin, Haynes, & Coady, 1993; Nation, 2001; Read, 2000; Schmitt, 2000; Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997; Wesche and Paribakht, 1999). This radical change is reflected in the view expressed by Beglar and Hunt (2005) which states that “reading comprehension is the crucial, and in some senses, the central component in successful foreign language acquisition. (p. 7)”

In Iran, the most frequent kind of reading which is practiced at universities is *intensive reading*. In this form of reading, students should carefully analyze the text with the hope of understanding the text carefully (Bamford and Day, 1997). This way of teaching reading texts has been considered as a pedagogical practice, which is a language lesson not a reading lesson (Susser and Robb, 1990). Based on Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development (2008), this is a good justification for the fact that most of Iranian university students are not good at reading English texts. They are not fluent because they translate each word into their first language while reading a text. They analyze the written text word by word and it hinders their normal way of reading. As a result, they will face many difficulties in reading a text. Overall, it leads to the development of a negative attitude toward second language learning texts.

In order to overcome this problem, students should read large quantities of reading comprehension texts based on their level as a pleasure. In the long run, when extensive reading is practiced, they will be fluent readers and at the same time they could improve their reading speed, vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension and will have a possible positive attitude toward English reading comprehension texts (Ford, 1996; Gray, 1986; Sharpe, 1995). According to Nation (1997), extensive reading is the best remedy for those who are not good at reading comprehension. By reading extensively, students can improve all their English skills such as reading, writing, and spelling, grammar, etc. (Krashen, 1993, 2004). Consequently, students will gain knowledge of learning to read well, which is the first step for language learners to get the right pass for acquiring a new language (Alderson, 1984).

According to Siramard (1992), English knowledge is one of the best tools for communication and promoting everyone's knowledge of the technology. Most Iranian students, thus, choose to take part in different English classes in

order to develop their knowledge. There has been a renewed interest in the nature of reading comprehension and its role in learning and teaching in recent years (Richards & Renandya, 2002). This is due to several reasons, such as the influence of comprehension-based approaches to language development, the research efforts of applied linguists, and the development of computer-based language corpora (Nunan, 1999).

In sum, reading is the best way to pass language problems successfully, develop the writing style, extend the vocabulary knowledge, improve grammar, and advance the spelling problems. Due to the paucity of research on extensive reading in second or foreign language learning in Iranian context, the present study sought to investigate extensive reading through finding answers to the following research questions:

1. Does extensive reading affect the language proficiency of EFL students?
2. What is the EFL learners' attitude toward the use of ER?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Cho & Krashen (1994), in an extensive reading program, the readers choose the materials by themselves from a series of graded readers with the aim of achieving them in a specific target time and period. Graded readers are in the form of short stories which are classified according to the grammar and vocabulary and are controlled for a specific age of students (Day and Bamford, 1998). It is hard to deny the benefits of extensive reading. Many studies have been conducted for nearly 20 years to show the usefulness of extensive reading approach in various aspects of language learning.

Elley and Mangubhai (1983) conducted a study on two hundred elementary students. The students participated in the extensive reading program for a year. The results showed that their receptive skills (reading and words recognition) improved significantly. In the second year of exposure to extensive reading texts, other abilities (oral and written production) of the subjects improved too.

Another study was conducted on extensive reading by Hafiz and Tudor (1989). The participants were Turkish students who took part in a four month extensive program. The researchers found an improvement in the reading and writing ability. Robb and Susser (1989) conducted a similar study in Japan with Taiwanese students who participated in an extensive reading program. They found that the students reading proficiency made a substantial improvement. Based on Elley (1991)'s study on extensive reading program, the primary level students of Singapore who took part in this study improved in many areas of English language, such as listening, reading, and writing. Lai (1993) found improvement in speaking and writing among secondary students who participated in a four-week extensive reading program in Korea.

Cho and Krashen (1994) found that by exposing the students to extensive reading, the attitudes of the readers can change and their language proficiency can improve. They performed their study with 80 adults who were Chinese living in the United States. The participants read the stories that were designed for senior high school boys and the texts were appropriate for 5 grade level. At the end of the treatment, the result confirmed the researcher's hypothesis of improving in language proficiency. Polak & Krashen (1988) found that extensive reading program is very useful for reading comprehension. They conducted their survey among junior students of Korea for about 9 weeks. The results showed that they improved a lot in their reading comprehension. According to Mason and Krashen (1997), extensive reading can have a positive effect on readers. They performed an experiment on Japanese high school students and the results showed gains in positive affective and an improvement in comprehension.

Pigada and Schmitt (2006) reported an increase in vocabulary knowledge among Japanese university students in the United States after taking part in an extensive reading program for one month. They found that students can acquire vocabulary by being exposed to extensive reading texts. Day & Bamford (2002) conducted an experiment with Japanese high school student. They gave them extensive reading at their level and the students read them silently in their free time for entertainment. The result was positive, and the students acquired a good knowledge of vocabulary incidentally.

A survey was conducted by Yamazaki (1996) with high school students of Africa. The students engaged in this extensive reading program for 8 weeks. In the end, the results showed that their vocabulary knowledge increased. Pigada and Schmitt (2006), who conducted a two month case study in the U.S., reported an increase in vocabulary knowledge of 29 year old African learners of French. In addition to vocabulary, they improved in spelling, meaning understanding and comprehending the grammatical points.

Sakar and Ercetin (2005) studied 44 adult intermediate level learners and found that learners prefer authentic texts significantly more than the simplified texts. They also found a positive relationship between authentic reading texts and comprehension and suggest that simplified texts may be useful for the lower-level learners to process additional information better. Merlot (2000) found similar effects especially for intermediate and upper-intermediate students and stated that the learners can improve their grammatical, structural and lexical part of their language through exposing to authentic texts.

In a small study of 13 second-year German students, Chun and Payne (2004) concluded that students who had a lower level of language proficiency used simplified texts in order to understand the text better. They suggest that a rich multimedia environment (comprehensible input) increases the cognitive load on students and this can have an impact on comprehension.

In a small study of 55 second-year German students, Chun and Payne (2004) concluded that students who had a

higher verbal working memory capacity prefer authentic reading texts more than modified texts. They suggest that higher level reading texts increases the cognitive load on students and this can have an impact on reading comprehension.

Fan (2003) reports on the use of simplified reading texts by Chinese fourth grade students, using different graded readers and short stories for about 10 weeks and the researcher reported a significant difference between their pre- and post-test scores. Fan found that the majority of students (90%) decided to continue reading after the treatment. Hafiz & Tudor (1989) reports on the result of a survey about the use of simplified and authentic texts by international students entering a university in England for the 1995-1996 academic years. 50 students used simplified and 50 students used authentic texts as their extensive reading texts. Both groups took part in a proficiency test after two month exposure to reading texts. The result showed that the authentic group members better performance.

A study by William & Moran (1989) involved 254 Chinese and Japanese ESL students in Vancouver, Canada. Her study differs from other studies on reading texts use in that it employed modified and authentic texts. They found that 87% of the Japanese students who read modified texts got better remark in their posttest. Krashen (1993) investigated the effects of extensive reading on reading comprehension of EFL learners, using 105 American college students of Spanish. The students were assigned to read short stories (simplified and authentic) on the computer screen. The computer was programmed to track the subjects' spending time. Krashen (1993) found that the experimental group with access to the authentic texts performed better in both immediate and delayed tests than the group with access to the simplified texts and benefited more. The experimental group also achieved higher reading comprehension scores than the control group.

Mason & Krashen (1997) was one of the early researchers who investigated the effects of extensive reading on reading comprehension of EFL learners. They compared simplified texts with authentic texts in effectiveness for improving a reading comprehension task. Each of 200 beginning-level Brazilian learners of English took part in a reading comprehension tests after the treatment. Students were able to understand 89% of the passage in the simplified group, and 75% in the authentic group, so it indicates that the extensive reading texts improved the reading comprehension for beginners. According to Yamazaki (1996), eighty Japanese undergraduate and graduate students took part in his experiment. They took two types of vocabulary tests (immediate and delayed test). The scores on both the tests were higher among the authentic group than in the modified group. However, there was no significant difference on the test scores between the two conditions.

Schmitt & McCarthy (1997) also investigated the relative effects of modified texts to real texts on empirical and perceived efficiency of these texts on language proficiency of EFL learners. Seventy-seven university students took a comprehension test that required answering the test comprehension. They also completed a survey about their perceptions of the two types of texts. The results indicated that there were no differences between the two types of dictionaries but the participants overwhelmingly preferred authentic texts more than modified.

A more recent experiment by Kobayashi (2000) was an attempt to examine how Japanese EFL learners evaluate extensive reading texts when using authentic and modified texts. Eighty six college students and sixty high school students read both authentic and modified English texts. A week after the experiment, they were given two types of tests: modified and authentic. Students also answered a questionnaire about their impressions on the kinds of texts they had used. Kobayashi (2000) found no significant differences in respect to either the number of words they had learned, although the college students group tended to read more authentic texts. There were no significant differences in their grades at the end of treatment.

III. METHOD

A. *Participants*

The participants of this study consisted of one hundred six (n=106) male and female university students, ranging in age from 20 to 22, who were in their second semester. They were all majoring in English translation at Adib University, Sari, Iran. All of them were native speakers of Persian who were selected for convenience. They had learned English for six years; three years in guidance school and three years in high school prior to pre-university studies. The reason why university students were selected was that they had passed the university entrance examination in English translation and had enough knowledge to read intermediate graded readers stage (3 and 4). Although the participants were purportedly homogeneous in terms of their common experience in English learning, a Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered to them in order to determine their level of general English proficiency. Based on the PET, one hundred six students were selected.

Furthermore, the participants were assessed based on their first semester reading course grade by their first semester English professor. Therefore being homogeneous in terms of the level of English language proficiency, they were assessed based on their previous reading course grade. Table 3.1 shows the demographic information of the participants.

TABLE 3.1
PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Category	Description	Number
Experimental group 1 (authentic)	University students	35
Experimental group 2 (simplified)	University students	36
Control group	University students	35
	Total	106

B. Design

In this study, the researchers used a true-experimental design. Participants were assigned to the experimental and control groups by random assignment before the use of pretest on the dependent variable. The experimental subjects were exposed to the treatment for a specified time, after which the two groups were measured on the dependent variables. Post-tests were run after the treatment to compare the means of the groups.

C. Research Instruments

The reading passages used in this study were selected from the graded readers of two famous publishers (Oxford Graded Readers and Penguin Readers) (see Appendices A). These graded readers series were chosen based on their popularity among extensive reading researchers (Bamford & Day, 1997). They used reading texts from these publications for their different extensive studies. Prior to the treatment sessions, proficiency tests were used both for obtaining homogeneous groups and as a pretest. In order to ensure the homogeneity of the groups, the Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered to the participants. Based on the results interpreted by referring to the test guide level, the majority of scores ranged from 40 to 80 which indicated that they were intermediate level learners.

The second research instrument used in the present research for data collection was an open-ended interview with the participants at the end of the treatment in order to analyze the participants' attitudes toward extensive reading.

D. Procedure

The experimental procedure consisted of three stages: Pretests, Treatments, and Posttests. One week before the study, a standardized English proficiency test (Preliminary English Test) was administered to a total of 112 participants. Those participants who were located two standard deviations above and below the mean were selected to participate in this study. Having analyzed the data, 106 participants were selected as the intermediate-level learners. The other six participants were deleted. Three students scored much higher than the others who were excluded from the participants. Three other students performed lower than what was expected. They were excluded as well. Once the researcher made certain that the participants formed a homogenous sample, the participants were randomly divided into three groups. The researcher ran the pre-test on the 21st of February at 11 o'clock. There were 5 questions in the reading PET test (pre-test), and the exam time was about 45 minutes. The students were supposed to read the reading text in each section and answer the comprehension questions after the text.

Having completed the pre-test stage, the participants in the two experimental groups received the treatments in 10 sessions. The participants in the two experimental groups read 10 short stories during the treatment. During the treatment sessions, the researcher and the participants tried to discuss and consult with each other about the content of the story. The classes for both groups were held one session a week, beginning at 11:30 in the morning until half past twelve and instructed by one of the present researchers. The treatment sessions of one experimental (simplified) group were held on Saturdays while the treatment sessions of the other experimental were held on Sundays on a computer site of the university. In all classes, the researcher spent about one hour in order to solve the participant's misunderstanding and reading comprehension problems. The first experimental group used *authentic texts* for their treatment while the second experimental group used *simplified texts* for their treatment. Students in both groups were instructed to read the texts and understand it without using their dictionaries.

The post-test was administered in the thirteenth session; the participants in all three groups received the modified version of the PET test. The test was a reading comprehension test consisting of five parts items to be answered in 45 minutes under the supervision of a teacher. Every part consisted of a short or long paragraph that the participants were supposed to read and answer the questions about the texts. They were informed that incorrect responses would have no negative points.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One hundred six students were selected from a population of university students and were purportedly homogeneous in terms of their standardized English proficiency test (Preliminary English Test) scores, to make sure about their level of general English proficiency. Based on PET-test leveling result and the obtained scores of the participants, the participants were considered intermediate level. It should be reminded that a t-test is a statistical test which is employed to make sure whether significant (non-chance) differences can be found between two means or not (Bamford & Day, 1997). The results of the pre-test performance of the participants are shown in Table 4.1.

A. Results of Proficiency Test

TABLE 4.1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PRETEST RESULTS ON PROFICIENCY TEST

	authentic1	simplified1	control1
Mean	50.3143	45.5278	45.6000
N	35	36	35
Std. Deviation	20.20887	15.29983	20.17453
Std. Error of Mean	3.41592	2.54997	3.41012
Minimum	21.00	21.00	19.00
Maximum	108.00	85.00	116.00

As it could be seen in Table 4.1, the mean scores of authentic, simplified and control groups are 50.3143 and 45.5278, and 45.6000 respectively. The results in this table show that the size of mean difference is small among the groups but in order to make it clear whether the mean difference is small or big at the beginning of the study, the researcher conducted a one way ANOVA in order to analyze it accurately. In table 4.2 you will see the result of one way ANOVA. Based on the result of ANOVA (.471>0.5), it could be claimed that there is no significant difference between the groups at the beginning of the treatment and they are homogeneous. Therefore, the three groups did not differ significantly in their performance on the pre-test at .05 level of significance indicating the fact that the three groups were similar before the start of the experiment.

TABLE 4.2
ANALYSIS OF THE PRE-TEST MEAN DIFFERENCE OF THE THREE GROUPS (TWO EXPERIMENTAL AND ONE CONTROL)
ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	529.236	2	264.618	.759	.471
Within Groups	35916.915	103	348.708		
Total	36446.151	105			

- The significant level has set at <.05

B. Results of Posttest for the Control and Experimental Groups

The results obtained from the post-tests are presented in 4.3. In order to see whether the treatment given to the experimental groups had any effects on their language proficiency and to see if the participants in these groups performed significantly different on their post-test, another ANOVA was conducted. The results of the second ANOVA are presented in Table 4.4.

TABLE 4.3
RESULTS OF POSTTEST FOR THE CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
Authentic 2	35	67.8571	19.21571	3.24805	33.00	113.00
Simplified 2	36	67.2778	16.14862	2.69144	30.00	102.00
Control 2	35	49.8000	19.34638	3.27013	25.00	118.00
Total	106	61.6981	19.95479	1.93818	25.00	118.00

The mean and standard deviation of the experimental group's pre- and post-tests were calculated through the use of SPSS 20. We sought to know which kinds of texts had a better effect on participant's language proficiency at the end of the treatment. In order to examine the differences and see whether they were significant, an independent sample t-test was applied. The results demonstrated in Table 4.5 indicate that the mean difference between the two experimental groups' scores, which measured at the time of the posttest, was not significant. Therefore, it indicates that the both reading texts (simplified and authentic) had the same effect for the participants.

TABLE 4.4
THE RESULTS OF POST-TESTS

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7403.232	2	3701.616	11.081	.000
Within Groups	34407.108	103	334.050		
Total	41810.340	105			

Based on the result of the Table 4.3, there is a significant difference between the mean score of the control group and the experimental groups after the treatment. Thus, it could be claimed that that the treatment period was effective for the experimental groups' participants.

TABLE 4.5
 PAIRED SAMPLES TEST (POST-TEST)

Post test difference	Paired Differences			t	f	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1 authentic2- simplified2	-.02857	28.91212	4.88704	-.006	4	.995

As Table 4.5 shows, the probability value is bigger than the level of significance, $P = 0.995 > .05$. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of PET test between the participants in extensive group 1 (authentic) and extensive group 2 (simplified) on their post-test. Their mean scores were, 67.85 and 67.88, respectively (Table 4.3). Therefore, the second null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in PET scores across the posttest between simplified and authentic groups of experimental groups is accepted. The result of the present study is in contrast to the previous studies (Sakar and Ercetin, 2005; Merlot, 2000) that claimed that authentic text can have more influence on reader’s language proficiency.

As Table 4.3 indicates, the mean score of the posttest in experimental groups are 67.8571 and 67.2778, while that of control group is 49.8000. In order to examine the differences between experimental groups and control group’s post-test scores, and see whether their mean scores were significant, an independent sample t-test was applied twice, once between authentic 2 and control 2 and once between simplified 2 and control 2 (table 4.6). The results demonstrated in Table 4.4 and 4.6 indicate that the mean difference between both groups’ scores measured at the time of the posttest was significant. Therefore, the first null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in PET scores across the posttest between experimental groups (simplified and authentic) and control group, is rejected.

TABLE 4.6
 PAIRED SAMPLES TEST

	Paired Differences			t	f	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1 authentic2-control1	18.05714	23.50337	3.97279	4.545	34	.000
Pair 2 simplified2-control1	18.08571	27.75881	4.69209	3.855	34	.000

C. Comparing the Pre- and Post-tests

By analyzing the participants’ performance (Table 4.7) on both pre- and post-tests, the researchers came to the conclusion that in all groups the participants performed better in their post-test as their mean scores indicates. In comparison to control group, the experimental groups performed remarkably better than the control group. It indicates that extensive reading had a positive effect on the language proficiency of the participants, and comparing the two t-values of the experimental groups (table 4.8) indicates that the participants in the simplified group performed better, although their differences were not significant.

TABLE 4.7
 COMPARING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN THEIR PER- AND POST-TEST

	authentic1	authentic2	simplified1	simplified2	control1	control2
Mean	50.3143	67.8571	45.5278	67.2778	45.6000	49.8000
N	35	35	36	36	35	35
Std. Deviation	20.20887	19.21571	15.29983	16.14862	20.17453	19.34638

TABLE 4.8
 PAIRED SAMPLES TEST (T-VALUE)

	Paired Differences	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
					Mean
Pair 1 authentic1 - authentic2	17.54286	10.42154	9.959	34	.000
Pair 2 simplified1 - simplified2	21.75000	8.41894	15.501	35	.000
Pair 3 control1 - control2	4.20000	4.07142	6.103	34	.000

As Table 4.7 shows, each of the experimental groups’ post-test mean scores are remarkably higher than their pre-test mean scores, so it indicates that the treatment had affected the participants positively, whereas the subjects in the control group who did not have any treatment course in this study did not improve significantly. Looking at the sig (2tailed) value in table 4.8, which is less than .05 ($p < .000$), we can reach this conclusion that there is a significant difference between their performance on pre- and post-reading comprehension tests, especially for the experimental groups.

TABLE 4.9
 PAIRED SAMPLES STATISTICS OF THREE GROUPS
 (DIFFERENCES OF THE MEAN SCORES (PRE AND POST) AMONG THREE GROUPS)

Paired Samples Statistics		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	authentic1	50.3143	35	20.20887	3.41592
	authentic2	67.8571	35	19.21571	3.24805
Pair 2	simplified1	45.5278	36	15.29983	2.54997
	simplified2	67.2778	36	16.14862	2.69144
Pair 3	control1	45.6000	35	20.17453	3.41012
	control2	49.8000	35	19.34638	3.27013

Based on the numerical data of Table 4.9, the mean score (pre-test) of all three groups were very close (in favor for the authentic extensive reading group). It is understood that the students are at the same reading comprehension level. After conducting the treatment (extensive reading), the mean scores of these three groups (simplified, authentic, control) were compared and it was found that the participants in the experimental groups (simplified and authentic) performed better than those in the control group on their posttest. Therefore, based on these numerical data (table 4.9), we can answer the first research question which was about the effect of extensive reading texts on language proficiency of the students.

According to the mean scores of the post-test within the experimental groups, it was found that the participants in both experimental groups had a better performance and got better scores. The mean score difference within the authentic and simplified groups were 17.5428 and 21.75 respectively and by comparing the mean score of the pre and post-tests in control group, we came to this conclusion that their post-test mean score was higher than the pre-test with a mean difference of 4.2. Based on the differences between the pre- and post-test scores of the simplified and authentic groups which are 21.75 and 17.54 respectively, it could be concluded that the participants in the simplified group outperformed the other participants in the authentic group.

D. Open-ended Interview Results

In this section, the results of the open-ended interview with 40 participants (20 participants from authentic group and 20 participants from simplified group) are presented. The participants in the interview session answered 7 questions related to extensive reading texts and their attitudes about it. The interview questions and the responses by the interviewees are presented below.

Q1: What do you think about extensive reading?

All the interviewees (100%) in both simplified and authentic groups had the same point of view. All of them considered extensive reading texts useful for them and had positive attitudes toward extensive reading. Some of them (75%) answered that reading English is useful for their future career and they can get various kinds of information when they expose to English reading texts. 26 students (65%) pointed that they felt anxious when they did not know all the words before the treatment. However, they claimed that, after being exposed to the treatment on extensive reading, they feel that they can read many texts without anxiety although they do not know some of the meanings of the new words. About 45% (18 students) said that reading English is enjoyable and useful when get a good grade in class.

Q2: Do you think extensive reading is useful for you? If so, why do you think extensive reading is useful? Do you want to continue extensive reading? Why or why not?

The answers of all the interviewees were the same as the answers to the previous question. All of them (100%) considered the extensive reading useful and they pointed that it is a reasonable way of improving the second language. All of them pointed that they want to continue reading because when they read English texts as a hobby in their free time they enjoy reading English books and reading extensive reading short stories will broaden their view. 15 students (38%) commented that reading English books developed their literacy skills and helped them to understand English literature better. All of them unanimously agreed that Extensive reading (ER) was useful and interesting for them because it improved their language proficiency.

Q3: What was your attitude toward reading texts before participating in this treatment study?

Only 5 students (13%) had positive attitudes toward reading texts. The rest of the learners (87%) did not have positive attitudes toward reading texts. They said they had many problems with reading. As an example, they pointed that when they read English texts they felt that reading the texts was difficult for them, they got so confused and they could not remember what they were reading and they felt intimidated whenever they encountered unknown grammar or vocabulary and they got nervous and confused when they could not understand every word. They did not feel confident when they read in English. They also were not satisfied with the level of reading ability that they had achieved so far in English. They believed that this way of exposure to reading texts would extend their confidence, motivation, autonomy and helped them to improve their reading comprehension. They also mentioned that they benefited from in-class activities related to extensive reading.

Q4: Do you believe that ER improves your English?

About 32 interviewees (80%) mentioned that their grammar, vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension improved significantly in this period. 10 student commented that their reading speed improved. And about 37% of the

participants pointed that their reading fluency extended.

Q5: Do you think learning to read English is an important skill for developing language proficiency in a foreign language?

About 37 of the participants (92.5%) mentioned that extensive reading texts are one of the best ways for improving language proficiency. Moreover; about 8% of the participants did not consider extensive reading texts as the main way of improving language proficiency.

Q6: What was your experience after taking part in this treatment study? Was it an interesting experience?

All of the participants unanimously agreed that they had a great experience during the treatment and they enjoyed the extensive reading classes. They also wanted to take part in the treatment sessions again and have another experience.

Q7: Which one do you like more, intensive or extensive reading?

About 36 of the participants (90%) considered extensive reading better than intensive classes based on their experience. They think they enjoy extensive reading (ER) texts better than intensive reading (IR) texts and they mentioned that dealing with intensive reading is tedious and boring. According to their point of view, they can learn English better through exposure to extensive texts which are at their level of proficiency. They mentioned that they can learn different aspects of English language (vocabulary, grammar etc.) easier by reading the kinds of texts that you enjoy, read in your free time and without any pressure. The rest of the participants (10%) think that although extensive reading is an effective way of improving English language, intensive reading is more effective.

E. Discussion

The main result of this study is that both groups in the experimental groups (simplified and authentic) showed a significant improvement after taking part in the treatment. Such an improvement was not observed in the control group. Significant differences were found between control and experimental groups in language proficiency learning and as measured by the PET posttests suggesting that achievement in experimental groups improved as a result of exposure to extensive reading texts. This means that use of extensive reading proved to be a powerful tool for improving students' achievement in second language learners' language proficiency. This finding is consistent with findings of prior studies using this form of technology in extensive reading such as Bamford and Day (2005), Day and Bamford (1998), and Hill and Thomas, (1988).

Findings of the study reported here also revealed that learners will indeed learn significantly better when they are provided with extensive reading texts (both authentic and simplified). This is congruent with the language proficiency Theory (Eskey and Grabe (1986), which states that information coded in authentic texts are as effective for learning as information coded in simplified form of the texts. Furthermore, the findings of this study confirmed the previous findings of studies carried out by such researchers as Alderson (2005); Grabe (1991) and Eskey and Grabe (1986), who found the satisfactory role of extensive reading in language proficiency. Therefore, the results suggested that both texts (simplified and authentic) in extensive reading treatment is beneficial to the learners, possibly due to the fact that they received two kinds of useful input reading texts (Ellis, 1994).

The two main findings of this study was that the participants in both experimental groups (simplified and authentic) showed a significant increase in their language proficiency due to the extensive reading program implemented in their course at the university.. Such an increase was not observed in the control group. This finding was measured by a PET-test that aimed at reading comprehension knowledge only. Based on the results reported in Table 4.7, it is concluded that the participants' performance in the two experimental groups (simplified and authentic) improved more than the participants' performance in the control group.

V. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effectiveness of extensive reading texts on language learning of one hundred six university EFL learners at the intermediate level. Similar to findings of previous research carried out in the field (Hitosugi and Day, 2004; Day and Bamford, 2002), the results indicated that both reading texts (simplified and authentic) are useful in language learning of EFL learners. Some different patterns of use between simplified and authentic reading texts were identified, which seem to result from design features of two types of reading texts. Both texts are perceived as with different advantages and disadvantages for the learners. Possibly, the simple vocabulary and grammar of the simplified texts can help learners to improve their language proficiency step by step and the real contexts of authentic texts can expose learners to the real nature of second language.

It was also found that there are no significant differences between simplified and authentic reading texts in language learning of EFL learners. As a result, it proved to be a beneficial learning tool, since these texts (simplified and authentic) enhances language learning in general. This study also confirms that exposure to extensive reading texts, as a language learning method, which supports the power of reading in improving the language proficiency, can enhance specially reading comprehension. Therefore, the study provides evidence for integrating the extensive reading texts in the curriculum of language learning and teaching.

Implications and Applications of the Study

By and large, at the practical level, the results of this study have some pedagogical implications for teachers

and students. Besides, some important implications should receive the attention of decision makers.

There is no doubt that teachers play an important role in integrating reading texts into their classes. However, implementing extensive reading texts are challenging for the teachers when these texts are not in the main curriculum course of the students. Teachers should consult with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, and explain the effectiveness of extensive reading texts on language proficiency of the students, so that they can use various forms of extensive readings more and more in education inside and outside the classroom to facilitate language proficiency. Teachers could assign the task of reading specific texts in extensive readings. These would be reading texts that teachers, on the basis of their experience, know are useful for their students.

Moreover, offering constant extensive reading texts to the students is very crucial in that they should adapt themselves to the ways of effective language learning. Furthermore, the increasing importance of developing language proficiency, requires that teachers rethink about their way of teaching and try new approaches to meet the challenges posed by implementing extensive reading texts in to the supplementary curriculum of the students.

As for the implications of the study for students, it is suggested that students should be trained on how to use and enjoy different types and levels of extensive reading texts. Learners should also be encouraged to access different kinds of information found in extensive reading texts. They frequently read the assigned reading texts by teachers, without implementing more reading texts in their daily reading schedules. Moreover, the assignments given to the students should involve more extensive reading texts so that literacy gaps can be bridged.

Decision makers and educational authorities, i.e., curriculum planners and syllabus designers, should change the curriculum and reading style of the students. They should include more extensive reading texts in the language planning, and more budgets should be allocated to schools to provide the teachers and students with desperately needed extensive reading texts. The authorities should know that, by adding more reading texts to the present curriculum of the learners, they can guarantee the language proficiency of the EFL language learners. If extensive reading texts are not used inside or outside the classes, it might not be due to the teachers' fault, but it might originate from the negligence on the part of administrators and school or government authorities. So authorities should provide training courses, seminars, workshops and discussion groups for the teachers to get familiar with theoretical and practical foundations of extensive reading, and consequently they can develop their teaching pedagogy.

This study opens avenues for further research. For example, the present research did not distinguish between the reading strategies of participants. The rich literature on Individual Learner Differences (ILDs) suggests, "There is a particularly wide variation among language learners in terms of their ultimate success in mastering an L2" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 6). Therefore, there is a need to carry out the same study taking into account the participants' reading strategies. Some learners might be understand the texts by answering questions; while others, understand better nr summarizing (Ellis, 1994). The present study investigated intermediate Iranian EFL students reading comprehension. It could be valuable if another study subsequent study could examine the reading comprehension of students with elementary or advanced levels of proficiency through the same procedure.

This study examined reading 10 short stories (simplified and authentic) in a ten weeks treatment. Aside from the fact that ten short stories in ten weeks are relatively small to provide us with airtight proof, a similar study is needed to conduct longer period of treatment along with more short stories. Experimental study can potentially provide more versatile tool for portraying qualities in improving second language learning. This study also did not control for gender. A similar study could investigate the effect of gender variable on extensive reading.

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