The Effect of Extensive Reading Instruction on Arab EFL Students' Speaking Skill

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to investigate the effect of extensive reading (ER) program on the speaking skills of secondary Arab EFL students in the Negev. The participants were in the eleventh grade and this study lasted eight months or first and second semester of the academic year 2020/2021.

The recent study attempts to answer the question: Is there a significant effect of extensive reading program on improving EFL students' speaking skills.

The participants of the study are 53 students, 26 in the experimental group and 27 in the control. The instruments used in this research are the extensive reading program, speaking skills test and a rubric for evaluating the students speaking skills test. Validity and reliability of the study instrument were obtained.

The findings of the study: Extensive reading instruction(ER) improves students' language skills especially speaking; in addition, this instruction helps learners develop their ability to convey opinions, improving vocabulary enrichment. Moreover, it improves the participants' accuracy and fluency. Finally, Extensive reading contributes to improving grammar skills and develop interpersonal communication. Based on the findings of the study, itis recommended that other researchers conduct additional studies to investigate the effect of extensive reading instructions on the other skills such as writing and listening.

Index Terms: ER, Speaking skills, EFL, Instruction

Introduction

Reading outside the environment of the classroom has a significant influence on speaking skill. Students who do reading comprehension a lot are more likely to represent speaking well. Through readings, students improve the fluency and accuracy of utterances in their speaking. Davies and Pearse (2000) stressed the importance of communication as "Real success in English teaching and learning is when the learners can actually communicate in English inside and outside the classroom."

With the increasing importance of English language throughout the world in general and in Israel in particular, Arab parents and educators in Israel began to be aware about their children's level in English, whichis considered low. They began to look for solutions to this problem.

Speaking is being capable of speech, expressing or exchanging opinions through using language. "Speaking is a creative aural/oral skill and it containsmaking systematic verbal utterances to deliver meaning (Nunan, 2003, p.48)." (Harmer, 2001) notes down that from the communicative point of view, speaking has many different aspects including two major categories – accuracy, involving the correct use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation practiced through controlled and guided activities; and, fluency, considered to be 'the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously'

This study will shed lights on vocabulary and grammar knowledge.Extensive Reading (ER) will enable EFL learners to develop their vocabulary retention and grammar competence, which will effectively contribute to the speaking skills. Vocabulary knowledge is indispensable for effective communication. Lewis (1993, p.23) claims that learning vocabulary is essential task in second language learning SLA, and any language skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating cannot exist without vocabulary.

Laufer (1997) stresses the importance of vocabulary knowledge and adds that without words to express a wider range of meaning, communication in a second language cannot happen in a meaningful way. Learners will improve their speaking competence if they have better vocabulary knowledge, which they can get through reading.

English as a foreign language is considered as an integral part of the Israeli matriculation (BAGRUT). Without getting a good mark in English, students cannot continue their academic studies in either the universities or colleges. Therefore, their success in higher learning will be very limited.

Elazar (1993) states that Israeli Arab students encounter problems in learning English and a low percentage of them passes the English examination in the matriculation. He attributes the Arab students' low

achievement in English to the lack of exposure to English native speaking community. The Arab students practice English formally in the classroom setting.

Spolsky and Shohamy (1999) attribute the low percentage of Arab school graduates in universities and colleges to the Israeli higher education institutes. These institutes require a high level of proficiency in English, ignoring the needs of some sectors as the Arab sector whose students encountering difficulties in English. This condition may be a barrier for university entrance.

Researchers and educators agree that Arab school graduates in Israel are notproficientenough in English (Amara, 2002; Spolsky and Shohamy, 1999; Elazar, 1993) however; very few studies have been conducted to examine methods, approaches and strategies of teaching and learning to improve the students' achievements in English. All the studies focused on the students' weaknesses and the reasons for this problem. Fewer studies offer solutions to the problem.

The inspectorate for teaching English seems to be worried about the Arab students' achievement in English. Therefore, in 1998 a new curriculum was approved in Israeli schools including the Arab sector (Spolsky and Shohamy, 1999). In the new curriculum, it was suggested to teach according to domains rather than skills. Four domains are proposed: social interaction, access to information, presentation and appreciation of literature, culture and language. The inspectorate also puts the focus on Extensive Reading (ER) especially for students who lack exposure to English native speakers. This approach exposes the students to authentic English through reading graded readers.

Schools and English teachers were to use the instruction of Extensive Reading (ER) by enforcing their pupils to read books and stories individually at home.

Nuttall(1982)has appeared discussing some various aspect of teaching FL reading by ER. Unfortunately, little data based has been done on extensive reading as an L2 pedagogic procedure(Rob, T. and Susser, B.1989).

EFL instructors are usually reluctant to do extensive reading activities in class because they need to cover their syllabus. They usually disregard activities that can be held outside the classroom for the elementary students such as, reading books or papers. It may be because it is difficult to assess or because they do not want to fall behind the curriculum (Tiryaki, Z &Tutunis,B, 2012)

Zimmerman (1997) claims that incidental vocabulary acquisition is a time consuming, and unpredictable process and hence, raise questions about the appropriacy of the approach for second language learners. Whereas Laufer (1998) states that knowledge of vocabulary of language use both in L1 and L2 is very crucial. Communication at any level, whether transactional or interactional, is based on knowing what the words in the language mean.

Significance of Research

The aim of this study is to find out whether extensive reading hassignificant effect on EFL Arab learner's speaking skill. To that effect, two groups of high school students are investigated, an experimental 'intervention group' and 'a control group' which will not do the extensive reading program.

The experiment is designed to shed light on the following questions:
- Will there be a significant progress in speaking skill of Arab EFL learners in the read and intervention group after an extensive reading program?
- Is there a significant difference in speaking skill between read and intervention group and the control group which do extensive reading program?

It is common for teachers of English as a foreign language to use varied techniques in the language class to help their students improve their speaking skills. The use of ER to improve speaking skill is widely proposed in the literature of learning English as a foreign language, (Abou Baker, 1996; Khater, 2002; Bakir, 2004). In the context of research-based practices, many teachers may be skeptical about allowing the use of a new educational instruction until the effects of this instruction has been clearly documented through research. The current study examines the effectiveness of an ER program in improving the speaking skill of Arab students in Israel, to the best knowledge of the researchers; this is one of fewattempts to determine whether Arab EFL students' speaking skill significantly improves when they are exposed to the ER program.

Literature Review

The term "extensive reading" ER was originated by Palmer in 1917 in order to distinguish it from intensive reading IR. This term was defined as reading longer texts only for pleasure in simple and clear language forms and the aim was determined as comprehending the general meaning and being able to follow it to the end without the intention of focusing on grammatical and lexical items (Chiu-Kuei, 2015).

Reading is one of the most effective ways of foreign language learning. Reading simply is the interpretation of a written message. Hill (1979) defined reading as what the reader does to get the meaning he

needs from the contextual resources.Reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning (Nunan, 2003).

Hedge (2003) writes the goals of learners' in a reading process:
-   The ability to read a wide range of texts in English.
-   -Building a knowledge of language which will facilitate reading ability
-   Building schematic knowledge
-   Developing an awareness of the structure of written texts in English
-   Taking a critical stance to the contexts of the texts

In order to understand how language functions, learners should give attention to grammar. "If we only understand what others say partially and superficially, the communication of ideas can't be properly realized (Zhang, 2009, p.63)." Through reading learners see how words fit together. When learners constantly engage in the target language, they begin noticing and mastering the patterns in the language.

Mccarthy (2000) states that lexical and grammatical knowledge are correlated to reading comprehension. This means students will achieve better reading comprehension through grammar. Knowledge of vocabulary of a language is essential for aspects of language use in both L1 and L2. Communication at any level, whether spoken or written based on knowing what the words of a language mean.

One of the major goals of schools and adult education everywhere is reading. In pursuit of this goal, students and educators are concerned with vocabulary acquisition. The relationship between vocabulary size and reading comprehension seems to be unassailable research finding and word knowledge is crucial for learning (Laufer, 1997). This means that reading comprehension is strongly related to vocabulary knowledge. Increased vocabulary leads to improvement in all language components Stahl, 1993and Becket et al 1982).

Laufer (1997) claims that insufficient vocabulary is the most important barrier for L2 readers. Vocabulary size, in term of the vocabulary richness of the text, is also related to text readability, i.e., the ease or difficulty of a text for a range of readers.

Anderson and Freebody (1983) stated: "vocabulary difficulty has always proved to be a factor for overpowering importance in studies of readability". Poor reading comprehension in L2 is usually not caused by poor knowledge of grammar, the meaning of words (Ulijn, 1978).

Effective readers know that comprehension is not something that just happens; Readers have a role in the reading process. So, the purpose of reading is to understand the material. While the ability to understand what is written is critical to success, comprehension problems become most apparent when students are faced with textbook material (McNamara 2007)

ER needs knowledge of lexical items. According to Hirsh and Nation (1992), reading for pleasure needs a higher lexical text coverage. Readers would need to know 5000 word families or 8000 lexical items.If so much depends on vocabulary size, then EFL learners clearly need to acquire great vocabulary. The problem then becomes how to increase the size of L2 vocabulary. This was researched in experiments involving memory and memorization. Subjects attempt to increase their L2 English vocabulary by: writing, immediate repetition, using the lexical items, contextual association and talk about the lexical item (Sanoui, 1995).

Many language teachers and researchers recommend reading as the best way to increase one's vocabulary. In fact, "it is generally accepted principle that extensive L2 reading is good vocabulary growth" (Hulstijn, 1993).

Dubin and Olshtain (1977) also point out that through extensive reading students learn much vocabulary. They emphasize the merits of extensive reading as: •
-   Students develop an ability to gain pleasure and satisfaction from reading on their
-   They are exposed to the language in a more natural and less structured way
-   Extensive reading has influence on other language skills such as writing and speaking.
-   Extensive reading, or reading for pleasure, will help the students comprehend more and continue to use the language after the instruction.

Over the last four decades a large amount of research has been conducted that deals with ER. Some shows that language gains of many types occur from exposure to simplified L2 texts (Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Krachen& Cho, 1994). Seragi et al (1978) did an interesting research on how learners pick up vocabulary; the study shows that ER results in substantial vocabulary learning.

Elley and Mangubi (1983) tested the effect of giving Fijian school children a large number of highly interested story book in English. In a careful conducted experiment over two days, they found that the children in the experimental group improve their general reading comprehension skill at twice the normal rate.

Hokkins and Coady (1999) stated that there are reasons why ER is so attractive to develop language knowledge and more specifically vocabulary. They mentioned that it is considered an efficient approach, as two activities –vocabulary acquisition and reading- occur in the same time. This approach, they added, facilitates learner's autonomy, can be very pleasant and motivating and provide learners with the opportunity to meet words in their context of use.

Considering the above, it seems that ER is an essential aspect of vocabulary teaching. However, there are many counter arguments to the potential merits of ER mentioned so far. Hokins and Coady argued that reading for meaning does not automatically lead to the acquisition of vocabulary, they make distinction between guessing the meaning of a word an within the use of context clues and actually retaining that meaning.

Moreover, Zahar, Cobb and Spada, (2001) claimed that richness of information can sometimes result that learners ignore the target word, as they do not need to understand their meaning in order to comprehend the text.

Apart from these reviews that found limitations in the studies concerning the effect of ER on language knowledge. After reviewing 25 studies on extensive reading, Waring (2001) found numerous problems in the research methods and instruments. He concluded that one should be extremely cautious in proposing that there is a strong evidence for the value of ER.

The results of a study conducted by Celik (2018) show that extensive reading has important influence on language learning. The learners become aware of the collocations, which are the natural use of word combinations. Moreover, the participants become more conscious of other meanings of words and different types of sentence structures.

Waring (2001) who suspected the efficiency of the researches conducted on the effects of ER stated in the end of his review of 25 studies: "Extensive reading is good for second language learners, especially for affect, and reading is probably one way we become good readers, it seems that through ER we can develop a good writing style, advanced grammar and may help learners to become good spellers".

Lee and Hsu (2009) examined the impact of ER on weaker students' writing in a Taiwanese university. In the evaluation of their writing, the results indicated that reading has a strong effect on writing, accuracy and fluency.

Benettayeb (2010) investigated the role of extensive reading in vocabulary learning and teaching, accuracy and reading fluency. She suggested that reading as a communicative and a learning instrument is a basic skill which must be learnt by foreign or second language learners.

Speaking is being capable of speech, expressing or exchanging thoughts through using language. "Speaking is a productive aural/oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning (Nunan, 2003, p.48)."

Harmer (2001) notes down that from the communicative point of view, speaking has many different aspects including two major categories – accuracy, involving the correct use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation practiced through controlled and guided activities; and, fluency, considered to be 'the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously'.

Brown and Yule (1983) believed that many language learners regard speaking skills as the criteria for knowing a language. They defined fluency as the ability to communicate with others much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. They regarded speaking as the most important skill students acquire. Students assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication

The most widely used term for explaining the failure or success of foreign language learners is motivation. As a key factor in following anything in our lives (Gardner, 2001b-as cited in Kato, Yasumoto& Van Aacken, 2007), motivation also plays an important role in language acquisition. It provides a source of energy that is responsible for why learners decide to make an effort to learn another language and how long they are going to continue it (Brewster &Fager, 2002).

Attitudes towards English in general refer to the state of emotion and thought relating to the English language and the culture of English speaking people. The attitude towards the English language implies the students' feelings, prejudice, or fears about the learning of English as a second language (Spolsky, 2000)

Ellis (1985) encountered a problem in defining attitudes and motivations because these cannot be directly observed, but have to be inferred from what the person actually does. He adopted Schuman's (1978) definition of attitude. Schuman defined 'attitude' as a social factor influenced by variables such as 'size of learning group', and 'motivation' as an affective factor alongside 'culture shock'. Ellis also defined motivation in terms of L2 learner's overall goal of orientation, and attitude as the persistence shown by the learner in striving for a goal.

Finally, the aforementioned studies show that ER should increase the learner's language knowledge; even the researchers who have limitations concerning these studies agree that ER by itself is a beneficial method for EFL students. Another fact to be mentioned is that very few studies were conducted to examine the effects of ER on Israeli Arab EFL students especially in the south on language skills at any level.

Methodology and Procedures

This study was conductedat Arab comprehensive school in the Negev, southern district, Israel. The community is considered as Bedouin, their socio-economic situation is middle and even low, and their level in English is very low.

Research population

A convenience sample of 53 Eleventh grade students, the research was carried out in the term of the year 2019-2020 participated in the study. The participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups of 26 students in the experimental group and 27 in the control one. The experimental group received an ER program, whereas the control group continued with the traditional method without program. The experimental group students were exposed to the ER program through four 45-minute periods a week for eight months. The control group students were not exposed to the ER program during the course of the treatment. Both groups took a speaking pretest before starting the experiment and took the same test as a posttest after the experiment.

Table 1: Distribution of the Research Subjects by School and Gender

class	Number
11A- experimental group	26
11B -control group	27
Total	53

Research Procedure

In order to answer the question of the study, the researcher prepared an extensive reading (ER) program and a speaking skill test. The ER program consisted of three books. After reading each book Each,some activities including reading and speaking were performed by the students. Speaking material relevant to students' interests and abilities were used. The program consisted of narrative, argumentative, descriptive, scientific, and expository texts and readers. The researchers chose the material based on the students' level. Designed program was then validated by apanel of three lecturers from the department of English in the college of Sakhnin for teacher education. Based on the comments of the panel, the preliminary version of the program was modified to suit the level of the students.

The program that was conductedduring the first term of the year 2020- 2021consisted of an introductory classroom period and four units. Each unit took three weeks. This means nine 45-minute periods. Therefore, the program took 36 classroom periods over the semester. The introductory classroom period was used to introduce students to the program. The importance of using ER programs in developing speaking skill was also explained. During that period, each student in the experiment group received a copy of the program.

Research Instrument

The researchers usedspeaking test to achieve the purpose of the study:

The speaking test was planned and developed by the researchers, and includes oral questions and evaluation rubrics. The oral test included three kinds of questions:

- Biographical such as "where do you work?" and "How many members are in your family"? (5 questions)
- Guided questions such as "What is your favorite language? Why? "Do you like to study English? Why? (4 questions)
- Open questions such as: "In your opinion, what should be done to help you learn English? "Why do you think many Arab students do not like English? (Appendix1, P. 26). (4 questions)

The purpose of the speaking test was to assess the participants' speaking skills before and after the implementation of the extensive reading program in order to detect the influence of extensive reading on the participants' speaking skills. The participants were pre and post-tested orally, and were then tape- recorded by another EFL teacher who evaluated them after each session according to an evaluation scheme presented by the researcher. The evaluation rubrics for the speaking test were adopted from Ur (2006) and validated some experts to suit the local context. Table 2 presents the specifications and the weight of fluency and accuracy in the oral social interaction test.

Table 2: The Specifications for the Speaking Skills Test

Accuracy	points	fluency	points
Little or no language production	1	Little or no communication	*1*

Poor vocabulary, mistakes in basic grammar,may have very strong foreign accent	2	Very hesitant and brief utterances, sometimes difficult to understand	2
Adequate but limited vocabulary, makes obvious grammatical mistakes, slight foreign accent	3	Conveys ideas, but hesitantly and briefly	3
Good range of vocabulary, occasional grammar slips, slight foreign accent	4	Effective communication in short turns	4
Extensive vocabulary used appropriately virtually no grammar mistakes, native like or foreign slight foreign accent	5	Easy and effective communication, uses long turns	5

The following procedures were carried out for the preparation and administration of this test:
- The test was designed by the researchers and validated by a panel of lecturers and researchers in the college of Sakhnin for teacher education.
- -The researchers and the EFL teachers who carried out the test held a training session in which they discussed the questions in the speaking test and the evaluation rubrics and agreed on the content and the procedures of the test and its evaluation.
- The teachers held individual sessions with the subjects of the study. The teachers met with each student for ten minutes, during which they asked questions from the speaking skills test. Each session was tape-recorded. After each session the teachers evaluated the student's speaking performance according to the evaluation scheme. The scheme is divided to accuracy and fluency and the lowest grade in each item was one point and the highest is five for each. The final grade of each student is out of ten points. This procedure was conducted before and after the implementation of the instructional program.

Analysis of data
The data derived from the instruments were coded for statistic treatment. (SPSS, version 15) was used for statistical analysis. An Independent-Sample (paired sample t-test) was used to measure gain scores of both groups from pre- to post testing. A One-Way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to determine the differences between the two groups on the posttest after eliminating any possible differences between them on the pretest.

Results
The objective of the current research is to assess the effect of an ER instruction on the speaking skill of EFL Arab students at comprehensive School in the Negev. This section shows findings of the study, discussion of the findings, and recommendations.   The study compared the relative effect on students' speaking skill of ER and conventional speaking in instruction. It was predicted that the students who were taught through the ER program would represent better achievement in speaking than those who were taught through the conventional instruction. This hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance. An independent t-test was carried out to determine if there were differences between the two groups on the pretest. These statistics is presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and t-values for the mean differences between two groups on the pretest

Group	N	M	SD	t-value	Sig
Control	27	15.99	4.92	1.69	.85
Experimental	26	16.63	4.13		

Table 3 shows that the difference between the achievement of both groups on the pretest is statistically insignificant at α = 0.05. Thus, the two groups were homogeneous prior to the experiment. Another independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups on the speaking skill posttest. Table 4 presents this statistics:

Table 4. Means, standard deviations and t-values for the mean differences between two groups on the posttest

Group	N	M	SD	t-value	Sig

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Control	27	16.91	3.73	5.21	.0179
Experimental	26	28.57	2.29		

Table 4 shows that there is a statistically significant difference at α = 0.05 between the results of the experimental group and that of the control group on the posttest in favor of the former. This indicates that ER has a positive effect on students' speaking skill. The mean score for the experiment group on the posttest was 28.57 while that of the control group was 16.91. In spite of the fact that the difference in speaking skill of the experimental and the control groups on the pretest was not statistically significant. This data is shown in table 5 below

Table5*. Results of the test of between-subjects' effects*

Source	Some of square	df	Means of square	F	Sig
Pretest **posttest**	7732.111	1	7824.121	265.456	0.000
Group	407.807	1	408.907	13.854	0.000
Error	3265.204	114	29.280		
Corrected Total	16886.167	117			

Table 5 shows that there is a statistically significant at (a = 0.05) between the experimental and the control groups on the posttest. The achievement of the experiment group, measured by the difference between the pretest and the posttest, was significantly higher than that of the control group**.** This is attributed to the extensive reading program for the experimental group.

Discussion
These findings are consistent with the studied carried out by Laufer (1997), Freebody (1983), Celik (2018), Benettayeb (2010),(Nunan, 2003), (Harmer, 2001) and Bakir (2004). All of these studies showed that using ER has sighnificant effects on FL proficiency in general and on speaking skill or oral proficiency in particular.

The improvement that the experimental group achieved in oral proficiency and oral communication is attributed doing the extensive reading program outside the classroom at home. Furthermore, the differences between the two groups may be attributed to many other reasons. First, using the ER program in the reading classes is a novelty. This novelty may have encouraged the students to deal with it enthusiastically, which may have been reflected in better listening comprehension achievement.

Second, reading many different texts and doing many reading activities help the students develop significant reading habits and then influence their personal interaction in English as a second language.

Third, training students through the extensive reading program encouraged them to use the skills they learned when reading, which surely leads to develop their reading comprehension performance and then their communication skills. These findings are consistent with Laufer (1997) claims that the relationship between vocabulary size and reading comprehension 'seems to be unassailable research finding and word knowledge is crucial for learning. This means that reading comprehension is strongly related to vocabulary knowledge. Increased vocabulary leads to improvement in all language four skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking.

Fourth, it is sure that EFL students participated in the current research knew enough about reading and speaking skills, but they lacked the chance to putthem into real practice. Once they were taught the definitions of each skill and were provided with enough activities and encouragement, they were able to apply them successfully Fifth, using the ER program was effective in motivating the students to read a wide variety of books. The program was useful in motivating the students to read on different genres such as novels, poems, short stories and autobiographies which increased their reading proficiency and speaking performance.

Finally, the students' accuracy and fluency in the control group in the post testwere not in a proficient level. Their accuracy was adequate but their vocabulary was very limited, they made obvious grammar mistakes and had slight foreign accent, in fluency, the students were hesitant and did brief utterances and did their communication in short terms. Whereas the students in the experimental group had a high performance in accuracy especially in the post test after participating in the extensive reading program. They had a wide vocabulary appropriately used, virtually no grammar mistakes, nativelike or slight foreign accent. In fluency, the students performed easy and effective communication and they used long terms.

Conclusion

The researcher drew the following conclusions based on the findings and the review of related literature:

1. Extensive reading instruction(ER) improves students' language four skills especially speaking,
2. Extensive reading helps learners develop their ability to express ideas, whilst also enlarging the size of vocabulary.
3. Extensive reading improves the participants' accuracy and fluency in the experimental group.
4. Extensive reading helps learner build up better grammar skills and develop effective communication and enhances learners to use longer turns.
5. Arab EFL students who live in Southern Israel encounter problems in and low percentage pass English matriculation examination. This might be partially attributed to lack of exposure to English. ER can be the solution because it gives the students the opportunity to practice English outside and inside the classroom.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the present study, it is recommended that EFL teachers in the Beduine sector in southern Israel use ER instructions in their teaching, since it enhances students' accuracy and fluency and provides them with more exposure to English language, literature, grammar and culture. It is also recommended that other researchers conduct additional studies to investigate the effect of extensive reading instructions on the other skills such as writing and listening.

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