

Pre-service English Teachers' Extensive Reading and Its Effect on L2 Reading Self-efficacy

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ABSTRACT

The many benefits of using extensive reading (ER) to foster language learning are increasingly clear. However, considerably less is known about how ER might improve pre-service English teachers' affect regarding L2 reading. Accordingly, this study investigated the effect of ER on pre-service English teachers' L2 reading self-efficacy and perceptions of ER. A pre-posttest quasi-experimental intervention was conducted with participants who engaged in ER to observe its impact on their self-efficacy and perceptions. In contrast to previous positive research findings, these results were that ER did not substantially affect a number of aspects of their self-efficacy. Qualitative results revealed that participants became more familiar with English and enjoyed ER, but they also expressed some dissatisfaction with their ER experiences. These findings suggest that while ER encourages some positive emotional states when reading, we also need to pay much closer attention to addressing learners' reservations and helping them to see the value of ER.

Keywords: L2 reading, self-efficacy, extensive reading, pre-service teachers, teacher development

1. Introduction

The two main objectives of this investigation are to explore the effect of extensive reading (ER) on pre-service teachers' L2 reading self-efficacy and examine participants' perceptions of ER. The study of teachers' beliefs and perceptions about ER is vital because their beliefs have a considerable influence on their classroom practice (Borg 1999; Richards and Lockhart 1994). More specifically, "[t]eachers' beliefs influence their goals, procedures, materials, classroom interaction patterns, their roles, their students, and the schools they work in" (Kuzborska 2011: 102).

An important element of teacher beliefs is their self-conceptions. Self-efficacy is a particularly key construct to understand because "[a]mong the mechanisms through which human agency is exercised, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of

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personal efficacy” (Bandura 1999: 28). As well, powerful connections exist between intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy so that self-efficacy is necessary to maintain intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan 1992).

Some research has begun to explore the role of self-efficacy in reading but there has been limited study of the relationship between self-efficacy and language learning (Burrows 2012). This state of affairs is unfortunate because “... a focus on the development of students’ reading efficacy beliefs would be beneficial to students’ reading proficiency” (Mills et al. 2006: 286).

Self-efficacy in pre-service teachers is a topic that is particularly worthy of closer scrutiny. Improvement of teacher self-efficacy is necessary because teachers cannot be expected to make their learners into confident readers if they themselves are not confident readers (Applegate and Applegate 2004). Some research has also begun to demonstrate that “... lower efficacy in teaching English would lead teachers to put less effort in motivating students to learn and value English learning (efficacy for engagement)” (Chacon 2005: 269). That is, the less self-efficacy the teacher has, the less effective he or she will be in the classroom.

Concern regarding teacher effectiveness relates to another potential problem for L2 teachers that has already been discussed in L1 reading teacher research. Teacher illiteracy has been identified as a widespread crisis among L1 teachers (Applegate and Applegate 2004; Gomez 2005). That is, while many L1 teachers are able to read, they are not actually regular readers. Disconcerting findings from various studies revealed that a substantial proportion of pre-service (Applegate and Applegate 2004) and in-service L1 teachers (Applegate et al. 2014; Nathanson et al. 2008) are themselves reluctant readers. The question remains open as to whether a similar problem exists with regard to L2 reading teachers in the EFL reading classroom.

Although this issue has not been widely explored in the EFL context, it warrants particular attention in Korea due to many teachers’ previous L2 literacy experiences. A large proportion of currently-practicing teachers learned English in an education system that encouraged intensive grammar-translation based reading (Byun 2009) and limited pleasure reading (Byun 2010). Long-term exposure to this kind of instruction has been shown to have a detrimental effect on attitudes associated with reading (Cho 2007; Song and Lim, 2010). Unsurprisingly, many Koreans prefer not to read in English (Kim 2011) and this includes Korean English teachers (Cho 2012). These findings are disturbing because teachers’ negative L2 reading attitude may damage their student’s perceptions of reading (Gambrell, 1996; Routman 2003).

Although these observations are disconcerting, steps can be taken to address the

problem because teacher beliefs and attitudes are amenable to change through teacher education (Murtiningsih 2014). Extant research tells us that providing teachers with experience engaging in extensive reading can improve their attitude toward the practice even if this exposure is for brief periods (Byun 2010; Cho 2012; Murphy Odo, 2017) and these changes can be maintained over time (Cho, 2014). Additionally, doing ER with teachers is important in order improve their views of L2 reading (Yamashita 2013) as well as to encourage them incorporate ER into their own classroom practice so that their students can experience its many benefits (Grabe 2012; Krashen 2011; Nation 2008). After all, “Without teachers’ knowledge of books and strong belief in the effectiveness of ER, it would be impossible to motivate students to read a lot and enjoy ER” (Takase and Uozumi 2011: 6). Nevertheless, while we know ER improves attitudes toward L2 reading, at this stage, we are less sure about its impact on self-efficacy.

Given this need to more clearly understand how to improve pre-service teachers’ L2 reading self-efficacy, the primary intention of this study was to investigate how engaging in ER affects their self-efficacy. This objective was achieved through a quasi-experimental pre-posttest intervention that allowed teachers to do ER and then measure the growth in their self-efficacy by means of a standardized instrument. The questionnaire also contained open-ended questions to obtain qualitative feedback on their perceptions of ER to provide deeper insight into their views regarding its value.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Self-efficacy in learning

The concept of self-efficacy is central in Bandura’s social cognitive theory. The theory is premised on the claim that humans are self-organizing agents who construct their own reality and initiate action rather than always reacting to their environment or impulses (Pajares 2002). That is, people can alter their environment through their actions and influence the course of their own development in the process. Another important aspect of this agency is people’s ability to control their own thoughts and emotions through their self-beliefs. Our unique cognitive capabilities, beliefs and emotions then shape our future behavior and its consequences (Bandura 1986).

Among our self-beliefs, Bandura maintains that self-efficacy beliefs are uniquely influential. These beliefs are defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to

organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura 1986: 391). The importance of self-efficacy beliefs rests on the fact that they are the basis of motivation and achievement. Thus, if someone does not believe she can perform well, she will be less likely to give her full effort or show resilience when faced with challenges (Pajares 2002). In this way, "people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (Bandura 1997: 2).

2.2. Self-efficacy in L2 reading

L2 reading self-efficacy research has explored learner characteristics as they relate to beliefs about reading. Findings demonstrate that younger learners have higher reading self-efficacy beliefs than those of older students (Osman et al. 2016). However, another investigation of pre-service teacher self-efficacy showed no relationship between their year of study and efficacy beliefs (Tercanlioglu 2001). Regarding the connection between gender and L2 reading self-efficacy, results favor females. In general, female students reported greater self-efficacy about learning English (Osman et al. 2016) and French (Mills et al. 2006). However, in contrast to these findings, one study of Malaysian secondary students reported no significant difference in self-efficacy according to gender (Murad Sani and Zain 2011).

Investigators also measured learner self-efficacy in relation to reading ability. Research into comprehension revealed that those with higher self-efficacy had higher L2 reading comprehension scores (Burrows 2012; Ghabdian and Ghafournia 2016). Likewise, positive correlations were reported between learner self-perceptions and reading proficiency for English (Murad Sani and Zain 2011) and French (Gahungu 2007; Mills et al. 2006). However, Oh (2016) found no relationship between self-efficacy and L2 reading proficiency for university students studying English.

Related research lends some support for the connection between self-efficacy and L2 reading achievement. Students with higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs for EFL reading have been shown to perform better in their reading achievement tests (Osman et al. 2016; Shang 2010). Similarly, learners with high self-perceptions of their metacognitive strategy use experienced greater academic success in an intermediate French class (Mills et al. 2006). However, in contrast to these findings, a study of pre-service EFL teachers revealed no relation between the participants' personal sense of improvement and their self-efficacy (Tercanlioglu 2001).

Learner anxiety is another learner characteristic whose connection to self-efficacy

has received some research attention. Gungor and Yayli (2012) have noted a low correlation between self-efficacy and anxiety perceptions of pre-service English teachers. However, other studies have demonstrated that Reading anxiety and self-efficacy are more strongly related (Barrows et al. 2013; Mills et al. 2006). Additionally, negative correlations between self-efficacy and anxiety have been observed indicating that the more anxious the learner is the less the self-efficacy he or she will have and vice versa (Anyadubalu 2010; Dogan 2016) which makes some sense intuitively.

Connections between self-efficacy and the use of L2 reading strategies are also beginning to be considered. Research shows a positive correlation between use of reading learning strategies and self-efficacy for university level students in Taiwan (Shang 2010) and China where learners with higher self-efficacy report using significantly more reading strategies (Li and Wang 2010). Similarly, associations between self-efficacy and reading strategy use were observed for learners studying a variety of foreign languages at the high school level in the US context (National Foreign Language Resource Center 1996).

2.3. Extensive reading in the EFL classroom

2.3.1. Theoretical basis of ER

ER is underpinned by the wide acknowledgement of the key role of comprehensible input in L2 learning (Ellis 2005; Krashen 2001, 2004; Nation 2008). Indeed, Krashen (2004: 147) argues ER is such a powerful method that “...when second language acquirers read for pleasure, they can continue to improve in their second language without classes, without teachers, without study, and even without people to converse with...” Although other researchers may disagree regarding the exact role of comprehensible input in the language learning curriculum, few dispute its value (Ellis 2005; Nation 2008).

In her review of conceptualizations of ER from cognitive, affective and pedagogical perspectives, Yamashita (2015: 169) identifies four critical features of ER which are “a large amount of reading, easy materials, faster reading rate, and pleasure” which she contends is “the essence of ER.” Based on her analysis of current research and thought in the field, she ultimately defines ER as “...an attempt to include pleasure reading in L2 programs for the longest period of time possible in a given context” (175).

2.3.2. Findings on the benefits of ER

An expanding profusion of ER benefits for L2 learning continue to be identified. For instance, ER can develop reading and general language ability (Iwahori 2008; Krashen 2004, 2011), enrich target language vocabulary (Day and Bamford 1998; Pigada and Schmitt 2006), boost gains in reading fluency (Nation 2008), enhance writing ability (Hafiz and Tudor 1989), improve exam performance (Krashen and Mason 2015; Nation, 2014), and develop good reading habits (Richards and Schmidt 2002). After considering all of the advantages offered by ER, Perego and Boyle (2005: 276) concluded that:

...having our students read from self-selected books every day is a key to language acquisition...We believe that the most important thing we can do for our students is promote love for reading and create a risk-free environment that encourages daily reading of self-selected materials.

2.3.3. Using ER to change teacher attitudes and self-efficacy

Some research has also begun to evaluate the potential of introducing ER to English teachers. It is hoped that experimenting with ER might encourage them to incorporate it into their own repertoire so that learners can experience its benefits. Studies thus far have yielded some encouraging results. In-service teachers in Korea who have tried ER for brief periods have improved their perceptions of ER (Byun 2010; Cho 2012). Indeed, a short introduction led Cho (2014: 15) to conclude "...a short (two-week) personal pleasure reading experience in English had a dramatic effect on teachers' own reading behavior and their interest in implementing sustained silent reading in their classes." Equally, Byun (2010: 90) noted that in-service teacher participants were reticent about L2 reading at the beginning of the course but "...in contrast with their reluctance to read prior to the program, the survey data shows that the EFL teachers were actually interested in reading books written in English." These positive perceptions also translated into many of the teachers incorporating ER into their classroom practice when they returned to their schools (Cho 2014). More recent work continues to confirm that opportunities for teachers to try ER can improve their L2 reading affect (Murphy Odo, 2017).

2.3.4. Research on the impact of ER on self-efficacy

Second language reading research has also more recently begun to explore the impact of ER on learner self-efficacy. Burrows (2012) attempted to ascertain whether ER would improve the self-efficacy of Japanese university non-English major students. Over the period of an academic year, learners read a variety of self-selected graded readers but they had to begin with very easy reading materials regardless of their level. He found that ER by itself did not significantly improve learner self-efficacy but it did when combined with L2 reading strategy instruction.

In contrast, Lake and Holster (2012) showed that ER with graded readers did significantly improve self-efficacy with female freshmen Japanese postsecondary students who did ER over one semester. In fact, the researchers observed a large effect size in self-efficacy gains noting that it is particularly susceptible to change in comparison to other psychological variables like motivation. The authors point out that these results are important because self-efficacy influences reading fluency, engagement, strategy use, and comprehension. Additional research by Lake (2014) confirmed the earlier finding that reading self-efficacy significantly improved over the study with a substantial effect size.

Previous research has yielded a number of important insights into the benefits of ER for improving the cognitive and affective aspects of English language learning. At present, researchers have learned that experience with extensive reading can facilitate the development of positive attitudes in learners (Yamashita 2013) and teachers (Byun 2010; Cho 2012, 2014). We also know that ER can help improve the self-efficacy of tertiary-level learners (Burrows 2012; Lake 2014). However, a number of other essential questions remain. For instance, we need to know more about the potential benefits of having teachers experience ER for themselves. As Cho (2014: 15) points out, “...the best way to stimulate appreciation for reading in a second language is to get people to try it themselves...” As well, while there have been some short-term (i.e., two weeks) investigation of in-service teachers (Byun 2010; Cho 2012), there appears to be a dearth of studies of pre-service teachers. This research could help clarify whether teachers also benefit from longer exposure to this instructional method during their pre-service training.

As well, while there has been some limited research on the impact of ER on learner self-efficacy, this has not been conducted with teachers. Even the research that has been done has some limitations that should be addressed. For instance, Burrows (2012) used the Start with Simple Stories approach (SSS) to ER which

forced participants to read texts that were too easy for them. He speculated that his result of no effect for ER on self-efficacy was because the SSS approach of forcing some learners to read excessively-easy books may have caused them to fail to develop resilience when faced with inevitable reading challenges. He cited Bandura's (1997) warning that the learner's sense of overcoming obstacles is a crucial element of developing self-efficacy that using easy materials short circuits. These potential limitations of past research warrant additional investigation of whether other versions of ER might have better results in improving learner self-efficacy. Bearing in mind some of these issues with existing studies, the following research questions were addressed in the present study: (1) What impact does extensive reading have on pre-service EFL teachers' L2 reading self-efficacy? (2) What are pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of the experience of engaging in ER over one semester?

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

The study was conducted with Korean pre-service English teachers studying in a department of English education at a major Korean research university located in a large metropolitan area in Korea (N = 27). There were 5 males and 22 females, mean age 23 years who joined the study. They all participate in a 4 year, full-time undergraduate preservice TEFL teacher training program whose primary aim is to prepare them to become secondary English public school teachers in Korea. Their self-reported English proficiency ranged from low to high intermediate. Most have studied in the Korean EFL environment for approximately 15 years. They were recruited for the study by the author who was the instructor of the class.

3.2. Reading materials

Participants had access to both graded readers and young adult literature during the study. The graded readers ranged in level from stage one (400 headwords) through to stage five (1800 headwords). The graded readers were included in the classroom library because they can promote considerable vocabulary learning (Schmitt 2008) and they allow L2 learners to read without their having to excessively access the dictionary for unknown words (British Council 2016). A number of young

adult literature books were also included in the class library because of their ability to motivate L2 learners, promote L2 learning (Cho and Krashen 1995) and can serve as a model of excellent writing (Bucher and Manning 2014). A library of 350 books were made available to the class. The library contained roughly 12.5 volumes for each participant thereby surpassing the suggested 4 books per learner put forth by Day and Bamford (1998).

3.3. Instrument

A two-part questionnaire was administered. The first part of the initial administration consisted of questions about background and demographic information including year of study, age, gender, major, teaching experience, self-rated English ability etc. The first section of the end-of-course follow up survey included other open-ended questions about participants' feelings about reading in English over the semester, whether ER changed their opinions about L2 reading, and whether they felt their English had improved. These items were adapted from Atwell (2007), Miller (2010) and Pilgreen (2000).

The second part of the questionnaire was comprised of an adapted version of the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS2) (Melnick et al. 2009). This instrument measures learners' self-perceptions as readers grounded in Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. The 47-item questionnaire accesses learners' self-esteem and self-perceptions as they relate to reading. It asks respondents to indicate views on a series of 5-point Likert scale items that range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Items are divided into four indices. The first is Progress (comparing their current and past reading performance), Observational Comparison (evaluating their reading performance against their classmates), Social Feedback (perceived feedback from others regarding their reading ability), and Physiological States (their feelings and emotions when they read) (Melnick et al. 2009). This instrument has been used in a number of other first and second language studies (Alrwele 2015; Hedges and Gable 2016; Jung 2015). Five items were removed from the questionnaire prior to administration because they enquired about activities that are outside of participants' current experience. For instance, three removed questions asked whether the teacher, classmates or family likes to listen to the respondent when he/she reads aloud. These were judged to be inappropriate because these undergraduate university students rarely or never read aloud to their teacher, classmates or family.

3.4. Procedure

This study was a quasi-experimental examination of the role of extensive reading in second-language reading self-efficacy development. The research spanned the 16-week spring academic semester of 2017. The RSPS2 L2 reading self-efficacy questionnaire was administered twice during the semester. Once during the second class at beginning of the semester and again at the second-to-last class of the semester in week 16 to reassess possible changes in participants' L2 reading self-efficacy as a result of engaging in ER over the semester.

The ER treatment began at the outset of the class, students were provided with an orientation on how to use the portable classroom library to select books or graded readers that were at their appropriate reading level as well as an explanation of what ER is and how it differs from the kind of intensive reading that they typically do in their English classes. They were told to choose books that contained no more than 3 unknown words per page. They were encouraged to choose enjoyable texts, read as much as they comfortably could, and to forego dictionaries. As well, since the primary emphasis of the class was essay writing, participants were also informed that the purpose of their extensive reading was to support their writing development (Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Park, 2015; Tsang, 1996). The writing instruction in the class itself was focused primarily on overall text structure paying more attention to genre features of the text rather than improving learner grammatical competence. The instructor explicitly taught paragraph and essay structure for various genres of essays including descriptive, argumentative and comparison. As part of the instruction, participants were instructed in thesis statement and topic sentence development, as well as organizing supporting details. They were also taught how to structure introduction and conclusion paragraphs for the various essay genres.

Students were allowed to choose their own books from a library of 350 books. They were given 15 minutes per class for extensive reading for a total of 30 minutes out of the 2 hours and 30 minutes of scheduled weekly class time available. The author observed participants as they read. Almost all of the participants appeared to engage in the ER. They read for 27 of the 30 classes during the 16-week semester. Participants were provided with access to the class library for the 10 minutes prior to the beginning of class to choose their book and they read at the beginning of every class. Following the advice of Pilgreen (2000) and Krashen (2011), while they were reading, the instructor also read to serve as a model.

3.5. Data analysis

Items from the RSPS2 were grouped into four indices that each represent a different aspect of learner self-efficacy. The Progress index included 16 items (1, 2, 5, 8, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 38, 42), Social Feedback contained five items (3, 11, 18, 21, 41), Observational Comparison had nine items (4, 9, 12, 13, 25, 28, 34, 37, 39), and Physiological States had 12 items (6, 7, 10, 14, 16, 20, 24, 26, 30, 32, 36, 40).

Cronbach's alpha was used as the measure of the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The coefficients were all greater than .90 which indicated high levels of instrument reliability. Mean scores from the item indexes were used in the analysis.

Almost all skewness and kurtosis values did not exceed the absolute value of 1.96, indicating limited departure from normality of those data except for the Progress variable on the post questionnaire. A Shapiro-Wilk test of normality demonstrated significant departures from normality only for the Social Feedback variable from the pre-treatment questionnaire. Therefore, the pre and post-test results for the Social Feedback variable were analyzed separately using the non-parametric Friedman test.

The remaining aspects of self-efficacy aspect (Progress, Observational Comparison, and Physiological States) were analyzed by means of a 2×3 repeated-measures ANOVA along with time (pretest and posttest) as within-subject variables. ANOVA results were followed by Bonferroni-corrected multiple comparisons.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Influence of ER on self-efficacy

The following section presents the research results according to each of the research questions. Research question 1 relates to the results of the quantitative self-efficacy part of the survey. Research question 2 relates to the qualitative section that asked participants to discuss their perceptions of using ER.

RQ # 1: Influence of ER on aspects of self-efficacy

Descriptive statistics for the extensive reading group for reading self-efficacy are

reported in Table 1. Results from the non-parametric Friedman test of differences among repeated measures for the Social Feedback variable yielded a Chi-square value of 1.64 which was not significant ($p = .201$). The results of the repeated-measures ANOVA with the remaining variables revealed that the main effect of time was significant, $F(1, 27) = 13.83, p < .001, \eta^2 = .339$. The main effect of aspect of self-efficacy (e.g., progress etc.) was significant $F(2, 54) = 12.96, p < .001, \eta^2 = .324$. The interaction between time and aspect of self-efficacy was also significant $F(2, 54) = 4.69, p = .014, \eta^2 = .148$ indicating that the effect of ER on learners' self-efficacy depends on the aspect of self-efficacy being measured.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for self-efficacy variables
(n = 27)

	Pre Questionnaire				Post Questionnaire			
	Pro- gress	Social feedback	Obs. compare.	Physio. states	Pro- gress	Social feedback	Obs. compare.	Physio. states
Mean	3.544	3.274	3.102	3.200	3.687	3.259	3.271	3.671
SD	.497	.576	.699	.840	.548	.586	.640	.666
Skewness	-.505	1.282	.560	-.569	-.569	.979	.654	-.628
Kurtosis	.158	1.965	.981	.042	3.107	1.865	.809	1.058
Minimum	2.313	2.400	1.889	1.417	2.000	2.200	2.000	1.917
Maximum	4.500	5.000	5.000	4.667	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000
α	.944	.921	.951	.958	.932	.940	.962	.954

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons identified significant differences between the pretest and the posttest for the Physiological States ($p < .05$, Bonferroni-adjusted), but not for the Sense of Progress, or Observational Comparison components of self-efficacy (see Figure 1). These findings suggest that ER had a significant effect on participants' ratings of their physiological states (how students feel inside when they engage in reading). That is, ER influences how the learners feel when they read but not any of the other components of their sense of self-efficacy.

The improvement of participants' physiological states after engaging in ER was somewhat comparable to other findings from preceding studies. However, it appears that only limited previous research directly investigated the impact of ER on learner L2 reading self-efficacy. Burrows (2012) research with Japanese university students who did ER over an academic year had somewhat mixed results. On the one hand,

their confidence in the usefulness of ER lead to their improved reading self-efficacy. As well, teachers who implemented ER in the study had a vital role in their students' self-efficacy development. Burrows (2012) concluded that when teachers convince learners of the value of ER for their reading development, their self-efficacy improves.

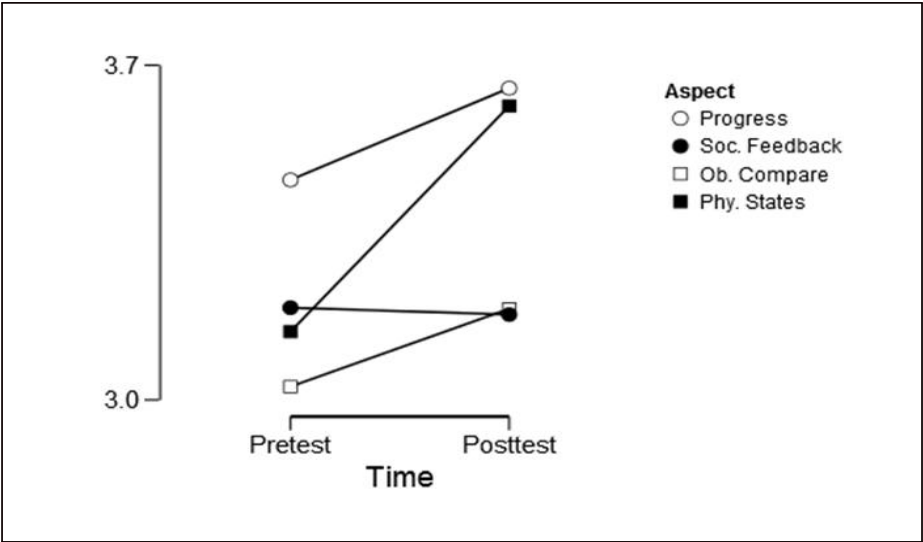


Figure 1. Descriptive plot of self-efficacy variable scores before and after ER.

In contrast to these positive findings, he did not find that participants' reading amount had any impact on their self-efficacy. He speculated that this hypothesis may not have been confirmed due to a number of potential problems with the ER intervention and data analysis. One possibly problematic aspect of the research was the Start with Simple Stories approach to extensive reading (Sakai 2002) used in the study. This approach requires learners to read very low level books regardless of their ability level during the first month. These easy texts may have alienated participants by failing to match their expectations for more challenging texts like those they typically read in other English classes. Because the self-efficacy result was self-reported, participants' negative perceptions of the "childish" materials may have lead them to unconsciously underestimate and underreport any positive impact that their reading had on their self-efficacy. A second shortcoming related to the data itself. Unfortunately, there was little variance in number of words read between some groups in the study. This lack of variance caused difficulties in conducting the statistical analysis. These limitations with the data seem to call these results question

and warrant further investigation of the topic.

Other research had findings that also somewhat corresponded to those reported here. Female Japanese university students dramatically improved their self-efficacy following ER practice with graded readers for a semester (Lake 2014; Lake and Holster 2012). The authors thus concluded that self-efficacy is considerably more amenable to change than some other psychological variables like motivation. An obvious explanation for discrepancies between their findings and those of the present study is that they used a seven-item scale that measured self-efficacy only as a single unified psychological construct. However, had they used an instrument that conceptualized self-efficacy in a more multifaceted way, they may have also the more nuanced impact of ER on self-efficacy observed in the current research.

Given the limited existing studies in this domain, discussion of other less directly related research seems warranted. This other research concurs with the results of the current study in a somewhat more indirect way. For instance, Ghabdian and Ghafournia (2016) observed an association between learners self-efficacy had their L2 reading comprehension scores. Similar correlations have been recorded between learner self-perceptions and reading proficiency (Gahungu 2007; Mills et al. 2006; Murad Sani and Zain 2011) as well as self-efficacy and L2 reading achievement (Mills et al. 2006; Osman et al. 2016; Shang 2010). These findings all suggest a close association between reading ability and self-efficacy that ER could develop through its ability to improve reading proficiency (Day and Bamford 1998; Krashen 2011).

Related research has focused on the interrelationship between learners' background experiences and their current levels of self-efficacy. One study of pre-service EFL teachers' demonstrated a lack of confidence in their L2 reading ability that indicate unsettlingly low levels of self-efficacy considering their future roles as models of foreign-language readers (Tercanlioglu 2001). This result is particularly relevant here because the grammar-translation based intensive reading "dokhae" approach that has dominated Korean English reading instruction has also been linked to negative perceptions of reading in English (Cho 2007; Song and Lim 2010).

Another applicable research domain is the connection between L2 readers' experience of success and their subsequent amount of reading in the target language. A number of these studies support the use of low-level materials when beginning and ER program based on their findings that both high school (Takase 2004) and university (Takase 2008) learners who have had an opportunity to begin ER with easier books tend to read considerably more than those who do not. Learners read more simplified materials because they can be read more rapidly, they are enjoyable

and learners do not have to exert themselves mentally translating the text to ensure comprehension (Takase 2008). Related research has revealed that excessively-challenging reading materials are actually de-motivating (de Burgh-Hirabe 2011). These findings all demonstrate the vital role of L2 reading materials in building L2 reading self-efficacy.

RQ #2: Pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of the experience of engaging in ER

4.2. Growing familiarity and enjoyment from ER

Findings from the post-treatment survey seem to indicate that ER helped many participants to improve their mindset with regard to reading in English. This result corresponds with previous research findings that have demonstrated that engaging in ER can positively influence learners' attitudes toward L2 reading (Day and Bamford 1998; Yamashita 2015). In the follow up survey, when they were asked about how they felt about reading in English in general, several commented that after some initial trepidation, they noticed that after doing the extensive reading they could feel some improvement in their attitude. As several of their comments demonstrate:

"For me, it is a little bit difficult. But, in this class, I read many books which are easy level and this makes me to have a positive mind of reading and English and I decide to read higher level books." Similarly, another learner mentioned, "I feel some uncomfortable at first. But reading is getting better and faster than before. And I felt more confident and that reading it is easy to understand."

These comments reveal the learners' views that reading easy books that were suited to their level gave them a more positive mindset and confidence. This positive mindset cultivated through exposure to easy reading materials about subject matter that they are interested in contributes to their growing sense enjoyment from ER. Similarly, this surprise at the comprehensibility of materials can also be seen in participants' remarks that extensive reading in English is easier than they imagined it would be.

In addition to improving their mindset, several learners remarked that the ER helped them to see that English reading not as difficult as they thought. They pointed out that what helped them realize that reading in English can be comfortable was their ability to self-select their reading materials. Two comments below help illustrate this.

"There are many kinds of books that are different levels so I can choose a book

that is suitable for me. And I felt if I read steadily an English book my English reading skill will be improved” Another student made a related observation noting, “When I chose to read a book I used to be obsessed with the idea that I have to understand and read the whole book until the end. But, due to the short reading in this class I just really read a book and when I feel sick of the book I can change to another interesting one.”

As these remarks illuminate, access to self-chosen materials helped some learners to overcome previous unproductive beliefs that they had to persist through books that were boring or too difficult for them. These statements also demonstrate how the participants’ exposure to large amounts of self-selected reading in English helped them to understand how enjoyable reading in English can be. A number of previous scholars have also pointed out the vital role of self-selection in ensuring maximum comprehensibility and learner engagement during ER (Day and Bamford 1998; Krashen 2011).

In addition to helping them to feel more comfortable reading in English, a number of participants discussed how ER helped acclimatize them to reading in English. While elaborating on some of the challenges of reading in English, a student noted that ER helped him in “Getting rid of thought that English is very far from our language.” A similar comment was made that “reading and English make me more familiar with English.” A third learner echoed this sentiment stating, “Now, I feel a little bit comfortable because I get used to reading and English.” These statements share the common impression that engaging in ER over the semester helped them to become more accustomed to reading in English. This L2 familiarization that the ER sessions seemed to have facilitated may well have also contributed to learners’ growing enjoyment with English reading. These results are in accordance with Yamashita’s (2013) finding that ER can help to reduce learners’ anxiety toward reading in the L2.

Along with ER’s facilitative power in making English seem more familiar to learners, it also changed their perspective on how reading in English can be pleasurable. In their survey responses, several participants discussed how ER helped them to develop their interest in reading in English. Along those same lines, they mentioned that the ER sessions allowed them to see how enjoyable it could be to read in English. When they were asked what they realized about reading in English, one learner shared that, “It’s fun. One of the best things I prefer in class is to have reading time.” Another stated that “It was more fun and easy than I thought.” As well, when asked about how his/her views of English reading changed, a third

respondent responded with “Pleasure. Before this activity, I used to read in English just for test.” These remarks suggest that ER turned out to be enjoyable to the extent that it was one participant’s preferred activity to do in the class. It also changed their mind about how reading can be for other purposes besides preparing for a test. These comments reveal learners’ growing sense of enjoyment in that they demonstrate how having the chance to try out extensive reading for only a couple of days per week can enable learners to realize that reading in English can be entertaining. A number of other researchers concur that encouraging English teachers to try ER often results in their realization that reading in another language can be enjoyable (Byun 2010; Cho 2012).

4.3. Ambivalent views about the value of ER

In addition to the positive evaluations of the ER experience, a number of participants also expressed some concerns with regard to ER. Firstly, in a discussion of the factors in the ER that made them want to do the reading, several participants mentioned the importance of interesting topics in the reading materials as being driver of their level of interest in the reading. They stated that ER was enjoyable when the topic or the book was interesting.

Two noteworthy observations were “It is important to read books and I’m interested in” and “I thought reading is just a boring activity. However, with interesting material, it was fun.” These comments underscore the importance of motivating materials for the enjoyment of ER. The importance of interesting topics reminds us that learners’ views of ER as a worthwhile experience depend largely on access to suitable materials. Based on several case reports, Krashen (2015: 35) argues that “input that [learners] find compelling” is the key to motivation rather than “urging them to work hard and reminding them how important it is to know English.” Likewise, Takase (2007) points out that regardless of age it is the learner’s intrinsic interest in the subject matter of what they are reading about rather than the promise of external rewards that encourages enduring motivation.

Besides sharing how much their interest depended on the topics available to read about, participants also displayed ambivalent feelings about their experience of ER more generally that included a mix of both positive and negative reactions. In conversations about how they felt when they did ER, several learners named two main obstacles that they believed prevented their more fully enjoying their ER sessions.

One such obstacle was that they had difficulty concentrating even though they

found the reading process to be enjoyable in general. For example, one participant mentioned that “reading in English is not easy. I feel tired because reading and English needs my concentration. But if I have appropriate environment and mental condition, it’s also interesting.” A similar comment was made by another learner who wrote “Sometimes it’s easy, sometimes it’s not. Personally, real enjoyment comes when I finally understand the meaning (or story) of difficult texts with multiple times of rereading.”

A second obstacle raised was the difficult language with which learners sometimes had to contend. One remarked that “I’m interested but lots of words I do not know often bother me.” Another elaborated that “I like to read books in English but it’s still hard to understand difficult vocabulary and complex constructed sentences. I’m afraid of misunderstanding contexts so I usually avoid difficult level books.” Both of these remarks point to some anxiety about the language they encountered in the texts despite their having access to easy reader texts and their ability to select any text they wanted.

Participants also had mixed opinions about the amount of time that they were given to read during ER. A number of them indicated that 15 minutes was adequate with some mentioning that they thought they would have lost their concentration beyond that. However, several others thought that 15 minutes felt like it was too short. One stated “It is valuable time but not sufficient time to read many books.” Although a few complained about how short the time was, they were still surprised at the number of words they could read in that limited time. One stated “Time went so fast. I was surprised that just within 15 minutes I could read up to 3,000 words.” Interestingly, no one believed that they were given too much time to read in class.

These comments demonstrate some learners’ somewhat ambivalent perceptions of ER. On the one hand, they appeared to see its value while at the same time acknowledging impediments to their enjoying it more. The quotes reveal how the learners are at times self-contradictory in their reactions to ER. On the one hand many expressed how they enjoy pleasure reading or find it to be interesting. However, this comment was often followed by reservations about the amount of concentration required or the challenge of contending with unknown language.

These ambivalent feelings provide additional instances of the kinds of reservations that learners have about the value of ER in the L2 classroom. In general, in the extant research literature, there is not much discussion of learners’ mixed feelings about ER. Most of the findings related to the impact of ER on learner affect indicate that it is on the whole positive (Cho and Choi 2008; Cho and Kim 2014; Krashen

2004, 2011). However, Asraf and Ahmad (2003) found that the Malaysian rural secondary students they studied felt that reading in English was difficult despite the fact that they enjoyed it as well. We should recognize the fact that learners may enjoy particular aspects of ER while at the same time having suggestions on how to improve it. If research remain overly focused on what is only good we can miss these valuable opportunities for self-reflection and further development.

In addition to the ambivalent feelings regarding ER shared by some participants, others were less optimistic and offered viewpoints that they disliked ER or felt no benefits from doing ER over the semester. As they commented on their feelings about having the opportunity to do ER in class, these participants noted a number of shortcomings in the method that they perceived as limiting its effectiveness.

The main reasons they offered for their dislike of ER related to it making them feel uncomfortable, its difficulty and it being boring. One participant pointed to her slow pace during reading as a source of discomfort. Another identified fear of difficult words and a third complained that “When I face strange topic or too long text, I feel dizzy and I’m not willing to read them.” The second reason given for not preferring ER was the difficulty level of the text. Participants stated either that the text was “so hard to me,” that “It is too difficult for me yet. I clearly need a dictionary” or that “I feel I should translate.” These comments all reveal a perception that the reading materials were too challenging. In addition to the discomfort and difficulty expressed by some, one student mentioned that he/she felt ER to be “somewhat boring.”

As these remarks demonstrate, not all of the participants found aspects of ER that they enjoyed. In particular, they expressed displeasure with their level of comfortable, the effort required and the activity itself being uninteresting. These results are somewhat unsettling because all of the participants are pre-service teachers who should be expected to eventually become enthusiastic teachers of reading. Nevertheless, some participants’ expressed dislike for ER provides a clear illustration of the broader issue of their skepticism about the value of ER.

Other studies have touched on the shortcomings of ER albeit not necessarily as they related to participants’ dissatisfaction. Particular shortcomings discussed in prior research have been, first, that it takes time to see its effects. Krashen (2001), for instance, concedes that ER programs that run for longer than one year are more effective than those that are shorter. A second common complaint relates to the ongoing challenge of finding suitable resources because “the key element in the success of extensive reading is having access to a large quantity of reading materials

geared to an individual's level of proficiency and interest" (Leung 2002: 78). A third difficulty of ER relates to a lack of buy-in from colleagues largely due to their attachment to traditional teacher roles and classroom practices (Jacobs and Farrell 2012). Despite the acknowledgment of these problems with ER, there appears to be limited discussion of the discomfort some learners might feel while doing ER. However, this discussion is necessary to ensure that we educators are able to pinpoint the specific sources of learner discomfort so that we can do our best to address them.

5. Conclusion

The interaction apparent between exposure to ER and change in learner self-efficacy demonstrated that the effect of the ER intervention depended on the aspect of self-efficacy that was measured. That is, ER had a significant effect on participants' physiological states (how students feel inside when they engage in reading) but not on the other aspects of self-efficacy. These findings fit with the limited existent research in their tentative support for the use of ER to support some aspects of the development reading self-efficacy. However, given the sparse and inconsistent evidence currently available, additional research is required to more clearly establish the effectiveness of ER for improving EFL learners' reading self-efficacy.

Participants' perceptions of ER were somewhat mixed with some having quite positive reactions to the experience and others being more uncertain or disapproving. On the one hand, participants indicated a sense of growing familiarity and enjoyment from ER as the experience improved their attitude toward reading, helped familiarize them with reading in English, and showed them that English reading can be enjoyable. These results are generally in accord with prior research.

In contrast to these positive findings, a number of participants also expressed more ambivalent or negative views about the Value of ER. These criticisms included remarks about the dramatic impact that poor book selection can have, mixed feelings about their ER experience overall and unfavorable ER experiences that left them feeling uncomfortable, struggling to comprehend or bored. Although there has been some dialogue about the challenges of ER in past studies, explicit focus on more specific reasons for learners' dissatisfaction with various aspects of ER appear to be largely absent from the discussion.

This study has some limitations that deserve acknowledgement. First, limited opportunities for recruitment resulted in the relatively small analysis sample. Secondly,

the RSPS2 was originally designed for use with native speakers although it has been used with L2 learners in other contexts (Alrwele 2015; Sağırılı and Okur 2017). Lastly, with respect to the research design, limited participant availability precluded the inclusion of a control group in the analysis. While the presence of a control group is ideal, carrying out controlled research in a classroom context can often be quite challenging (Grabe 2004). Nevertheless, future research must strenuously attempt to address this limitation.

Further research with other, potentially more sensitive instruments and larger participant populations should help to establish with greater certainty whether ER can effect several components of self-efficacy. Additionally, more time should be invested in identifying and exploring the nature of learners' negative perceptions of ER as well as the sources from where those perceptions arise. At present, we have a rather well-fleshed-out sense of what learners see as the benefits of ER. However, such explorations could provide us with a more accurate and complete picture of their views so that we may begin to effectively address their reservations while finding practicable solutions to the problems that some learners have.

The results presented here can help us recognize that ER can alter L2 readers' internal physiological states while reading and allow them to experience more positive emotions connected to reading in the target language. Thus, these findings give us yet one more reason to bring ER into our classrooms. These results can also help us to realize that there may be overt or covert learner resistance to ER so teachers need to seriously consider ways to effectively assuage learner concerns and help them to see the value of ER.

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