ROLE OF EXTENSIVE READING IN EFL VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT: REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we review vocabulary research findings with a focus on why and how extensive reading can maximize language students' natural and rapid development of word knowledge. To secure learners' continuous vocabulary growth, we suggest EFL teachers introduce explicit reading/vocabulary learning strategies and collaborate with students in planning classroom/home literacy practices. We finally propose teachers utilize online resources to solve the problems of accessing and purchasing reading materials.

Introduction

Over the years, the Taiwanese government has made numerous attempts to prepare its citizens with the necessary English skills for world competition, such as standardizing bilingual signs, requiring mandatory English courses starting from third-grade, and making their first official move in the year 2002 to recruit foreign teachers from English-speaking countries to assist with local language classes. At the college level, besides requiring students to take a one-year Freshman English course, schools not only encourage faculty to offer English-only classes but also demand students pass an English proficiency exam upon graduation. These efforts, unfortunately, have not paid off. Taiwanese college students tend to see English learning as a matter of translation (Wang & Su, 2009), read slowly (Shen, 2008), and on average only have knowledge of 2000-3000 English words (Chen, 1998). The 2009 TOEFL statistics report further reveals that Taiwanese examinees' test performance was ranked 20th out of a total number of 30 Asian countries. Finally, the mean TOEIC scores between the years 2002 to 2010 by local test-takers have generally stayed around the 550 range and demonstrated no significant improvement such outcomes are indeed depressing to many Taiwanese English teachers.

In light of the current challenges facing Taiwanese adult EFL education, what has been missing is clear: literacy programs which promote extensive reading (ER) of a wide range of texts for pleasure (Min, 2008). One of the problems has been that local English instruction often centers around test preparation (Huang, 2006). As students limit their reading to textbooks and some other test-oriented materials, they lack a substantial amount of pleasurable literacy practices in and outside the classroom. The less reading they engage in, consequently, the less likely they are able to develop vocabulary growth and language competence. Second, local universities sometimes mandate a fixed curriculum for non-major freshman English courses in which all teachers follow the exact same schedule and implement standardized tests on specific chapters. Beyond freshman year, schools usually do not even require non-majors to take English-related courses. Failing to provide learners with wide and consistent exposure to the target language, the English exit exam has become an unrealistic (if not unreasonable) demand.

In the following section, we will overview related research on the effectiveness of extensive reading for vocabulary development. Based upon the review, we will recommend strategies for successfully incorporating ER into one's curriculum design, particularly in a Taiwanese context. The underlying argument for this article is that when interesting and authentic materials are accessible for the learners to select, they are likely to become motivated readers, which gives them an opportunity to be exposed to more comprehensible input. Ultimately, the goal is for students to develop a robust vocabulary and become more competent in English.

Vocabulary Studies in Written Contexts

Vocabulary knowledge has long been seen as an indicator of power and wisdom because it enables people to express thoughts, comprehend messages and exchange ideas both orally and in writing (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000). Also due to its influential role in literacy proficiency (Anderson & Freebody, 1981), overall language development and academic success (Becker, 1977), researchers over the past few decades have started to focus much more on vocabulary in written contexts (Beck & McKeown, 1991).

The relationship between vocabulary and reading is believed to be reciprocal (Chou, 2011; Stahl & Stahl, 2004; Vacca et al., 2003). That is, the greater knowledge of vocabulary words a reader has, the greater the speed at which a person is able to comprehend a particular written text, which leads to a greater sense of personal accomplishment. This sense of accomplishment may likely motivate the person to read more, which, in turn, causes him/her to encounter and acquire more words. As Stoller and Grabe (1993, p. 30) have commented, "…vocabulary development must be viewed as both a cause and a consequence of reading abilities."

Vocabulary growth is highly related to one's SES (socio-economic status) and life experience (Gipe, 2006; Paynter, Bodrove & Doty, 2006). Specifically, as learners coming from low-SES backgrounds sometimes lack adequate life experiences to connect words with the corresponding concepts, they become less attuned to print, which may hinder their vocabulary gains.

Depth and Breadth of Vocabulary Knowledge

According to Beck, Mckeown and Omanson (1987), vocabulary knowledge is developmental as it can be completely unknown, somewhat familiar, or fairly established. Vocabulary knowledge is also multi-dimensional involving different degrees of learning, i.e. sounding out a word, recognizing the form-meaning association, being familiar with its semantic and syntactic rules, or/and putting it in actual use (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Owing to the depth of vocabulary knowledge, learners must acquire words in incremental stages (Graves et al, 2004; Nation, 2001).

With regard to the amount of English vocabulary one may need to be considered an efficient reader, scholars have drawn different conclusions dependent upon the nature of the tasks. In his review of previous studies, Schmitt (2000, 2008) concludes that language learners may need:

- a minimum vocabulary of 2000 words to have basic oral conversations;
- 3000-5000 words for written material;
- 5000-7000 word families for oral discourse;
- 8000-9000 word families for reading;
- close to 10000 words for academic success;
- 15000-20000 words to achieve native-like reading proficiency.

Similarly, Blachowicz and Fisher (2000) suggest that learners must have

- about 2000 high-frequency words in order to comprehend 85 % of most texts;
- minimum 3000 words.

Finally, Nuttall (1992) proposes that language learners need approximately 2000 words to engage in basic reading tasks, and 5000 words for independent reading. In accordance with these research findings, it seems fair to conclude that a vocabulary of 2000 English words is the baseline for becoming a reader although it has to be further expanded for more sophisticated reading purposes.

Selection of Words for Instruction

Researchers have attempted to investigate the right order in which to teach words. While it is generally accepted that teachers start with high-frequency words, which are usually shorter in length, Ghadessy (1979) argues that a word

list addressing the needs of all language learners may be unrealistic due to their varied learning goals and linguistic/cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, Stoller and Grabe (1993) emphasize teaching vocabulary words of linguistic or cultural relevance to the target students.

Other researchers have recommended focusing on words that support the overall curriculum. For example, Beck et al. (2005) suggest that after carefully examining the course objectives, teachers select words that can facilitate students' comprehension of classroom material or instructions. Similarly, Blachowicz and Fisher (2006) maintain that teachers should prioritize familiarizing students with; 1) comprehension words that are keys to understanding a given text, 2) useful words that are not essential in the selected text but may be helpful to know for future use, 3) generative words that can promote vocabulary learning strategies such as knowledge of prefixes or suffixes, and 4) academic words, which may not be readily available outside school settings. Besides using their professional judgments, Blachowicz and Fisher further add that teachers need to actively involve students in the process of selecting words to study, e.g. asking students to identify words that they need or want to learn.

Still other researchers propose teaching words that are personal and interesting to the students as this may facilitate the learning and retaining of vocabulary knowledge d with relative ease. Vacca et al. (2003), for instance, recommends teaching words that " … have unique origins, tell intriguing stories, or have intense personal meaning" (p. 288) as a means to promote students' learning of and reflection on new vocabulary. Likewise, Oxford and Scarcella (1994) found *"when learners hear words which are personally important to them, they remember them (p. 234)."*

Factors Affecting Word Learning
Another focus of vocabulary research is to evaluate the ease of learning a given word. In general, scholars such as Elley (1989) and Nation (2001) seem to agree that vocabulary learning relies heavily on the interaction among readers' perceptions, nature of the text and the number of exposures, although their relative significance is unclear. Conversely, Brown (1992) argues that learners' perceived saliency of the vocabulary, e.g. gloss provided in the margin, or part of speech, plays a more crucial part in the acquisition of unfamiliar words than the frequency. Laufer (1997) seconds Brown's opinion stating that nouns are most easily acquired whereas adverbs are the least.

Second Language Vocabulary Learning
Until recently, vocabulary learning has not received enough attention in the field of second language acquisition (Graves, 2006). Although L2 learners seem to go through similar stages of vocabulary development as L1 learners do (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983), they are often found to have specific difficulties acquiring

sufficient knowledge of English academic vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and polysemy (Paynter et al., 2006). Several factors may be responsible for these problems. First, L2 learners do not have the oral knowledge of words to facilitate the transition from oral language to written text (National Reading Panel, 2000). Second, L2 learners, especially native speakers of Chinese, are often not equipped with phonetic awareness and thus are likely to have difficulty recognizing the sound-letter relationships in the English language (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2003). Third, they rely too much on using a dictionary and tend to look for exact synonyms in English (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Finally, L2 learners lack proper cultural background knowledge to implement a theme-based strategy in learning new words (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2003).

Thus, to increase L2 learners' chances of success in learning new words, Oxford and Scarcella (1994) maintain that language teachers take into account students' ages/maturity levels, L1 and L2 proficiency, L1 background knowledge, as well as their familiarity with common learning strategies.

Limitations

Vocabulary research to date seems to have several limitations. First, owing to the difficulty of defining degrees of word knowledge, reading researchers have come up with a variety of test measures, which sometimes lead to very different conclusions (Waring & Nation, 2004) as to the appropriateness of individual instructional approaches. Moreover, the effectiveness of some vocabulary teaching methods needs to be re-examined and refined. For instance, Hudson (1982) discovered that providing a pre-reading word list may not be of much use if students lack the necessary word schemata. However, the most problematic issue may be that research findings do not seem to be appreciated or utilized. As Blachowicz and Fisher (2000) point out, instructional approaches that have been proven to be useful are sometimes not practiced; despite the acknowledgement that students need in-depth word knowledge, vocabulary instruction remains skill-based in some commercial textbooks (Ryders & Graves, 1994) and in actual classrooms (Konopak & Williams, 1994). As a result, L2 vocabulary instruction is often, as Krashen (1989) points out, either "boring" or "painful" (p. 450).

Incidental Vocabulary Learning

Definition

Noticing human beings' intuitive innate capacity to construct and expand language competence, linguists such as Chomsky and Krashen argue that implicit learning, a top-down process in which one receives, subconsciously evaluates and eventually integrates new linguistic forms into his/her prior linguistic system, accounts for most language acquisition. On the other hand, explicit learning, i.e. one's intentional efforts to construct or generalize rules from the given input, is considered less helpful

since it can never produce the sort of intuitive knowledge necessary for efficient and automatic language output, according to Krashen's non-interface position. This distinction between implicit and explicit learning has led to a debate on the use of incidental versus intentional vocabulary instruction in the classroom. Instead of formal and intentional classroom instructions, numerous scholars (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006; Carnine et al., 2006; Cunningham & Moore, 1993; Gipe, 2006; Graves, 2006; Henriksen et al., 2004; Nagy et al., 1985) are more inclined to believe that the observed rapid vocabulary development is facilitated through incidental learning, namely one's uptake of word knowledge through multiple exposures to different texts (Waring & Nation, 2004) that are comprehensible (Nation, 2001) and deal with a wide range of topics (Schmitt, 2000).

It should be noted that favoring incidental learning does not imply the exclusion of intentional instruction at all (Schmitt, 2008). Rather, since both methods emphasize students' frequent exposure and attention to new words (Marzano, 2004; Sokmen, 1997), they are indeed complementary and can benefit different aspects of students' vocabulary development. Laufer and Nation (1995), accordingly, recommend teachers provide students with explicit information on high-frequency words, but promote acquisition of infrequent vocabulary through incidental learning. Sonbul and Schimmit (2010) also find that incidental learning combined with explicit instruction is the most effective approach.

Criteria for Incidental Vocabulary Learning

Current literature suggests three main prerequisites for successful incidental word learning:

- Basic word knowledge: Usually, language learner's need a basic vocabulary of the most frequently used 2000 words to engage in a reading task before incidental learning can happen (Nation, 2001).
- Coverage: According to Krashen's i+1 Hypothesis (1985), learning occurs only when one receives language input that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic development. Therefore, Moss and Ross-Feldman (2003) suggest that the selected text should be interesting and at an appropriate reading level. Moreover, Qian (1999) recommends that a minimum 95 % of the given text should be comprehensible to students.
- Frequency: Language learners need to have multiple encounters with a variety of words (Carnine et al., 2006; Graves, 2006; Graves et al., 2004; Kamil, 2003; Marcaro, 2003; Oxford & Scarcellea, 1994; Paynter et al., 2006; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986; Swan, 1997; Vacca et al., 2003). As one single meeting of a given word in the text is unlikely to trigger incidental learning, let alone retention, the consensus is that secure incidental vocabulary learning usually requires the reader to be exposed to the target word approximately 6-12 times (Brown, 1992).

Limitations

Several issues concerning research on incidental vocabulary learning need to be further clarified if reading researchers wish to provide solid grounds for their arguments. First of all, Stoller and Grabe (1993) have discovered that researchers struggle to clearly define incidental versus intentional word learning: While Hulstijn (2001) maintains that the distinction lies in whether learners are informed of an upcoming test, Nation (2001) holds that learners' intent while reading, e.g. making meaning of the text versus conscious learning and memorization of words, is a more valid indicator.

The second issue related to incidental vocabulary learning is the inadequate evidence in support of its actual superiority. Probably because incidental word learning can be slow and gradual, superficial or even incorrect (Tu, 2004), as well as difficult to retain (Coady, 1997), some immediate test results turn out to favor intentional instruction (Hulstijn, 1992). More longitudinal studies may be needed.

The most controversial issue may be the variability of current vocabulary research findings. In their review of some frequently cited vocabulary studies, Waring and Nation (2004) conclude that second language learners can possibly make an average 10 % improvement on the target vocabulary words but the pickup rate can range from 5.8 % to 25 %, contingent upon factors like the test measure, the nature and amount of target words being selected as well as difficulty of the text. Another example is Pigada and Schmitt's case study (2006) of a learner of French which discovered a significant 65% gain in terms of spelling, form-meaning association and grammar knowledge (87 out of the 133 target words after reading four graded novels in one month; the four novels contained approximately 30,000 words). Therefore, it is advised that researchers carefully interpret study results, especially the definition of "learning" and the type of test being used.

Extensive Reading in Incidental Vocabulary Learning

Definition

Extensive reading is defined as one's engagement in reading for pleasure about a wide range of subjects that are linguistically/culturally relevant and appropriate. Taking different forms, e.g. sustained silent reading (SSR) in class, collaborative literacy clubs and voluntary reading outside school, extensive reading has the potential to help learners acquire good reading habits, increase their knowledge of vocabulary words, and gain a lifelong love of reading (Shen, 2008). Primarily, in an ER program, learners receive no direct instruction, nor will they be assessed or excluded (Lee, 2007).

Strengths

Extensive reading can bring learners of different ages and ethnic backgrounds the same benefits for their second/foreign language development as for L1 learners (Cho

& Krshen, 1994; Cho, 1995; Cho & Kim, 2004; Elly & Mangubhai, 1983; Elley, 1980, 1989, 1991; Lai, 1993; Lao & Krashen, 2000; Manson & Krashen, 1997; Mason, 2003; Tsang, 1996; Young, 2001; cited in Lee, 2007). Elley (2000) presents two examples of this happening: in South Africa, the low-SES 2nd and 3rd graders recruited for the project demonstrated a significant reading improvement over the control group. In Sri Lanka where English is spoken as a foreign language, participating 4th and 5th graders were able to score three times better in reading comprehension and vocabulary as opposed to the pre-test after merely five months of extensive reading. Elley concludes that both these successful reading programs seem to emphasize regular read-aloud time and encourage silent reading of self-selected books.

Research targeting Taiwanese learners has revealed that ER is equally beneficial for their vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing and attitudes toward reading (Lee, 2008; Lee & Hsu, 2007). Particularly, Min (2008) discovered that when receiving the reading-plus-vocabulary-enhancement treatment, the 25 participating 12th graders improved on 50 vocabulary items as opposed to their counterparts who focused solely on narrow reading. Likewise, after 38 college students read 16 articles, they were able to demonstrate a 10.5% word gain on new words (Huang & Liou, 2007). Several characteristics of ER likely have contributed to these positive results in EFL vocabulary development are:

- Variety: Because the majority of daily speech employs merely 2000 basic words (Schmitt, 2000), extensive reading exposes language students to a wider selection of vocabulary that may not be available in .spoken discourse.
- Repetition: As previously discussed, multiple meetings of a given word increase the chance of learning. Through extensive reading, students can retain and deepen their recently acquired knowledge.
- Flexibility: Teachers cannot possibly teach every single word in the classroom. Extensive reading, an activity which students can continue to do and enjoy after school, encourages as well as ensures that students become more independent and responsible learners of new vocabulary (Greenwood, 2004).

Criteria for Effective Extensive Reading

To ensure students get the maximum benefit, extensive reading has to be consistent and sustained (Schmitt, 2000). Lee and Hsu (2007) however warn that many so-called ER curriculums designed by Taiwanese educators last a relatively short time, fail to provide a large volume of books, and usually require some sort of oral/written reports or performance tests, which could reduce students' pleasure of reading. Therefore, in planning an authentic ER program, they suggest teachers take into consideration the duration of time, amount of reading materials accessible for students and accountability.

Another key to successful ER is to supply materials that are comprehensible, relevant, interesting and varied (Nuttall, 1996; Waring & Nation, 2004; Shen, 2008). In order to accomplish this, teachers, according to Shen (2008), should have students involved in the book selection process.

- Readability: The reading materials should be short and not far beyond students' current linguistic levels (Coady, 1997; Huang & Liou, 2007). As Nuttall (1996, p.131) states, "Improvement comes from reading a lot of easy material."
- ppropriateness and Authenticity: Because one's prior background knowledge has an essential impact on reading comprehension, (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006; Paynter et al., 2006) the selected materials should be culturally familiar and authentic (Coady, 1997).
- Attraction: The materials need to be appealing to the students (Elley, 1989). When supplied with materials of high interest, students not only read more (Glazer & Giorgis, 2005), they also apply more reading strategies (Coady, 1979).
- Variety: The reading materials should deal with a wide range of subject matter. While narrow reading focuses on in-depth studying of one topic, extensive reading instead stresses exposing students to different subjects and genres in order to construct/expand their word schemata.

Discussions and Recommendations

Extensive reading is a straightforward approach although the actual implementation can be rather challenging to local teachers. The 2007 PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) found that, among 45 countries, Taiwanese primary school children scored the lowest in terms of extracurricular reading. Lacking reading habits in their own native language at a young age, local EFL students may have a harder time appreciating and practicing ER in order to enhance their English reading ability. In addition, ER should be carefully planned so as to best avoid the Matthew Effect: when individuals are struggling readers, they practice less, which jeopardizes their general reading speed and comprehension. As a result, having trouble with comprehension will prevent them from enjoying the text and eventually further reduce their reading interest and potential literacy development. In creating a successful ER program, we recommend Taiwanese language teachers use the following guidelines: 1) nurture a love of reading from an early age; 2) engage students in planning an ER classroom; 3) supplement additional training on reading and vocabulary learning skills to support ER; and lastly, 4) familiarize students with free internet resources.

Family Literacy

Family literacy is a practice in family contexts where parents serve as language models demonstrating that print carries meanings similar to spoken language,

is presented in a particular sequence, and can tell fun and insightful stories which help individuals make meaning of the world. For children who speak English as their native language, family literacy practices have proven to be of great importance as studies have shown that children whose parents often read to them have better overall language proficiency and academic success. For EFL learners who lack opportunities to use English on a daily basis, family literacy activities in the home-setting can be great supplementary practices aiding the work they do in the classroom. Elish-Piper (2011) explains what parents can do to promote reading at home:

- Encourage their children to read as frequently as possible, utilizing websites, magazines, newspapers or even video manuals.
- Promote multi-literacy. Have their children read graphic novels or watch movies originally based on a novel, e.g. Harry Potter, Twilight, or Lord of the Rings.
- Locate reading materials which contain subject matter that would appeal to their children's personal interests, such as sports, fashion, or entertainment.
- Allow opportunities for their children to discuss what they read with family members, classmates and friends.

Applying the same principle as those listed above, adult students can have the same benefits when they read to/with younger siblings or relatives who want to study English.

Introductory Workshop

On the first day of class, we advise teachers to hold an introductory workshop for students on the concept of extensive reading, which should include a definition of ER, its strengths and interdependent role in vocabulary learning. They should explain to the class regarding the research-proven numbers of words needed for different tasks and stress that an average vocabulary of 2000-3000 English words that local students possess may be insufficient for sophisticated reading. Such information is not meant to frustrate students, but instead highlight the significance of ER.

They should also inform the class how they plan to incorporate ER into the regular curriculum, e.g. numbers of books supplied, percentage of class time spent on free reading, after-school extracurricular reading tasks, etc. More importantly, to reduce possible resistance, teachers should explain explicitly if and how students' participation in ER would count as part of their credit requirement. For example, it is mandatory that students fulfill a certain amount of in-class sustained silent reading or a teacher could require that they read a minimum of 10 books outside of class in order to earn extra points. In short, students must be well informed about why and how they need to practice ER and whether their progress in ER will be monitored and/or evaluated, and how that monitoring/evaluation will take place.

In the same workshop, teachers can start collecting information regarding students' current language proficiency (this can be simply a self-assessment or a formal proficiency test), reading behavior and specific difficulties they would like to work on. The next step would be to familiarize students with the necessary skills of choosing proper materials for the particular problem they indicate. That is, to acquire more vocabulary words, students should select books that are at least 95 % comprehensible (Laufer, 1992). To improve reading speed, the texts should increase to 99%-100% comprehensibility (Nation, 2001). Lastly, to build a reading habit, the materials need to be one step behind students' current language development (Hulstijn, 2001). Equipped with the knowledge of selecting level-appropriate materials, learners can simply skim through the first two or three pages of a book and decide if they should continue. As such, they are less likely to become frustrated readers and quit ER.

Next, teachers should include students in preparing books of different genres that are to their liking and the types of words they want to learn (Shen, 2008). For instance, as science majors and nursing students can have extremely varied preferences, they will get maximum benefit when accessing books related to their personal interests and professions. Subsequently, not only will they read more, also increase their academic achievement.

Supportive Learning Environment
Before (which could be incorporated into the introductory workshop) or while involving students in ER, teachers should set aside time and introduce essential reading strategies (Shen, 2008), such as scanning, skimming, guessing, note-taking, summarization, referring to the contexts, repeated reading, etc. Similarly, they must familiarize students, disadvantaged readers in particular, with vocabulary learning strategies (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006; Graves, 2006; Graves et al., 2004; Nagy et al., 1985). Some commonly used skills may include consulting a dictionary, utilizing context clues/word parts and personalizing learning by associating new vocabulary with familiar images (Mokhtar et al., 2009; Pillai, 2004) This additional training would likely facilitate students' reading comprehension and word acquisition, which further promotes ER.

As for the learning context, teachers might want to consider creating collaborative learning groups (Shen, 2008), e.g. class-wide pair reading or peer tutoring, so that disadvantaged learners can receive timely assistance from their partners. They should also maintain students' constant motivation and engagement in reading by utilizing various fun literacy activities, e.g. literature maps, KWL charts, character webs and literary report cards (Yopp & Yopp, 2006). Taiwanese learners may especially enjoy drawing and poem-writing since the typical grammar/translation curriculum (Huang, 2006) usually deprives them of such artistic practices. Combined with social

support from peers, explicit reading and vocabulary instruction as well as follow-up literacy activities, students can derive many important benefits from ER.

Internet Resources

For local EFL teachers whose schools demand a fixed curriculum, classroom ER almost becomes an impossible plan. Likewise, those who have the flexibility of implementing a book-flood curriculum could be frustrated by the expense of ordering multiple copies or having to pay international shipping fees (Mikulecky, 2007). A possible solution can be, as *Online Teacher resource* recommends, to utilize free online resources. For instance:

- *Children's Storybooks Online* (http://www.magickeys.com/books/)

This site offers visitors a variety of books divided into 3 categories: Books for Children, Books for Older Children, and Books for Young Adults. While there are a relatively limited number of available books included in each category, this site is sure to be of interest to its intended audience. The stories are well-written, and many of the books offer visually pleasing illustrations. In addition, some of the books have an audio component, which allows the reader an opportunity to hear the selected story being read, and the site includes such fun things as games, riddles, and jigsaw puzzles.

- Bygosh - Children's Classics (http://bygosh.com/)

This is a website which gives visitors an opportunity to read books which are very well-known, but which many people may not have read. Some of the books offered on the site are "The Three Little Pigs," "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," and Sun Tzu's "The Art of War." While the books are indeed classics, and worthy to be read, the rather plain, uninspired and generally unappealing visual look of the website may turn off readers, especially younger viewers who have got used to flashy graphics, and colorful illustrations that other sites offer. Nonetheless, putting visual concerns aside, this site does deliver on its promise to offer quality reading material to the visitor.

For those who are looking for something besides classic literature, the following websites provide free download of electronic books dealing with a large variety of topics, such as business, marketing and self-improvement books, among many others.

- Ebook Directory (http://www.ebookdirectory.com/)
- Planet ebook (http://www.planetebook.com/)
- Free ewbooks.net (http://www.free-ebooks.net/)
- Free PDF eBooks archive (http://www.planetpdf.com/free_pdf_ebooks.asp)
- Free eBooks by Project Gutenberg (http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Teachers may direct students to various sites and have them report back the weekly reading they do through an online discussion board, where peers can read and respond to one another's review. Teachers can also request students to collect and categorize lists of e-books that they find worthwhile to read, with detailed explanations as to why those materials are recommended. By so doing, the class can build their own personal online library, accessible and possibly level-appropriate to all the students.

With internet resources, teachers and students can enjoy extensive reading for free, along with having easy access to such materials. More importantly, free website access empowers students to become autonomous readers who decide what to read, when to read, and how long to read at any given time. Having such independence, as has been previously discussed, has great potential for promoting a long-lasting love of reading.

Conclusion

This article has synthesized research on the effect of extensive reading for vocabulary development and discussed pedagogical implications for EFL teaching practice, with a focus on Taiwanese college students. Specifically, in an ER programme, learners should have 1) access to various authentic and interesting materials; 2) the freedom to choose, respond to and discuss materials that they enjoy; 3) sufficient time for silent sustained reading or voluntary reading after school; and 4) the opportunity to select words they need or want to learn (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006). Intrigued and empowered, students are more likely to become independent, enthusiastic and strategic readers (Morrow & Gambrell, 2000), which can ultimately benefit their own vocabulary development.

To ensure student success, EFL educators in similar language teaching contexts must implement any and all necessary collaborative literacy practices and provide additional instructions on vocabulary and reading skills. They are also advised to involve students in planning and doing a variety of family literacy activities with their siblings/relatives. Finally, teachers are recommended to take advantage of free online resources to overcome the problems of expenses and access. Subsequently, we believe, their students will demonstrate substantive improvement in vocabulary knowledge and become competent readers.

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