

EXTENSIVE READING IN DEVELOPING SECOND LANGUAGE
SKILLS: A STUDY BASED ON TEACHING ENGLISH AS A
SECOND LANGUAGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RUHUNA



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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2016

Abstract

This dissertation explored the interrelation between extensive reading and the English language competence of the learner. The study was guided by three research questions mainly related to (1) students' improvement of English language competence through extensive reading, (2) university undergraduates' perception of the experience of extensive reading as they participate in the extensive reading project, and (3) finding out the impediments in designing and implementing an extensive reading program for the university undergraduates.

The main research orientation of the study was qualitative, of which the major methodological type was Case Study research in the form of extensive reading program. It also contained some quantitative data collection methods such as questionnaire and journal records, and data analysis involving some quantification along specific criteria. The research setting was the English Language Teaching Unit of the University of Ruhuna.

The findings of this study clearly showed that the participants' language competence improved significantly through the extensive reading program. These were discussed with respect to both language related benefits and non-language related benefits such as reading speed, vocabulary development (word power) and knowledge of vocabulary improvement, writing improvement, consolidating previously learned language, building confidence with extended texts, enhancing motivation for reading, and developing prediction skills, other than just general comprehension of a text. As these findings were largely based on the participants' perceptions about the extensive reading program, a sophisticated statistical analysis was not attempted to corroborate the perceived improvements. Thus, whether the participants actually improved their comprehension, speed, vocabulary, and so on could not be statistically proved. However, this study showed that perceptions were as important as actual gains and that the positive perceptions reflected the participants' actual improvements, motivation to read extensively, and to continue reading as a habit, which in the long run would help them in their university career and afterward.

Keywords: extensive reading, second language skills, perception, learner, competence.