ABSTRACT

This present study was conducted to investigate the effects of extensive reading on the improvement of EFL students’ writing ability, length of text and students’ attitudes toward extensive reading. This research was conducted in seven weeks with 53 Tra Vinh university’s EFL students who are different majors in scientific fields. Students were randomly assigned into two groups, a control group who worked works by reading texts in the course book, and an experimental group who worked with extensive reading. A selection of graded readers, which appropriates to the students’ English level of proficiency as defined in the university curriculum of English learning and teaching for science students. The pre-test and post-test of both groups were analyzed to answer the research questions. In order to obtain the students’ attitudes towards extensive reading, questionnaires and interviews were administered to the participants in the experimental group. The results indicated that the students in the experimental group gained higher mean scores than those in the control group in writing ability and text length. Besides, students’ attitudes towards extensive reading had higher mean scores in the post-test compared to the pre-test, however, the statistics did not improve. These findings revealed that the use of extensive reading contributed to the improvement of the students’ writing ability and there was a correlation between the text quality and text length. By contrast, with five – week intervention, the students’ attitudes towards extensive reading did not change statistically significant.
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<td>CG</td>
<td>Control group</td>
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<td>EG</td>
<td>Experimental group</td>
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<td>CB</td>
<td>Course book</td>
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<td>O1</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
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<td>O2</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
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<td>ER</td>
<td>Extensive reading</td>
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<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
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<td>CEFR</td>
<td>Common European Framework of Reference for Language</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The chapter includes six main sections. The rationale of the research presents the current picture of issues related to the writing skills of EFL students in the context. These realities led to the reasons for conducting the current study. The next parts are related to the research aims, research hypothesis, research questions, and the significance of the study. Lastly, organization of the thesis is introduced.

1.1. RATIONALE

1.1.1 The present picture of English teaching and learning to non-English major students at Tra Vinh University.

The English boom began in December 1986, when at the sixth National Congress, the Vietnamese Communist Party initiated an overall economic reform known as (Renovation). In the context of economic renovation and of the open-door policy, English became the first foreign language to be taught in Vietnam. It is one of the six national examinations that students have to pass, if they want to achieve the Secondary School Education Diploma and it is a compulsory subject for both undergraduates and graduates at tertiary level. Therefore, English is taught in schools, and in universities. The students at Tra Vinh university are not an exception. At the undergraduate level, all scientific fields students have to take 4 courses of ten credits of General English. The curriculum of English teaching and learning at the university is to prepare the students to achieve a B1 defined in the CEFR after graduating from the university (See Appendix 1 for regulation of English proficiency level for General English students). To achieve the B1 level of proficiency, in the students’ opinion, writing skills seemed as the most challenging skill and students always got lower marks, compared to listening and speaking skills. The course book used in General English curriculum is Cambridge English Objective PET Book (second edition) published by Cambridge University Press.
1.1.2. The necessity of improving writing skill for EFL students at Tra Vinh University.

According to the CEFR format at B1 level, the writing part in the CEFR requires three types of writing. In type 1, candidates have to complete five questions that aim at testing grammar. Type 2, candidates have to produce a short email or letter of between 35 to 45 words in length. Type 3 is the most challenging. Candidates have a choice of task to write; either a story or an informal letter with 100 words for both tasks. For this type of writing, it requires that students should better have their own stance with their imagination and self-expression in the writing. Within English language learning, however, I have recognized that when my students do writing, they find themselves confused with choice of words word choice, grammatical use, organization and generation of ideas. They tend to translate ideas from their respective mother tongue into English, express ideas in long sentences and they cannot convey the idea that they want to express. As, Binh, a Vietnamese EFL student majoring in Engineering in my pilot interview, said that “I want to write, but I do not have enough vocabulary inputs and it is very difficult to write down what I am thinking in my mind”, interviewed on October 20, 2017. Moreover, their writing products were poor of new ideas and did not include personal views and creative thinking in the writing. The reasons are, firstly, because of the influence of Vietnamese culture and social norms on their writing. They wrote long sentences in a rather circular manner. It is so difficult for the reader to understand. As Phan (2011) states, writing is much influenced by the culture and social manner of the writer. The author indicates that the indirect and circular manner are two characteristics of Vietnamese students’ writing text, which are against the straightforward quality of English writing. A participant in the pilot study mentioned that “when I read an English writing text, I know exactly what is going to be written about, whereas it is not Vietnamese writing’. As Nguyen (2012) states, Vietnamese writers are not used to setting up their own stance in a writing issues and creating and supporting their stance with their own arguments. These are true to the current teaching and learning English language of my students. Some students in my pilot interview said that the most challenging in the writing is that they do not have a large enough vocabulary to express their ideas and they do not know how to express the ideas into the written form.
In order to have a better work of writing, Suleiman (2000) indicates that students should set a scale of hierarchy, which involves critical thinking skills, social skills and linguistic competencies. They have to determine the purpose of writing, the personal role of the writer and the audience for whom their writing is intended. However, the reading texts in the course book, which are about the facts, and figures. In addition to this, the reading text and writing task in the course book do not link together, for instance, in unit 18. Shooting a film, the reading text is about “A day’s work at the seaside of the film crew”, but the writing task asks students to write a letter about: “You are spending next weekend with some friends who live in the country. Write a postcard to them, you should say how you plan to get there, ask about what you will all do and tell them what time you will arrive”. The students are not provided with meaningful input for their writing. As for the pedagogical context, vocabulary and language structures will be picked up from reading and should be able to make use of them in writing products.

From the aforementioned problems, the researcher thought that students should be encouraged to engage in the authentic reading material, which is appropriate to their level and interests in order to help them gain quality input from the reading. Hence, extensive reading could be considered a powerful teaching activity to help students improve their writing. According to Maley (2009), extensive reading offers comprehensive input, especially where the target language is hardly contacted to. Besides, extensive reading also helps improving the writing of students. There is a well-established link between reading and writing. The more we read, the better we write. These are proved in numerous studies (see discussion in Tsang, 1996; Mermelstein, 2015).

To examine the students’ interest in the new teaching materials, which are not in the course book, the researcher has run the pilot study of using extensive reading to encourage creative thinking of General English 3 at the Tra Vinh University in one day of teaching. The students were given three stories in a set of graded readers of Cambridge sources with level A2. After two hours of reading, the researcher gained a surprising evidence from the students’ reports. They were a little bit confused about the ways of narration used in the stories; for example, they did not understand the “direct speech” used in the stories. The students, 20 in 25 students, reported their interests in this kind of
reading. They said that “the vocabulary is easy to understand; the setting is clear and the pictures in the book help us understand the general idea of the story”.

1.2. AIM OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine whether there is any relationship between extensive reading and the improvement of EFL students’ writing ability. The focus of the investigation is on the influences of extensive reading on the participants’ writing ability. Also, the study examines students’ attitude towards the use of extensive reading.

1.3. HYPOTHESIS

From the aims above this study hypothesized that

1. Extensive reading has positive effects on non-English major students’ writing ability.

2. Students have a positive attitude towards the use of extensive reading in helping them improve their writing skill.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The data was collected to answer these following research questions:

1. Is there an effect of extensive reading on the improvement of EFL students’ writing ability? If yes, to what extent is the effect?

2. What are students’ attitudes towards extensive reading?

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the present research could provide further evidence for the effects of extensive reading on the improvement of EFL students’ writing ability. Teachers may answer the question of how to effectively integrate extensive reading into teaching writing. Furthermore, the result of this study could make contribution to enhancing teacher and student’s awareness of the advantages of integration extensive reading in language teaching and learning in the local context.
1.6. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This research consists of five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methodology, Research Findings, Discussion and Conclusion.

Chapter One presents rationale, aim of research, research questions, significance and organization of the research.

Chapter Two reviews literature which consists of two parts: Part 1 is theoretical concepts related to extensive reading and writing ability, relationship between extensive reading and writing ability; and related previous studies are the second part of the Chapter.

Chapter Three, which describes the methodology of research consists of six parts. Research design is the first part of this Chapter. Next, the research context and participants part will be described in detail. The materials used in the research and course specification of the research will be presented in the procedure part. In measurement part, the measurement instrument of the study is presented in detail. The chapter concludes with the data collection, and analysis parts.

Chapter Four reports the findings from the data collected through the use of tests, questionnaires, and interviews.

Chapter Five presents the summary of the major research findings, the discussion of the issues evolving from the results and the pedagogical implications for the use of extensive reading on the improvement of EFL students’ writing ability. Moreover, the limitations of the study as well as suggestions for further research are recommended at the end of the chapter.
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http://eprint.utm.my/11872/1/A_Study_On_The_Impacts_Of_Reading_On_Writing_Performance_Among_Faculty_Of_Civil_Engineering_Students.pdf