

The Effects of Extensive Reading on Some Esl Learners’ Vocabulary Development: A Case Study of Nigerian-Turkish International Colleges, Kano

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ABSTRACT: *Reading, which at the lowest mechanical level is the interpretation of printed or written symbols into speech or its mental equivalent, is one of the four language skills. The rest three are listening, speaking and writing. Reading is very vital both in informal and formal settings. Exposure to it, particularly the extensive one, can enhance learners’ overall proficiency in the English language in general and their vocabulary development in particular. Today, the reading culture, especially among secondary school students, is fast disappearing. The good old habit of “burning the midnight oil” in preparation for examinations is no more popular among the youths of today. And this accounts for the recurrent poor performance in English language and other subjects in such public examinations as WAEC, NECO and JAMB. It is an indubitable that that where people fail or are reluctant to read to pass examinations (intensive reading), they will hardly read for pleasure (extensive reading) This is why this paper is aimed at identifying the effects of extensive reading on the vocabulary development of ESL post primary school learners who engage in it ,using Elley & Mangubhai’s “Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)”, as a theoretical framework. And as the title suggests, Nigerian-Turkish International Colleges, Kano, are selected as the representative population.*

Keywords: *Extensive reading, ESL, Vocabulary development*

I INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on the effects of extensive reading on ESL post primary school learners’ stock of vocabulary at the Nigerian-Turkish International Colleges. Beside the fact that the English language is the medium of instruction in schools in Nigeria, especially from upper primary as provided by the National Policy on Education (Revised edition 1989), the language is offered as a core subject in secondary schools. And since learners’ proficiency in the use of the language is the goal, reading must be given a priority place in the teaching/learning process. Sagagi (2007) opines that a fluent reader has a great opportunity of developing a large stock of vocabulary and improving his skills on the linguistic structures of the target language. This is where extensive reading comes in.

Extensive reading is reading a lot and for pleasure. It is reading done at a comfortable “easy” level. The main goal is to read without having to reach for a dictionary after every sentence or every paragraph. The objective is to create fluency and enjoyment in the reading process. It is something that should take place over a sustained period (Elley and Mangubhai: 1981 in the internet TESL Journal, vol. xiii No 8. August 2007).

Extensive reading offers a lot of advantages to those who engage in it. Some of such benefits include enhanced language learning in such areas as spelling, vocabulary, grammar and text structure, increased knowledge of the world, improved reading and writing skills; greater enjoyment of reading, more positive attitude towards reading and, higher possibility of developing a reading habit (Day and Bamford 1998; Krashen 1993; Nation 1997). Extensive reading is beneficial to the learners in terms of increasing print exposure (West and Stanovich, 1989), writing ability (Tsang:1996), receptive and productive skills (Elley and Mangubhai: 1983) and vocabulary acquisition (Krashen, 1993).

An Extensive reading programme comes under different names, such as Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun (SURF) and the Book Flood Approach (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). These all share a common goal: that learners read large quantities of books and other materials in an environment that encourages a life long reading habit. These programmes also share a common belief that the ability to read fluently is best achieved through an instructional programme that emphasizes reading extensively in the (target) language. And according to Carrell and Carson (1997), extensive reading generally involves rapid reading of large quantities of materials or longer reading (e.g.

whole books) for general understanding with the focus generally on the meaning of what is being read than on the language.

The aim of this research is to provide insights into the meaning, and problems of extensive reading. Also, the study will suggest solutions to the problems of extensive reading and encourage students at Nigerian - Turkish International Colleges, Kano in particular and post primary institutions in general to exploit the benefits of extensive reading by engaging in it. This research work is therefore limited to selected students at Nigerian - Turkish International Colleges, (Boys and Girls), Kano and the focus of the research is on both Boys' and Girls' colleges. The effects of extensive reading is assessed from the performance of the students who engage in extensive reading and that of those who do not engage in it. It is the students in SS1 (86) and SS2 (65) Boys' and Girls' Colleges, that the researcher wishes to consider as a sample population and not all the students of NTIC, Kano.

ii. Statement Of The Problem

In the Nigerian – Turkish International Colleges, Kano, an extensive reading programme has not been implemented. And even though English language teachers do encourage students to read extensively, only a few of them actually do so. The fact that the school exams records show that these few students perform markedly better than those who do not engage in extensive reading stimulated this research work. Apart from the difference in the academic performance of these extensive readers, they also rank far higher than the others in spoken English.

iii. Research Hypotheses

- i **ESL learners with inadequate stock of vocabulary do not engage in extensive reading;**
- ii **ESL learners who acquire a sufficient vocabulary engage in extensive reading.**

iv. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SYUDY

The results of the finding of this work can be used to propose effective ways of implementing and harnessing the benefits of the extensive reading programme in the Nigerian - Turkish International Colleges, Kano and other post primary institutions of learning. Also, the result of this study can pave way for further researches in this field.

v. DATA COLLECTION

Data for the research were collected with a prepared test, testing vocabulary (specifically on phrasal verbs). Questionnaires were filled and returned by the students and teachers.

vi. SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The population of the research is a set of selected students from both Boys' and Girls' colleges from various classes of the Senior Secondary level. A systematic sampling procedure was adopted, selecting students from each level, that is, SS 1 and SS 2.

vii.VARIABLES

The main variables of this research work are: the effects of extensive reading on post primary school students' performance in the use of phrasal verbs, which is the dependent variable, and the learners' motivation to read extensively, the independent variable. The research is set to identify how extensive reading affects the vocabulary of post primary institution learners who engage in it.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

Sagagi (2007) states that reading has generally been identified as the essential gateway to knowledge; a proficient reader is more likely to be acquainted with his environment than a poor one. A fluent reader has a great opportunity of developing a large stock of vocabulary and improving his skills on the linguistic structures of the target language. Here the results of proficient and fluent reading are clearly spelt out, namely, developing a large stock of vocabulary and improving skills on linguistic structures.

According to Mary Clarity(2007), "Extensive reading is reading a lot. It is also reading for pleasure". From this, it is obvious that this type of reading is not one that is limited or regulated by school syllabuses. Also, it is not a reading type that is to be tested or examined. Rather, it is one that the learner does out of his free volition, not out of compulsion. And the main goal of this activity is enjoyment.

Frank Smith (cited in Smith and Elley 1997) opines that we do learn to read by reading. And according to Carrell and Carson (1997), extensive reading generally involves rapid reading of large quantities of materials or longer reading (e.g. whole books) for general understanding with the focus generally on the meaning of what is being read than on the language. Those who are bored with 'easy' class material can stretch themselves, and those who struggle can finally read without relying exclusively on translations. The reading material should consist of 98% known vocabulary and focus is on meaning rather than language (Nation & Hur 2000).

In the words of Kamal (1991), "This kind of reading, which the pupil undertakes on his or her own away from the classroom, has its own advantages. It increases the reader's vocabulary ; it likewise enables them to guess the meaning of words from context, and raises the possibility of enhancing the vocabulary level of the non-

native speakers well above that of the native speaker. However, generally, reading of any kind is assessed for its effectiveness to attain its desired objective". However, in this respect, scholars have emphasized the use of tasks.

The objective of extensive reading is to create fluency and enjoyment in the reading process. It is something that should take place over a sustained period (Elley and Mangubhai: 1981 in the internet TESL Journal, vol. xiii No 8. August 2007). And the number of books read is the best prediction of several measure of reading achievement (Anderson, Wilson and Fielding, 1988, cited in Elley & Smith 1997).

Extensive reading is an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy material in the new language. They choose their own reading material and read it independently of the teacher. They read for general, overall meaning, and they read for information and enjoyment. They are encouraged to stop reading if the material is not interesting or if it is too difficult. They are also encouraged to expand their reading comfort zone. Again, Raimes (1983: 51) says, "There are two types of reading we can ask our students to do: extensive reading or close reading. They can read whole stories or whole books, where they have so much to read that they cannot stop to look up every unfamiliar word or to translate every sentence. They then have such a lot of reading to get through, at a level that is challenging for them – a little above the level of the language they themselves produce – that they have to read for content, for meaning. Or, we can ask our students to do close reading, where they read a short passage and give close attention to all the choices the

Writer has made in, for example, content, vocabulary, and organization". Harmer (2003) explains that, "Extensive reading and listening frequently take place when students are on their own, whereas intensive reading or listening is often done with the help and/or intervention of the teacher".

Raimes (1983) adds that, "Extensive reading is a reading that promotes reading out of class". It is a kind of reading that covers a large area of materials. These materials include: story books, novels, newspapers, journals, magazines, books of all kinds, etc. It also involves dictionary reading. Extensive reading is primarily meant for vocabulary development. It may not be the only process, but today it is seen as the best. Raines (1983) continues, "When our students read, they engage actively with the new language and culture. If they are studying English where they have little opportunity to speak it or hear it spoken, then reading is the only activity that gives them access to unlimited amount of the language. The more our students read, the more they become familiar with the vocabulary, idiom, sentence patterns, organizational flow, and cultural assumptions of native speakers of the language".

Palmer, (1921/1964), sees extensive reading as "rapidly reading book after book". A reader's attention should be on the meaning, not the language of the text". Day and Bamford (1998) explains that, "Today, in language teaching terms, extensive reading is recognized as one of the four styles of or ways of reading, the other three being skimming, scanning, and intensive reading".

Good things happen to students who read a great deal in the new language. They become better and more confident readers, they write better, their listening and speaking abilities improve, and their vocabularies get richer. In addition, they develop positive attitudes toward and increased motivation to study the new language. Any ESL, EFL, or L1 classroom will be the poorer for the lack of an extensive reading programme of some kind, and will be unable to promote its pupils' language development in all aspects as effectively as if such a programme were present (Colin Davis 1995: 335).

III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLING

In order to collect data for this research work, a test on the meaning and use of phrasal verbs was administered to students. Thirty (30) objective questions were set and given to selected students in SS1 and SS2 at Nigerian –Turkish International Colleges, Kano (Boys and Girls). The purpose of the test was to find out the effects of extensive reading on the students' knowledge of the meaning and use of phrasal verbs (an aspect of English vocabulary). Also, two sets of questionnaire were designed by the investigator: one for the students, and the other for the teachers. However, the questions on both were directed towards collecting information on the effects of extensive reading on some ESL vocabulary development, with a particular focus on Nigerian –Turkish International Colleges, Kano (Boys and Girls)..

Two categories of subjects were employed-the students and the teachers. One hundred and thirteen (113) students in SSI and SS2 were selected at Nigerian-Turkish International Colleges, Kano, as the sample population out of a total of one hundred and fifty one (151), that is, seventy five percent (75%). Teachers of English language in NTIC, Kano were used by the investigator to administer the questionnaire to the students as the students were in different classes and the researcher could not be with all of them at the same time. The teachers themselves filled a total number of four (4) questionnaires . The aim of teachers' questionnaire was to find out whether or not the English language teachers believed in the role of extensive reading in language teaching/learning and whether they encouraged their students to engage in it or not

ii. **STUDENTS' TEST**

A total of thirty (30) questions on phrasal verbs (an aspect Of English vocabulary) were administered to the students who filled the questionnaires. The choice of phrasal verbs was informed by the fact that they are a type of vocabulary most commonly used, especially in conversations. It is expected then that ESL learners can easily come across them and use them. The test was aimed at ascertaining whether extensive reading positively affects some ESL learners' vocabulary development or not. The questions were the objective type in which students were provided with a list of possible answers lettered A-D after each question, from which they were required to choose the option they considered the appropriate answer to the question by ringing or underlining it. The test was attached to the questionnaire to enable respondents (students only) continue and complete the exercise at a stretch. Each student's score was calculated over one hundred (100) percent.

iii. **PHRASAL VERBS**

Phrasal verb is the name given to an English verb which is composed of two or three words. One verb is combined with a preposition (like *on, in, under*) or an adverb (like *up, down, away*). Sometimes a phrasal verb can have a meaning that is very different to the meaning of at least one of those two or three words separately. Some text books call these verbs multi-word verbs. Phrasal verbs are used more frequently in everyday speech than in formal, official writing or speaking. Here are some examples: Maria didn't know the word, so she **looked it up** in the dictionary. Oh no, we've **run out of** milk! I'll have to buy some more. Farmers have to **get up** early in the morning. The rocket **took off** with a loud roar. Many students of English as a foreign language panic when they hear the term "phrasal verbs", but in fact phrasal verbs are just vocabulary to memorize, and not some strange, secret grammatical formula. In fact many native speakers of English do not know the term "phrasal verb" at all, even though they probably use them very often!

v. **Types of phrasal verbs**

\There are **four** different types of phrasal verbs. These are:

- Phrasal verbs which take objects and are separable
- Phrasal verbs which take objects and are inseparable
- Phrasal verbs which do not take objects (these are always inseparable)
- Three-word phrasal verbs.

The phrasal verbs used in the test combined all the types stated above and they include the following: ask after, back out of, break away from, break down, break up, break through, break in, break into, break off, bring up, bring about, bring out, bring round, burst in, butt in, call away, call by, call for, call in, call in at ,call off, call up, and call by.

vi. **THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES**

At NTIC (Boys), the investigator distributed copies of the questionnaire to the students himself and left them under the supervision of some teachers in the respective classes. The teachers then collected the questionnaires and returned them to him. He distributed that of the English language teachers to them and collected them afterwards. At NTIC (Girls), the Vice Principal academics) took the responsibility of administering the questionnaires to both students and teachers. He also ensured they were collected and returned to the researcher.

4.i **DATA ANALYSIS**

Table 1: Extensive Readers and Non- Extensive Readers

Extensive Readers	Percentage of Extensive Readers	Non- Extensive Readers	Percentage of Non-Extensive Readers	Total	Percentage Total
33	29.2%	80	70.8%	113	100%

This table shows the actual number of extensive reading students at NTIC, using their responses to the questions asked in the questionnaire, that is, 33 (29.2%) and the actual number of non- extensive reading students , that is, 80 (70.8%).

Table 2: Students' test result analysis.

Er Students' Highest Score	Er Students' Lowest Score	Er Students' Average Score	Non-Er Students' Highest Score	Non-Er Students' Lowest Score	Non-Er Students' Average Score
77%	33%	55%	70%	27%	48.5%

This table shows NTIC extensive reading students' scores in the test: highest 77%, lowest 33%, average 55% and those of the non-extensive reading students: highest 70%, lowest 27%, and average 48.5%.

ii. RESEARCH FINDING

The percentage instrument of analysis was employed by the researcher and the result shows: (a) that extensive reading programme was not implemented in Nigerian-Turkish International College, Kano; (b) that of the five lesson periods assigned English language per week, none was used exclusively for extensive reading; (c) that only very few of the students engaged in extensive reading on their own;(d) that the students faced some difficulties or problems engaging in extensive reading, such as boredom, time constraint and understanding complex themes, words and expressions; (e)that NTIC Kano students would like their school to implement extensive reading programme; (f) that students who engaged in extensive reading actually proved to have higher stock of vocabulary than those who did not engage in it. This agrees with the research hypotheses and;(g) that extensive reading is not the only means of ESL vocabulary development –listening, and intensive reading also play major roles; (h) that reading materials like novels, magazines and newspapers were not sufficiently provided for the learners.

IV DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research work took a careful look at the effect of extensive reading on some ESL learners' vocabulary development in post primary institutions in general but with a more specific focus on Nigerian-Turkish International Colleges, Kano. It stated the meaning of reading as a concept before zeroing in on extensive reading as one of the types of reading. In examining the concept of extensive reading, its meaning, nature, principles, problems, role and implementation were considered.

Based on the finding, a number of suggestions are here made to the government, parents, school authorities, teachers (especially of English language) and students. It is hoped that these organizations and persons will judiciously utilise the results of the finding of this work to implement and consequently harness the benefits of extensive reading programme in Nigerian- Turkish International colleges, Kano in particular and other post primary institutions of learning in general. It also believed that the result of this work will inspire further researches in this field.

As stated earlier, the researcher administered questionnaires not only to students but to teachers of English language as well. Also, the students were given a test. His conclusion is therefore based on both the result of the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaires and that of the test. Extensive reading programme should be implemented and strictly supervised by schools. This is necessary as it enhances vocabulary development of learners. Besides, it helps students in other language areas like grammar, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, extensive reading exposes learners to general knowledge and makes learning more lively and interesting.

The idea of Davis (1995) can be considered. He described extensive reading from English Language Teaching (ELT) implementation perspective as a supplementary class library scheme attached to an English course in which learners are given the time, encouragement and materials to read pleurably at their own level, as many books as they can without the pressure of examination or scoring, so that students compete only against themselves, and it is up to the teacher to provide the motivation and supervision to ensure that the maximum number of books is read in the time available. The watch words are quantity and variety, rather than quality, so that books are selected based on attractiveness and relevance to the pupils' lives than for literary merit. The proposed programme could bear any of the following names listed by Elley and Mangubhai, (1983), such as Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun (SURF) and the Book Flood Approach. Whichever one is adopted, the goal must be that learners read large quantities of books and other materials in an environment that encourages a life long reading habit.

Implementing extensive reading goes along with teaching it. Here the onus rests on the English language teachers who are not only to encourage students to read extensively but should also develop themselves and instruct learners in class on how to read effectively. Hyland (1990: 104) suggests that for the effective teaching of extensive reading in schools, the types of tasks set in reading classes frequently reflect wholly artificial objectives, demanding the kind of grammatical attention or total comprehension rarely required in everyday life. Such close textual scrutiny seems to increase the anxiety that inhibits the reading flexibility of

many students. They come to believe that there is only one correct way to read, and this seriously hampers their studies.

The problem stems from the fact that reading classes are often used to teach language rather than reading. Texts are either milked of every last drop of meaning by intensive study or employed as vehicles for presenting linguistic patterns. In the real world, however, reading is a means to an end and not an end in itself. It is always a purposeful activity, and our job as teachers is to help students identify these different purposes and to master the strategies best suited to achieving them. In other words, we must use reading lessons to develop students' reading proficiency rather than improving linguistic competence. Endeavour to constantly stock the school library with relevant books and other materials for pleasure reading, like novels, story books, plays, magazines, dailies etc. This at least will have a semblance with the Book Flood Approach stated earlier in this chapter. In addition, the school should ensure a suitable environment for reading. With these, the students will be motivated not only to read but to develop reading culture as there will be no more excuses.

Students must on their part appreciate the efforts of their parents, the school and their teachers by making sure they look away from all else and focus on the main purpose of their being in school - acquisition of knowledge-which of course can only be achieved through reading both intensively and extensively. The reading habit which students have lost or replaced with playing of computer games; internet browsing and watching television and home video must be picked up again. Good as these activities may seem, they can never replace reading, according to Nwabudike, C (2006 p 20). Good things happen to students who read a great deal. They become better and more confident readers, they write better, their listening and speaking abilities improve, their vocabularies get richer, and their knowledge of the world around them increases. In addition, they develop a more positive attitude toward the target language.

The government,, private schools proprietors, parents and all stakeholders in education have their roles to play. They must ensure sound training and retraining of teachers. This they can achieve by enriching and supervising teacher-training programmes and providing in-service training opportunities. Next, they must ensure teachers are well paid so they joyfully give their very best to the learners. Also, they must provide the necessary facilities and encourage students to read by designing radio and television programmes that promote reading culture.

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APPENDIX 1.

SAMPLE OF TEST QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

This test is simply aimed at collecting information on the effect of extensive reading on some ESL vocabulary development for an MA English Language dissertation. You are therefore enjoined to answer the questions below yourself by simply underlining the appropriate answer from the options lettered A-E after each question.

- By the way, Jill, Gregory was asking..... you (asking how you are).
a. after b. by c. out d. over e. round
- I'm afraid you've signed the agreement now, Mr Blake. It's too late to back it. a. out of b. away from c. away with d. down to
- I tried hard but I simply couldn't break from my old habits.
a. into b. away c. down d. off e. out
- In court, she was so upset that she broke
a. out b. in c. up d. down
- I think I'll have to sell my car. It keeps
a. breaking off b. breaking up c. breaking down d. breaking in
- While they were on holiday their house was broken and some valuable paintings were stolen.
a. down b. into c. about d. away
- By the way ,I've just heard that Sally and Chris have their engagement.
a. broken up b. broken down c. broken away d. broken off
- When a fire.....at least ten priceless paintings were completely destroyed.
a. broke out b. broke off c. broke down d. broke through
- The tree prisoners who.....jail last weekend have finally been recaptured.
a. broke away from b. broke out in c. broke out of d. broke up into
- The police are still looking for the three prisoners who (escaped from) jail at the weekend. A .broke out of b .set off c .take up d .cross out
- I'm not surprised that Tom and Julie have They were never really suited.
a. broken down b .broken off c. broken up d .broken away
- Most schools in Englandat the end of July.
a. break up b. break down c. break off d. break with
- Janet and Peter brokea few months ago and are living apart.
a. into b .out c. up d. away
- There is a certain amount of evidence to suggest that violence on television and in films (causes) violence among young people.
a. breaks down b. gives out c. brings about d. makes for
- Seeing the couple walking hand in handmemories of his own first love.
a. brought up b. brought back c. brought out d. brought on
- It was walking home in the rain that must haveyour cold.
a. brought up b. brought on c. brought out d. brought on

APPENDIX 3.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

This questionnaire is simply aimed at collecting information on the effect of extensive reading on some ESL vocabulary development for an MA English Language dissertation. Respondents are therefore urged to cooperatively supply appropriate answers to the questions below:

- 1 Name:-----
 - 2 School:-----
 - 3 Subjects taught:-----
 - 4 Class(es) taught:-----
 - 5 Sex:-----
 - 6 How many periods per week do you teach English language per class ?-----

 - 7 Of the number of periods stated above, do you use any exclusively for extensive reading, that is, making students read materials and books different from their notebooks and textbooks? Yes/No (Tick one).
 - 8 If your answer to question 7 above is No, give reason(s)-----

 - 9 .If your answer to question 7 above is yes, state the number of books you have recommended for your students to read so far in this academic session-----

 - 10 State the titles and the authors of the books in 7 above-----
 - 11 Do you personally encourage students to do extensive reading? Yes/No (Tick one) .Give reason(s) for your answer.---

 - 12 If the answer to question 11 above is yes, what type of books or materials do you advise them to read? Magazines, newspapers, novels, religious books, others (Underline as appropriate).
 - 13 State the titles and names of writers/authors of articles and/or books in question 12 above-----

 - 14 State the difficulties or problems you face as a teacher in making your students do extensive reading-----

15. Do you think reading extensively improves students' vocabulary? Yes/ No (Tick one).
16. State other aspects of language you think reading extensively helps ESL Learners-----
17. Would you like it if your school decides to implement extensive reading programme? Yes/ No (Tick one).
18. Give reason(s) for your answer to question 17 above. -----
19. What difficulties or problems do you think your school is likely to face implementing extensive reading programme? -----
20. What, to you ,are the solutions to the problems stated in question 19 \ above?-----