

Applying Extensive Reading to Improve Unmotivated Learners' Attitudes toward Reading in English

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Abstract. Extensive reading has been highly praised by numerous scholars and researchers for its value to L1/L2 language learning and acquisition, with the extent of its effects on language learners ranging from linguistic to affective facets. The purpose of this study was to understand the effects of extensive reading on the subjects concerning their attitudes toward English reading. An attitude questionnaire was distributed to the subjects one year after the extensive reading activity terminated. The results revealed that the extensive reading improved the subjects' cognitive aspect of attitude; however, affective and behavioral aspects of attitudes indicated negative results. Some possible explanations for such results were presented in the discussions.

Keywords: extensive reading, cognitive attitude, affective attitude, behavioral attitude

1. Introduction

Extensive reading (ER) has long been advocated and perceived as an effective and stimulating instructional approach to enhance learners' language proficiency. It has been highly valued by numerous scholars and researchers in the language learning field. For instance, Robb and Susser (1989) in a study of SRA reading boxes praise the extensive reading program for both its cognitive and affective effects on language learners. Green and Oxford (1995) examining the influence of learning strategies on language proficiency claim that reading for pleasure was strongly associated with language proficiency. Waring (2009) also claims that learners cannot 'get their own sense of language' without getting themselves exposed to large quantity of reading. In her book 'Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language', Nuttall (1982) concludes by citing what other researchers often say when referring to extensive reading,

“The best way to improve one’s knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it.” (p.168)

While extensive reading is deemed valuable in terms of its effect on language learning, some criticisms have also been observed in literature (Coady, 1997; Green, 2005), particularly on the effect of extensive reading on learners’ gains in vocabulary knowledge (e.g., Powell, 2005; Huckin & Coady, 1999). The reason is that it uses simple texts and there is little or no consultation of dictionaries while reading. Besides, a general view is held that real-world texts should be adopted so that learners can adapt themselves to real-world reading (Day & Bamford, 2002). However, as Day and Bamford (2002) contend, “This is to confuse the means with the end, and paradoxically to rob students of exactly the material they need to progress to the goal of real-world texts.” (p.2) It is also argued that what counts is that learners are literally reading something meaningful, which can really entertain them and ‘trap’ them in what they are doing.

Extensive reading is also criticized for its costly investment since running an efficient and effective extensive reading program involves lots of administrative work (Day & Bamford, 1998). To deal with this problem, it is suggested that schools or universities make efforts to secure more funds from central government or cooperate with local governments to generate sufficient funds so that extensive reading programs can really run smoothly and be sustained permanently. Day and Bamford (1998) suggest running a small-scale ER program at the inception or when a program lacks sufficient funds.

Another criticism comes from the emphasis of the extensive reading scheme on free voluntary reading to promote language acquisition. It is argued that learners in the extensive reading program are often left alone without receiving any guided activities and being informed of explicit purposes for their reading, contradicting the principle of “interactionist theory” addressing the “dynamic process” of sharing and discussing either in small groups or through oral presentations (Green, 2005). Besides, it is also argued that an extensive reading program also exempts language teachers from showing commitment to reading in virtue of the scheme of the program not requiring teachers to give lectures (Green, 2005). Based on these contentions, it is suggested that language teachers design interactive activities for extensive reading programs so that students have opportunities to share reading through discussions and exchange of opinions or perspectives on their reading. What is more, it is also advised that language teachers familiarize themselves with their students’ reading so that they can share the reading with students and meanwhile present themselves as models of devoted readers as well.

Lastly, extensive reading is also attacked for lack of instruction and

practice of the language features in texts, restraining the development of students' linguistic knowledge of the target language. As Green (2005) contends, "The overriding concern always in reading schemes...leading to the development of a superficial fluency... . The principles of analysis and recycling so vital in consolidating and extending learners' knowledge of and ability to use target language systems do not operate in most reading schemes" (p.309). However, such contention demonstrates unawareness of the tenets of an extensive reading program—reading for pleasure rather than dissection of texts. It is argued that explaining and practicing linguistic features of the target language should be done in the regular reading class or grammar class rather than in the extensive reading program.

Motivation and Purpose

English reading has long been considered an important language learning activity for secondary education in Taiwan considering that a test-oriented educational system still prevails in this context (Tien, 2015). As a result, a great many students have become unmotivated language learners and readers since they are required to get immersed in a compelling bunch of English reading materials to cope with countless tests and exams, with many of these texts oftentimes unintelligible and inadequate owing to their improper difficulty levels (Lin, 2004). Consequently, most of our students ever learn to read only texts beyond their reading level, the kind of passages they see on language tests (Waring, 1997).

Besides, to build up students' language abilities, reading activities in schools often end up focusing more on explanations of linguistic features, practice and memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules and sentence translation than appreciation of pieces of reading. As a result, multitudes of students have completely lost interest in and even developed negative attitudes toward reading in English after undergoing such a rigid learning pattern and a barely pleasurable reading experience. Normally the negative attitudes are carried over to university, where students have to deal with a lot more English reading texts in their disciplines, with content even more intricate and obscure. Without developing positive attitudes toward and forming habits of reading in English, they might find it even harder to survive their university studies.

A substantial number of studies have recognized the values of extensive reading on the development of L2; however, there has been far less research on the affective influence of extensive reading (Yamashita, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to fill this gap by exploring the effects of a home-based extensive reading on L2 learners' attitudes toward English reading. To help the students develop positive attitudes toward English reading and turn them into motivated readers, they were

requested to do extensive reading at home. A survey was administered to the students to investigate the extent of the effects of extensive reading on the subjects' attitudes toward English reading one year after the extensive reading activity terminated. The findings were presented following the survey and discussed along with provision of certain pedagogical suggestions.

2. Literature Review

Extensive Reading: Terms and Definitions

The term of 'extensive reading' was originally coined by Palmer (1917) purporting to differentiate it from 'intensive reading' (Bamford & Day, 1997). The difference between extensive reading and intensive reading mainly lies in the amount of reading, degree of depth and extent of comprehension of texts. Intensive reading usually involves learning of shorter texts with higher degree of depth in content and use of more difficult language, often requiring learners' complete and detailed understanding of the reading materials; contrarily, extensive reading refers to reading longer passages with content written with simpler language and the purpose of reading is to understand overall meaning of a text rather than study of linguistic components (Bamford & Day, 1997; Yamashita, 2004). Other terms equivalent to 'extensive reading' are also used in literature. For instance, Beatrice Mikulecky calls extensive reading "pleasure reading" (Bamford & Day, 1997), Bamford and Day (1997) term it "sustained silent reading (SSR)" (Grabe, 1991) and Krashen (1993) denominates it "free voluntary reading" (Bamford & Day, 1997).

Definitions that serve to anchor and frame extensive reading also vary among scholars. Palmer defined extensive reading as reading "rapidly" (1921/1964, p.111) and "book after book" (1917/1968, p.137) with concentration on the "meaning" rather than the "language" (as cited in Day & Bamford, 1998, p.5). According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), extensive reading is reading for "general understanding" with intentions "to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading" (pp.193-194). Day and Bamford (1998) and Grabe and Stoller (2002) describe extensive reading as exposing learners to a great number of written texts of their language proficiency level, which is in the meanwhile pleasurable (Helgesen, 2005; Pigada, 2006). As whether reading is pleasurable or not can only be determined by the readers themselves, it would be best that the reading materials, as suggested by Day and Bamford (1998), are "self-selected".

Extensive reading can be conducted in the classroom generally accompanied to an English course (Davis, 1995) or as an after-school activity (Day & Bamford, 1998). As for the goal set for amount of

reading that can be qualified as extensive reading, Susser and Robb (1990) indicate a range from an hour per night to two books weekly, as agreed upon by educators. Anderson (1999) considers 200 words every minute a rational and practical goal for L2 readers. However, Powell (2005) suggests that flexibility be a necessity considering students' substantial workload imposed upon them at schools.

Theoretical Framework of Extensive Reading

The instructional value ascribed to extensive reading is founded on the supposition that learners will have a good command of L2 provided that they are exposed to meaningful and interesting texts over an extended period of time (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989). In addition, the theoretical motive underlying the use of extensive reading derives from the thought that learners need a considerable amount of comprehensible input of the target language so that acquisition of the whole target language can be made possible (Krashen, 1982; Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs, 1999).

In fact, extensive reading is mainly founded on Krashen's two prominent reading theories, the Input Hypothesis or Comprehension Hypothesis and the Pleasure Hypothesis (Hong, 2007; Iwahori, 2008; Maxim, 1999). The Input Hypothesis claims that learners can acquire language best by understanding the input somewhat beyond their current language level, namely the 'i+1' level, with 'i' being learners' current level and 'i+1' the subsequent level (Krashen, 1982, 1985). To move from 'i' to 'i+1', learners must obtain comprehensible input, and the ideal input must be interesting and/or relevant, not grammatically sequenced and in sufficient quantity (Krashen, 1982); moreover, learning also needs to be undertaken in a low-affective context (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). The Input Hypothesis is consistent with Krashen's Natural Order Hypothesis, claiming that learners progress following an inherent sequence when receiving parallel levels of language input (Krashen, 1982, 2002; Morano, 2004). In brief, the Input Hypothesis advocates that language knowledge is acquired subconsciously, a process similar to 'incidental learning' (Krashen, 1989), and as long as learners have acquired the essential skills of a language, they can acquire the language by themselves through exposure to a large amount of comprehensible input.

The Pleasure Hypothesis claims that pleasant language activities can not only provide comprehensible input but also lower learners' affective filters, a 'mental block' in charge of language acquisition (Lee, 1998). The affective filters correlate with the anxiety level of learners (Krashen, 1982), relating to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggesting that language learners with low affective filters are more receptive to input and confident of learning a language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). That is, the comprehensible input cannot be completely used if there is a mental

block or affective filter obstructing the acquisition process (Krashen, 1985). Though the affective variables do not influence language acquisition straightforwardly, they inhibit language acquisition (Krashen, 1992, 2002; Lee, 1998). In an extensive reading program, learners can choose their favorite reading materials with intelligible content assured; besides, acquisition of linguistic knowledge can be guaranteed as learners' anxiety level is lowered being immersed in a less stressful learning condition.

Extensive reading is also closely related to the Bookstrap Hypothesis and the Flow Theory. The Bookstrap Hypothesis is proposed by Day and Bamford (1998), who borrowed the idea from bootstrapping in engineering describing "a process in which the results of an action are fed back to achieve greater results more quickly with less effort" (p.30). The Bookstrap Hypothesis lays special weight on learners' initial successful experiences in extensive reading, which has great impact on learners' attitude and motivation. With experiences of achievement in reading, learners find that reading is virtually exciting and valuable; in consequence, their positive learning attitude is increased and motivation is enhanced. These successful experiences will entice readers to move on subsequent reading leading to greater achievement in reading in L2 (Day & Bamford, 1998). The Flow Theory alludes to the condition when learners are deeply involved in the reading when the reading catches their attention and at this level learners start to use their background knowledge to process the text or decode the meaning of the text by chunks (phrases or ideas) instead of decoding word by word (Waring, 1997). It is argued that extensive readers engage in interesting reading activities, motivating them to plunge into more reading by entering into a virtuous circle, and ultimately they deviate from less effective reading along with development of language or content knowledge, finally attaining better reading skills and reading comprehension.

Benefits of Extensive Reading

A considerable amount of research conducted over the past decades has reported the impact of extensive reading on learners at different age levels and in different contexts (Leung, 2002) and also on the development of both L1 (e.g., Krashen, 1993; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985) and L2 (e.g., Elley, 1991; Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Hayashi, 1999; Krashen, 1997; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Robb & Susser, 1989; Yang, 2001). Numerous studies have reported that learners have increased their language abilities in different aspects from extensive reading (Yamashita, 2004; Yamashita, 2013) with received benefits spreading from receptive skills to productive skills (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). The reported gains include general language competence (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Iwahori, 2008), vocabulary knowledge (e.g., Lao & Krashen, 2000; MacQuillan & Krashen, 2008; Poulshock, 2010; Yamamoto, 2011), listening ability (e.g., Elley & Mangubhai, 1983), oral skills (e.g., Cho & Krahen, 1994), reading

skills (e.g., Day & Bamford, 1998; Manson & Krashen, 1997; Nakanishi, 2014) and writing ability (e.g., Janopoulos, 1986; Saleem, 2010; Tsang, 1996). In addition, studies have also reported beneficial effects of extensive reading on affective domains such as improvement of learners' motivation and/or attitudes (e.g., Cho & Krashen, 1994; Hayashi, 1999; Johanson, 2012; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Nishino, 2007; Yamashita, 2013) and building of learners' confidence (e.g., Kembo, 1993; Ro, 2013). This study mainly examined the effects of extensive reading on L2 learners' attitudes toward English reading.

Extensive Reading and Attitudes

Affective factors are recognized as important elements in a reading course (Quinn & Jadav, 1987) and more emphasis is beginning to be played on the importance of affective reading development (Matthewson, 1994). One important affective element having impact on language learning is learners' attitude (Gardner, 1972). Attitude is often defined as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p.6; Yamashita, 2013, p.249) and are usually considered many-faceted, specifically involving cognitive, affective and behavioral components (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Hovland & Bosenberg, 1960; Ley, Schaer & Dismukes, 1994). Alexander and Filler (1976) define reading attitude as "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation" (p.1) or "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that makes reading more or less probable" (Smith, 1990, p.215, as cited in Yamashita, 2004, p.3). Therefore, with positive attitude toward L2 reading, it is more likely that L2 learners will form habits of reading, attach higher values upon reading, be more intrinsically motivated to read and become active readers. In short, reading attitude decides whether a learner will read or have a will to read or not.

Extensive reading has been recognized by several scholars and researchers as a powerful device for improving learners' reading attitude (e.g., Cho & Krashen, 1994; Johnson, 2012; Robb & Susser, 1989; Poulshock, 2010). The following section presents related literature on extensive reading in terms of its potential for promoting positive reading attitude with these studies involving learners in different contexts and with different language proficiency levels, covering different study span and adopting different methods.

Elley (1991) reported a three-year longitudinal study engaging elementary students in an extensive reading program called REAP where learners were provided with highly interesting illustrated story books. The results revealed that children reading extensively seemed to occasionally acquire the language and developed positive attitude toward

reading as well. Walker's (1997) study involved international undergraduates and graduate students in the UK, who were preparing for a test required for tertiary level study in English. A self-access extensive reading project was set up with graded readers made accessible to the subjects on their schooldays. The students read an average of 7.5-8 books over a 30-week study period. The results showed a correlation between extensive reading and the subjects' test scores. Moreover, the interview responses also revealed perceived change of the learners' attitudes toward English reading. Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009) engaged beginning level college students in a Saudi college pre-session course that adopted extensive reading approach. The results showed that the participants doing a daily 20-25 minutes silent reading demonstrated parallel improvement in reading comprehension, reading speed and vocabulary knowledge as the counterparts in the control group, who read 100 short articles. Moreover, the participants in the experimental group also demonstrated more positive attitudes toward English reading, their reading and their class compared to the students in the extensive reading group.

A great many extensive reading studies are conducted in Japan. Mason and Krashen's (1997) quasi-experimental study compared reluctant EFL university students to students in diverse school levels. The reluctant students' cloze test scored much lower than the comparison students receiving conventional classroom language instruction. After being administered to an extensive reading class for one semester, the reluctant students virtually got abreast of the comparison students on the cloze test; moreover, the reluctant students also improved their learning attitude. Lao and Krashen (2000) examined the influence of extensive reading (using popular literature) on university students' language proficiency and reading attitude. The results revealed that the popular literature group who had completed five assigned books and one self-selected book during the semester showed significant gains in vocabulary knowledge and reading rate compared to their counterparts whose learning focused on development of academic skills. Moreover, they also demonstrated positive attitude toward the pleasure reading activity. Yamashita (2013) conducted a study investigating the impact of extensive reading on reading attitude, which was assumed made up of varied components, serving as the affective aspect and the cognitive aspect of EFL reading attitudes respectively. The participants were 61 non-English major university students enrolled in compulsory EFL classes. They received a weekly 90 minutes' English instruction based on the ER approach. The students read both inside and outside of class and were required to submit book reports. The study lasted for 15 weeks. The result showed that ER generated effects on Comfort and Intellectual Value and Anxiety Value but not on Practical Value, denoting that ER stimulated intrinsic motivation of language learners forging a virtuous cycle of reading.

In Taiwan, Nash and Yuan (1992/93) compared university English majors receiving instruction using quantity reading with those receiving traditional reading instruction that focused on learning of subskills. After reading for one academic year, the subjects in quantity reading group demonstrated more positive attitudes toward reading compared to the control group. Sheu (2003) reported an ER study involving beginning-level Taiwanese junior high school students. The study lasted for two semesters. The results showed that the two treatment groups improved on reading comprehension scores to a significant extent. Moreover, the self-assessment also indicated that the subjects in the treatment groups developed positive attitude toward reading in English. Tien (2015) conducted a large-scale study for a university's Teaching Excellence Project in Taiwan. A two-year extensive reading program was established for non-English majors with an aim to improve their English proficiency. The students received two hours of extensive reading treatment per week. At the end of the first year, the author conducted a study to evaluate the program by adopting questionnaire and focus-group interviews. A total of 5,711 students and 36 instructors participated in this study. The author examined what factors influenced non-English majors' attitudes toward extensive reading and how students and teachers perceived the extensive reading program. The results showed that numerous factors exerted effects on learners' attitude toward extensive reading with learners' majors and amount of time spent on reading having direct effect. Moreover, both teachers and students displayed perceptible attitude change toward extensive reading recognizing its linguistic benefits after experiencing reading for a period of two semesters.

Some researchers adopted exploratory qualitative research design to get deep insight into the effect of extensive reading. Alshamrani (2003) implemented a qualitative study involving two groups of ESL students participating in a reading course termed Reading Club. The subjects read authentic texts during the three-month course. After experiencing the extensive reading course, the subjects increased several linguistic skills and adopted positive attitudes toward reading authentic texts and became enthusiastic readers as well. Another study was conducted by Fredricks and Sobko (2008) in Tajikistan. The subjects participated in an ER program where they were provided with reading texts with topics relevant to their own cultures. The reading activities involved discussions and debates on the selected reading materials along with teacher-guided activities. The results showed that the learners demonstrated positive attitude toward reading in English after experiencing the extensive reading; moreover, they also formed habits of reading as well. Byun (2010) also adopted a qualitative research design involving 14 in-service secondary school EFL teachers in a professional development program in a Korean university. One purpose of the study was to explore how the EFL teachers perceived the administered extensive reading approach. A

copious supply of prints, roughly 1000 copies, was made accessible to the participants. The data were generated within two weeks through multiple sources including classroom observations, interviews, diaries and surveys. The results showed that the teachers had changed their perceptions about extensive reading and turned into enthusiastic extensive readers. They recognized several benefits of extensive reading including increase in vocabulary knowledge and improvement in reading attitude and sense of accomplishment.

ER also demonstrates its effects on different languages besides English. Hitosugi and Day (2004) conducted a study at the University of Hawaii engaging beginning learners of Japanese in reading texts written for children. The subjects had an access to 226 books for the ER class and read extensively over the 10-week period and also spent 30 minutes weekly doing numerous activities related to the reading. The subjects read an average of 31.6 books within the study period. The results showed that the subjects developed more positive attitudes toward Japanese study compared to their regular class counterparts. Similarly, McQuillan (1996) also conducted a 10-week FVR (free voluntary reading) study with native speakers of English enrolled in a university course, Spanish for Native Speakers (SNS). The experimental group did FVR outside the classroom and discussed reading in class by forming literature circles. At the end of the course, the subjects increased vocabulary knowledge to a significant level and adopted more positive attitudes toward Spanish literacy. Arnold (2009) conducted an evaluation study at a university in the southeastern United States engaging eight advanced German language learners in a modified extensive reading program. The participants read online text without instructor preselection and read whatever materials they liked without restrictions on text length or type. The participants met twice a week for a period of 75 minutes. After reading, they filled out reading reports and did follow-up activities including discussions and reflections. The study lasted for one semester and the results showed that many students became motivated German learners and took a much more active attitude toward extensive reading.

3. Methodology

Subjects

The subjects were freshmen students from the department of Information Management at a university in southern Taiwan. The researcher taught the subjects Freshman English Reading in academic year 2006. In addition to the reading class, the subjects were also required to do extensive reading at home. At the beginning of the class, the researcher investigated orally the class concerning their perceptions about English learning along with their attitude toward reading in English. Most of the subjects, according to the researchers' understanding, were mostly unmotivated or

reluctant English readers and had formed negative conception about English learning after undergoing a rigid way of learning English reading in high schools and encountering numerous frustrations and failures in the process of their learning. In addition, most of them conceived being able to read in English as unimportant and unrelated to their future careers without knowing that most employment opportunities require job seekers to be equipped with certain level of English language skills. Other than that, most of them considered being able to read in English was not important in their specific field of study partly because they thought they were non-majors granting that they were clearly aware of the fact that many disciplines in their fields of study required a certain level of English skills, particularly reading skills since most of the textbooks they used were written in English.

Instruments

The attitudes questionnaire was designed based on Lewis and Teale's (1980) tri-attitudes model. Lewis and Teale developed their own reading attitudes model based on the generally agreed conception that attitudes consist of cognitive, affective and behavioral components. The three components correspond to the three attitudes including a) beliefs or opinions about reading, (b) evaluations or feelings about reading and (c) intentions to read and actual reading (Ley, Schaer & Dismukes, 1994).

In order to generate more appropriate questions, the first version of the questionnaire was given to two of the first author's colleagues for examination, who had offered precious feedback for the items in the questionnaire. Moreover, the questionnaire had also been reviewed by other experts from English teaching-related field; therefore, it is equipped with content validity and face validity. After incorporating their opinions and making revisions, the second version of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was developed. The reading attitudes questionnaire was a five-point Likert scale questionnaire with each item requiring the subjects to answer by selecting a number ordered from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). As for the reliability of the questionnaire in this study (See Table 1), the lowest Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was affective ($\alpha = 0.788$) with a value larger than 0.7. Therefore, this reading attitudes questionnaire in this study had internal consistency reliability.

Table 1. Reliability of Reading Attitudes Questionnaire

Reading Attitudes	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
a. Cognitive	5	.886
b. Affective	4	.788
c. Behaviour	5	.889

Other than the main section of the questionnaire, a short section containing items of gender, age, language learning experience, status of

subscription of English reading materials, experience of living in English-speaking countries and English scores of the scholastic aptitude test for college admission and indication of English reading material for extensive reading was also deliberately constructed to acquire students' demographic information.

Procedure

The extensive reading was conducted by the first author, which was administered at the beginning of the first semester of academic year 2006 and finished at the end of the second semester, lasting for one academic year. In addition to having weekly two hours of in-class reading in the university, the subjects were also required to do extensive reading after school. They were told to freely choose whatever genres of reading if only they felt interested in them, be they magazines, newspapers, entertaining or informed texts, fiction or non-fiction short stories, etc. Books such as American children's literature and Young Adult Literature (YAL) were also recommended to the subjects. The young adult literature has recently become popularly used in the university's English curriculum in Taiwan for its multiple values including using natural and authentic language written from young adults' viewpoints, discussing interesting themes related to young adults' real life experiences, and fostering learners' cross-cultural understanding (Bushman & Bushman, 1997; White, 2000; Wilder & Teasley, 2000). Booklists of Oxford Bookworm Library and Heinemann Guided Readers covering different levels were also distributed to the subjects as references for their selection of reading materials.

To help the subjects choose reading materials, the researcher led the subjects to the university's library, where a whole bunch of reading materials were made accessible to them, who spent a couple of hours scanning the texts and pick up their favorite ones. As emphasized by Hill (1997), an ER specialist, it is important to offer multitudinous types of reading materials to fulfill the needs of students considering their varied language proficiency levels. The procedure for borrowing books was explained by the librarian. Apart from borrowing books from the university library, the subjects were also encouraged to look for L2 reading materials from bookstores and make a collection of their own favorite reading materials to conduct pleasure reading in their free time.

The purpose of doing extensive reading was explained to the students. In addition, the subjects were also advised that dictionary consultation for unfamiliar words be decreased or avoided to refrain from distraction and interruption of the flow of reading. They were also encouraged to choose reading materials based on their own proficiency and comfortable levels and conduct their reading in their free time and at their own pace. There was no designated number of books for students in light of the inherent

attribute of the extensive reading intended for pleasure. Nevertheless, the recommended reading volumes were 4-5 books each semester and estimated pages were roughly 400 to 500 pages. They were encouraged to spend at least one hour to do extensive reading per night. There were no tests administered to students for their extensive reading, nor were they required to undertake any reading task or do any assignment in virtue of the varieties and different levels of the reading materials selected by the students. In addition, the extensive reading does not intend to impose on learners any additional post-reading tasks, as suggested by Day and Bamford (1998). The subjects were also told to record their progress in reading and document what they had read. Nevertheless, the researcher did not actually monitor their progress by requesting them to present their progress reports. Each student was requested to present orally in front of the class on books read and what they had learned from their extensive reading. The oral presentation ran for a period of two weeks, arranged at the last two weeks of each semester with each presentation lasting five minutes only owing to time constraint.

In addition to the home extensive reading, students also did textbook reading in their weekly two-hour of English reading classes, for which students used prescribed textbooks (For Your Information 1 & 2 written by Blanchard and Root). For the in-class reading, the subjects were requested to memorize lots of lexical elements including root morphemes, prefixes, suffixes and synonyms, antonyms, words collocation/phrases and idioms and do exercises in the textbooks. They were also required to do sentence practices and translation in class and for their homework. Supplementary reading materials related to the reading/topics in the textbooks were also distributed to students for extra reading. The subjects were administered several quizzes and mid-term and final exams respectively per semester to test their knowledge of lexical and syntactic structures as well as reading skills and reading comprehension.

A questionnaire designed to understand the impact of the extensive reading on the subjects in terms of their attitudes toward English reading was administered to the subjects on 22 May, 2008, one year after the extensive reading terminated. The questionnaire was written in Chinese. The subjects were informed that the survey was used to understand the effect of the extensive reading they were required to do at home for their English reading class in academic year 2006. They were asked to respond to each item in the questionnaire honestly. All the subjects took less than 5 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. A total of 40 questionnaires were distributed to the students. After excluding four invalid questionnaires, there were 36 left, achieving a return rate of 90% (36/40).

4. Results and Discussions

Data Analysis

Twenty-three (63.9%) male students and 13 (36.1%) female students participated in this study. Most of the subjects were at the age range of 18-20 (94.4%) (mean age= 19.31) (see Table 2). All the subjects had received formal English instruction for at least six years with mostly having 7 years of English education and some, more than 7 years (see Table 3). None of these subjects except one had ever lived in English-speaking countries, which is considered one of the interfering factors affecting learners' attitude toward learning English (Yamashita, 2004). As regards the English grades of the university's basic scholastic aptitude test, of which the full mark is 15, a great majority of the subjects were at grade range 2-8 with a cumulative percentage of 86.6 (see Table 4) excluding the missing value. The mean of the grades was 5.67 and the standard deviation was 2.733. The results of the grades indicate that most of the subjects were low achievers in terms of their English language proficiency. As for the types of reading materials they chose for their extensive reading at home, the results showed that the most popular materials were songs and magazines, with novels coming third and story books, fourth (see Table 5).

Table 2: Frequency of Age

	Frequency		Percent		Valid
		Cumulative		Percent	
Valid	18	7	19.4	19.4	19.4
	19	17	47.2	47.2	66.7
	20	10	27.8	27.8	94.4
	22	1	2.8	2.8	97.2
	24	1	2.8	2.8	100.0
Total	36		100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Frequency of Years of Learning English

	Frequency		Percent		Valid
		Cumulative		Percent	
Valid	6	5	13.9	15.2	15.2
	7	15	41.7	45.5	60.6
	8	3	8.3	9.1	69.7
	9	3	8.3	9.1	78.8
	10	3	8.3	9.1	87.9
	11	3	8.3	9.1	97.0
	19	1	2.8	3.0	100.0
Total	33		91.7	100.0	
Missing System	3		8.3		
Total	36		100.0		

Table 4. Frequency of English Grade

	Frequency		Percent		Valid
		Cumulative		Percent	
Valid	0	1	2.8	3.3	3.3
	2	2	5.6	6.7	10.0
	4	6	16.7	20.0	30.0
	5	10	27.8	33.3	63.3
	6	3	8.3	10.0	73.3
	7	1	2.8	3.3	76.7
	8	4	11.1	13.3	90.0
	10	1	2.8	3.3	93.3
	12	1	2.8	3.3	96.7
	13	1	2.8	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	83.3	100.0	
Missing System	6	16.7			
Total	36	100.0			

Table 5. Frequency of Home Extensive Reading Materials

Genre	N	Sum
Story books	36	8
Novels	36	12
American Children Literature	36	1
Young Adult Literature	36	0
Oxford Bookworm Library	36	1
Heinemann Guided Readers	36	2
Songs	36	17
Magazines	36	13
Newspapers	36	3
Internet	36	3
Valid N (listwise)	36	

Concerning the results of the attitudes test, this study tested the three dimensions of attitudes (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) to see whether the means of the three dimensions reached 3. The findings showed that extensive reading had improved the subjects' cognitive aspect of attitude ($p=.000$, $t=6.148$, $df=35$); however, the results also showed negative effects for affective ($p=0.000$, $t=-5.135$, $df=35$) and behavioral ($p= 0.000$, $t= -5.041$, $df=35$) aspects of attitudes. As could be referred to from Table 6, the mean of cognitive aspect of attitude was 3.9000 and the standard deviation was .87831, the mean of affective aspect of attitude was 2.3403 and the standard deviation was .77033, and the mean of behavioral aspect of attitude was 2.2167 and the standard deviation was .93243. The results indicated that after undertaking extensive reading for one academic year, the subjects had changed their thought about reading in English, considering it as important, which was in contrast to an opposing attitude held toward English reading when

they were just matriculated into the university. The subjects used to think of reading in English as irrelevant and unimportant to their current study and future careers. However, after undergoing the extensive reading program, the subjects had changed their perceptions toward reading in English. They believed reading extensively would improve their reading ability and benefit them in their current study and future employment opportunities. Namely, after reading, the subjects had adopted a more affirmative attitude, at least in their perception, toward reading in English.

Table 6. One-Sample Statistics of Reading Attitudes

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Cognitive	36	3.9000	.87831	.14639	6.148*
Affective	36	2.3403	.77033	.12839	-5.139*
Behavioral	36	2.2167	.93243	.15541	-5.041*

「*」: $p < 0.001$

Nevertheless, the findings demonstrated negative effects of the extensive reading on the subjects' affective and behavioral aspects of attitudes toward English reading. One possible reason to explain this phenomenon was that for the home extensive reading, the teacher did not supervise the subjects' reading progress by requesting them to present their progress reports; therefore, the subjects probably did not actually carry out extensive reading at home, not reading diligently as advised or expected. The teacher simply encouraged the students to read as much as they could but did not monitor their reading progress, for which the intent is to move the reading forward (Ellis & McRae, 1991). As Waring (1997) notes, for the out-of-class reading, teachers are advised to keep track of learners' progress by demanding learners to document their reading to ensure that they have conformed to the goal of page number set for each semester though the targeted page number is reserved for learners to determine on their own judging by their own proficiency level, time, motivation and accessibility of reading materials. Lack of monitoring on the part of the teacher, the subjects might consider the reading task as unimportant, not taking a more serious attitude for the home-based extensive reading. It is understood that the subjects had already taken an aversion to English reading in light of the fact that they were low-achieving and passive English readers, who might need a certain level of supervision on the part of the teacher so that they would be more engaged in their extensive reading at home. The teacher should have monitored the subjects' reading progress, at least at the first semester and then let them monitor their own progress until they became familiar with the techniques of self-monitoring, as advised by Ellis and McTae (1991).

Another conceivable reason to shed light on the negative effects of the administered extensive reading on the subjects' affective and behavioral

aspects of attitudes toward reading in English was possibly the workload imposed on the subjects for their in-class reading. For the in-class reading, the selected reading materials were more complex texts containing more sophisticated lexical words and syntactical structures. As aforementioned, the subjects were assigned lots of tasks for the in-class reading including vocabulary learning, sentence practices and translation, supplementary reading; moreover, several quizzes coupled with mid-term and final exams were also administered to them each semester. Apparently, the subjects were already occupied with enormous workload for the in-class reading; they might feel that the extensive reading, in effect, placed an additional burden on them instead of bringing them pleasure. Even though they were aware that extensive reading would help them improve their English reading ability and benefit them in their current study and in their future careers, they did not feel like sparing some time doing the reading emotionally.

Though cognitively the subjects knew that the in-class reading and extensive reading were different in essence with the latter easier and more pleasurable, the in-class reading workload might generate stress for them, which prevented them from any attempt to do extra reading, and the heavy workload might also lead to hatred to reading in English for the subjects. If this is the case, it is suggested that when conducting both conventional classroom reading and extensive reading, teachers should take learners' level into consideration. For the low-achievers or unmotivated learners, it is important that teachers avoid overburdening the students with in-class reading work considering their lower language proficiency. Teachers should know how to weight both types of reading carefully. In addition, since the purpose of extensive reading is to motivate students to read and develop reading habits, it is important that teachers engage students in reading emotionally, so that they will hopefully become autonomous English readers who can manage and take initiative for their own learning.

Lastly, since this survey was conducted one year after the administration of the extensive reading finished, it might be possible that the subjects had increased positive attitudes toward English reading in terms of their affective and behavioral aspects of attitudes after experiencing the extensive reading but the effects did not persist after the extensive reading terminated. As suggested by Day and Bamford (in Donnes, 1997; as cited in Powell, 2005), more research is needed to understand to what extent the students kept on doing L2 reading when the extensive reading class was over. Moreover, Powell (2005) also indicates that "questionnaire-based research tends to produce general impression rather than hard evidence" (p.33). Therefore, other research instruments such as interviews (Yamashita, 2004), reflective logs or diaries should also be utilized to generate more concrete evidences and get in-depth insight into the real causes leading to the negative effects of extensive reading on the subjects' affective and behavioral aspects of attitudes toward reading in

English.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of extensive reading on students' attitudes toward reading in English. The findings indicated that the extensive reading had yielded a moderate improvement in the subjects' cognitive aspect of attitude in terms of reading in English; however, the results did not demonstrate positive effects on the subjects' affective and behavioral aspects of attitudes. Two conceivable reasons were suggested for such results. One reason is that the teacher did not execute monitoring for the subjects' progress of the home-based extensive reading; therefore, the subjects might deem the reading as unimportant. It might be possible that the subjects were virtually not doing much reading or performing extensive reading at home. Therefore, teachers are advised to keep track of students' reading progress by requiring them to keep records of their own reading, executing a certain degree of monitoring to push them forward so as to effectuate learning. As suggested by Waring (1997), teachers can require students to write book reports or keep reading diaries to record and report their reading. Bell (1998) also suggests holding regular conferences between teachers and students, which can help teachers execute efficient monitoring of students' reading progress and meanwhile offer teachers the opportunities to direct students in choosing titles, encourage them to read extensively and to demonstrate their liking for the selected reading materials. In short, to implement a successful extensive reading program, effective monitoring is indispensable so that teachers can make themselves aware of what students are reading, how much they have read and track students' development of reading habits and interests (Bell, 1998). As only when students find satisfaction with their learning will they feel motivated to learn and be more likely to form habits of reading in English.

The negative effects were also possibly ascribed to the fact that the subjects were burdened with heavy workload for the in-class reading, which might lead to their reluctance to do the extra reading at home granting that the home reading was much more easier and interesting than the in-class reading. As Powell (2005) indicates, "Given the subjects already heavy workload for their in-class reading, it is not always easy to convince them of the benefits of undertaking extra, voluntarily reading, no matter how enjoyable we suppose it to be." (p.33) Therefore, it is important to note that when implementing home extensive reading, teachers should take the loads of in-class reading into consideration, assessing students' ability and giving consideration to how much work they can afford, especially for low-achieving and unmotivated students.

Granting that encouraging results were not found from this extensive reading study in terms of its effects on the increase of the subjects'

affective and behavioral aspects of attitudes toward reading in English, the subjects had changed their perception of reading in English, taking a more positive attitude toward it. At least the extensive reading program had made the subjects become more aware of the importance of being able to read in English. As far as is known, a large number of ESL/EFL students are required to read for academic purposes; it is necessary for them to acquire certain skills and strategies to cope with longer texts and books (Bell, 1998), and the value of extensive reading lies in its development of learners' confidence and capability to deal with those longer texts (Kembo, 1993). However, engaging in academic English reading requires developing a certain level of interest and forming reading habits on the part of students; otherwise, they might find it hard to survive their university studies.

In short, if learners can be offered opportunities to read extensively and develop interest in reading, they are more likely to feel desirous to learn the required reading skills and vocabulary necessary for finding enjoyment from their reading (Leung, 2002), and only when learners can find fun in reading in the target language will it be possible that they become active readers. Therefore, reading teachers should help students engage in extensive reading and motivate and encourage them to read to develop a lasting interest in reading so that they will hopefully become independent L2 readers.

6. Limitations

The study did not administer pretest for the subjects; therefore the difference between pretest and posttest in terms of their English reading attitudes could not be compared, which was considered an important limitation in this research. Moreover, since this was a small-scale study with a small number of sample examined, which was by no means representative enough. To acquire more accurate data, further studies need to be replicated in larger data sets in future investigations.

7. References

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Appendix 1

Dear Students

The following is an academic questionnaire used for research purposes. The questions are designed to help you reflect on your attitudes toward reading in English. There is no right or wrong answer to each statement in the questionnaire and your responses will not influence your university English grades. The information will remain anonymous and confidential, so please feel at ease to fill out the questionnaire.

Section 1: Reading Attitudes

Please read carefully the following statements in each category. For each statement, select a response that best represents your attitudes toward L2 reading. The numerical numbers stand for degree of agreement with 1 indicating strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree.

I. Cognitive(認知)					
After the extensive reading...					
1. I think being able to read in English is very important.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I think reading extensively in English will benefit me in my future job.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I think reading extensively in English will benefit me in my future study.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I think my reading ability has improved after experiencing the extensive reading.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I think being able to read in English is not very important.	1	2	3	4	5
II. Affective(情感)					
After the extensive reading...					
6. I enjoy reading English materials in my free time after experiencing extensive reading.	1	2	3	4	5

7. I feel that the extensive reading can help my current study.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel tired when I am presented with English reading materials.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I prefer Chinese reading materials to materials written in English.	1	2	3	4	5
III. Behavioral(行為)					
After the extensive reading...					
10. I read English materials in my free time.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When I go to the library, I also read English materials for fun.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I also read English articles on the Internet.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I go to bookstores, I also look for English reading materials for pleasure reading.	1	2	3	4	5
14 I try to avoid reading English materials.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 2: Background Information

1. Are you male (M) or female (F)? Male Female
2. What is your age? _____
3. How long have you been learning English? _____years
4. Have you ever lived in an English-speaking country? Yes No
If yes, for how many years? _____
5. What is your English score of the university's basic scholastic aptitude test? _____
6. Please indicate the kind of reading materials you chose for your extensive reading at home?
 - story books novels American children literature
 - young adult literature Oxford Bookworm Library Heinemann Guided Readers
 - songs magazines newspapers Internet texts