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# Encouraging ESL Teachers to Empower Their Students to Read

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University of San Francisco

**Encouraging ESL Teachers to Empower  
Their Students to Read**

A Field Project Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in International and Multicultural Education

by  
Rachael Van Liefde  
May 2015

**Encouraging ESL Teachers to Empower  
their Students to Read**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

by

Rachael Van Liefde

May 2015

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

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Instructor/Chairperson

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Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I - Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Project.....	5

Theoretical Framework.....	7
Significance of the Project.....	11
Definition of Terms.....	12
Chapter II - Review of the Literature.....	14
Introduction.....	14
Automatic Decoding and Reading Fluency.....	14
Comprehensible Input.....	16
Affective Filter and the Vicious Cycle.....	18
Extensive Reading.....	22
Summary.....	23
Chapter III - The Project and Its Development.....	24
Brief Description of the Project.....	24
Development of the Project.....	24
The Project.....	26
Chapter IV - Conclusions and Recommendations.....	27
Conclusions.....	27
Recommendations.....	29
References.....	30
Appendixes.....	34



## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the US, thousands of international students are studying, or are preparing to study, at institutions of higher education. Before being accepted into these institutions, these students must demonstrate proficiency in English, most often demonstrated by an acceptable score on a test such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Test System (IELTS). Unfortunately, receiving an appropriate score on such a test does not necessarily correlate to a pupil's ability to pass the courses required in order to obtain the desired degree. According to Yakimchuk (2010), "unsatisfactory English-language proficiency levels of second language students are a global concern and an issue at all levels of post-secondary education" (p. 2). Research has indicated poor language skills can prevent international students from succeeding while studying outside their home countries (Mathews, 2007). One of the most critical factors affecting their academic progress is their reading skills.

It is widely accepted that a successful student in higher education must be able to read and comprehend assigned readings quickly because subject area knowledge is acquired through materials such as textbooks, journals, articles, and other educational texts (Iwai, 2011). Celce-Murcia (2001) states, "many have argued in the past 15 years that reading is the most important academic language skill for second language students" because it is "assumed to be the central means for learning new information and gaining access to alternative explanations and interpretations" (p. 187). For students that are pursuing higher education in the US with English as their second language (ESL), reading speed and comprehension pose a significant obstacle. Burgstahler (2002) suggests reading difficulties faced by international students create the kind of difficulties that are akin to those faced by disabled students. In other words, reading is such an

important skill that if a student does not have strong reading skills, this in itself acts as a disability.

ESL students' struggles in reading are due, in part, to the academic texts they encounter being lengthy, complex, dense, and riddled with jargon and complicated lexicon (Mohd., 2010). In addition, Segalowitz, Poulsen, and Komoda (1991) indicate, readers who do not have English as their first language read much slower than those who do, even fully bilingual readers can be up to 30% slower than their L1 counterparts. Durken (2004), Reid et al. (1998), and Goodman (1976) uncovered additional factors: ESL students needed two or even three times more time to finish a passage than do native speakers. In addition, they also need more time to create the custom of critical reading for academic purposes (Phakiti, 2011). Jensen (1986) states, "even advanced ESL students may read only 100 words per minute or less (p. 106). A reading rate of 150 words per minute is insufficient to be successful in college because the minimum reading rate for effective college-reading is 400 words per minute (Jamieson, 2005).

Another factor that impacts ESL students is the fact that the skill of reading can only be improved by more reading; this is one principal that all researchers agree on (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Research (Huffman, 2014; Anderson, 1999) has also indicated if a student has a slow reading rate they understand less which then causes them to dislike reading. Therefore, they may not develop an enjoyment of reading. A lack of enjoyment of reading can cause these students to become stagnant in their reading development. Furthermore, the level of difficulty of academic texts may trigger in ESL students feelings of fear and concern. These feelings can then lead to reading anxiety, defined by Mohd. (2010) as "a feeling which is associated with a feeling of dread and worry when engaging in reading tasks" (p. 44). Reading anxiety can distract the learner and decrease concentration, thereby hindering comprehension. Therefore, confidence

and motivation levels can be adversely affected when a student fails to comprehend the texts they are reading.

Many adult ESL students lack the reading skills they need to be successful in college. How can ESL teachers assist these students at the high beginning, intermediate or advanced levels in improving their reading skills? The answer might be easier than they think: extensive reading. Much research (Huffman, 2014; Krashen, 2012; Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Cha, 2009; Iwahori, 2008; Krashen, 2004; Rodrigo, Krashen, & Gribbons, 2003; Mason & Krashen, 1997) has revealed the most effective method to improve reading rate, fluency, and comprehension is extensive reading. However, extensive reading, or reading easy text for enjoyment and understanding of the general idea, has often been overlooked in ESL classrooms and curriculum development (Krashen, 2004). Instead, the majority of reading instruction in ESL classrooms is intensive reading, or reading of shorter, more difficult texts with accompanying vocabulary and comprehension exercises.

To prepare adult ESL students for higher education in the US, as Krashen (2014) states, “the field of language education today is dominated by concerns about the development of Academic Language Proficiency, the mastery of the vocabulary, grammar, and discourse style of academic, or professional language” (p. 8). Thus, intensive reading and other skill building methods should be utilized in the classroom. However, according to Krashen’s input hypothesis and affective filter hypothesis, this may not be the most effective instruction (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Rodrigo, Krashen & Gribbons, 2003). Difficult exercises can demotivate learners, are likely to be uninteresting, and do not contribute to learner autonomy, as the teacher must assist the student in comprehending the text. In addition, in input-poor settings such as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts or when ESL students have a limited amount of class time, intensive reading practices do not provide learners with large amounts of input. In contrast,



extensive reading can provide learners with an endless supply of meaningful and understandable language which they can access without teacher instruction in any setting.

In addition to the use of primarily intensive reading instruction, another factor impacting ESL adult learners' ability to improve their reading skills is the amount of time set aside in many ESL classes is minimal. According to Ro and Chen (2014), "lack of time was the most selected reasons for poor reading habits" (p. 49). Consequently, not only do students lack time to practice reading, the importance of reading in language learning is not emphasized. Typically in intensive reading, short, difficult passages are assigned as homework and class time is taken to discuss the given texts. Expecting ESL adult students to practice reading in their L2 at home is a reasonable expectation of teachers. However, many students are not regularly read in their L1. Therefore, ESL teachers need to emphasize the importance of reading. In other words, when teachers use limited class time for reading, learners can learn to appreciate the usefulness of reading (Day, 2013; Ro, 2013; Krashen, 2004).

Of course, as educators, it is our desire and responsibility to ensure that our students receive the practice and instruction they need in order to succeed. In this case, if ESL students cannot or will not be motivated enough to complete reading assignments at home, teachers must communicate its seriousness by requiring that it be completed during class time. Though some may view this process as wasted classroom time, by having this routine, instructors can instill the relevance of reading onto their students.

Adult ESL students must also have appropriate materials to read. They should be given comprehensible input, reflected in Krashen's well-known input hypothesis, that is both interesting and meaningful to them (Latifi, Ketabi & Mohammadi, 2013; Brown, 2007; Krashen, 2004; Lao & Krashen, 2000). This means the level of language, both lexical and semantic, should be just above the skill level of the learner so as to facilitate interest and motivation without losing or

confusing the learner. In addition, the learner should be connected to the meaning of the language, understanding the main point and not simply focusing on form. In other words, students should be engaged in the material because they are captured by the information in the text and hunger for more, whether it be fiction or non-fiction, a comic book, a magazine, etc. They should enter into what Csikszentmihalyi (as cited in Krashen, 2004) describes as flow. To be able to accomplish this, learners must have a variety of appropriate readings to select from. However, most ESL students do not have access to comprehensible, interesting, and engaging books or other genres of reading materials (Krashen, 2004; McQuillan & Au, 2001). Instead, the reading passages are too difficult, outdated, and irrelevant for the students, leading them to become disinterested, frustrated, hopeless, and disengaged. The inability to acquire appropriate books can discourage even the most motivated reader. Teachers of adult ESL students are in need of teaching resources that allow them to effectively integrate extensive reading into their classroom activities.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The function of this project is to encourage students in their reading practice. If students knew the benefits that reading for pleasure would have on their language skills, they would dedicate much more time to reading. In addition, the negative perception that so many ESL students have towards reading in a second language can be seriously shifted as they begin to read more and their reading improves. Thus will begin the cycle of the good reader; as ESL learners witness their improvement in reading rate and comprehension, they will be motivated to read more. The enjoyment and success they experience will create a lowering of the affective filter and a strong sense of internal motivation. The affective filter hypothesis by Krashen (Liu & Cheng, 2014; Ro, 2013; Lems, Miller & Soro, 2010; Krashen, 2004; Mohd. & Rafik-Galea, 2010) states that when anxiety is high, language learners become blocked, and thus learning is slowed or dis-

rupted. Therefore, with the use of extensive reading, students will have a lowered affective filter and will begin to feel more confident and at ease with the skill of reading. As a result, they will be intrinsically motivated.

Intrinsically motivated activities, as defined by Edward Deci (as cited in Brown, 2007), are ones for which there are no apparent reward except for the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward... Intrinsically motivated behaviors are aimed at bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of *competence* and *self-determination*. (172)

It is this competence and self-determination that ESL students need. All too often, ESL students hide behind the thick wall of the affective filter which negatively impacts their learning experience. Moreover, research (Liu & Cheng, 2014; Ro, 2013) has shown that the higher a student's motivation is, the less anxiety they have. If students are motivated, they will experience less anxiety, thereby having a lower affective filter and being more open to learning. However, in their studies, many students are driven by extrinsic motivation, which is clearly inferior to intrinsic motivation (Vural, 2013; Brown, 2007). According to Vural (2013), extrinsic motivation is, "managed by reinforcement contingencies to receive some instrumental result, such as earning a reward or avoiding a punishment" (p. 2). In other words, if a student is given extra points when they read, or has points taken from them if they do not read, extrinsic motivation is being accessed. When students read because they enjoy it, intrinsic motivation is cultivated.

Giving students rewards for reading is sending the message that reading in itself is not valuable, yet must be coerced from the learner (Krashen, 2004). Thus, this project emphasizes ESL teachers cultivating intrinsic motivation for students to develop reading. Extrinsic motivation is not how our students will reach their greatest potential; therefore, it is the hope that this power point presentation instill a feeling of capability, motivation, and excitement in the ESL

student toward reading, so that they will be driven to read more, understand more, and thus be their best selves in completing their education and contributing to the world around them.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This project is framed by the following two theories: automaticity theory and the acquisition-learning hypothesis, which includes both the input hypothesis and affective filter hypothesis. Automaticity theory finds that when readers expend less energy on lower-level processing, such as decoding words, and more energy on higher-level processing, such as making inferences, they understand more. The acquisition-learning hypothesis proposed by Krashen includes a set of five interconnected hypothesis which are the acquisition-learning hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, natural order hypothesis, input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Two of these hypothesis which correspond directly with extended reading are the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis.

The automaticity theory was developed by LaBerge and Samuels in 1974. Because the process of reading takes place within our working, or short term memory, it is a limited capacity processor. Therefore, as readers use much of this capacity on low-level skills, such as word recognition, they have little to no ability to focus on higher level skills, which are related to an understanding of the big picture of the text. LaBerge and Samuels (as cited in Lems, Miller & Soro, 2010) claim, “readers learned to read better when they moved from effortful decoding of words, which took all of their attention, to unconscious and automatic decoding, which allowed them to pay attention to constructing meaning while reading” (p. 150). The role, specifically, of word recognition, is thought to be the key to fluent reading (Chang, 2013). Therefore, for readers to be successful, fundamental elements, such as word recognition and syntactic parsing, must be processed quickly and automatically so that they can give their attention to higher-level skills, such as drawing on background information and making inferences (Chang, 2012; Chang, 2013).

The most effective method of improving lower-level processing is more exposure to language, or comprehensible input: reading.

The acquisition-learning hypothesis developed by Krashen is composed of five interrelated hypotheses; these five hypotheses work together to explain the phenomena of second language learning. The first component of this hypothesis is the acquisition-learning hypothesis, which differentiates two modes of internalizing the target language: acquisition, which is subconscious and intuitive, and learning, which is a conscious process in which learners are aware of the rules of a language. The second hypothesis is the monitor hypothesis, which comes into play during the learning process, not acquisition. Under this hypothesis, the learner acts as a monitor while they are producing output, namely speech acts. This device notices and corrects any errors made by the speaker. The third component of the acquisition-learning hypothesis is the natural order hypothesis, which states that we acquire language rules through a predictable order. The fourth hypothesis is the input hypothesis, which claims that in order for students to acquire language, there must be comprehensible input; in other words, meaningful language that is just above the learners' level of competence. This is also known as  $i+1$ . The final hypothesis is the affective filter hypothesis, which states that language acquisition occurs most efficiently in environments where anxiety and defensiveness is low (Brown, 2007).

The input hypothesis claims that for one to learn a second language, they must be exposed to comprehensible input (Latifi, Ketabi & Mohammadi, 2013; Brown, 2007; Krashen, 2004; Lao & Krashen, 2000; Krashen, 1989). Comprehensible input is what is known as ' $i + 1$ '. In other words, the language that learners are exposed to should be just beyond their current abilities; pupils should be able to comprehend most of the information, yet still have the need to make an effort to progress their skills (Brown, 2007). As explained by Krashen (1989), "language is subconsciously acquired- while you are acquiring; you don't know you are acquiring;

your conscious focus is on the message, not form” (p. 440). Thus, as applied to extensive reading, learners are exposed to large quantities of input, yet they are focused on the meaning or message of the text. In this way, they improve their reading skills by becoming faster both lower level and higher level processing, thereby increasing their reading rate and comprehension. However, much more than reading speed and understanding is improved. In addition, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary are also improved as much or more than in explicitly taught skill-building exercises (Day, 2013; Pratheeba & Krashen, 2013; Krashen, 2004; Rodrigo, Krashen & Gribbons, 2003; Krashen, 1989).

The Affective Filter Hypothesis is well-known in the field of second language learning. Krashen states anxiety and defensiveness impact the learning process (Liu & Cheng, 2014; Ro, 2013; Lems, Miller & Soro, 2010; Mohd. & Rafik-Galea, 2010; Krashen, 2004). When there is fear in the learning setting, an invisible wall emerges from the learner which impedes the student from being receptive to knowledge (Brown, 2007). Liu & Cheng (2014) found that, “the combination of speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation acted as a primary source of language anxiety” (p. 286). In addition, it was found that general anxiety surrounding English learning in general was present among the researched (Liu & Cheng, 2014). In addition to these sources of anxiety, reading anxiety, or fear around the process of reading which creates dread and worry, can be prevalent among ESL learners. When students are in this state, their ability to concentrate and comprehend is diminished because their anxiety interferes with their working memory, which is responsible for processing and storing information (Mohd., 2010). Moreover, as students do not understand they become discouraged, which propels them to disengage from reading. Thus, they develop what Nuttall (as cited in Anderson, 1999) describes as the “vicious cycle” of the poor reader (p. 2). In other words, because they are poor readers, they do not read, thereby maintaining their unsatisfactory reading skills. Students are most likely to have this type

of relationship to reading if they have done more intensive reading than extensive reading (Ro, 2013). However, overwhelming research (Huffman, 2014; Ro & Chen, 2014; Day, 2013; Ro, 2013; Vural, 2013; Mohd. & Rafik-Galea, 2010; Cha, 2009; Iwahori, 2008; Cho, Choi & Krashen, 2005; Krashen, 2004; Rodrigo, Krashen & Gribbons, 2003; Lao & Krashen, 2000) shows that students improve their attitudes toward reading after experiencing extensive reading.

In conjunction with the affective filter hypothesis is Krashen's pleasure hypothesis. This hypothesis states that, "pedagogical activities that promote language acquisition are fun" (Krashen, 2004, p.28). In other words, if a student is acquiring language, it will be a pleasurable experience. However, this does not indicate that all enjoyable activities will promote learning. Supported in this hypothesis is the concept of flow, which was introduced by Csikszentmihalyi. When in the state of flow, people are deeply and effortlessly engaged in an activity; any worries or problems we may have disappear, and our perception of time is altered (Krashen, 2004). This is an experience all human beings can relate to; research (as cited in Krashen, 2004) has shown that flow is experienced by people across cultures from various groups. According to Csikszentmihalyi (as cited in Krashen, 2004), reading, "is currently perhaps the most often mentioned flow activity in the world" (p. 29). When readers are in flow, they are in pure enjoyment of their present moment; in addition, they are acquiring language in a comprehensible and meaningful manner. With their affective filters low, students are improving their skills, thus appreciating their experience.

### **Significance of the Project**

The primary beneficiaries of this power point presentation are ESL teachers. They will be exposed to the research and facts behind the power of reading, and thus will be equip to incorporate extensive reading into their classwork and curriculum. In realizing the effectiveness of extensive reading, they will encourage and motivate their students to read. In addition, extensive

reading will have a positive effect on the improvement of all their students' skills; the ultimate goal of a teacher. Finally, this presentation will open a dialogue between teachers and students around their motivations, attitudes, and preferences in the classroom and English learning in general. These conversations will make for a richer and more dynamic learning environment in which the teacher can facilitate learning.

The secondary beneficiary of this project are adult ESL students; after the presentation of this project to their teachers, their teachers will share the information presented to them, and their motivation to read will rise and the betterment of their reading skills will be apparent. After being encouraged to read, not only will their reading rate be improved because of their ability to process lower-level skills more quickly, but their comprehension will also increase due to the fact that they will have a larger bank of academic vocabulary from which to pull. In addition, as their reading skills improve, they will feel more confident and capable in their ability to read in English, and thus will strive to read more and further the improvement of their skills. This will encourage internal motivation, which will result in positive effects on their studies. Students will discover that learning can be fun; they do not need to suffer to improve their skills. Thus, they will look forward to learning and expand their perspectives of the academic world. Finally, students will be more prepared to complete courses in higher education as they will be equipped with the skills they need to do so.

### **Definitions of Terms**

Affective Filter: An invisible block which emerges when a second language learner becomes anxious or defensive that disallows them to be receptive to learning new information.

Comprehensible Input: Language that the learner is exposed to that is just beyond their current level of competence; in other words, language which the learner can understand most of, but to



which they also must put forth some effort to comprehend, thus extending their language skills (Brown, 2007).

ELL: English Language Learner

ESL: English as a Second Language

Extensive Reading: Reading a large amount of text that is at the competence level of the reader for the purpose of enjoyment (Chang, 2013).

Fluency: The ability to read and comprehend at the same time, with little attention lower level processing such as word decoding, indicators of which are automaticity, accuracy and speed (Chang, 2013; Yen, 2012).

Higher-Level Processing: The process of the working memory which enables the reader to draw on prior knowledge, employ strategies to understand meaning, make inferences, and evaluate information (Chang, 2013).

Intensive Reading: Reading of a text, often difficult, in which each component must be fully understood and the structures within in studied in depth (Rodrigo, Krashen & Gibbons, 2003). Often intensive reading includes post reading questions and vocabulary exercises.

Language Acquisition Device, LAD: According to Chomsky, a metaphorical box in the brain that holds the innate knowledge which allows human beings to process language (Brown, 2007).

Lower-Level Processing: The process of the working memory which readers engage in when they decode words using orthographic, phonological, and morphological information to create meaning from a text from the word and clause level (Chang, 2010).

Matthew Effect: The more students read, the more they improve their reading skills (Anderson, 1999).

Vicious Cycle: Readers that do not enjoy reading do not read, thus they propel themselves to remain as poor readers (Anderson, 1999).

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

Most adult ESL students desire to increase their language and literacy proficiency so they can accomplish specific goals related to family, community, or work. Helping them develop their English language skills is the primary mission of ESL teachers. Nevertheless, supporting them in developing language and literacy proficiency in their L2 is multilayered and complex. The purpose of this project is to provide adult ESL teachers resources that allow them to more effectively facilitate the use of extensive reading in instruction of their students. Encouraging students to read for pleasure can lead to the kind of extensive reading they need if they are to gain auto-

maticity. Less proficient readers indulge in slow analysis of words in a text. Consequently, this drains memory and diverts attention from comprehension.

It was, therefore, appropriate to explore literature related to the primary purpose of this project. The first section of the literature review addresses the relationship between automatic decoding and reading fluency. The second section outlines the importance of comprehensible input in language learning and how it can be addressed via extensive reading. The third section discusses the affective filter, its impact on L2 learning, and the positive effects extensive reading has on learner's motivation level. The final section explores extensive reading and its impact benefits on reading fluency and language skills.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Automatic Decoding and Reading Fluency**

Reading is composed of low and high-level cognitive processes. These processes are usually engaged in simultaneously. Lower-level processes include word recognition, decoding, and working memory activation. Higher-level processes include drawing on previous knowledge, making inferences, evaluating the efficacy of a text.

If a reader must expend much of their cognitive capacity engaging in lower-level processes, then they have little or no capacity to engage in higher-level processes (Chang & Millett, 2013). Skillful readers are able to recognize words efficiently and with little effort, thereby permitting them to focus their cognitive attention on comprehension. Reading fluency, defined as accuracy, speed, and fluidity while reading, is likely to be achieved when both levels of cognitive processing can be accessed simultaneously (Chang, 2012). Readers who are unable to complete lower-level processes efficiently experience a slower reading rate and comprehension level.

In 1974, LaBerge and Samuels suggested readers with "automated word recognition skills are better comprehenders" (Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass & Gorsuch, 2004, p. 88). In other words,

if a reader does not need to use cognitive energy on the deciphering of forms, or on lower-level processing, they can focus their energy on understanding the text, or higher level processing. Lems et al. (2010) stated, “readers learned to read better when they moved from effortful decoding of words, which took all of their attention, to unconscious and automatic decoding, which allowed them to pay attention to constructing meaning while reading” (p. 150). For readers to be successful, fundamental elements, such as word recognition and syntactic parsing, must be processed quickly so they can focus attention on higher-level skills (Chang & Millett, 2013; Chang, 2012).

Readers should strive for fluency. A fluent reader was defined by the National Reading Panel as: “one who can perform multiple tasks- such as word recognition and comprehension- at the same time” (National Reading Panel, 2000, 3.8). As previously stated, there is a significant correlation between reading fluency and comprehension (Nation, 2014; Chang & Millett, 2013). In order to improve fluency, then, it is agreed that exposure to more reading is necessary.

### **Comprehensible Input**

Comprehensible input, as Krashen (2004; 1989) explains, is necessary for second language acquisition. Input hypothesis distinguishes between learning and acquiring. Learning is a conscious effort, whereas acquiring is a subconscious act. Much as children acquire their first language without conscious effort, second language learners acquire language most efficiently through being exposed to large quantities of meaningful language. Students should be able to understand the essence of what is being said or presented. Thus, language is acquired when we focus on the message, not the form. Students are able to learn a new language best when they receive input that is slightly more difficult than they can easily understand. In other words, students should be able to understand most, but not all, words the teachers use.

The comprehensible input concept is related to Chomsky's language acquisition device (LAD). LAD is a figurative box inside each human being that gives us our innate ability to process language (Brown, 2007). When learners acquire language, they are consciously focused on a meaningful message. Their subconscious absorbs the forms and rules of the language through the LAD. This subconscious learning has also been termed "incidental learning" or "tacit knowledge" by Chomsky (as cited in Krashen, 1989, p. 440). Krashen (2004) believes that this type of learning is most effective for second language learners because learning all aspects of a language consciously is not only overwhelming but also impossible.

The input hypothesis is in contrast with the output hypothesis and the skill building hypothesis. These hypotheses conclude that conscious learning is necessary for the improvement of L2 skills. Specifically, in Meryl Swain's output hypothesis, it was found that learners benefited from opportunities to produce language; learners who were not encouraged to speak or write did not make as much progress in their language skills as did those who needed to develop communicative competence (Lems et al., 2010). However, the output hypothesis does not suggest that a learner does not need or benefit from input, but that output has the additional functions of drawing attention to learner errors, allowing the learner to experiment with what they have been exposed to, and permitting the learner to reflect on the language in an interactive way with peers in order to clarify any inconsistencies (Brown, 2007; Celce-Murcia, 2001). In addition, it has been noted (Celce-Murcia, 2001) that as a speaker produces output, for example, in dialogue, they are in turn exposed to more input. Thus, input and output in language learning complement each other, as they are constantly interacting. These hypotheses are complemented by the skill building hypothesis.

Skill building hypothesis suggests a student first learn the form or rule governing a language item, then practice this form with exercises and drills to make the rule automatic. If the

learner commits an error during this process, they consciously correct the mistake and are expected to retain the corrected information (Krashen, 2004; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Krashen, 1989). This is the type of instruction that has been commonly practiced in second language learning, yet it has been found that for skill building to be at all successful, the exercises or drills must be meaningful (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Although skill building type drills are exercises are found widely in second language classrooms, research on their effectiveness in reading, vocabulary, and spelling improvement is the same or less than students being exposed to comprehensible input through extensive reading (Day, 2013; Pratheeba & Krashen, 2013; Krashen, 2004; Rodrigo, Krashen & Gribbons, 2003; Krashen, 1989). As Krashen (2004) explained, there are several factors that lead to these conclusions:

Language is too vast, too complex to be taught or learned one rule at a time (the complexity argument); literacy development can occur without formal instruction (competence without instruction); the impact of direct instruction is typically small or nonexistent. When studies do show an effect of instruction, the effect sometimes disappears with time. (p. 18)

Thus, although skill building practices and production by students is a useful and beneficial aspect of language teaching and learning, it cannot account for all language learned by students. Therefore, apart from these methods, it is crucial that students be exposed to comprehensible input through extensive reading.

### **Affective Filter and the Vicious Cycle**

Another factor that contributes to the effectiveness of extensive reading is the affective nature of language learning. The affective filter hypothesis states that when a learner experiences anxiety, there is an invisible wall that emerges, thus preventing them from learning, or being receptive to comprehensible input (Liu & Cheng, 2014; Ro, 2014; Brown, 2007). Therefore, it is the role of the teacher to create an environment in which students are comfortable and relaxed so as to facilitate learning (Liu & Cheng, 2014; Ro, 2014; Celce-Murcia, 2001). Dornyi (as cited

in Liu & Cheng, 2014) suggests that establishing a “pleasant and supportive” environment is the first task teachers should accomplish before students can be motivated in any other activity (p.255). However, even the most experienced and talented teacher can experience difficulties in accomplishing this goal because language learning in itself brings about anxiety in many students. Foreign language anxiety, as named by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (as cited in Ro, 2014) is, “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning, arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 214). In other words, language learning is a stressful process which can activate the affective filter in the language learner. In addition, Horwitz et al. (as cited in Ro, 2014) found that certain activities in the language classroom cause more stress than others; speaking, test taking, and being evaluated by a teacher bring about the most anxiety among learners. Although these activities cannot be avoided in a typical ESL classroom, teachers can support their students in participating in low anxiety activities such as extensive reading, in which their affective filters will be low and they will therefore be open to acquiring language.

However, L2 reading can also be stressful for ESL students. Sellers (as cited in Ro, 2014) reported that reading anxiety in language learners may have a negative impact on reading comprehension. The author found that because anxious students were unable to focus, they remembered less of the passage than those who were not anxious (Ro, 2014). Therefore, in order to lower the affective filter of L2 readers, students should be guided to select materials that are easy for them to read. In other words, students should practice extensive reading in contrast to intensive reading. Because extensive reading involves reading easy text for pleasure, as students read, they will experience success and enjoyment. Thus, their affective filters will be lowered, they will feel more confident in their reading skills, and they will chose to read more, thereby entering into the cycle of the good reader.

The cycle of the good reader is in direct contrast with the vicious cycle of the poor reader. When a poor reader reads, they read slowly, and thus have minimal understanding. As a result, the level of enjoyment they experience while in the reading process is low (Nation, 2014; Anderson, 1999). This is especially true when the text is difficult. Chang (2012) noted, “reading slowly may imply poor comprehension, lack of automaticity when decoding word meanings, and lack of pleasure while reading” (p. 56). This creates what Nuttall (1996) described as the “vicious cycle of the weak reader” (p. 127). As a reader does not understand the content which they are reading, they slow down, resulting in less comprehension and decreasing the level of pleasure associated with reading. In addition, as they do not enjoy reading, they do not read, and their reading skills do not improve. Yet, it is only through more reading that students can acquire the skills they need to increase their reading rates, and therefore fluency (Taguchi, 2004; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Anderson, 1999). That is why it is crucial students are exposed to authentic  $i + 1$ , or comprehensible input, that can be easily understood while engaging in extensive reading; the intention with extensive reading is that students become interested and engaged in the message, entering into *flow*.

Flow theory, as explained by Egbert (as cited in Brown, 2007), emphasizes the importance of

an experiential state characterized by intense focus and involvement that leads to improved performance on a task...Flow theory claims that as a result of the intrinsically rewarding experience associated with flow, people push themselves to higher levels of performance. (p. 174)

When we are in flow, we are completely focused on the task at hand and nothing else exists on our world. We are open and receptive, lost in the activity of the present moment; our perception of time shifts and our problems seem to disappear. Flow has been found to be a universal phenomenon (Krashen, 2004), shared by various cultures and groups. Moreover, reading is one of the most common activities in which people enter into flow (Krashen, 2004). Therefore, if Eng-



lish language learners get hooked on reading, if they find themselves lost in the pleasurable flow of reading, they will not only be exposed to large amounts of comprehensible input while their affective filters are low, but they will also be improving their attitudes towards L2 reading and learning, thereby increasing their motivation.

Motivation has been found to be a key factor in successful reading development. As related to L2 reading as stated by Celce-Murcia (2001), it is “as an individual trait, related to a person’s goals and beliefs that is observed through task persistence and positive feelings toward an activity” (p. 199). There is a distinction made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. As described by Vernal (2013), intrinsic motivation is, “the type of motivation that is animated by personal enjoyment, interest, or pleasure, engaging in an activity because it is enjoyable and satisfying to do” (p. 16). In contrast, extrinsic motivation is, “fueled by the anticipation of a reward from the outside and beyond the self” (Brown, 2007, p. 172). Research has shown (Ro, 2013; Vernal, 2013; Krashen, 2004; Celce-Murcia, 2001) that intrinsic motivation is more effective than extrinsic motivation.

For example, Takase (as cited in Ro, 2013) found that intrinsic motivation for L1 and L2 reading had the biggest impact on Japanese high school students’ success in extensive reading. In addition, Takase (as cited in Ro, 2013) reported that as these students experienced enjoyment, accomplishment, and improvement in extensive reading, their intrinsic motivation grew, thus encouraging them to read more. Therefore, for optimal learning, it is crucial that teachers motivate and engage students to become positively and meaningfully connected to the text which they are reading so that the student has an intrinsic desire to continue reading for the sake of pleasure.

In addition, extensive reading is an effective approach to increasing student motivation. Robb and Susser (as cited in Ro, 2013) found that extensive reading was a more effective approach than a traditional skills based approach to increasing students motivation toward L2 read-

ing. Moreover, Karlin and Romanko (as cited in Ro, 2013) reported that of three factors studied as being influenced by extensive reading, affect, fluency, and vocabulary. Namely, affect was the “quickest and most pronounced byproduct of ER” (p. 215). Extensive reading increases student motivation significantly decreases anxiety. Liu (as cited Liu & Cheng, 2014) identified motivation and anxiety as having the strongest correlation. In other words, the more intrinsically motivated a student is, the less anxiety they will experience. Thus, if a student is in flow with the content they are reading, their anxiety will be low, and they will be acquiring language through comprehensible input.

### **Extensive Reading**

As it has just been stated that to improve reading skills, students must be exposed to text, extensive reading is one definite way to do so. Taguchi (2004) stated, “ER is thought to increase L2 learners’ fluency, i.e., their ability to automatically recognize an increasing number of words and phrases, an essential step to comprehension of L2 texts (p. 71). Extensive reading entails students choosing their own texts from a number of leveled choices, that is, books that contain the appropriate syntax, lexicon and length for the student. The reasoning for using leveled choices is it allows students less cognitive energy on lower-level processing, read the selected passages at a faster rate, and more easily understand the content. This leads to more enjoyment of the reading process and more desire to read.

Reading for pleasure exposes students to language extensively, which has been shown to effectively increase reading speed and comprehension (Taguchi, 2004; Anderson, 1999). In other words, students improve their lower-level processing by being exposed to more text. As stated by Celce-Murcia (2001), “all researchers recognize that the actual ability to comprehend texts comes about through reading, and doing a great deal of it, as the core of reading instruction” (p. 188). Chang and Millett (2013) also state, “automatic word recognition is considered to be

the foundation or heart of fluent reading, and is assumed to arise from constant and regular practice” (p. 127). In engaging in extended reading, students increase the quantity of text read, thereby improving their automatic word recognition.

### **Summary**

It is widely accepted that reading fluency is a critical skill for the success of ESL learners in higher education. Unfortunately, the majority ESL students planning to attend higher education in the US do not have adequate reading skills to be successful in university. They must not only increase their fluency in reading, but also improve their attitude towards reading in order to be successful scholars in the US.

To increase their fluency in reading, students must improve their lower-level processing so that they may focus their attention on higher-level processing. Extensive reading is an effective method by which students are exposed to large amounts of text which aid in improving reading fluency. Moreover, extensive reading allows students to take in comprehensible input in a meaningful way in a low anxiety environment so that their affective filter is low, permitting them to acquire the target language in a pleasurable manner. With a positive and motivating environment, learners can feel less anxious and more comfortable developing their reading skills. Accordingly, extensive reading has multiple benefits for the ESL student: increasing reading fluency, improving attitude towards reading and language learning in general, and providing access to comprehensible input which in turn improves second language acquisition.

## CHAPTER III THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

### **Description of the Project**

This project consists of a two-part keynote presentation along with a presenter's script. The first section of the presentation is entitled "Extensive Reading, a Fun Way to Learn!: Introduction and Theories." Specifically, it explains one of the most significant obstacles many ESL students encounter: poor L2 reading skills. Subsequently, I outline a method for addressing this obstacle: extensive reading. I then connect the use of extensive reading to particular theoretical understandings of L2 learning and acquisition.

The second section of the presentation entitled, "Extensive Reading, a Fun Way to Learn!: Research and Application" is presented. In particular, it outlines research regarding the benefits of extensive reading, including both language skills and affective factors, and methods of classroom application. The presenter's script follows the two-part presentation.

### **Development of the Project**

Once I determined the goal of the project was to provide ESL teachers resources to motivate students to engage in extensive reading, I deduced a keynote presentation was the most obvious, practical, and useful vehicle of delivery. I was interested in identifying a format that would be most enjoyable, dynamic, and inspiring for ESL teachers. I determined the most effective way in which to accomplish this goal was by emphasizing the personal contact ESL teachers have with their students. In addition, I realized I would have many future professional opportu-

nities to present this project, such as at conferences, school in-services, and workshops. Therefore, the choice to develop the project using a keynote presentation format was appropriate.

In deciding whether to create a presentation for students or teachers, I chose to present to teachers because it seemed the most effective. In this way, the message of the power of extensive reading could reach a larger number of people. In other words, by informing teachers about the benefits of extensive reading, more students could receive this important and helpful information. However, if presented to students directly, they would have this information only for themselves; the inspiration to read would likely end with them. Therefore, this presentation was designed to target teachers.

As the presentation developed, its shape followed the outline of chapters one and two of this project. That is, it was reasonable to commence with the introduction of the problem and to include impressive quotations and statistics which I had used in the introduction. Following that, it was clear that an understanding of the theories behind the effectiveness of extensive reading was a crucial component to conveying its worth. Thus, the theoretical framework from chapter one is addressed after the introduction.

Because of the density of the information presented, I determined a two-part project was necessary. After the discussion of theories, a break seemed logical. Therefore, part two begins with an in-depth examination of relevant research on extensive reading, both in the realms of language skills and affective factors. With the theories understood, looking into the research on extensive reading would solidify the claims about its significance in second language learning. This sequence also follows the layout of the first two chapters, as chapter two begins with a literature review. This aspect of the presentation was the most challenging to create because of the large amount of research that has been done on extensive reading. My goal was to present a wide variety of compelling studies: enough to demonstrate the extensiveness of its benefits, but

not too much as to confuse or bore the audience. It was difficult not only to choose which and how many studies to include but also to summarize them in a concise way that indicated their significance in the field of language learning and acquisition.

With the problem, solution, theories behind the solution, and research in the field all being stated and understood, the final component of this project is classroom application. Of course, for teachers to be capable of applying extensive reading in the classroom, they must have guidelines on how to do so. Thus is the reasoning behind presenting classroom application of extensive reading. This section provides teachers with practical, useful, and effective methods in which to incorporate extensive reading in their everyday teaching curriculum.

Fortunately, after completing the project, I had the opportunity to present a first draft of the presentation to ESL teachers at my place employment, ELS Language Centers in San Rafael, California. Presentation of the two parts together lasted approximately 40 minutes. There was no break between the two parts. Instead, I immediately transitioned from section one to section two. I realized both sections of the presentation could be given in one session if ample time was allotted. In addition, the presentation could also be given in its original two-part composition. Another important insight I gained was the teachers were extremely interested in the section describing the current research on extensive reading. As the studies selected were from diverse countries and therefore diverse populations, the teachers were impressed with the positive results extensive reading had on not only language skills but also addressing affective factors. In fact, my co-workers and the administration were so inspired by the presentation that they decided to incorporate a new extensive reading class into our current curriculum. This positive feedback is strong evidence as to the effectiveness of this field project.

### **The Project**

The project in its entirety can be found in the Appendix.

## CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Conclusions**

Increasingly, students from around the world endeavor to graduate from institutions of higher education in the US. For them to successfully complete their coursework, it is essential they have advanced reading skills because the majority of academic content is delivered via this process. Unfortunately, many ESL students have not developed the appropriate level of fluency in their L2 to read the required texts efficiently and effectively. They also have not, in many cases, cultivated healthy reading habits in their L2. For example, they may have negative attitudes about reading and avoid reading as a result. ESL students' negative attitudes about reading can adversely impact their confidence and motivation and, ultimately, their academic progress.

In ESL classrooms, teachers seek to improve their students' reading skills. Yet, they often overlook one of the most effective methods available to them: extensive reading. Extensive reading involves learners reading books because they want to, not because they are required to. These books are selected by the reader for fun and because they are uncomplicated for the reader. In other words, one does not have to look up unknown words or decipher difficult syntax. While engaged in extensive reading, students are not held accountable for what they have read by the teacher through tests, vocabulary quizzes, or comprehension questions. Extensive reading not only improves students' reading fluency and comprehension, but it also has positive effects on their grammar, vocabulary, spelling, speaking, and other language skills. Moreover, students show improved confidence and motivation after engaging in extensive reading.

The purpose of this project was to create a professional presentation for ESL teachers to delineate the effectiveness of extensive reading in L2 learning and acquisition. The intention was to create a resource that educated and inspired teachers so they can be motivated to use extensive reading with their students. In first calling teachers' attention to some of the academic

obstacles encountered by ESL students, this keynote presentation provides the audience with statistics about ESL students and their reading abilities. Because a teacher's principle objective is to aid their students in learning, these trends highlight the importance of identifying alternative solutions for meeting the needs of ESL students planning to study or studying at U.S. institutions of higher education. Once the problem is outlined, theories behind extensive reading are presented in order to provide the audience with a research-based framework for understanding extensive reading. Following the explanation of related theories, research, both on language skills and affective factors, are described. This section of the presentation is powerful in validating extensive reading as a potent learning tool.

The keynote presentation concludes with suggestions for classroom applications. ESL teachers must have practical methods applying their newly acquired knowledge. A variety of methods are introduced. In addition, a two-sided form outlining the presentation, including the theoretical framework, classroom applications, a reading log, a list of graded readers, and other reading materials recommended for ESL students are provided.

As with any presentation, each delivery will be unique. It is similar to a live performance in this respect, and, thus, subject to differences in participants, location, time, and other situational factors. In addition, it is likely the presentation delivery and content can be improved and altered by means of reflection and evaluation. I intend to give this presentation often so as to inspire as many ESL teachers as possible to motivate their students to engage in extensive reading. As students read for pleasure, they will recognize L2 learning can be enjoyable and, hopefully, be motivated to continue challenging themselves to set academic goals.

### **Recommendations**

The intention of this project was to create a resource to inform and inspire ESL teachers of the powerful benefits of extensive reading. As extensive reading is valuable to L2 learner at



all levels. Therefore, it would be appropriate, with appropriate modifications, to present this keynote presentation to ESL teachers in any context. Giving this presentation in the presence of multiple stakeholders (i.e. faculty, administrators, etc.) would also be useful because the participants could work collaboratively determine how to incorporate extensive reading in their curriculum.

Although the principal audience for this project is ESL teachers, its content could be altered for a student audience as well. For example, if a school decided to adopt extensive reading in their classroom practices, a revised version of this project could be presented to the student body as to inform and excite them about extensive reading. Knowledge is power. Once teachers and students are aware of the value of extensive reading, they will have the power to make this tool their own as they engage in extensive reading.

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APPENDIX

Encouraging ESL Teachers to Empower Their Students to Read

## Field Project Script

Slide 1:

Hello everyone. My name is Rachael Van Liefde and today I am here to talk about extensive reading; a fun way to learn!

Slide 2:

To be successful in higher education, what is the most important skill for ESL students to have?

Reading skills! Yes!

Slide 3:

As Celce-Murcia (2001) states, “many have argued in the past 15 years that reading is the most important academic language skill for second language students” (p. 187).

Why is this?

As we know, in higher education, course work includes large amounts of difficult text.

Slide 4:

Celce- Murcia (2001) also states that reading is, “assumed to be the central means for learning new information and gaining access to alternative explanations and interpretations” (p. 187).

Unfortunately, even highly proficient ESL students read much slower than their native counterparts.

Slide 5:

Research (Jensen, 1986) has shown that, “even advanced ESL students may read only 100 words per minute or less” (p. 106).

This is a problem for our academically bound students because an effective college-reading rate is 400 words per minute (Jamieson, 2005).

Wow! So, how can our students improve their reading skills so that they are more prepared for college?

READ!!

Slide 6:

The problem is that so often students get caught in the vicious cycle of the poor reader. That is, when students don't like reading or have a negative experience with reading, they don't read and thus perpetuate their poor reading skills.

Slide 7:

How can we encourage our students to read more?

With extensive reading!

Slide 8:

So, what is extensive reading?

It is reading for pleasure because you want to! It is not required reading; there are no tests, vocabulary exercises, or discussion questions. The books read are easy so that one does not need to look up unfamiliar words. If one does not like the book being read, they put it down and choose another that interests them.

This, according to Krashen (as cited in Su, 2008), this is the type of reading that highly literate people do regularly and with passion. It sounds like a wonderful way to learn a second language, doesn't it?

Slide 9:

My intention with this two part presentation is to demonstrate to you, teachers of ESL, the importance and effectiveness of extensive reading in not only improving the reading skills of our students, but also other academic skills such as vocabulary, spelling, and grammar. In addition, affective factors such as attitude, motivation, and confidence are improved by extensive reading.

It is my hope that after this presentation, you will feel so inspired and motivated by the power of extensive reading that you will be driven to incorporate extensive reading in your curriculum and lesson planning. Moreover, you will instill in your students the importance and love of this crucial method of language learning.

I will begin by briefly reviewing the theories behind extensive reading which explain why it is so effective in second language learning. Then, I will outline the current research and

studies on extensive reading. Finally, I will explain how we, as teachers, can effectively incorporate extensive reading into our lessons.

Slide 10:

First, the theories. The theories that support extensive reading are the automaticity theory, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. The latter two hypothesis are components of Krashen's acquisition-learning hypothesis.

Slide 11:

The automaticity theory was developed by LaBerge and Samuels in 1974. This theory claims that because reading takes place in our short term memory, it is a limited capacity processor. That is, it has its limits! Therefore, if a reader expends much energy on lower level processing, such as word decoding, they will not have energy to focus on higher level processing, such as understanding the gist of the passage. In other words, poor readers read slowly and stay focused on the word level; thus, they can not understand the meaning of the passage.

To improve reading skills, readers must better their lower level processing so that they may focus their energy on higher level processes.

And how do we improve lower level processes?

By reading more! Yes!

Slide 12:

The next two theories that support extensive reading as an effective method of second language learning are components of Krashen's popular acquisition-learning hypothesis. His hypothesis is composed of five interrelated hypothesis.

The first is the acquisition-learning hypothesis, which states that adult ESL learners have two ways in which they can internalize the target language (Brown, 2007). The first is acquisition, which is a subconscious and intuitive process, much like that of a child learning their first language. The second is learning, which is a conscious process in which the learner intentionally focuses on the rules and forms of the target language. Krashen favors language acquisition, as he believes that in learning, a conscious act, the student will become overwhelmed by the amount of information to be learned (Brown, 2007).



The second theory is the monitor hypothesis, which states that all learners have an internal device that acts much like a watchdog for a speaker's output. This device is applied to learning, not acquisition, and has the function of correcting speakers' errors.

The third is the natural order hypothesis, which states that all learners acquire language rules in a predictable order.

The fourth is the input hypothesis, commonly known as  $i+1$ . This states that the cause of second language acquisition comes from the learner being exposed to comprehensible input, or language that is just above their proficiency level. With comprehensible input, the learner is focused on the meaning of the message, not form.

The final component of Krashen's acquisition-learning hypothesis is the affective filter hypothesis, which states that acquisition occurs in environments in which anxiety and defensiveness are low (Brown, 2007).

The components of Krashen's five interrelated hypothesis that are exemplified in extensive reading are the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis, so let's look at those in more detail.

Slide 13:

Again, the input hypothesis states that when we are acquiring language, we are consciously focused on a meaningful message, yet our subconscious is absorbing the forms and rules of the language.

This is wonderful news for teachers and students!

This means that if we can get our students engaged in the material they are reading, their minds will be open and they will be absorbing the syntax, spelling, vocabulary, and much more from the text.

Slide 14:

Finally, the affective filter hypothesis states that students must have low levels of anxiety in order to be receptive to learning. We have all experienced this in the classroom: if a student is fearful, a wall goes up and learning stops.

Extensive reading is an excellent method in which anxiety is low. Extensive reading materials are 'easy' for students, thereby raising their confidence of their English skills. In addition,

with extensive reading, students are not 'on the spot': they do not need to speak or answer difficult questions. Therefore, their anxiety is low and they are able to be open to acquiring language.

So, with those theories as our framework, what does current research tell us about extensive reading?

The findings on extensive reading in ESL teaching are astounding!

### **Field Project Script, Part Two**

Slide 1:

Hello everyone! My name is Rachael Van Liefde and today I am going to talk with you about extensive reading, a fun way to learn! This is part two of a two part presentation which will include both research and classroom application of extensive reading.

Slide: 2

As Krashen (2009) stated in an article titled *Anything But Reading*, "Only one method of improving reading ability really works: engaging in a great deal of interesting (better yet, compelling), comprehensible reading. Massive evidence supports this view, both in first and second language research" (p. 20).

Of course, today we are focusing on second language learning; however, we know with the interdependence hypothesis by Cummins (as cited in Dr. Popal, 2015) that the more competent a person is in their first language, the easier they will acquire a second language. Therefore, any reading improvement in a student's L1 will transfer to their L2 skills. This is also good news!

First, we will focus on the research of language improvements in ESL and foreign language students who cooperated in extensive reading programs, then we will discuss the affective factors impacted by extensive reading.

Slide : 3

Looking at the research from afar, Krashen (2004) states that of 53 comparisons, 50 show that students who did extensive reading for at least one hour per day did as well or better than those who took a traditional reading class. These are significant results!

Let's take a closer look at some of those studies that show improvement in not only reading fluency, but also vocabulary and grammar improvement, improved writing, and improved speaking and listening.

Slide: 4

Many studies show improved reading fluency with extensive reading practices. One such study is that by Cha with Korean vocational high school students. A 12 week study on a control group and an experimental group revealed that students who engaged in extensive reading showed "statistically significant growth in reading rates without impairing text comprehension" (Cha, 2009, p. 3). That is, after extensive reading, students read faster while still understanding what they read. That's important!

In contrast, the students who were not involved in extensive reading did not make these gains. Moreover, the attitude of the students who participated in extensive reading was positive and they looked forward to extensive reading in their classes.

Slide: 5

Perhaps one of the better known studies on extensive reading as related to grammar improvement was done by Stokes, Krashen, and Kartchner (as cited in Rezaee and Nourzadeh, 2011). In this study of Spanish as a foreign language, researchers found that students' ability to use the Spanish subjunctive in communicative activities, which means speaking, had a direct correlation with the extent of their involvement with extensive reading. Interestingly, other factors such as how many years of formal Spanish study or living in a Spanish speaking country did not correspond with the use of subjunctive verbs. It seems that this aspect of Spanish language is better acquired, not explicitly learned.

In this example we can see that not only grammar, but also speaking skills were positively affected by extensive reading.

Slide: 6

In another study done by Rodrigo, Krashen, and Gribbons (2003), also with students of Spanish as a foreign language, there is evidence of improved vocabulary and grammar: "Fourth semester students of Spanish as a foreign language at the university level participated in two kinds of comprehensible-input based instruction" (p. 1). One of those classes involved extensive

reading combined with assigned reading, and the other was a reading and discussion class which included assigned reading, debates and discussion. Both of these groups did better in both vocabulary and grammar tests than did those who took classes which were taught traditionally.

Again, this study shows that extensive reading is in fact more effective in improving vocabulary and grammar than are traditionally taught classes.

Slide: 7

Another study done in Iran with advanced Iranian EFL learners also consisted of two groups of students: the experimental group was involved in an extensive reading course in which they read four story books in four weeks while the control group did not. Rezaee and Bourzadeh (2011) found that participation in the extensive reading course improved, “learners’ bottom-up and top-down processing capacities” (p. 1167). They concluded that, “The overall findings have implications for L2 reading comprehension classes and assessment” (Rezaee & Bourzadeh, 2011, p. 1167). Again, the control group did not make these gains.

As we discussed previously, to become more fluent readers, students must improve their processing capabilities. Thus, these findings demonstrate extensive reading advances student’s reading fluency.

Slide: 8

A ten week study done by Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009) on 70 male Saudi EFL college students also revealed that extensive reading is as good as or better than a traditional focused intensive reading approach for reading comprehension ability, reading rate, and vocabulary acquisition. As the authors report, surprisingly, even in this short ten weeks and in an environment where pleasure reading is not typical, extensive reading was successful.

In addition, as the students in this study were low level, they were hesitant to read prior to the study. However, the students who participated in the extensive reading approach improved their attitudes toward reading whereas the students that participated in intensive reading did not.

Slide: 9

Another study carried out by Mason and Krashen (1997), also shows successes of extensive reading in what might be considered a challenging situation.

Two groups of Japanese EFL university students were studied. The control group was made of motivated and successful students who did their work and maintained good attendance. The experimental group were repeating students who could be described as poor students: they did not do their homework or come to class often. In place of a traditional intensive reading course, the poor students were given graded readers and made to read extensively for the semester and write short journals recording their reflections on the stories they read. At the end of the semester, although the control group still outscored the experimental group, the experimental group had almost made up the gap. That is impressive!

Thus, again we can see that extensive reading is effective with even unmotivated learners.

Wow! Pretty compelling evidence!

We have seen just a very small sample of research that supports extensive reading in the improvement of second language acquisition. Now, let us look at some of the research involved with the affective factors of extensive reading.

As we have discussed, it is essential for ESL students to feel comfortable in their classes in order to be receptive to learning; this is the affective filter hypothesis. In addition, the more confident a student feels about their skills, the more motivated they will be to engage in those tasks. Thus, confidence also elicits learning.

Slide: 10

So, what tasks are the most stressful for ESL students? In a study of EFL freshman in Taiwan, Liu and Cheng (2014) found that, “the combination of speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation acted as a primary source of language anxiety in the Taiwanese EFL classroom” (p. 285). This is not surprising!

So, what we can do as ESL teachers to lower the stress of our students is lead them to engage in low anxiety activities, primarily, activities that do not involve speaking or testing. Clearly, speaking and assessments are necessary aspects of the language learning environment and cannot be avoided; however we can promote other low anxiety activities to our students.

Slide: 11

In one study, Ro's (2013) researched extensive reading with an unmotivated L2 reader for only eight weeks. The participant in this study was a 28 year old woman from South Korea

who had previously studied English in Korea for 10 years. In her studies in Korea, she was taught by methods of grammar translation and audio-lingual method; her teachers were primarily concerned with her getting high test scores. She had not done well in these classes, and thus had developed a very negative attitude toward English language learning. At the time of the study, the participant had lived in the United States for 8 months with her husband, and had therefore developed some desire to improve her English communication skills.

Although at the beginning of the study the participant had anxiety around reading and speaking, at the end of this eight week course, she showed higher confidence and motivation towards not only reading but also her English skills in general. She stated, "While I was doing ER, I did not feel any intimidation; in fact, I was very happy when I realized that my comprehension skills were improving as I did more ER sessions. I was able to comprehend more of the contents and meanings of expressions by merely referring to the context as I did more ER. I never had this kind of experience before" (Ro, 2013, p. 225).

This is an inspiring account, as often times it feels impossible to motivate those students who have had negative experiences with English. We can see that as confidence improves, one feels more motivated and capable to continue.

Slide: 12

In another study by Ro and Chen (2014) of 60 non-academic ESL students at a higher education institution in the US, it was found that, "participants with positive attitudes towards reading tend to read more and that experience in the target-language culture and years of previous English study did not show statistically significant results on the participants' reading habits and attitudes" (p. 49). Thus, if our students can gain a positive attitude toward extensive reading, they will read more. In addition, this factor is not affected by how many years they have studied English or the experience they have with the cultures of English speaking countries.

Slide: 13

If we combine the research on the positive effects of extensive reading on language skills with the positive effects extensive reading has on affective factors such as comfort level and motivation, we can see the powerful tool that extensive reading is.

However, the benefits do not stop here!

Extensive reading is also an activity that takes little effort on part of the teacher. Students can engage in extensive reading at any time, at any place; all they need is a book!

Extensive reading also improves general knowledge of students; as students read texts, they are exposed to ideas, culture, and world knowledge. This is wonderful for their learning in general.

So, how can we apply this information in our everyday classroom practices?

First of all, we can remember that our job as promoters of extensive reading is to spark interest in our students and to discover encouraging ways to keep them reading (Day, 2013).

Slide: 14

As Day and Bamford (as cited in Day, 2013) state, “effective extensive reading teachers are themselves readers, teaching *by example* the attitudes and behaviors of a reader” (p. 18).

So, what are these attitudes and behaviors? Readers are authentically passionate about reading materials that excite them! When they read a good book, they can't put it down, and they talk about it. Thus, we can be excited about reading and consciously share this excitement with our students. In addition, we can show that we are readers by reading.

Slide: 15

Of course, if there are no interesting materials available to read, we will not read! Therefore, it is critical that teachers make a wide variety of interesting books available. We must supply our students with compelling books, and lots of them!

Have you ever read a book and just gotten lost in it; really got in the flow? That is what we are striving for with our students! Reading is the number one flow activity (Krashen, 2004) across cultures. Once our students get excited about a book, they won't stop reading! This means massive amounts of  $i + 1$ !

Can you remember the first book or series that got you reading? The first book that you were really engaged in? Many people can. This is what Trelease (as cited in Krashen, 2004) calls a “home run book” (p. 82). He notes that just one positive reading experience can create a reader. So, if we expose our students to a variety of text and give them many opportunities to read, they may have that positive home run reading experience!

Yet, clearly, as our students have a vast array of different interests, we must make texts of diverse genres available. Research shows that any text is valuable for extensive reading, for ex-

ample, graded readers, comic books, magazines, blogs, teen novels, etc. (Krashen, 2004). So, if it is at their level, and they are interested, have that text available!

Making books available may seem a daunting task that might include encouraging the administration of our schools to invest in appropriate texts; however, it is well worth the effort. In addition, many schools have budgets for books that go unused or that are spent on books that end up not being used. Many easy reading materials are inexpensive and over time, any given school can accumulate an effective library from which their students can select from a wide variety of engaging materials.

Slide: 16

As Nuttall (as cited in Day, 2013) stated, "Reading is caught, not taught" (p. 18). So, let us infect our students with the desire to read!

Another crucial element to effective extensive reading instruction is to have easy books available. We have already stressed the importance of compelling books, but these texts must also be easy for our students; they should not need to struggle with difficult lexicon or syntax.

As it is our duty to introduce and guide our students through the journey of extensive reading, we must aid them in selecting materials that are appropriate to both their level and interest. To do this effectively, we must be familiar with the library at hand. It is helpful for students and teacher to have a list of readers according to level so that they may easily be aware of what is available to them. In addition, it is useful for teachers to also have a brief summary of the text for students' reference.

Slide: 17

Another important factor to an effective extensive reading program is that the students be encouraged to move up to the next level when they are ready. Just as students should be encouraged to change books if the text is uninteresting or too difficult for them, when a text becomes too easy, students should be encouraged to "expand their *reading comfort zone*" (Day, 2013, p. 11).

One possible method of ensuring communication between students and teacher is one-on-one conferences. While all other students are engaged in extensive reading during class time, the teacher can meet individually with students to discuss their progress. During these encounters, the teacher can also check for comprehension and interest of the book while giving the student



an opportunity to ask any questions about the text. In addition, this is an excellent space for teacher and student to begin a dialogue about their language learning in general and affective factors which surround it.

Slide: 18

Igniting internal motivation in students is another crucial component to an effective extensive reading program. In other words, extensive reading is most effective when students are themselves excited to read. Therefore, extensive reading programs should not involve testing or heavy requirements. In forcing students to read extensively or giving them reward for doing so sends the message that reading in itself is not good enough; people must be coerced into it (Krashen, 2004). This being said, it may be helpful for students to have some low-stakes assignments for their reading to act as external motivation which may then awaken their internal motivation. For example, students can be made to write journals in which they write reflections of their reading. Of course, they would not be graded on the content of their writing, just the completion of it. In addition, students can use reading logs in which they record when and how much they read. As they notice that their reading rate is increasing, or that they are successfully completing many books, students may become excited.

Internal motivation can also be inspired in students by encouraging them to set personal goals. Students setting their own goals is much more motivating and meaningful than having those goals set by an outside source.

Slide: 19

Another component of an effective extensive reading program is a combination of selected and assigned texts. As previously mentioned, students have different likes and interests. Therefore, it is important that they have many various texts to choose from. However, it is also an effective practice for the teacher to sometimes assign easy reader books for the entire class to read. In doing this, students and teacher are able to discuss the book read by all students. This can create motivation as students can work together to figure out and give their opinion of the chosen book. In some cases, the teacher may even want to read aloud some passages of the text to engage the students in it.

Slide: 20

Lastly, as many students are bogged down with homework and other assignments, it is important that teachers give their students time to read their extensive reading books. In taking up valuable class time, teachers demonstrate the value of extensive reading. In addition, many of our students have not yet developed the concentration levels of being able to read for extended periods of time. Therefore, as a class reads together, the energy of their classmates and the quiet reading environment will aid students in improving their ability to read for longer segments of time.

Slide: 21

Finally, as teachers we must remember that although it may take time and effort for students become engaged and develop the habit of reading, once they do, this skill will be with them for their lifetime, and will bring them many rewards. Therefore, let us, their teachers, make the effort to encourage our students to read so that we may gift them with the invaluable gift of reading!!