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# The Effects of Extensive Reading on Turkish Learners' L2 Reading/Writing Performance and Foreign Language Self-Concept

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This study investigates the impact of extensive reading (ER) program, which integrates extensive reading with in-class follow-up writing activities, on Turkish EFL learners' L2 reading/writing and foreign language self-concept (FLSC). In this research, conducted in a Turkish university, experimental design was used and the experimental group was exposed to ER for six weeks different from the control group. Data was collected by means of L2 reading and writing tests and Foreign Language Self-concept Scale (FLSCS) (Er, 2007) given at the beginning and at the end of the intervention, and by means of focus group interviews carried out with 10 randomly chosen experimental group students. Analyses of the data showed a significant difference between control and experimental groups regarding their L2 reading and writing performance. The difference between the groups' FLSC was found to be insignificant, though within group analyses indicated that ER affected the students' FLSC positively. Qualitative data, interviews, supported the quantitative data and revealed that the project also improved students' motivation and self-confidence as well as various aspects of L2 language ability and fostered their positive self images as EFL learners. The insights gained from the study provide important implications for English language teaching programmes in EFL context.

**Keywords: extensive reading, writing, reading, foreign language self-concept**

## Introduction

In academic settings, from secondary to postgraduate instruction, second language students face many challenges, ranging from the need for a large academically oriented vocabulary to the ability to communicate effectively and the ability to combine reading and writing skills to learn and display content appropriately. In this article, the focus on the extensive reading and writing integration which is a relatively underdeveloped area, even though it is commonplace in most academic contexts and critical for academic success.

Turkish students at higher education are expected to read various publications in English–textbooks, articles and lecture notes–and integrate information from different sources for project or report writing in L2. Learning to write from textual sources, e.g., integrating complementary sources of information,

interpreting conceptually difficult information, is a demanding skill that even native-speaking students have to work hard to master. The task becomes much more challenging for L2 students, especially when they are not practiced sufficiently. Grabe and Zhang (2013) further argue that one of the challenges of EAP students is that they lack experience in integrating reading and writing skills. Thus, students need to read extensively along with their constant reading and writing practice to build confidence and fluency which are fundamental to academic literacy. Studies have indicated the same challenge for Turkish learners of English, who rate their English level as average to fulfil the major reading and writing requirements of their departments (Kırkgöz, 2009). Many students experience difficulties in L2 reading and writing (Akyel & Özek, 2010), have high L2 reading anxiety and negative beliefs about their own English reading abilities (Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2011), high level of L2 writing anxiety (Kurt & Atay, 2007; Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015), low level of L2 writing self efficacy (Öztürk & Saydam, 2014) and negative attitudes towards writing (Göy, 2017). According to faculty members in many Turkish universities, students at a higher education institution lack reading habit and interest in reading and "do not trust their language competence" (Altınmakas & Bayyurt, 2018, p. 101). In spite of having received over 1000 classroom instruction upon their graduation from high school, it is reported, based on a research carried out by the association of British Council and TEPAV in 2013, that Turkish students perceive themselves to have low level of English language skills and declare lower self-confidence to learn English. They believe that their level of English get worse and they cannot make progress despite over the years of schooling (Yavuz & Höl, 2017). For these reasons, most Turkish university students start university with low level of English and have to attend the one-year English preparatory programme provided by the university to continue their English-medium classes. In this aspect, as teachers, we have a crucial role in helping students develop their language skills to meet their academic needs and improve their self-concept for successful language learners especially in settings like Turkey, where students have limited exposure to English language input.

The present study was motivated by the above mentioned situation in the Turkish academic context and attempted to find out the ways to improve Turkish university students' reading and writing skills so that they can pursue their academic studies in English. As a result, an efficient reading instruction was thought to be designed since reading is a skill that can be developed through effective and extensive practise by students on their own, under their own control of selection of the reading passages, after they finish their EAP course work (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). We believed that a well designed extensive reading (ER) would serve this purpose. Reading texts within their areas of interest and linguistic abilities would develop learners as lifelong readers and help them acquire academic language competence and skills as it bridges to heavier reading and prepares them to cope with more complex texts and multiple reading resources required for all academic course work (Day & Bamford, 2002; Krashen, 2004; Park, 2016). Thus, designing an ER program integrating out of class reading with in-class follow up writing activities was believed to be an effective way to help students develop not only their reading but also writing skills and to promote their foreign language self-concept, which refers to one's belief and perception about himself in language learning (Mercer, 2011) and is thought as an important predictor in learners' academic achievement (Marsh & Martin, 2011). Therefore, in this study, we integrated ER in an academic reading/writing class with related writing activities and our aim was to explore its effects on the L2 writing and reading performances of Turkish EFL learners. In addition, we explored whether participating in the ER program would affect the learners' foreign language self-concept.

## Literature Review

### Extensive Reading (ER)

Extensive reading (ER) is a form of reading instruction, the definition and purpose of which are defined as follows: ER "means reading in quantity and in order gain a general understanding of what is read. It is

intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, pp. 193-194). ER is for the purpose of pleasure or information rather than learning particular language features and is usually self-selected. Therefore, it is often promoted as a good way to improve learners' L2 proficiency; especially in input-poor environments. Thus, it has been drawing increasing attention from the researchers and the teachers in ESL and EFL context, who point out the benefits of ER (Grabe, 2009).

Research, with varying degrees of confidence, has reported beneficial effects of ER on various aspects of L2 ability, such as gains in reading speed and reading comprehension (Bell, 2001; He, 2014, Mermestein, 2014; Suk, 2017; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007), silent reading rate (Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, & Gorsuch 2004), vocabulary knowledge (Tiryaki & Tütüniş, 2012; Wang, 2013), reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge (Chen, Chen, Chen & Wey, 2013), grammatical competence (Sheu, 2003), and general English language proficiency (Al'zubi, 2014; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Yamashita, 2008), and development of writing skill (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2014; Kirin, 2010; Mermelstein, 2015). The benefits of ER is not limited with linguistic aspects alone, it is also found to boost students' L2 reading motivation (Fujito & Noro, 2009; Guo, 2012), L2 reading attitude (Atay, 2004; Ro & Park, 2016; Salameh, 2017; Yamashita, 2013), L2 reading self-efficacy (Burrows, 2012; Lake, 2014; Raissi & Roustaei, 2013), learner autonomy (Channuan & Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Mede, Incecay, & V. Incecay, 2013) and to lower L2 reading anxiety (Ro, 2013). The positive attitudes that L2 learners hold towards ER has been on the most commonly discussed issues in ER studies. For example, Dohuy and his colleagues (2006) studied six Vietnamese computer science students who were required to reflect on and report their reading experience during a seven-week ER treatment. They found positive results in terms of attitudes towards reading in the L2 use of different strategies and reading autonomy.

## Integrating Extensive Reading with Writing

In recent studies, many researchers have emphasized the benefits of integrating reading with writing in English classes rather than encouraging students to do extensive reading. Graham and Hebert (2010), for example, claim that integrating ER with writing activities can promote the benefits of ER; writing can be a vehicle for improving reading, especially, getting students to write about a text they have read improves their comprehension and helps them make connections between what they read, know, understand and think. Through linking reading and writing, students might have more opportunities to acquire L2 vocabulary, grammatical structures, and rhetorical features of texts (Tsai, 2006). However, most studies have lacked incorporating reading and writing to increase the effectiveness of ER and studies that design an ER programme integrating ER with follow-up writing activities are highly limited in number. For instance, Lee and Hsu (2009) asked Taiwanese EFL students to write a reflection paragraph or a summary after reading a book as part of an ER program. Results indicated improvement in learners' L2 writing. In a more recent study, Park (2016) explored the impact of integrated ER (ER) on EAP writing of EFL learners in a university in US. Students exposed to more input through ER gained significantly higher holistic scores in their post-essay tests. In addition, analytic scoring indicated that the ER class improved more than the traditional class in the specific areas of writing; content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

In the present study, our aim is to find out the effects of integrating reading and writing through an ER program on Turkish L2 learners' reading and writing performances. In addition, we explored if participating in this program would affect the foreign language self-concept of the learners as a result of the progress in their reading/writing performance. In the following section, we will present information on this concept to illustrate its importance in learners' academic achievement (Rodrigez, 2009; Marsh & Martin, 2011; Tang, 2011).

## Foreign Language Self-concept (FLSC)

Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) broadly defined self-concept as "a person's perception of himself" formed through his experience with his environment (p. 411). In a more recent definition, Mercer (2011) suggests that "self-concept refers not only to what one believes about oneself and one's abilities in certain domain in cognitive terms but also evaluation of these believes and feelings in effective terms" (p. 2). Thus, self-concept is an internal psychological construct with both affective and cognitive dimensions.

In the present study, the focus is on learner academic self-concept in the domain of foreign language learning. Self-concept plays a more important role in language learning than in other domains as "language, after all, belongs to a person's whole social being; it is a part of one's identity and is used to convey this identity to other people" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 115). Mercer (2011) defines foreign language self-concept (FLSC) as "individuals' self-descriptions of competence and evaluative feelings about themselves as foreign language learners" (p. 14) and it is important to help learners develop positive self-concept as low self-concept causes negative feelings that make the language learning experience unpleasant, less motivating and less effective (Arnold, 2007). Helping the learners to have a successful self-image and perception can reduce negative beliefs and provide strong support for language learning process (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Research has shown that academic self-concept is an important factor in learners' academic achievement (Marsh & Martin, 2011; Rodrigez, 2009; Tang, 2011). For example, the study of Liu (2008) with Taiwanian EFL college students showed that FLSC had positive correlation with reading and listening performances of the students and was a significant predictor in students' English proficiency. Another study conducted by Erten and Burden (2014) with 6th grade Turkish students in Turkey showed a close relationship between both FLSC and language learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study of Walker (2015) with international students in pre-master course in a British university indicated the relationship between self-concept and competence perceptions and English language ability as well as the changes in self-concept of the students over the course. This result showed that the achievement in L2 enhanced the self-views on L2 reading and learning and L2 reading self-concept might improve over time through positive experience. It also revealed that students with high self-concept "have or develop more strategies for reading and develop higher levels of criticality and analysis", which are all required for academic success (p. 81). To this end, some researchers, though limited in number, designed studies to promote FLSC of the EFL learners through activities and tasks (Er, Yurdabakan, & Altunay, 2012). Developing learners' FLSC is highly significant as it affects learners' behaviours and willingness to use the foreign language. It impacts their beliefs about language learning and about himself/herself as language learner. In addition, as Mercer (2011) points out "it provides learners with their sense of agency, drives and guides their behaviours, can help learners to become higher achievers academically be more motivated, more willing to expend effort and set more challenging goals and generally to have a more positive affective attitude towards their academic studies" (p. 3).

Motivated by the benefits of ER and importance of FLSC for learners for both their language learning beliefs and positive attitudes towards their academic studies as mentioned in the literature, we decided to do this study in order to support the positive construction of FLSC of learners in an academic context and to ensure students will be reading extensively and practising writing. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1) Will there be a statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups regarding their
   a. L2 reading performance
   b. L2 writing performance
   c. FLSC levels after the ER program?
2) What are Turkish EFL students' opinions about participating in an ER program and its effects on their English language learning?

# Method

## Setting and Participants

The present study took place in an English medium university; all students are expected to take the English Proficiency exam at the beginning of the academic term and those who get lower than 60 out of 100 have to attend the one-year English preparatory school. Students are placed in an appropriate level (A1, A2, B1, and B2) in the preparatory school according to the results of the exam. At the time of the study, there were nine B1 groups and two classes of the first researcher were randomly assigned as the experimental (12 females/10 males) and control groups (9 females/13 males). The average age of students was 18.3. All students gave consent to participate in the study.

## Materials

The present study follows a mixed study design which "combines quantitative and qualitative approaches and builds on the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone" (Creswell, 2014, p. 483). Mixed method approach provided a broader perspective and in-depth understanding of the impact of ER on learners' reading/writing performance and FLSC.

The reading and writing sections of Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET, 2015), a B1 level test developed by University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), were given as pre- and post-tests. This exam was chosen as it was thought it is an appropriate exam to test the students with this level of English (B1). The reading section consists of 35 items (multiple choice, matching, true/ false and multiple choice cloze tasks), assessing a wide range of reading skills. In the writing section, students were asked to write a story beginning with: "Tom felt angry as he got off the train" for 30 minutes.

Learners' foreign language self-concept level was measured by Foreign Language Self-concept Scale (FLSCS) developed by Er (2007). In the course of developing the scale, 60 items were piloted on 182 Turkish EFL students. After eliminating the misspecified items on the basis of factor loadings, 34 items were found to be loaded significantly on one factor. Thus, the final version of the scale consisted of 34 items and the item factor loadings for the overall scale ranged between 0.488 and 0.789; and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient reliability was reported as .955. It is a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) in Turkish and includes items such as 'I think I am successful at English class', 'I have difficulty in expressing myself in English' and 'I can deal with the challenges while learning English by myself.' There are twelve negatively worded items to prevent responses biases in students. A demographic questionnaire was given along with the scale.

Two experienced teachers (the researcher herself with eight year and the other with 6 year-teaching experience) assessed the writing tests of the learners, using the Cambridge University English Language Assessment Scale. The scale assesses four sub-skills of writing: content, communicative achievement, organization and language. All components were assessed on a band from 0 to 5, with 0 being the lowest and 5 the highest. The inter-rater reliability was .893 for the pre-test and .917 for post-test.

## Procedure

ER program lasted for six weeks in the fall semester of 2017-2018 academic year. One week before ER program started, pre-tests were administered to ensure that there was no significant difference between control and experimental group students in terms of their L2 writing, reading and FLSC levels. Man Whitney U test results showed there was no statistically significant difference between the groups (reading-$U = 215$, $p = .524 > 0.05$; writing-$U = 194.5$, $p = .262 > 0.05$; FLSC-$U = 211.5$ $p = .474 > 0.05$). Post tests were given one week after the study.

The English academic program for B1 level is composed of 22 hours per week: 4 hours for listening/speaking, 6 hours for reading/writing and 12-hour integrated skills course (main course) weekly. The present study took place in reading/writing course, in which *Unlock Level 3 Reading & Writing Skills,* (Westbrook, 2014) was followed. The book includes 10 units with 2 reading texts and a writing task in each. Every week, learners read two texts and complete pre- and post-reading activities, such as comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises and topic-related discussions. Writing tasks are carried out during class time or assigned as homework.

During the six-week study, while the control group followed this program, experimental group students additionally did out of class ER and in-class writing activities connected with their readings.

The overall framework of the ER program was based on the top ten principles of Day and Bamford (2002) for conducting a successful ER program. This study essentially adhered to the following principles: Students should read a variety of reading material on a wide range of topics, choose what they want to read and "read as much as possible for pleasure, information and general understanding" under the orientation and guidance of a teacher who is a role model (pp. 137-141). Taking these principles into consideration, students in this program were provided different kinds of graded readers, appropriate for their level of English, and enabled freedom to choose what, where and when they wanted to read for pleasure, information and general understanding by their teacher.

The graded readers were determined by the number of headwords used by the publishers for each level. The information, vocabulary and structure were controlled for each level to suit the students' ability and *Macmillan* graded readers' series, Level 4 / pre-intermediate for the first three weeks and Level 5/ intermediate for the last three weeks of the study were decided to be provided to students during the study. Graded readers were from various topics ranging from popular classics and autobiographies to science fiction and students were allowed to choose freely any book that suited their interests. In this regard, they were provided 10 different books for level 4 and 9 different books for level 5. Students were suggested to read on average 20 minutes every day and they had one week to read the whole book assigned. Each week, they exchanged the books with each other. All books were numbered by the teacher in order to prevent any confusion and to be sure that every week, students had a different book. Book titles, book number, book pages were recorded as well.

Each ER activity was integrated with in-class reading related writing activities. To illustrate, in the first week of the study, the students who had read their books assigned in the previous week were provided an in-class writing task which was writing a different ending to the story they had read. After the writing activity, students who had read the same book were grouped, and asked to compare and discuss the writing products they had just completed. After this integrated out-of class reading in-class writing activity, the students exchanged their books with each other for the next week. In the second week, the students who had completed reading their second books were provided another post-reading writing task which was writing a review on the book they had read. The same procedure repeated during this six-week study. While the students read a book out of class for a week, the following week they had a post-reading in-class activity, yet the writing activity for each week differed (see Appendix B for detailed weekly writing tasks). Each session for the in-class writing activity lasted for a class hour (about ninety minutes). These post-reading in-class writing tasks led the students to express their opinion related to the book under the guidance of the teacher. Teacher also gave corrective feedback on students' written products.

## Data Analysis

Mann Whitney U Test (Non-Parametric Test) on SPSS 24 was used to compare the groups before and after the program implementation and to see whether there was a significant difference between two groups' L2 reading/ writing performance and FLSC. In addition, Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (Non-Parametric Test) was applied to the data to compare the pre and post FLSC test results of the students within each group itself.

Focus group interviews with 10 (4 males/6 females) randomly chosen students from the experimental group were conducted to get in-depth data about students' opinions about the ER program (Appendix A). The interviews, about 45 minutes in length, were audio-recorded and transcribed. All students provided consent for recording and transcription of interviews. Interview data was analysed by means of pattern coding as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994).

# Results

## Results of Quantitative Data

In order to compare post-test scores of the students in experimental and control group after ER, Mann Whitney U Test (Non-Parametric Test) was used.

The result of the Mann Whitney U test in Table 1 displays that there was a significant difference between reading post- test scores of the students in experimental group and control group ($U = 116.5$, $p = 0.003$). By analyzing mean ranks and sum of ranks of the groups, it was observed that the difference was in favour of experimental group.

TABLE 1
*Results of Man Whitney U Test to Compare the Reading Post-Test Scores of Students Based on Groups*

| Mann Whitney U Reading Post Test | Groups | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks | U | z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Experimental | 22 | 28.20 | 620.5 | 116.5 | 2.961 | 0.003 |
| | Control | 22 | 16.80 | 369.5 | | | |
| | Total | 44 | | | | | |

*Note. N* = number of the ss; $p < 0.05$

The analysis of Mann Whitney U test to compare the post-writing test scores of the students based on the groups in Table 2 shows that the writing scores of the students in experimental group and control group were significantly different from each other ($U = 50.5$, $p = 0.000$). The difference was in favour of experimental group.

TABLE 2
*Results of Man Whitney U Test to Compare Writing Post-Test Scores of Students Based on Groups*

| Mann Whitney U Writing Post Test | Groups | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks | U | z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Experimental | 22 | 31.20 | 686.5 | 50.5 | 4.507 | 0.000 |
| | Control | 22 | 13.80 | 303.5 | | | |
| | Total | 44 | | | | | |

*Note. N* = number of the ss; $p < 0.05$

On the other hand, the analysis of Mann Whitney U test result in Table 3 shows there was not a statistically significant difference between FLSC post-test scores of the groups ($U = 208$, $p = .425$).

TABLE 3
*Results of Mann Whitney U Test to Compare FLSC Post Test Scores of Students Based on Groups*

| Mann Whitney U FLSCS Post Test | Groups | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks | U | z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Experimental | 22 | 24.05 | 529.00 | 208.00 | 0.798 | 0.425 |
| | Control | 22 | 20.95 | 461.00 | | | |
| | Total | 44 | | | | | |

*Note. N* = number of the ss; $p < 0.05$

However, Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to measure whether FLSC level of the students significantly differed before and after the ER within their own groups. When mean rank and sum of ranks are analyzed, it is apparent that the difference is in favour of positive ranks, namely post test result in experimental group, which created a significant difference between the level of FLSC before and after the ER. While a statistically significant difference was seen between FLSC pre-test and post-test scores of the students in experimental group itself ($z = 3.341$, $p = .001 < 0.05$), there was not a significant difference between the pre and post-tests of the control group ($z = .957$, $p = .339 > 0.05$) as seen in table 4. Although, the ER has not created a statistically significant difference between the groups, it is observed that there was a significant difference between the experimental group students' FLSC pre and post-test scores within the group itself.

TABLE 4
*The Result of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to Compare FLSC Pre-Post Scores of the Students in Groups*

| FLCS Post–Pre Test | Groups | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks | z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group | Negative Rank | 2 | 6.00 | 12.00 | 3.34 | 0.001 |
| | Positive Rank | 17 | 10.47 | 178 | | |
| | Ties | 3 | | | | |
| Control Group | Negative Rank | 10 | 8.80 | 88.00 | 0.957 | 0.339 |
| | Positive Rank | 11 | 13.00 | 143.00 | | |
| | Ties | 1 | | | | |

*Note. N* = number of the ss; *p* < 0.05

## Results of the Qualitative Data

The first interview question investigated the students' opinion about the ER project and its content; books, writing activities and the project's impact on their reading habit and study strategies. Analysis of interview data revealed that students found ER program highly beneficial activity. Some focused specifically on the books as follows:

> Most of the books were interesting. I was glued to the one about Nelson Mandela. I could not stop reading it. I learnt new information, yet some books had the same subject so I got bored.

Some commented on post-reading in-class writing activities. All students stated that they found writing activities very beneficial as they helped them to improve their writing. Five students stated that they especially liked writing a different ending to story as:

> Some stories did not end as I wanted and imagined. I liked creating an end. I changed the ending of the story that I did not like. It made the story more interesting and improved my creativity.

Some students (3/10) stated that they liked the activity of choosing their own actors and actress as the imaginary director of the film version of the books they read:

> I had to analyze the characters' personality and imagine their outlook to find a suitable actor/actress to act in my movie.

In addition, students talked about the positive effect of the ER on their reading habits. Seven students pointed out that the program helped them to acquire reading habit as can be seen in the following example:

I did not like reading so I was prejudiced against this program at first, but after two weeks, I got used to reading books. I was reading a part before sleeping every day.

Three of these students indicated that this program also fostered their reading habits in their own language (L1):

When reading these graded books, I started wondering the original versions, so I bought some of them in Turkish and already started reading one of them.

Furthermore, some students (6/10) pointed out the benefit of the program on building some study strategies like taking notes as it can be seen below:

Normally, I read books by lying down on my bed, but I read the English books on my study desk and I took some notes while reading. I was underlining some repeated words, key words and chunk and taking small notes.

The second question aimed to find out the challenges that students faced during the project. Students also faced some challenges during the program due to some reasons. Most of the students (8/10) indicated that they had to look up dictionary for unknown words that they encountered in the books. This made the reading activity boring and time-consuming for them. Some students said that reading book was boring and difficult for them as they "did not have a reading habit". For some (4/10) planning and managing the time to read the book before deadline was hard "as there were also other assignments to finish on time".

On the other hand, as for the impact of ER on students' performance as an EFL learner, all students pointed out that the program helped them improve their English language in different aspects. Students reported that the program helped them develop their English language in different aspects. They reported that reading extensively improved their reading fluency and stimulated their reading speed, for example, one of the students said: "Before this program, I was reading the texts word by word. Now, I can read texts fluently and see the big picture. The more I read, the faster I started to finish the books". Furthermore, they all thought ER program helped them to learn new words:

At first, I did not understand most of the words in the book, so I was checking their meaning word by word in the dictionary. I think, I have learnt some new words without being aware. I can use wide range of words in my writings.

Reading extensively promoted their ability to infer the meaning of the unknown words in the context and improved their speaking performance as illustrated below:

It increased my familiarity with the words. Even if I do not know the meaning of a word, I can infer it from the context and make comments on the text. I read the whole text and try to understand the word from the text in general.

Most of the students (7/10) stated that they were able to build more complex sentences thanks to reading a lot as can be seen in the following example:
Reading books encouraged me to build more complex sentences. I do not make simple sentences that just include subject and verb, but link them with conjunctions.

All students pointed out that this program helped them to improve their writing as seen in the example:

While I was writing, I had difficulty in creating new ideas. I got bored in writing classes. Not many ideas came into my mind, yet now I can express my thoughts easily and I can build more accurate sentences and use variety of words in my writings.

Next questions (from 4 to 6) were specifically asked for in-depth exploration of the effect of ER on learners' foreign language self-concept. Thus, fourth question provided insights into how experience of ER changed students' beliefs and thoughts related to learning English and self-perception as learners.

All students stated that the improvements in their English and getting higher grades in exams led them to have feeling of achievement as illustrated with some striking examples below:

I am a person who gets motivated through achievement. A failure can discourage me easily. This program has been a step for me. Thanks to this program, I can read better and comprehend something easier. Seeing my English improvement every week has motivated me.

When a person sees that he/she can achieve something, he/she gets more eager to do that thing and spend more time on it. In this aspect, that program has been very beneficial for us. It is obviously seen that it has improved our English. Reading a lot also affected our midterm and quiz grades in the university positively.

Half of the students explicitly stated that this program encouraged them to deal with the challenges and difficulties while learning English as exemplified below:

Even if I do not make the correct guess and infer the meaning of an unknown word in a text, it does not become a big problem for me. I do not give up reading. I do not get discouraged from the difficulties.

The fifth question explored the effect of the program on students' motivation. Most of the students (8/10) stated that the program promoted their motivation to read more and learn English as they learned new information through books:

The program increased my interest in learning English and I became more eager to learn English as I started to learn new information through books. For example, I learnt life of Nelson Mandela and Gandhi and read more about them on the internet.

The last question was related to the effect of the program on students' self-confidence in learning English. Majority of the students (8/10) expressed that the program positively affected their self confidence.

All students (8/8) stated that this program increased their self-confidence in learning English as they have overcome fear of making mistake as a result of the programme as illustrated below:

At the beginning of the semester, I had fear of being laughed by other students in the classroom when I made a mistake, but as a result of reading a lot, my speaking got better, so I became more confident to speak in the classroom. I was reading the books aloud, as you suggested, and recording my voice to talk about the book. I have started to believe in myself that I can speak English well and began to volunteer to express my thoughts in the classroom. I am not afraid of making mistakes anymore. I believe that I can learn from my mistakes. They are learning steps for me.

I had fear of making mistake and not being able to make a correct sentence. I was afraid of building long and complex sentences, too. This program helped me to overcome these fears because I got

more familiar with the complex sentence structures in the books and I can remember them while creating my own sentences.

Some students (5 out of 8) also pointed that the improvement in their writing enhanced their self-confidence as it can be seen in the following example:

Before this program, in writing class, when the teacher gave us a topic to write, everybody was getting tense and felt uncomfortable. They were complaining and saying "writing again? What will we write?", yet recently, I hardly ever, in fact, almost never hear these kinds of complaints. This program improved our writing and we are more confident to write anything.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to find out the effects of ER on Turkish EFL learners' reading and writing performance and FLSC. The results of the quantitative data indicated that the program have improved Turkish learners' reading and writing performances. Throughout this program, students were provided with books by the teacher and they chose the books depending on their interest. Each week, after students read the books that they selected, they were provided a writing task related with the books, which enabled the students to personalize the books that they read and encouraged their the engagement and interaction with the books more while describing, summarizing, creating a different end, analyzing the content and the characters. In this regard, ER has integrated reading and writing, creating opportunities for more language input and output. As Graham & Hebert (2010) states, integrating ER with writing activities has promoted the benefits of ER. The improvement in writing performance of students as a result of integrated ER confirms the result of some studies conducted in different settings (Lee & Hsu 2009, 2015; Park, 2016).

As for FLSC of students, a significant difference was found in experimental group's FLSC before and after the program; however, the difference between the groups was not statistically significant. As Mercer (2011) stated, self-concept shows complex, dynamic development over time depending on the context, social interactions of the individuals but has a certain internal stability. It develops slowly over time and the biggest changes are observed in childhood and early adolescence (Rosenberg, 1986). Thus, this result is not surprising for a six-week study, which is quiet a short time compared. The study conducted by Er, Yurdabakan, and Altunay (2012) explored the effects of active learning on EFL learners' FLSC yielded similar results and researchers suggested that longer time was needed to see a change in a learner's FLSC.

The benefits of ER on learners' writing, reading and FLSC level were also supported with qualitative data. As Tsai (2006) has pointed out, linking reading and writing seemed to have created more opportunities for the students to improve their comprehension and making connections what they read, know, understand and think. What students say in the interview indicates it not only developed their reading and writing skills but also other aspects of language including vocabulary, reading fluency and speed, ability to infer the meaning of the words in the context, speaking skill, and ability of building more complex sentences. In addition, the program has raised awareness of the students, enhanced their reading habit and encouraged them to cope with the challenges. The improvement in the FLSC level in the experimental group was also supported with interview data. Learners had highly positive views of learning English after ER, focusing on factors related to their self-concept. Mercer (2011) stated language self-concept is shaped by internal factors like affective and cognitive reactions and external factors outside of the learners such as failures/ success, past experiences, social comparisons, positive feedback and past experiences of language learning. Learners indicated that ER program boosted their motivation, self-confidence and they perceived changes in their self-concepts as a result of their achievement in language learning especially through the improvement in their writing and reading skills. Burden (2005) points out academic self-concept can change as a result of "developing skills, increased attainment and

growth of self confidence and learner autonomy" (p. 59) and the change in the self-concepts of the learners as a result of their achievement and improvement in their language confirm the studies which linked the academic achievement and the self-concept (Marsh & Martin, 2011; Rodrigez, 2009; Tang, 2011). Students' verbal accounts of learning and improvement in L2 reveal out their final perception of competence in English. This displays the dynamic nature of self-concept which changes over time through positive experiences provided by ER and confirms what Liu (2008), Erten and Burden (2014), and Walker (2015) revealed out about positive correlation between the language learning performance and FLSC. Although positive change in FLSC was observed in qualitative data, there was not a statistically significant difference between the groups, yet this does not devalue our study. It would be better to go on the research with the same groups for at least a year to be able to observe the effect of the program on learners' foreign self-concept levels clearly.

On the other hand, there are limitations of this study which need to be acknowledged. The first limitation result from the number of the students and level of the students. Further study with large number of students in different language levels and in different contexts should be done to research the effects of ER on reading, writing and learners' FLSC. The themes and the results should be taken into consideration as hypothesis to be tested. The second limitation result from the time restriction, it needed to be completed within a six-week period. Although there was a significant difference between the level of the students' self-concept before the program and after the program inside of the experimental group, the time was not enough to create a significant difference between the students' level of the self-concept between the experimental group and control group. This is a fact that self-concept is dynamic and it may change yet it requires time to be obviously observable.

In spite of the limitations, ER which integrated reading and writing has proved to be significantly effective in increasing the learners' exposure to the target language; and consequently, fostering the improvements of the students' reading and writing performance along with the other language aspects. Together with these improvements, it seemed to have promoted students' motivation as a result of learning new information and their self-confidence thanks to overcoming fear of making mistake and improvement in their writing. Thus, it seems it helped them to have more positive views related to language learning. This study indicates that students' self beliefs play a central role in their academic success and their self-construct is a key factor affecting the process of language learning.

The overwhelming conclusion can be that students' self perceptions significantly affect their attitudes, behaviours and cognitive process. It is highly important to help the students to create strong language learner self-images. If students are provided language learning environment and tasks that support their language exposure and positive experiences related with language learning, those can foster their positive self-images as learner and be a powerful motivator for them to learn L2. In this regard, this study fills the gap in the literature by integrating ER with in-class writing activities to promote learners' reading, writing and FLSC. Therefore, this ER program can be utilized as a program in EFL classes to increase the learners' engagement with the target language and to help the learners develop many aspects of their language and positive views along with motivation and self-confidence to learn the language.


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is assumed as a result of ER and this displays the students exposed to ER outperformed the students in control group in an exam which assesses students L2 language proficiency and proves the positive effect of the ER on experimental group students' language skills just in such a short period.

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# Appendix A

## Interview Questions

1. What do you think about the ER program? (books, writing activities and so on)
2. What were the challenges that you face during the program?
3. Do you think this ER program had an impact on your performance as an EFL learner?
4. How do you think ER program has affected your thoughts and beliefs related to English Classroom/ English learning?
5. What are the effects of ER program on your motivation to learn English?
6. How do you think ER program has affected your self-confidence to learn English?

# Appendix B

## In-class Reading Related Writing Tasks

| Tasks |
|---|
| **Week 1**<br>Write a different ending to the story you read. |
| **Week 2**<br>Write a review on the book that you read. First, summarize it shortly, then write your comments (what you like / do not like). |
| **Week 3**<br>Choose a scene in your book and write the dialogue among the characters with your group friends by using your own words and then act out the scene. |
| **Week 4**<br>Think that you are working as a journalist in a newspaper or a magazine<br>Write an article about the book that you read.<br>Give information about the people, their lives/ lifestyle and the time that they lived, their thoughts and feelings<br>Or report an imaginary interview that you did with the main character of the story |
| **Week 5**<br>Imagine that you are the director making the film version of your book. Choose one scene from<br>the story and give details of the following (place, characters)<br>• the characters: who are they, what they do in the scene and any feelings they should show and<br>say which famous actor or actress you think should play each character, why?<br>• think clothes / costume for each actor<br>• any music, sound effects, other special effects |
| **Week 6**<br>Choose a character in your book and write a letter to someone in that character's life (wife, husband, lover or a friend) from his/her perspective, his/ her feelings, thoughts. |