

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter includes the participants of this study, the instruments used to obtain the data, the experimental procedures, and the data analysis.

3.1 Participants of the Study

The participants of this study consisted of three first-year classes, with 95 sixteen-year-old students in total, at a vocational high school in northern Taiwan. Most participants in this study came from the Taipei district. The ratio of boys to girls in these classes was 32:5, 35:4, and 34:4 respectively. These three classes were instructed by the same English teacher. They all had six periods of English classes per week and used the same textbooks.

From the information revealed by the pre-test questionnaire, about 84 % of the participants had studied English for 5 years since the fifth grade of elementary school while 16 % had studied English for 3 years since junior high. Seven students had passed the General English Proficiency Test Elementary Level before the study.

Two classes were randomly selected as the experimental groups with extensive reading and intensive reading instruction implemented on, while the third class served as the control group with traditional reading instruction. In the class for extensive reading instruction, the total number of participants was 32, with 7 students excluded from the study. Among the 7 students, 2 of them had passed the GEPT Elementary Level when in

their junior high and 5 of them passed the simulation test of GEPT Elementary Level provided by the researcher. As for the intensive reading group, 5 students in total passed the GEPT Elementary Level and the simulation test of GEPT Elementary Level, so the overall number of participants was 33. In the control group, except the 7 students who passed the GEPT Elementary Level and the simulation test of GEPT Elementary Level, 30 students would be included in this study.

On the participants' attitudes toward cloze test, about 71 % of them regarded cloze test as a difficult test. Besides, among the three major components of cloze test in EEFTC English Examination, i.e., grammar, vocabulary & phrases, and transitions, about 60 % of the participants considered the part of vocabulary & phrases the easiest section to get high scores, while 66 % viewed the grammar part as the most difficult one. When asked if reading activities was conducive to improving their performance in cloze test, 76 % of them held positive attitudes toward the effects of reading activities. In terms of participants' reading habits, 55 % would sometimes read Chinese magazines, comic books, horror stories, and adventures, while only 7% would sometimes read English stories or novels. The reason for this sharp contrast was that most of them thought English reading involved difficult words and grammar, and lengthy articles, and they had to spend a lot of time looking up words in the dictionary. Interestingly enough, though, nearly 80 % of the participants would like to be engaged in English reading activities if it was provided in class.

The above was regarding participants' English learning background, their attitudes toward cloze test, and their reading habits. The following section would be about the instruments adopted in this study.

3.2 Instruments of the Study

The instruments of this study were pre- and post-study questionnaires, a simulation test of GEPT Elementary Level, and a 55-item cloze test.

Questionnaires were used before and after the study. The questionnaire before the study was used to retrieve participants' background information, including their age, years of English studying, the number of those who passed the GEPT Elementary Level, their Chinese and English reading habits, their reading preferences, and their attitudes toward cloze test. After the study, the other questionnaire was used to survey participants' responses and suggestions about cloze test and the reading activity; for example, if this reading activity was effective to their performance in cloze test, if the level and topic of the story books were suitable for them, and if the amount of time for this reading activity was sufficient. Multiple choices and open questions were included in these questionnaires so participants were welcome to write their opinions.

To define language low achievers in this study, the second instrument was adopted: a simulation test of GEPT Elementary Level released by The Language Training and Testing Center. The GEPT Elementary Level was considered equal to a junior high school graduate's English proficiency, so, if the student failed the simulation test, he/ she would be grouped as a low achiever in this study. For those who had taken this simulation test, their data would not be included in this study.

The third instrument was a 55-item cloze test used both in the pre- and post-study. This cloze test was to examine participants' performance before and after the study. These 55 items came from the simulation tests of GEPT Elementary level released by the LTTC. Among the 55 items, 21 of them were to test their grammar ability; 22 items were

for vocabulary & phrases; 12 items were for transitions. Participants' total scores as well as the three individual scores, i.e., grammar, vocabulary & phrases, and transitions, would be compared before and after the study.

3.3 Procedures of the Study

The study would last for 14 weeks with two classes per week for reading activities. The procedures of the study could be divided into three parts: procedures before the study, during the study, and after the study.

3.3.1 Procedures before the Study

After a brief introduction of the study, all participants had to complete the simulation test of GEPT Elementary Level, a 55-item cloze test, and a pre-study questionnaire in the first two weeks of a new semester.

Firstly, the simulation test of GEPT Elementary Level was used to define low achievers in this study. The first phase of the simulation test was to examine participants' listening, reading, and writing ability, and the second phase was for speaking ability. The minimum score to pass the listening, reading, and speaking tests was 80, and 70 for the writing test. Only when one passed the first phase could he/she continue the second phase. The guidelines for scoring writing and speaking were based on the instructions of the manual and two experienced English teachers were chosen as the raters of the writing and speaking tests. After they discussed the writing scoring standard provided by the manual and reached a common ground on scoring, 39 answer sheets were randomly picked up for them to score, and the inter-rater reliability was calculated by Pearson Correlation

Coefficient. When the correlation coefficient reached a significant level, the two raters would score the other 68 answer sheets individually. The scoring for speaking was in the same manner. Those who failed the simulation test would be defined as low achievers in English, being the participants of the study.

The inter-rater reliability for writing and speaking scoring are presented with the following tables.

Table 3.1: The Inter-rater Reliability for Writing--Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Descriptive Statistics			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Rater1		2.51	1.09
Rater2		2.69	1.05

Correlations			
		Rater1	Rater2
Rater1	Pearson Correlation	1	.845(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Rater2	Pearson Correlation	.845(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3.2: The Inter-rater Reliability for Speaking--Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rater1	57.69	16.29
Rater2	62.05	17.79

Correlations			
		Rater1	Rater2
Rater1	Pearson	1	.752(**)
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Rater2	Pearson	.752(**)	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As can be seen in Table 3.1, the means scores of these 39 writing samples are 2.51 and 2.69 for Rater 1 and Rater 2 (The full score for writing is 5). The Pearson Correlation Coefficient for writing scoring is 0.845, which is significant at the 0.01 level ($r=0.000<0.01$). This means the scoring for these two raters in writing is positively correlated. As for Table 3.2, the means scores of these 39 speaking samples are 57.69 and 62.05 for Rater 1 and Rater 2 (The full score for speaking is 100). The Pearson Correlation Coefficient for speaking scoring is 0.752, which is significant at the 0.01 level ($r=0.000<0.01$). This indicates that these two raters are positively correlated in terms of

scoring participants' speaking performance.

After the simulation test was finished, a 55-item cloze test was conducted so as to compare participants' performance before and after the study (see Appendix A). The cloze test was composed of 21 grammar items, 22 vocabulary & phrases items, and 12 transitions items. Participants' overall performance as well as the performance in the three sections would be examined.

When the simulation test and the cloze test were completed, participants were required to fill out the pre-study questionnaire for their background information, English learning history, reading habits and preferences, and their attitudes toward cloze test (see Appendix B).

In the first two weeks, the simulation test of GEPT Elementary Level, the cloze test, and the questionnaire were administered to all participants. In the third week, instructions of transitions and reading strategies would be given.

Transitions, including additive ones, *and*, *that is*, etc., adversative ones, *but*, *however*, etc., causal ones, *so*, *because*, etc., and temporal ones, *then*, *soon*, etc., were introduced to participants with exercises provided. This practice was to give them a general idea of the usage of these transitions so that they could better comprehend the texts when they read along. Based on H. Douglas Brown's *Teaching by Principles* (2001), a demonstration of reading strategies was given after general principles were introduced.

Reading strategies, such as skimming and scanning, were also illustrated to the participants, and then, the application of these reading strategies was exemplified through an article-reading.

When the instructions of general principles about transitions and reading strategies

were done to the three classes, preparations for conducting extensive and intensive reading activities, and traditional reading activity were made.

3.3.1.1 Experimental Group: Extensive Reading

In the extensive reading activity, 87 story books on adventures, romance, detectives, horror, as revealed in the questionnaire, were picked up for participants to read in the study. Most of the books came from the Penguin Readers level 2 and 3. Each book had a brief Chinese introduction about the plot, and each was labeled as *beginner*, *basic*, *intermediate*, and *advanced* with different colored stickers, according to the level of difficulty of the vocabulary and the context. The beginner level was with a range of 600 words; the basic level, 1,200 words; the intermediate level, 1,700 words, and the advanced level, 2,300 words. Fifty books were for the beginner and basic levels, and 37 ones for the other two levels. Since most participants were low achievers in English and were afraid of the lengthy English stories, as indicated in the pre-study questionnaire, it was no surprising that a large proportion of story books went to the beginner and basic levels.

After labeling the level of books was completed, an evaluation card of each book was attached in the back of the book for readers to express their fondness of the book (see Appendix C). Then, a check-out catalogue of the story books was done to inform each participant that he/she was responsible for the borrowed book. This check-out catalogue included the title of the book, the book number of the book, the borrower of the book, and the date the book was borrowed and returned (see Appendix D).

The last step was designing the individual reading record and the book review. The

individual reading record contained the date of the reading activity, the title of the book, the author and level of the book, the number of reading pages done for each class period, and a summary section where participants wrote in Chinese what they had read for a class period (see Appendix E). The Chinese summary served not only to lower the participants' reading anxiety but also to help the teacher examine participants' comprehension of the story. When a book was finished, the participants had to complete a book review (see Appendix F), which required them to summarize the story, describe the protagonist, and comment on the plots. When they finished the book review, they could get a sticker on the reading record pasted in the back of the classroom (see Appendix G). This reading record was a reminder of the number of books one had read.

3.3.1.2 Experimental Group: Intensive Reading

In the intensive reading activity, 15 articles with a range of 1,000-2,000 words were chosen as the reading materials. Each contained about 400-500 words. Based on participants' reading preference shown on the pre-study questionnaire, the topics for these reading materials were about environment, technology, Chinese customs, and adventures. Exercises for the vocabulary and the grammar rules, along with the reading comprehension questions, were provided in each article. Besides these articles, a story book and relevant worksheets were offered during the intensive reading activity.

3.3.1.3 Control Group

For the traditional reading activity, 12 extended readings from the textbook with a range of 2,000 words served as the reading materials. Each contained 400-500 words. The

topics of these articles were all related to those of the lessons in the textbook. Participants had to take the vocabulary and grammar test when each article is finished.

To sum up, the first three weeks were intended for the implementation of the simulation test, the cloze test, and the questionnaire, the instruction of transitions and reading strategies, and the preparation for relevant materials for the extensive, intensive and traditional reading activities.

3.3.2 Procedures during the Study

Reading activities were carried out 100 minutes each week during the 4th-15th week.

The procedures for the experimental groups and the control group are as follows:

3.3.2.1 Experimental Group: Extensive Reading

Two 50-minute English classes each week were spent on extensive reading activity. One class was designed for the silent reading and the other for group reading and reading discussion.

For the silent reading, participants chose their favorite books according to their preference. Fifteen to twenty pages, for the beginner level of 600 words were the minimum requirement for each reading class and participants had to hand in the reading record at the end of each reading class. When they finished a book, they had to complete the book review before they moved on to the next book. The total number of books read by each participant would be calculated and the first three who read the most would be awarded in the end of the study. The scores of the reading record and the book review would be counted in their semester grade. During the reading activity, participants were

encouraged not to use a dictionary when they read and they could change the book anytime.

For the group reading, the whole class read the same story book and completed the worksheet in groups. Questions on the worksheets of the story were explained in advance, and then, the whole class did the reading after listening to the tape. Discussion began in groups of 4-5 participants after each member finished reading the section. When each group finished the worksheet, one representative from each group had to answer one question on the worksheet. The grades of the worksheets and the oral reports were also be included in their semester grade.

The other alternative for the group reading activity was the reading discussion, in which 4-5 participants exchanged what they felt about the story and discussed the plots for each story. Topics for discussion, such as “the funniest plot,” or “the bravest protagonist,” could be given to facilitate the discussion if necessary. Each group would also have one participant present the results of their discussion.

In extensive reading activity, the role of the participant was to establish their reading autonomy by being engaged in silent reading, and to participate in the discussion eagerly, and the teacher’s role was to help participants form the habit of silent reading, lead the discussion if needed, and monitor participants’ reading and learning processes.

3.3.2.2 Experimental Group: Intensive Reading

In intensive reading activity, two 50-minute English classes were conducted each week. Fifteen articles in a range of 1,000-2,000 words and a story book were chosen for intensive reading activity. Thirty minutes for each class was to explain the grammar,

vocabulary, the content, and the structure of the passage. Participants were required to familiarize themselves with 10 to 15 new words in the passage, and took a vocabulary test after each article was finished. The same procedure was followed for the instruction of the story book. English-Chinese translation was done and participants also had to memorize the new words in the story book. When time permitted, discussion of the articles and the story book was carried out.

The role of the participants was to familiarize themselves with the article and memorize new words, and the teacher's role was to help them build up basic language ability.

3.3.2.3 Control Group

In the control group, two 50-minute English classes were also conducted to implement the traditional reading activity each week. Twelve extended readings with the level of vocabulary 2,000-words from the textbook were for the reading material. Each class was conducted to explain the grammar and vocabulary, and participants had to take a vocabulary test after each reading was finished.

Participants in the control group had to memorize the newly-learned vocabulary and grammar, and the teacher was to help them build up basic language ability.

3.3.3 Procedures after the Study

Both the experimental groups and the control group took the 55-item cloze test so as to compare their pre- and post-study performance. The post-study questionnaires would also be given to the experimental groups for them to express their views about the reading

activities (see Appendix H & I).

3.4 Data Analysis

The data of this study came from two parts: the pre- and post-study cloze test, and the pre- and post-study questionnaires.

After the participants took the pre-study cloze test, Test of Homogeneity of Variance would be adopted to ensure the difference in English proficiency in the control and experimental groups was not significant. Then, the performance on the four sections of post-study cloze test, that is, grammar, vocabulary & phrases, transitions, and overall scores would be analyzed by One-Way ANOVA to examine the different effects of traditional, intensive, and extensive reading instruction on these four sections.

For the pre- and post-study questionnaires, the answers from the participants would be presented in descriptive statistics.