

Chapter Five

Discussion

The main purpose of the study was to examine the effects of different reading instruction on low achievers' performance in cloze test, i.e., in the grammar, vocabulary & phrases, transitions, and the overall performance. Traditional, intensive and extensive reading instruction have been implemented on the participants and the result of post-test in experimental groups is compared with that in the control group. The following discussion is divided into two parts based on research questions: the different effects of traditional, intensive and extensive reading instruction on grammar, vocabulary & phrases, transitions, and overall scores in cloze test; the feedbacks and suggestions of the reading activity from the participants. The summary of the discussion would be presented at the end of this chapter.

5.1 Different Effects of Traditional, Intensive and Extensive Reading Instruction on Grammar, Vocabulary & Phrases, Transitions, and Overall Performance

5.1.1 Different Effects of Traditional and Intensive & Extensive Reading Instruction

After a 3-month study, both the control group and the experimental groups took cloze test to examine the effects of reading instruction on cloze test performance.

As shown in the results obtained through One-Way ANOVA, the difference of mean scores between the experimental groups and the control group in grammar, vocabulary & phrases, and the overall performance reached the significant level ($p= 0.01 < 0.05$;

$p=0.001<0.05$; $p=0.003<0.05$). The possible reason for such results might be that although the control group underwent the traditional reading instruction, participants in this group only studied the extended readings in their textbook, which might be insufficient in the vocabulary and topic variety when compared with those in the experimental groups. So, the control group did not outperform the experimental groups in term of grammar, vocabulary & phrases, and overall performance.

Besides, the reason why there was no significant difference between the control and experimental groups for the performance in the transitions section could be that the post-test only included 12 transitions items due to the validity of the test, which might not truly reflect participants' improvement in transitions even though the experimental groups made better improvement than the control group.

5.1.2 Different Effects of Intensive and Extensive Reading Instruction

The different effects of traditional, extensive and intensive reading instruction have been explored, but the difference between the two experimental groups failed to be significant in these four sections. The possible reasons for the consequence could be the retention problem of the participants, the instruction of transitions in the intensive reading group, the insufficient test items in cloze test, and time constraint for implementing reading activities.

Although instruction on vocabulary & phrases and grammar rules were given to the intensive reading group, which might result in the better performance than that of the extensive reading group, it was natural for participants to forget what they had learned weeks after. In this study, the review about the vocabulary & phrases and grammar rules

was done only once after the article was finished. It might be difficult for participants to retrieve all that they had learned after studying 15 articles.

In addition, why the extensive reading group did not outperform the intensive reading group in the section of transitions might be that the intensive reading group received the instruction of transitions so that the difference between the intensive reading group and the extensive reading group was not significant in the section of transitions.

Furthermore, due to the validity of the test, the 55-item cloze test, which only contained 21 grammar items, 22 vocabulary & phrases items, and 12 transitions items, might not be enough in its test items in the study. The insufficient time of implementing reading activity might be another possibility which makes the different effects between intensive and extensive reading activities not so explicit.

5.2 Participants' Attitudes toward Extensive and Intensive Reading Activity

The results of post-study questionnaire indicated that most participants held a positive attitude toward extensive and intensive reading activities, and they thought that this reading activity was inductive to their performance in cloze test. They held the same positive attitudes toward the reading activity, just as did the participants in Asraf & Ahmad (2003), Dickinson (1995), Robb & Susser (1990), Yin (2004), and Nash & Yuan (1992). Most participants were willing not only to participate in more English activities but also to read other English materials outside the classroom. Several reasons could account for participants' positive attitudes toward reading.

One reason could be that participants thought they could gain some valuable knowledge and improve their English ability after the reading activity. The extensive

reading group read classic stories, which were related to what they had learned in the history class, or they read their own materials they considered useful in improving English. The intensive reading group read articles which presented the present news, like global warming, the Internet spam, etc., and from these articles, they gained practical knowledge not only of the news itself but also of many new words and phrases in the article.

Another reason for participants' positive attitudes might be that a lot of the stories and the articles were chosen according to participants' preferences shown in the pre-study questionnaire. So participants in both groups were reading something they liked at least, and if they showed no interest in it, they were encouraged to recommend some other materials. In this way, participants' fondness for the reading activity was gradually built up.

Besides, a stress-free environment was promised to the participants, especially in the extensive reading group. They could do their own reading without a test, and they could consult the teacher if necessary. All they had to do was to write a Chinese summary of their reading at the end of each reading class. Furthermore, the completion of reading an English story brought a sense of achievement, which in turn resulted in a positive attitude toward the reading activity.

Last but not least, participants were more willing to be engaged in the reading activity through the discussion with their peers. They interacted with each other by exchanging their ideas about the story, either silly or funny, which would create a sense of participation in the whole class. Through the discussion activity, they could also understand the thoughts and perspectives of their peers, and perhaps found some partners

with hobbies and interests in common.

The benefits the reading activity brought, e.g., the growth both in their language ability and in their personal mentality, could account for the positive attitudes participants hold toward the reading activity.

5.3. Participants' Suggestions for Extensive and Intensive Reading Activity

Variety in topics is one of the suggestions from both extensive and intensive reading groups. Although the selection of topics of the story and articles were mainly based on their preferences shown in the pre-study questionnaire, e.g., adventures, romance, detectives, and horror in the extensive reading group and environment, technology, and Chinese customs in the intensive reading group, there were still some interesting topics that were not chosen due to the limited resources and the little readability of the article itself. If much more various topics were available for participants, they might be more willing to be engaged in reading activities.

Another suggestion from the extensive reading group is that they need a greater amount of time for reading and written review. Since the written review had to be handed in right after each reading class, and there was a minimum requirement for reading pages for each reading class, they sometimes felt that instead of really enjoying the reading, they were busy writing the record and catching up with the requirement for reading pages. Indeed, though the written review was done in Chinese, participants first had to digest what they read over a short period time, and then put it into Chinese. Also, since the written review was part of their final grade, they could not help but write to the best of their ability. It was a dilemma that the teacher could not check the reading progress of the

participants without having them write down the summary. Writing the review might seem to be a burden to the participants, but from a different perspective, it helped them inspect the content of the reading, and even “forced” them to think critically about the plot of the story. The written review could actually be regarded as a way to helping develop participants’ thinking ability.

Another interesting suggestion from one participant in the extensive reading group was that tests of vocabulary & phrases be administered after each story book was completed. The rationale is that after she finished the story book, she felt like gaining some practical knowledge about English, like vocabulary & phrases, or grammar, so that she would feel she learned something from the reading. In fact, extensive reading was not only inductive to critical thinking as mentioned above, but it was also beneficial to one’s English ability in the long run. In a short period of 3-month research, the participant could not immediately realize the positive effects of extensive reading on her language ability, but as shown in the post-test, she made great improvements in the vocabulary & phrases section.

5.4 Summary of the Discussion

After a 3-month study on the effects of traditional, intensive and extensive reading instruction on low achievers’ performance in cloze test, the result showed that in terms of the different effects of traditional, intensive, and extensive reading instruction on cloze test performance, the experimental groups outperformed the control group, and the difference in the section of grammar, vocabulary & phrases, and overall performance reached the significant level. Such results might be due to the selection of the reading

material and the insufficient test items in the transitions section.

However, the difference between the experimental groups themselves failed to be significant. The reason for such an outcome could be attributed to the retention problem of the participants, the insufficient test items of cloze test, and the time constraint for the study.

From the data in the post-study questionnaire, the reading activity improves participants' attitudes toward English reading. During the reading activity, since the participants could gain practical knowledge and information, read their favorite books, and share their ideas with the peers in a stress-free environment, it was no wonder that participants would hold a positive attitude toward reading activities.