

Self-selected voluntary reading: The missing link in language education

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Two views of language/literacy development

A. The comprehension hypothesis: we acquire language when we understand it.

1. grammar, vocabulary = RESULT of language acquisition
2. pleasant immediately

B. The skill building hypothesis: first learn about language, practice rules

1. grammar, vocabulary learned first, then you can use the language
2. delayed gratification (that never arrives)

Compelling Comprehensible Input: So interesting not aware of language, sense of time, sense of self diminishes = Flow (Csikszentmihályi): the end of motivation

Case histories: language acquisition never the goal, but a by-product.

Paul-Lao, C. & Krashen, S. 2014. *Journal Bilingual Education Research & Instruction* 16(1).

First language literacy: Fink (1996) 12 former dyslexics. 9 published creative or scholarly works. 11 learned to read between 10-12, one in 12th grade. "As children, each had a passionate personal interest, a burning desire to know more about a discipline that required reading ... all read voraciously, seeking and reading everything they could get their hands on about a single intriguing topic."

Special case of the comprehension hypothesis: the reading hypothesis - the source of our reading ability, writing ability (writing style), vocabulary, spelling, grammar)

The case for free voluntary reading

Sustained silent reading (SSR)

The Fiji Island study (RRQ, 1983): Elley & Mangubhai: gains in RC

grade	ALM	SSR	Big Books
4	6.5	15	15
5	2.5	9	15

year 2: larger differences, readers better in writing, listening and grammar

Correlational Studies

Krashen and Mason (2015, IJFLT.com): Seven subjects (ages 21-78) did independent self-selected reading, 22-162 weeks. Gains: about .5 TOEIC point per hour.

To move from 250 to 950 TOEIC score; one hour per day of PLEASURE READING for three years (about 1200 hours).

UK Study: Sullivan and Brown: Predictors of scores on vocabulary test given at age 42

1. Reading at age 42 counts, independent of reading at 16 or younger & previous vocabulary.
2. Fiction counts: high-brow and middle-brow, but not low-brow
3. Reading counts even when you control for parent occupation and parent education, your education.

Sullivan, A. & Brown, M. 2014. Centre for Longitudinal Studies, University of London

Case Histories

Liz Murray (Breaking Night): "Any formal education I received came from the few days I spent in attendance, mixed with knowledge I absorbed from random readings of my or Daddy's ever-growing supply of unreturned library books. And as long as I still showed up steadily the last few weeks of classes to take the standardized tests, I kept squeaking by from grade to grade."

Bishop Desmond Tutu: "One of the things I am most grateful to (my father) for is that, contrary to educational principles, he allowed me to read comics. I think that is how I developed my love for English and for reading."

The extreme pleasure of self-selected reading

- A reader interviewed by Nell (1988): "reading removes me ... from the irritations of living ... for the few hours a day I read 'trash' I escape the cares of those around me, as well as escaping my own cares and dissatisfactions.

- Somerset Maugham, in Nell (1988): "Conversation, after a time, bores me, games tire me, and my thoughts, which we are told are the unfailing resources of a sensible man have a tendency to run dry. Then I fly to my book as the opium-smoker to his pipe ..." (p. 232).

Nell: **reading before you go to sleep** - level of arousal increased during reading, declined just after reading below original level

- 24/26 pleasure readings read in bed "nearly every night" or "most nights" (p. 250).

"Even if I read for only five minutes, I must do it - a compulsion like that of a drug addict!"

"My addiction to reading is such that I almost can't sleep without a minimum of ten minutes (usually 30-60 minutes) of reading" (Nell, p. 250).

Develops Knowledge: Stanovich & colleagues: those who read more know more about literature, history, science, have more "cultural literacy," "practical knowledge."

Free voluntary reading & career success: "omnivorous reading in childhood and adolescence correlates positively with ultimate adult success" (Simonton, 1988)

Michael Faraday (1791-1867): influence of working for a bookbinder for 7 years.

"ACADEMIC" LANGUAGE: The three stages

STAGE ONE; READ-ALOUDS & STORIES

children read to regularly make superior gains in reading, vocabulary, listening.

Read-alouds are pleasant: Vast majority of children say that they enjoy being read to

Encourages reading, which in turn promotes literacy development.

Second language teaching: TPRS!

STAGE TWO: SELF-SELECTED PLEASURE READING

A. the bridge: massive evidence that self-selected FVR builds literacy, knowledge

B. narrow, self-selected

STAGE THREE: ACADEMIC/SPECIALIZED READING = specialized reading: in an area of your interest, to answer a question/solve a problem: Typically narrow and selective.

The alternative: formal study ("English for Academic Purposes")

- complexity: grammatical complexity, text structure complexity, vocabulary complexity and size

- failure of direct instruction in the research: always loses to free voluntary reading.

Reading and Writing

1. Writing style: from reading!

2. What writing does: helps us solve problems, makes us smarter = composing process

The problem: Access to books

Predictors of reading - The PIRLS 2006: over 40 countries, tested in first language

Predictor	η^2	P
SES	0.41	0.005
Independent reading	0.16	0.14
Library: 500 books	0.35	0.005
Instruction	-0.19	0.085

$r^2 = .63$ from: Krashen, Lee and McQuillan (2012)