Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use

Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use

THE TAIPEI LECTURES

Stephen D. Krashen

HEINEMANN
Portsmouth, NH

Heinemann
A division of Reed Elsevier Inc.
361 Hanover Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801–3912
www.heinemann.com

Offices and agents throughout the world

© 2003 by Stephen D. Krashen

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Krashen, Stephen D.
Explorations in language acquisition and use : the Taipei lectures / Stephen Krashen.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-325-00554-0
1. Language and languages—Study and teaching. 2. Language acquisition. I. Title.

P51 .K666 2003
418′.0071—dc21 2002013703

Editor: Lois Bridges
Production: Elizabeth Valway
Cover design: Joni Doherty
Typesetter: TechBooks
Manufacturing: Steve Bernier

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper
07 06 05 04 03 VP 1 2 3 4 5

Contents

INTRODUCTION *vii*

1 **Principles of Language Acquisition** ***1***
- Part 1: Theory *1*
- Part 2: Applications *6*
- Notes *14*

2 **Free Voluntary Reading: Still a Very Good Idea** ***15***
- Research on Free Reading *15*
- Light Reading As a Bridge *22*
- Other Advantages of Reading *22*
- Motivating Students to Read *24*
- Some Innovations *25*
- Conclusion *26*
- Notes *26*

3 **Current Issues and Controversies: Does Grammar Teaching Work? What About "Comprehensible Output"?** ***30***
- The Role of Grammar *30*
- Comprehensible Output? *59*
- Notes *65*

4 **How Reading and Writing Make You Smarter, or, How Smart People Read and Write** ***68***
- How We Get Smart *68*
- Some Notes on Incubation *69*
- The Research on Learning by Problem Solving *70*
- Reading and Cognitive Development *72*
- Writing and Cognitive Development *73*
- Oral Language *77*
- Conclusion *78*
- Obstacles *79*
- Notes *80*

CONCLUSION *83*

REFERENCES *87*

INDEX *97*

Introduction

On November 17 and 18, 2001, I presented a series of four lectures at National Taipei University in Taiwan. I attempted to review the fundamentals of second-language acquisition theory, present some of the original research supporting the theory as well as more recent studies, present counterarguments to criticisms, and explore some new areas that appear to have promise for progress in both theory and application. This volume is based on these lectures. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 correspond closely to three of the four lectures presented. Chapter 3 includes material presented in the fourth lecture but also includes material discussed in response to questions from the audience, as well as a discussion of a recent paper by Norris and Ortega dealing with the effect of grammar instruction.

Chapter 1 reviews the central hypotheses underlying what I consider to be current theory in language acquisition. These hypotheses have not only survived well over the years but have also proven to be useful in other areas of language education. So far, research results remain consistent with these hypotheses and there is no counterevidence. According to the rules of science, this is all one can demand of a hypothesis. But the fact that the hypotheses have also helped explain phenomena in other areas is equally impressive. The clearest example is the role of the input hypothesis (also known as the comprehension hypothesis). As explored in Chapter 2, the input hypothesis has been successfully applied in the area of reading; comprehensible input in the form of free voluntary reading has been shown to be highly effective for first- and second-language development. I have argued in other publications that comprehensible input also helps explain the success of whole language methodology in beginning reading (Krashen 1999a) as well as the success of well-designed bilingual education programs (Krashen 1996).

Chapter 3 is self-defense. The research community has devoted an extraordinary amount of energy in an attempt to show that grammar teaching works. Instead, they have shown only what many, many language students have always realized: Formal grammar instruction has a very limited impact on second-language competence. Even intensive, prolonged instruction that is limited to just a few aspects of grammar results, in general, in only modest gains on tests in which students are encouraged to think about form. The researchers themselves, in every case, consider their results to strongly support the efficacy of grammar instruction. I argue in Chapter 3 that the results only show that the Monitor hypothesis, reviewed in Chapter 1, is correct.

Chapter 3 also contains a discussion of a current rival to the input hypothesis, the comprehensible output hypothesis. Its originator, Merrill Swain, did not consider it to be a rival, but rather a supplement to comprehensible input. Yet much of current practice assumes the correctness of comprehensible output and considers it to be the major path to second-language competence. The data, in my view, certainly does not support comprehensible output as the only way; in fact, there is little evidence that it plays any role at all. Parts of Chapter 3 were originally published in *Foreign Language Annals* (Krashen 1999b) and *System* (Krashen 1998).

Chapter 4 is an exploration into other areas. Good readers and writers, I argue, are those who have learned to read and write in a way that is consistent with the way the brain learns and solves problems. Unfortunately, the most efficient ways of using reading and writing are often different from the way we are taught in school. Good thinkers, I conclude, are those who have overcome the lessons they have learned in school. A previous version of this paper was originally presented at the Georgetown Round Table on Languages and Linguistics and was published in their proceedings (Krashen 1990). It has been updated and, I hope, improved by the addition of recent work on the composing process, especially the interesting work of Robert Boice. Boice's insights have, in fact, been of great help to me in completing this manuscript. I highly recommend his 1994 book, *How Writers Journey to Comfort and Fluency.*

I thank my former student and now valued colleague Professor Sy-ying Lee of National Taipei University, who organized the series of presentations in Taiwan. I also thank the chair of the department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics at National Taipei University, Professor Ching-kang Liu, for his hospitality.

2

Free Voluntary Reading: Still a Very Good Idea

Free voluntary reading may be the most powerful tool we have in language education. In fact, it appears to be too good to be true. It is an effective way of increasing literacy and language development, with a strong impact on reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing. It is also very pleasant. In fact, it is more than pleasant: it is extremely enjoyable. Free reading may also be an important part of the solution to two related problems: making the transition from the elementary level to authentic language use, and from "conversational" language ability to "academic" language ability.

Free voluntary reading works, I propose, because it is a form of comprehensible input delivered in a low-anxiety situation (Krashen 1994a; Chapter 1 of this volume). In this chapter, I briefly review the evidence for free reading, some practical issues, and, even though it is hardly necessarily, evidence showing that free reading is enjoyable.

Research on Free Reading

Correlational Studies

Studies in both second- and foreign-language acquisition confirm that those who read more do better on a wide variety of tests. I include here some recent studies in foreign- and second-language acquisition (see Krashen 1993b for earlier studies). In Stokes, Krashen, and Kartchner (1998), students of Spanish as a foreign language in the United States were tested on their knowledge of the subjunctive on a test that attempted to probe acquired competence (in the results presented below, only subjects who were not aware that the subjunctive was the focus of the test were included). Formal study was not a predictor of subjunctive competence, nor was length of residence in a Spanish-speaking country. Stokes, Krashen, and Kartchner also asked subjects about the quality of instruction they had had specifically in the subjunctive. This variable also failed to predict performance on the subjunctive test. The amount of free reading in Spanish, however, was a clear predictor (Table 2–1).

Lee, Krashen, and Gribbons (1996) reported that for international students in the United States, the amount of free reading reported (number of years subjects read newspapers, news magazines, popular magazines, fiction, and nonfiction) was a

Table 2–1
Predictors of Performance on the Subjunctive in Spanish
(Multiple Regression Analysis)

Predictor	*beta*	*t*	*p*
Formal study	0.0518	0.36	0.718
Length of residence	0.0505	0.35	0.726
Amount of reading	0.3222	2.19	0.034
Subj study	0.0454	0.31	0.757

$r2 = .12, p = .128$
(*Source*: Stokes, Krashen, and Kartchner 1998)

significant predictor of the ability to translate and judge the grammaticality of complex grammatical constructions in English (restrictive relative clauses). The amount of formal study and length of residence in the United States were not significant predictors. Results for the grammaticality judgment task are presented in Table 2–2 (translation results were similar).

Constantino, Lee, Cho, and Krashen (1997) reported that the amount of free reading international students living in the United States said they did before taking the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was an excellent predictor of their score on this examination (Table 2–3). In this study, formal study and length of residence were also significant (and independent) predictors.

Case Histories

Cho and Krashen (1994) demonstrated substantial and obvious growth in vocabulary in English as a second language in adult English acquirers who were encouraged to read novels in the Sweet Valley High series. Subjects had had some instruction in English as a second or foreign language (heavily grammar based), and began with the Sweet Valley Kids (second-grade level) series, moving eventually to Sweet Twins (fourth-grade level) and to Sweet Valley High (fifth- and sixth-grade level).

Table 2–2
Grammaticality Judgment Test (Multiple Regression Analysis)

Predictor	*beta*	*t*	*p*
Amount of reading	0.516	3.98	0.0002
Formal study	0.072	0.57	0.568
Length of residence	0.052	0.4	0.69

$r2 = .29$, $p < .05$
(*Source*: Lee, Krashen, and Gribbons 1996)

Table 2–3
Predictors of Performance on the TOEFL Test (Multiple Regression Analysis)

Predictor	*beta*	*t*	*p*
Free reading/books	0.41	3.422	0.002
English study/home	0.48	3.72	0.001
LOR/US	0.42	3.243	0.003

$r2 = .45$
(*Source*: Constantino et al. 1997)

They showed clear gains in vocabulary, and vastly increased confidence in speaking English.

Segal (1997) describes the case of L., a seventeen-year-old eleventh-grade student in Israel. L. speaks English at home with her parents, who are from South Africa, but had serious problems in English writing, especially in spelling, vocabulary, and writing style. Segal, L.'s teacher in grade 10, tried a variety of approaches:

> Error correction proved a total failure. L. tried correcting her own mistakes, tried process writing, and tried just copying words correctly in her notebook. Nothing worked. L.'s compositions were poorly expressed and her vocabulary was weak. We conferenced together over format and discussed ideas before writing. We made little progress. I gave L. a list of five useful words to spell each week for six weeks and tested her in an unthreatening way during recess. L. performed well in the tests in the beginning, but by the end of six weeks she reverted to misspelling the words she had previously spelt correctly.

In addition, L.'s mother got her a private tutor, but there was little improvement.

Segal also taught L. in grade 11. At the beginning of the year, she assigned an essay: "When I came to L.'s composition I stopped still. Before me was an almost perfect essay. There were no spelling mistakes. The paragraphs were clearly marked. Her ideas were well put and she made good sense. Her vocabulary had improved. I was amazed but at the same time uneasy . . ." Segal discovered the reason for L.'s improvement: She had become a reader over the summer. L. told her, "I never read much before but this summer I went to the library and I started reading and I just couldn't stop." L.'s performance in grade 11 in English was consistently excellent and her reading habit has continued.

Cohen (1997) attended an English-language medium school in her native Turkey, beginning at age twelve. The first two years were devoted to intensive English study, and Cohen reports that after only two months, she started to read in English, "as many books in English as I could get hold of. I had a rich, ready-made library of English books at home . . . I became a member of the local British Council's library and occasionally purchased English books in bookstores . . . By the first year of middle school I had become an avid reader of English."

Her reading, however, led to an "unpleasant incident" in middle school: "I had a new English teacher who assigned us two compositions for homework. She returned them to me ungraded, furious. She wanted to know who had helped me write them. They were my personal work. I had not even used the dictionary. She would not believe me. She pointed at a few underlined sentences and some vocabulary and asked me how I knew them; they were well beyond the level of the class. I had not even participated much in class. I was devastated. There and then and many years later I could not explain how I knew them. I just did."

In-School Free Reading

In-school free reading studies include evaluations of several kinds of programs: In sustained silent reading, students read whatever they please (within reason) for a short time each day and there is no accountability required. In extensive reading programs, a small amount of accountability is included; for example, a short description of what was read. In self-selected reading programs, the entire class period is devoted to reading, and occasional teacher-student conferences are scheduled.

I have reviewed the available research on in-school free reading in several places (Krashen 1993b, 2001). In my most recent summary (Krashen 2001), I found that students who participated in these programs did as well or better than comparison students in traditional language arts or second-language programs on tests of reading comprehension in fifty-one out of fifty-four comparisons. The results were even more impressive when one considers only studies lasting one academic year or longer: in eight out of ten cases, participants in in-school reading programs outperformed comparisons and in two cases there was no difference.

The National Reading Panel (NRP), supported by the U.S. Government, also reviewed studies of in-school reading, and reached the startling conclusion that there is no clear evidence supporting this practice. They were, however, able to find only fourteen comparisons, all lasting less than one academic year, between students in in-school free reading programs and comparison children, devoting only 6 pages of their massive report to this topic (as compared to approximately 120 pages devoted to research on phonemic awareness and phonics). Interestingly, in-school reading did not fare badly even in the limited analysis done by the NRP, with in-school readers doing better in four cases, and never doing worse. Note that even a finding of "no difference" suggests that free reading is just as good as traditional instruction, an important theoretical and practical point. Because free reading is so much more pleasant than regular instruction (see below), and because it provides readers with valuable information, a finding of no difference provides strong evidence in favor of free reading in classrooms.

I have also argued (Krashen 2001) that the NRP not only missed many, many studies, they also misinterpreted some of the ones they included. I present here a discussion of recent studies that have particular relevance to the EFL situation.

In Elley and Mangubhai (1983), fourth- and fifth-grade students of English as a foreign language were divided into three groups for their thirty-minute daily English class. One group had traditional audio-lingual method instruction, a second did only

Table 2–4
In-School Reading in South Africa: Reading Comprehension Results

PROVINCE	STD 3		STD 4		STD 5	
	Read	Nonread	Read	Nonread	Read	Nonread
Eastern Cape	32.5	25.6	44.0	32.5	58.1	39.0
Western Cape	36.2	30.2	40.4	34.3	53.0	40.4
Free State	32.3	30.1	44.3	37.1	47.2	40.5
Natal	39.5	28.3	47.0	32.3	63.1	35.1

STD = standard
STD 3 = grade 4
(*Source*: Elley 1998)

free reading, while a third did "shared reading." Shared reading " . . . is a method of sharing a good book with a class, several times, in such a way that the students are read to by the teacher, as in a bedtime story. They then talk about the book, they read it together, they act out the story, they draw parts of it and write their own caption, they rewrite the story with different characters or events . . ." (Elley 1998, 1–2). After two years, the free-reading group and the shared-reading group were far superior to the traditional group in tests of reading comprehension, writing, and grammar. Similar results were obtained by Elley (1991) in a large-scale study of second-language acquirers, ages six through nine, in Singapore.

Elley's recent data (Elley 1998) comes from South Africa and Sri Lanka. In all cases, children who were encouraged to read for pleasure outperformed traditionally taught students on standardized tests of reading comprehension and on other measures of literacy. Table 2–4 presents the data from South Africa. In this study, EFL students who lived in print-poor environments were given access to sets of sixty high-interest books, which were placed in classrooms, with another sixty made available in sets of six identical titles. The books were used for read-alouds by the teacher, for shared reading, and for silent reading. Table 2–4 presents data from different provinces; in every case the readers outperformed those in comparison classes, and the gap widened with each year of reading.

Mason (Mason and Krashen 1997) developed a version of extensive reading for university EFL students in Japan in which students do self-selected reading of pedagogical readers as well as easy authentic reading. Accountability was present but minimal; students only had to write a short "appreciation" of what they had read. In three separate studies, Mason found that extensive readers made greater gains than comparison students who participated in traditional form-based EFL classes. Table 2–5 presents the details of the three studies in the form of effect sizes comparing the extensive readers to the traditionally taught students.

Lao and Krashen (2000) compared progress in reading over one semester between university-level EFL students in Hong Kong who participated in a popular-literature class that emphasized reading for content and enjoyment, including some

Table 2–5
Extensive Reading Compared to Traditional Methods of Teaching EFL

STUDY	SUBJECTS	DURATION	MEASURE	RESULTS	EFFECT SIZE
1	4-year college	1 sem	Cloze test	ER > trad.	0.702
2a	4-year college	1 yr	Cloze test	ER > trad.	1.11
2b	2-year college	1 yr	Cloze test	ER > trad.	1.47
3	4-year college	1 yr	Cloze test	ER = cloze[a]	0.244
	(reactions written in Japanese)		RC	ER > cloze[a]	0.609
	4-year college		Cloze test	ER > cloze[a]	0.63
	(reactions written in English)		RC	ER > cloze[a]	0.48

RC = reading comprehension; ER = extensive reading
[a] Cloze = traditional instruction with emphasis on cloze exercises
Effect size calculation = (mean of ER group − mean of traditional)/pooled standard deviation.
(*Source*: Mason and Krashen 1997)

self-selected reading, and students in a traditional academic skills class. Application of statistical tests, including those that accounted for pretest differences, confirmed that the superiority of the popular literature group was statistically significant. As shown in Table 2–6, the popular-literature students made better gains in vocabulary and reading rate and, at the end of the semester, clearly felt that what they had learned in the course would help them in their other university courses.[1]

Shin (2001) examined the impact of a six-week self-selected reading experience among two hundred sixth- and seventh-graders who had to attend summer school because of low reading proficiency. Students attended class four hours per day; during this time, approximately two hours were devoted to sustained silent reading, including twenty-five minutes in the school library. The district invested $25 per student on popular paperbacks and magazines, with most books purchased from the Goosebumps series. In addition, about forty-five minutes per day were devoted to reading and discussing novels such as *Holes* and *The Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Comparison children ($n = 160$) followed a standard language arts curriculum during the summer. Attrition was high for both groups but similar (class size dropped from 20 to 14.3 among readers, and from 20 to 13.2 among comparisons) as was the percentage of limited English proficient children (31 percent in the reading group, 27 percent in the comparison group). The readers gained approximately five months on the Altos test of reading comprehension and vocabulary over the six-week period, while comparisons declined. On the Nelson-Denny reading comprehension test, the summer readers grew a spectacular 1.3 years (from grade 4.0 to grade 5.4). On the vocabulary section, however, the groups showed equivalent gains.

Table 2–6
Popular Literature vs. Traditional Instruction

	VOCABULARY		READING RATE		HELP IN OTHER COURSES		
	Pre	**Post**	**Pre**	**Post**	**Yes**	**No**	**Don't know**
Popular literature	7	8	10.7	17.3	88	3	
Traditional	5.1	5.2	7.4	7.9	12	22	5

scores in grade level equivalents
(*Source*: Lao and Krashen 2000)

The Author Recognition Test: A Methodological Breakthrough

Stanovich, in a series of studies, has verified the value of a simple procedure for studying the impact of reading. In the author recognition test, subjects simply indicate whether they recognize the names of authors on a list. For speakers of English as a first language, scores on the author recognition test have been shown to correlate substantially with measures of vocabulary (West and Stanovich 1991; West, Stanovich, and Mitchell 1993; Lee, Krashen, and Tse 1997), reading comprehension (Cipielewski and Stanovich 1990; Stanovich and West 1989) and spelling (Cunningham and Stanovich 1990). These results have been confirmed using other first languages as well: Significant correlations have been reported between performance on an author recognition test and writing performance in Chinese (Lee and Krashen 1996), and Korean (Kim and Krashen 1998a), and between author recognition test performance and vocabulary development in Spanish (Rodrigo, McQuillan, and Krashen 1996).

Those who report reading more also do better on the author recognition test. This is true for English speakers (Stanovich and West 1989; Allen, Cipielewski, and Stanovich 1992), Korean speakers (Kim and Krashen 1998a), Chinese speakers (Lee and Krashen 1996), and Spanish speakers (Rodrigo, McQuillan, and Krashen 1996). One study also reported a positive correlation between performance on the author recognition test and the amount of reading subjects were observed doing. West, Stanovich, and Mitchell (1993) observed airport passengers waiting for flights and classified them as either readers (those who were observed to be reading for at least ten continuous minutes) or nonreaders. Readers did significantly better on an author recognition test as well as on a vocabulary recognition test.

Only one study thus far has examined the performance of foreign language students on the author recognition test. Kim and Krashen (1998b) reported that for high school students of English as a foreign language, performance on an English author recognition test was a good predictor of performance on an English vocabulary test. In addition, those who reported more free reading in English also tended to do better on the author recognition test.

Table 2–7

Common and Uncommon Words in Speech and Writing

	FREQUENT WORDS	RARE WORDS
Adults talking to children	95.6	9.9
Adults talking to adults (college grads)	93.9	17.3
Prime-time TV: adult	94.0	22.7
Children's books	92.3	30.9
Comic books	88.6	53.5
Books	88.4	52.7
Popular magazines	85.0	65.7
Newspapers	84.3	68.3
Abstracts of scientific papers	70.3	128.2

frequent words = percentage of text from most frequent 1,000 words
rare words = number of rare words (not in most common 10,000) per 1,000 tokens.
(*Source*: Hayes and Ahrens 1988)

In addition to providing confirmation of the relation between recreational reading and language development, the author recognition test and similar measures (magazine recognition test, title recognition test) promise to simplify work in this area.

Light Reading As a Bridge

Of course, a great deal of free reading will be "light reading." Research by Hayes and Ahrens (1988) supports the idea that lighter reading can prepare readers for heavier reading. According to their findings, it is highly unlikely that much educated vocabulary comes from conversation or television. Hayes and Ahrens found that the frequency of less-common words in ordinary conversation, whether adult-to-child or adult-to-adult, was much lower than in even the "lightest" reading. About 95 percent of the words used in conversation and television are from the most frequent 5,000. Printed texts include far more uncommon words, leading Hayes and Ahrens to the conclusion that the development of lexical knowledge beyond basic words "requires literacy and extensive reading across a broad range of subjects" (409). Table 2–7 presents some of their data, including two of the three measures they used for word frequency. Note that light reading (comics, novels, other adult books, and magazines), although somewhat closer to conversation, occupies a position between conversation and abstracts of scientific papers.[2]

Other Advantages of Reading

In Krashen (1994b), I proposed the pleasure hypothesis: Pedagogical activities that promote language acquisition are enjoyable, and those that do not are not enjoyable (and may even be painful). Of course, just because an activity is enjoyable does not mean it is good for language acquisition; some activities may be very enjoyable but may not help at all. Enjoyment is no guarantee of effectiveness. It is, however, interesting that there is strong evidence that free voluntary reading is very enjoyable.

The evidence includes work by Csikszentmihalyi (1991), who introduced the concept of flow. Flow is the state people reach when they are deeply but effortlessly involved in an activity. In flow, the concerns of everyday life and even the sense of self disappear—our sense of time is altered and nothing but the activity itself seems to matter. Crosscultural studies indicate that flow is easily recognized by members of widely different cultures and groups. For example, members of Japanese motorcycle gangs experience flow when riding (Sato 1992) and rock climbers experience flow when climbing (Massimini, Csikszentmihalyi, and Della Fave 1992).

Of special interest is the finding that reading "is currently perhaps the most often mentioned flow activity in the world" (Csikszentmihalyi 1991, 117). This finding is consistent with reports of individual pleasure readers. A resident in Walse in Northern Italy said that when he reads, "I immediately immerse myself in the reading and the problems I usually worry about disappear" (Massimini, Csikszentmihalyi, and Della Fave 1992, 68). One of Nell's subjects reported that "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 . . ." (Nell 1988, 240). W. Somerset Maugham, quoted in Nell (1988), had similar comments: "Conversation after a time bores me, games tire me, and my own thoughts, which we are told are the unfailing resource of a sensible man, have a tendency to run dry. Then I fly to my book as the opium-smoker to his pipe . . ." (232).

Nell provided interesting evidence showing why bedtime reading is so pleasant. Pleasure readers were asked to read a book of their own choice while their heart rate, muscle activity, skin potential, and respiration rate were measured; level of arousal while reading was compared to arousal during other activities, such as relaxing with eyes shut, listening to white noise, doing mental arithmetic, and doing visualization activities. Nell found that during reading, arousal was increased, as compared to relaxation with eyes shut, but a clear decline in arousal was recorded in the period just after reading, which for some measures reached a level below the baselines (eyes-shut) condition. In other words, bedtime reading is arousing, but then it relaxes you. Consistent with these findings are Nell's results showing that bedtime reading is popular. Of twenty-six pleasure readers he interviewed, thirteen read in bed every night and eleven "almost every night" or "most nights" (1988, 250).

Free reading has additional benefits. Lee and Krashen (1997) proposed that those who read more have less "writing apprehension" because of their superior command of the written language. They reported a modest but positive correlation between the amount of reading done and scores on a writing apprehension questionniare for Taiwanese high school students. The modest size of the correlation ($r = .21$) may be because other factors affect writing apprehension, such as mastery of the composing process. It is consistent, however, with reports that those with less writing apprehension enjoy reading more (Daly and Wilson 1983). Free reading is also an excellent source of knowledge: those who read more, know more (see discussion in Chapter 3;

e.g., Ravitch and Finn 1987; Schaefer and Anastasi 1968; Simonton 1988; Stanovich, West, and Harrison 1995).

Motivating Students to Read

If reading is so enjoyable, do we have to worry about motivating students to read? I think we do, but the task is much simpler than we thought. There is good evidence that rewards and incentives play no role in increasing the amount of reading done nor does it impact gains in reading comprehension (McQuillan 1997). The simpler solution is to provide students with access to plenty of interesting and comprehensible reading material and also provide some time for them to read. There is evidence that this works.

The Impact of Reading Itself

Those who participate in in-school free reading programs are motivated to read more (Pilgreen and Krashen 1993). Greaney and Clarke (1973), in fact, reported that children who participated in a sustained silent reading program reported reading more than comparison students six years after the program ended. Tse (1996) describes the case of Joyce, an adult ESL student in the United States who did not view reading as a leisure activity and had never read a book in English before coming to the United States. After participating in an extensive reading class, her attitude toward reading changed dramatically, and she continued to read after the end of the course, and she recommended that her husband take the same class, rather than a traditional class.

The Impact of One Trip to the Library

Ramos (Ramos and Krashen 1998) taught in an elementary school that had an inadequate school library. He and his fellow teachers organized a field trip for their second-grade students to a nearby public library, at a time when the library was closed to the public and the librarian was available to help and interact with the teachers and children. Ramos documented a clear and dramatic growth in interest in reading among the children after this visit. Cho and Krashen (2002) documented a clear increase in interest in reading and in promoting pleasure reading among teachers after one exposure to interesting and comprehensible children's literature.

The Impact of One Positive Reading Experience

Jim Trelease (2001) has suggested that one positive experience with reading can do the job, one "home run" experience. Two recent studies have confirmed that a surprising percentage of elementary school children report that they did indeed have one very positive experience with reading that got them interested in reading (Von Sprecken, Kim, and Krashen 2000; Kim and Krashen 2000). In both cases, children reported a wide variety of home run books, which strongly suggests that readers should have exposure to a rich variety of reading material.

There are several ways of helping ensure that a home run experience takes place. The best way is to make sure interesting reading is available, reading that students really want to do. Simply recommending books is an obvious step. Others include read-alouds (Trelease 2001), modeling reading (e.g., reading while children are reading during sustained silent reading time; see Wheldall and Entwhistle 1988 for evidence), and interesting book discussions (the core of language arts) as well as providing time to read. The time issue is an important one: there is evidence that interest in reading remains strong as students get older, but the pressures of school, and sometimes work, result in their having less time to read (Krashen and Von Sprecken 2002).

Providing Time to Read

Simply providing time to read results in reading. Von Sprecken and Krashen (1998) observed sustained silent reading (SSR) sessions in a middle school in the middle of the school year and reported that 90 percent of the students were reading. More reading tended to take place in those classrooms in which more books were available in the classroom library, in which teachers also read while students read, in which students were not required to bring their own books, and in which teachers made deliberate efforts to promote certain books. In one of the eleven classes observed, there were few books, no modeling of reading, no promotion of books, and students had to bring their own books. Nevertheless, 80 percent of the students in this class were observed to be reading during SSR.

Cohen (1999) unobtrusively observed 120 eighth-grade students during SSR time over a two-week period, and found that 94 percent were reading during SSR. She noted that enthusiasm for sustained silent reading was not high at the beginning of the school year, but increased after one or two months.

Herda and Ramos (2001) reported that 63 percent of students in SSR sessions in grades 1 through 12 were actively reading; in grades 1 through 5, the percentages were much higher, ranging from 76 percent to 100 percent. In the upper grades, students were given the option of studying or pleasure reading, and a substantial percentage took advantage of the study option. Nevertheless, a surprising percentage were reading for pleasure, ranging from 29 percent in grade 12 to 65 percent in grade nine. Overall, 21 percent of the sample were studying during SSR time and only 17 percent were neither reading nor studying.

Some Innovations

Handcrafted Books

A problem with free reading in the second- and foreign-language situation is that it is hard to find texts that are both interesting and comprehensible; the beginning student will find authentic texts too difficult. There are two solutions to this problem. One is simply to find the best pedagogic readers and make them available for free voluntary reading. A second is a recent innovation called "Handcrafted Books" (Dupuy and McQuillan 1997). Handcrafted Books are written by intermediate students, corrected by the teacher, and are to be read by beginners. Writers are instructed not to look up words while writing; if intermediate students don't know a word, the chances are good that beginners won't know it either. Handcrafted Books thus have a good chance of being interesting and comprehensible; they are written by peers who are slightly more advanced than the readers.

Sheltered Popular Literature

A very useful adjunct to sustained silent reading is a class on popular literature. Even foreign-language students who are well read in their first language may not be aware of the options for pleasure reading in the second language. Sheltered popular literature exposes students to the different kinds of light but authentic reading available, moving from comics and magazines to novels. Such a course is taught as literature; that is, with discussion of the values expressed in the reading as well as the insights they provide on the culture (for suggestions, see Dupuy, Tse, and Cook 1996). Our hope is that such a course will help students discover one or more kinds of light reading they would like to do on their own. For evidence that such a course can actually work, see Lao and Krashen (2000), discussed earlier.

If students become enthusiastic readers of any type of reading, they will progress enormously; better readers are typically "series" readers (Lamme 1974)—readers of Nancy Drew, The Black Stallion, John R. Tunis, Sweet Valley High, Goosebumps and Fear Street, and so forth. Narrow reading builds language and literacy competence rapidly, thanks to the familiar context and resulting high level of comprehensibility. In addition, acquisition of any written style should facilitate comprehension of any other; while there are differences among different types of prose, there is also substantial overlap (Biber 1988); someone who can read light fiction easily has acquired much of what is needed to read academic prose.

Conclusion

There is overwhelming evidence for recreational reading as a means of increasing second-language competence. In fact, it is now perhaps the most thoroughly investigated and best-supported technique we have in the field of second-language pedagogy. Only one aspect of recreational reading remains uninvestigated: Why isn't it used more frequently in second-language programs?

Notes

1. Sze (1999) evaluated an extensive reading program in Hong Kong. Four hundred ninety-six students from five schools, ages thirteen through fifteen, were engaged in an extensive reading project (the Hong Kong Extensive Reading Scheme [HKERS]) that had the following features:

1. Each class of forty was given one hundred books; Sze suggests that this is a large number, but it is not. It is only 2.5 books per student.

2. Students had free choice in book selection but had to answer comprehension questions; "question and answer cards" were provided with each book (64).
3. Students had regular conferences with teachers, and teachers gave support through "awards" and "praise" (65).
4. One to two periods per week were devoted to extensive reading.

Note that this is a version of "extensive reading" (free reading with some accountability), and has a few features that may not be optimal: book access was limited, incentives were used (for evidence showing the lack of positive effect of incentives, see McQuillan 1997), and reading was massed (all at once), rather than distributed (some reading each day; see Pilgreen 2000 for suggestive evidence that distributed SSR is a better option).

The readers responded to a questionnaire after two years, the comparisons after one year. Readers reported reading more, reporting that they typically read about two hours per week, compared to about a half-hour per week for comparisons. Those in the extensive reading group also reported reading an average of twenty-six books over the last year, while comparisons only reported reading five. There was, however, considerable variation within the reader group, with some reading over a hundred books in the last year, others very few. Those in the extensive reading group reported a modest increase in interest in reading, with 7 percent reporting that their interest in reading increased "a great deal" and 62 percent reporting that it had increased "moderately." Only 4 percent reported a decline in interest in reading. Readers also reported increased confidence in reading English. For example, 74 percent agreed with the statement "I can read English books independently without much help from the teacher," as compared to 68 percent of the comparisons.

Readers also felt that they had improved; most felt that reading had improved their vocabulary (77 percent), with less perceived improvement with other aspects of language competence (62 percent felt reading improved their reading comprehension, 50 percent that it had improved their writing, 46 percent their grammar, and 19 percent their speaking).

This extensive reading program was clearly successful—there was a clear increase in reading, a modest increase in interest in reading (with clearly few negative reactions), and perceived improvement . With more access, less acountability, and distributed reading times, it might have done even better.

Subjects in Yang (2001) were students in four evening adult EFL classes in Hong Kong. All had passed an exam at a level equal to 450 on the TOEFL in grade 11. They attended class for three (consecutive) hours per week for a total of fifteen weeks. Students in two classes (A and B below) read two Agatha Christie novels in addition to the reading materials done by all students in all four classes. Students read about forty pages per week. About an hour was spent in class per week discussing the books (" . . . plots, characters, and social issues students found in the book and how those issues could be related to present day life" [455]).

The pre- and posttests were identical, a multiple choice test of "grammar, sentence structure and usage" (454–5). Yang performed an omnibus Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which revealed "strong evidence that at least one class is different from the rest" (457) but did not perform post-hoc comparisons. He noted, however, that classes A and B made about twice the gains that the other two classes made. Combing scores for classes A and B (the readers), and C and D (nonreaders), I calculated an effect size of 6.3, which is enormous and easily statistically significant (posttest means for readers = 74.6, standard deviation (sd) = 1.26; posttest means for nonreaders = 66.9, standard deviation = 1.18; pretest scores were nearly identical for all four groups).

Results of a questionnaire administered showed that most readers understood the books, and felt that reading was beneficial. Only 20 percent had read a novel in English before. As Yang points out, there are confounds. Those who did the reading spent more time on English, and also had writing assignments related to the novels. His conclusion is reasonable: " . . . the extra time on reading in English is time well spent" (460).

Of course, one could argue that extra time spent doing grammar is also well spent, but studies of in-class sustained silent reading and related programs in which students spend the same time in skill-building and reading show reading to be more effective, as noted in the text. Also as noted in the text, Lao and Krashen (2000) reported that university EFL students in Hong Kong who participated in a popular literature-based class made greater gains in vocabulary and reading rate than students in traditional classes. Students in the literature class reported more reading outside of school, but those in the comparison class spent more time watching TV and movies in English, used English more in conversation, and spent significantly more time in academic study of English. These results confirm that time spent in reading is indeed very well spent.

2. Horst, Cobb, and Meara (1998) provide evidence supporting the hypothesis that vocabulary is acquired via reading, but conclude that reading is "not a very effective way" for those at lower levels of competence to increase their vocabulary. Subjects in their study were "low-intermediate" students of English as a foreign language in Oman. Students read a simplified version of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, consisting of 21,232 words. The procedure was "rather unorthodox": students followed along in the text while the story was read aloud in class by the teacher in six class sessions. This was done to ensure subjects covered the entire text and to prevent students from looking up words while reading. Horst, Cobb, and Meara assure us that students were "absorbed by the story" (211).

Horst, Cobb, and Meara constructed a multiple-choice vocabulary test of 45 words considered to be potentially unknown to the subjects. On a pretest given a week before the reading, subjects averaged 21.64 correct ($sd = 6.45$). Thus, 23 words remained for potential acquisition. On the posttest following the reading, subjects averaged 26.26 correct ($sd = 6.43$), a gain of 4.62, or 22 percent (effect size based on pre- and posttests = 0.72). This rate is somewhat higher than that seen in previous studies using adult second language acquirers (e.g., Pitts, White, and Krashen 1989; Day, Omura, and Hiramatsu 1991; Dupuy and Krashen 1993), which Horst, Cobb, and Meara attribute to the fact that a longer text was used. They describe the increase as "small but substantial" (214). Despite this conclusion, Horst, Cobb, and Meara argue that for acquirers at this level, reading is not enough. Reading a 20,000-word book resulted in a 5-word increase: Even if they read one such book a week, this would translate into a gain of only 250 words per year, insufficient progress to reach the 5,000-word level considered by some to be the minimum to read authentic texts. Since students have "limited time," "vocabulary growth needs to proceed more rapidly" (221).

There are several problems with this conclusion:

1. It is not clear that direct teaching results in true acquisition of vocabulary; direct teaching results in learning, not acquisition, a fragile kind of knowledge that is unavailable unless stringent conditions are met, and that fades fairly quickly with time (see Chapters 1 and 4).
2. The treatment may have underestimated the impact of reading. As noted above, the students did not read at their own pace, but followed along in the text as it was read aloud, a method that prevents the rereading and pausing that naturally occur with reading. In addition, subjects may have acquired words from the text not included in the test. (And, of course, readers get other linguistic benefits from reading, such as better grammatical development and acquisition of "planned discourse," as well as knowledge and pleasure; see text.)

3. There is no evidence that those who have reached the 5,000-word level did it via direct instruction and study of vocabulary. Native speakers with good vocabularies, in fact, attribute their attainments to reading, not study. Smith and Supanich (1984) tested 456 company presidents and reported that they had significantly larger vocabulary scores than a comparison group of adults did. When asked if they had made an effort to increase their vocabulary since leaving school, 54.5 percent said they had. When asked what they did to increase their vocabulary, about half of the 54.5 percent mentioned reading. Only 14 percent of those who tried to increase their vocabulary (3 percent of the total group) mentioned the use of vocabulary books. Smith and Supanich's presidents were more advanced than the subjects in Horst, Cobb, and Meara; it would be of great interest, however, to determine how second-language and foreign-language acquirers who are successful in reaching the 5,000-word goal did it. It is hard to imagine that they studied 5,000 flash cards.

Heinemann

DEDICATED TO TEACHERS

Thank you for sampling this resource.

For more information or to purchase, please visit Heinemann by clicking the link below:

http://www.heinemann.com/products/E00554.aspx

Use of this material is solely for individual, noncommercial use and is for informational purposes only.