

An Analysis On the Phenomena Between Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) And Students' Writing Ability

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Abstract. *This study investigates the phenomena between free voluntary reading (FVR) of Stephen Krashen and students' writing ability. This study checked and confirmed whether there is a tendentious relationship between students' free voluntary reading habit and their ability in writing narrative text. The participants of this research were 18 students of senior high school grade X. They were given a writing test and also interviewed to reveal whether or not they have free voluntary reading habit based on the Stephen Krashen theory of FVR. After scoring the students' writing test and administering the interview, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method to draw the conclusion. The result revealed that students who have the habit of free voluntary reading on their daily life have a good writing ability. This analysis confirmed the theory of FVR of Stephen Krashen. By having the genuine information of FVR habit owned by the students, this analysis cultivated the previous studies on FVR. It is suggested for the next study to set a true experiment and long period study to implement FVR to confirm either the advantage or the controversy of this theory related in language learning.*

Keywords: *free voluntary reading (FVR), writing ability, reading pleasure.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Evidence for the value of free voluntary reading, or recreational reading, continues to accumulate. In the last few decades, evidence from several areas continues to show that those who do more recreational reading show better development in reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary. These results hold for first and second language acquisition, and for children and adults.

Correlational studies have consistently shown that those who read more show more literacy development. The results of such studies are reassuring and consistent with the view that reading results in language and literacy development, but of course correlation is not causality; it is quite possible that those who read better, as a result of more direct instruction in school, then go on to do more recreational reading.

More recent studies in second language acquisition make this interpretation less plausible: They consistently report a positive relationship between the amount of free reading done and various aspects of second and foreign language competence when the amount of formal instruction students had is statistically controlled (Y.O. Lee, Krashen, and Gribbons, 1996; Stokes, Krashen and Kartchner, 1998; Constantino, S.Y. Lee, K.S. Cho and Krashen, 1997; S. Y. Lee, 2001).

Case histories provide convincing verification of the power of reading. While not considered by some to be "scientific," they clearly are, because in many cases one can only attribute gains in literacy and language development to recreational reading; there are no plausible confounds or alternative explanations for the obvious development that took place. In Krashen (1993), it is described the cases of Malcolm X and Richard Wright, both of whom achieved very high levels of literacy, and both of whom attributed their literacy development to self-selected reading.

More recent studies include the Sweet Valley studies (Cho and Krashen, 1994, 1995a, 1995b): Adult second language acquirers made obvious and impressive progress in English as a second language simply by reading books from the Sweet Valley series, novels written for young girls (Sweet Valley Kids, Sweet Valley Twins) and teen-age girls (Sweet Valley High). Subjects did not attend ESL classes; their main source of English was the novels. "Maturation" and time in the US is also an unlikely factor here: All subjects had lived in the US for a considerable amount of time before starting their reading program, and had made little progress in English. There are so many researches on free voluntary reading done in school,

known as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). In SSR, time is set aside for recreational reading; students read whatever they like (within reason), and are not tested on what they read.

Reflecting the previous studies, the writer tried to prove the theory of FVR proposed by Krashen derived from the philosophy of Natural Approach and the results of previous studies on FVR in a different perspective. The writer did not apply or implement SSR as the application or the treatment in her research, but she tried to investigate the genuine FVR habit owned by the students in relation to their ability of writing.

This study was engaged in an effort to see the relationship between free voluntary reading habit and students' writing ability.

B. METHODS

The participants of this research are 18 students of senior high school grade X. they were given a writing test to see their ability in writing narrative text. Having scored the students writing test, they also followed the interview conducted by the researcher, this was aimed to gather the data of the information whether or not those students have free voluntary reading habit. At the end of the research, the writer compared and analyzed the students' writing score and the data from the interview to draw the conclusion; whether the students' who got the high/highest score of writing test have good habit of FVR.

Instruments of the Research

1. Writing Test

The researcher administered a writing test to gather the data of the students' writing ability. Here, the researcher had provided the students the first part of narrative text (first paragraph) that was the orientation of the story of narrative text, and then the students were asked to continue to write the next two paragraphs that was the

complication and the resolution of the story of narrative text. The students were given a chance to write for about 90 minutes.

There was one topic given to the student to be developed in their writing. The test was given by following instructions including, time allocated and some key words. To be clearer below was the sample of the direction:

Direction:

1. Finish this narrative text (**write its complication and resolution**) by following the orientation provided!
2. You may develop the orientation paragraph by giving the names for the characters of the story.
3. You may want to use these words in your passage, e.g. first, second, then, next, before, after, finally, etc.
4. You may also use these key words, e.g. One day, a long time ago, Once upon a day, Last year, One year ago, Two years ago, etc.
5. To make your writing unified and coherent, pay attention in using the transitional markers.
6. Pay attention also to your grammatical structure!
7. Pay attention to the capitalization and Punctuation!
8. Don't separate the syllables of a word at the end of the line (like you do in Indonesian style)!
9. Check them carefully before you submit it!

Since writing test is a subjective test, there were two raters to reduce the subjectivity in judging students' writing ability. The two raters were the researcher herself and her colleague. Both of the raters worked collaboratively to score the result of the students' writing. In the intention of increasing reliability of the test, the two raters treated the students' work anonymously during scoring by folding back the top side of the paper where the students put their names on. It is done before scoring

Anonymous scoring is highly desirable, for identification of papers (students' writing) often leads quite unconsciously to scorer bias, Harris (1974: 79). Then, before scoring any papers, the two raters scanned a sample of papers to decide upon standards. They found, for example, a high, high medium, low-medium, and low paper to serve as models. Then, as they scored the papers, they returned occasionally to the models to ensure that their standards were not shifting.

After scoring the test, it was important to make sure that both raters used the same scoring criteria. Reliability of the pre-test and post-test was examined by using statistical measurement:

$$R = 1 - \frac{6 \cdot \sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

Notes:

R : Reliability

N : Number of students

d : The different of rank correlation

1-6 : Constant number

(Sudijono, 2006:228)

The standard of reliability:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| A. a very low reliability | ranges from 0.00 to 0.19 |
| B. a low reliability | ranges from 0.20 to 0.39 |
| C. an average reliability | ranges from 0.40 to 0.59 |
| D. a high reliability | ranges from 0.60 to 0.79 |
| E. a very high reliability | ranges from 0.80 to 0.100 |

The researcher considered that the test had achieved the reliability if the test had reached range 0.60-0.79 (a high reliability).

The validity of writing test of this research was related to face, content, and construct validity. To get face validity, the instruction of writing test was previously examined by researcher and colleague until the test which was in form of instruction looked right and understandable. The content validity meaning that the test was a good reflection of what had been taught based on the syllabus of the students' level. The test measured the students' ability in writing narrative text. Construct validity concerned with whether the test was actually in line with the theory of what writing is. It means that the test measured certain aspects based on the indicator. The researcher examined it by referring to the theories of aspects of writing and the theories of narrative text itself.

In evaluating the students' writing score, the researcher and another rater based on their judgment by considering five aspects of writing to be tested; they are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic. These criteria adopted from Jacobs (1981:90).

Basically, there are five aspects to be evaluated by the researcher and another rater. They are:

1. Content referring to the substance of writing, the experience of the main idea (unity).
2. Organization analyzing the logical organization of the content (coherence).
3. Vocabularies denoting to the selection of words those are suitable with the content.
4. Language use viewing the use of correct grammatical and syntactic pattern.
5. Mechanic referring to the use of graphic convention of language.

The percentage of scoring from the writing components was derived as follow:

1. Content : 30%
2. Organization : 20%
3. Vocabulary : 20%

- 4. Language use : 25%
- 5. Mechanic : 5%

The classification of scoring criteria adopted from Jacobs et al (1981:90), in general listed as follows:

Content

- 30-27 Excellent to very good: knowledge substantive, development of thesis/topic, relevant to assign topic.
- 26-22 Good to average: some knowledge of subject, adequate range, limited development thesis, mostly relevant to topic but lack detail.
- 21-17 Fair to poor: limited knowledge of subject, little substance, inadequate development of topic.
- 16-13 Very poor: limited knowledge of subject, non-substantive, not pertinent or not enough to evaluate.

1. Organization

- 20-18 Excellent to very good: fluent expression, ideas clearly stated/supported, well organized, logical sequencing, cohesive.
- 17-14 Good to average: somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, logical but incomplete sequencing.
- 13-10 Fair to poor: non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, lack logical sequencing and development.
- 9-7 Very poor: does not communicate, no organization, or not enough to evaluate.

2. Vocabulary

- 20-18 Excellent to very good: sophisticated range, effective word/idiom choice and usage, word form mastery, appropriate register.
- 17-14 Good to average: adequate range, occasional errors of word/idiom, form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured.

- 13-10 Fair to poor: limited range, frequent errors of words/idiom form, choice, usage, meaning confused or obscured.
- 9-7 Very poor: essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, words form, or not enough to evaluate.

Language used

- 25-22 Excellent to very good: effective complex construction, few errors of agreement, tense number, word order/function, articles, pronoun, and preposition.
- 21-18 Good to average: effective but simple construction, minor problems in simple construction, several errors of agreement, tense, word order/function, articles, pronoun, preposition, but meaning seldom obscure.
- 17-11 Fair to poor: major problems in complex/simple construction, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronoun, preposition and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions, meaning confused, or obscured.
- 10-5 Very poor: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated by errors, does not communicate, or not enough to evaluate.

3. Mechanics

- 5 Excellent to very good: demonstrated mastery of conventions, few errors spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing
- 4 Good to average: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, but meaning not obscured.
- 3 Fair to poor: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, poor hand writing, meaning confused or obscured.
- 2 Very poor: no mastery convention, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, hand writing illegible, or not enough to evaluate.

2. Interview

The interview was set to reveal the information from the students about their genuine daily free voluntary reading habit. The items of the interview were developed from the theory of free voluntary reading of Stephen Krashen. The indicators of the items of interview reflect the FVR theory. The interview was in form of open ended questions. It is because the researcher did not only need the simple answer of the students but also she demanded reason, explanation, and also elaboration in order to reveal the real information about whether or not the students have habit of free voluntary reading. Furthermore, by asking deeply to each student, the researcher would know the degree of quantity and also the quality of their FVR habit. Some of the items which were arisen during the interview were as follows:

1. What is your hobby? Or Do you like reading?
2. Which one do you prefer, reading Indonesian or English reading materials?
3. What motivates you to read?
4. Do you read a lot? Why?
5. Do you feel comfortable for spending your time to read? Give the reason!
6. Do you spend your free time to read? If yes, how long do you usually set your time for reading?
7. Do you always take reading materials or book with you? If yes, what for?
8. Do you keep a list of all great books or reading materials you want to read? If it is yes, what is your consideration to do this?
9. Which one do you prefer, reading in a quiet place or in a crowded place? Why?
10. Which one do you prefer, reading, watching TV or keeping in touch with internet? Why?
11. Do you make a log for your reading list to register the title of the books, author of the books, reading materials, and the dates you start and finish them? If yes, what is your consideration to do so?
12. Do you enjoy going to bookshop? Why?
13. Do you have a library day? How often in a week?

14. What kinds of books or reading materials do you feel fun? Why?
15. Do you always think that reading is pleasurable activity? Why?
16. Do you commit to set a reading hour or reading day? Why?
17. Do you set a high goal for your reading habit? For example: 10 books for two or three months. If yes, why?
18. Can you share me your experiences in your reading habit? Could you tell me some of your fun and interesting reading? You may tell me the most interesting book or reading material that you have ever finished.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The distribution result of students' writing scores were grouped and categorized into three segmental levels, they are Excellent, Average, and Poor. From 18 students; 6 students got *excellent* scores, 4 students got *average* scores, and 8 students got *poor* scores.

And based on the data from interview, it was gained that the students who were excellent in their writing narrative text are truly good free voluntary readers. The data from the interview revealed that they have robust habit of reading. The six of highest score students take free voluntary reading as their daily basis activity. They are fond of reading books, novel, comics, and other literature works such as short stories. They read in their spare time sustainably. Even they can access their reading through electronic media particularly internet. So it is also found a new trend of free voluntary reading which meets the developmental era of technology. While, the students who were categorized in scores of average and poor, factually, they were lack of reading. They did not have habit of the craziness of reading. They preferred killing their spare time to watch television and play games. Even to read the school text books they felt boring and lack of motivation.

The additional good news is that the 6 students were not only fond of reading in Indonesian reading materials but also in English versions. They have actually had great motivation and knowledge about improving their English through reading. They shared their belief in the interview that one prominent way to improve their English is by reading more and more. That is why they have good motivation and effort in reading.

Discussion

It was stated in previous researches that those who read more read better, those who read more write better, those who read more have better vocabularies, those who read more have more grammatical competence (Lee, Krashen, and Tse, 1997; Cho, Park and Krashen, 2008). The current finding supports this idea that students who owned free voluntary reading habit performed better in writing test particularly in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, and language used.

Self-selected voluntary reading is so pleasant that readers often report being addicted to it. W. Somerset Maugham, quoted in Nell (1988), is clearly a reading addict: "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 ..." (Nell, 1988, p.232).

In a review of surveys done between 1965 and 1985, Robinson and Godbey (1997) confirm the pleasure of reading: Adult Americans consistently rated reading as enjoyable. In their 1985 survey of 2,500 adults, book and magazine reading was rated 8.3 out of 10 in enjoyments, compared to 7.5 for hobbies, 7.8 for television, and 7.2 for "conversations."

In Nell (1988) 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 drop in arousal was recorded in the period just after reading, which for some measures reached a level below the baseline (eyes-shut) condition.

The ability of reading to relax us may explain why bed time reading is so popular: It is arousing, but then it relaxes you. Consistent with these findings are Nell's results showing that bedtime reading is popular. Of 26 pleasure readers he interviewed, 24 read in bed every night or most nights.

Those who discover reading in a second language clearly find it pleasant when they can find interesting and comprehensible reading material. Kyung-Sook Cho (Cho and Krashen, 1994, 1995a, 1995b) reported that adult ESL acquirers in the US became dedicated and enthusiastic readers of Sweet Valley High novels, written for teenage girls. Pilgreen's high school ESL students (Pilgreen and Krashen, 1993) were quite positive about sustained silent reading (SSR): Of Pilgreen's subjects, 56% reported that they enjoyed SSR sessions "very much," while 38% said they enjoyed them "some" and only 7% reported that they only enjoyed them a little.

There is ample evidence that students participating in free reading programs in school prefer free reading to traditional language arts instruction (Krashen, 2004). The same appears to be true for those reading in a second language.

McQuillan (1994) asked university level foreign and second language students participating in recreational reading programs this question: "Given a choice between reading popular literature and studying grammar, which would you prefer to do?" Eighty percent (n = 39) said they would prefer reading popular

literature. Additional very positive reactions to free reading from foreign language students are reported by Rodrigo (1997) and Dupuy (1997, 1998).

A series of studies done by Kyung Sook Cho and her colleagues confirmed that reading is more popular than traditional instruction among children studying English as a foreign language in Korea.

The power of reading has been confirmed using "correlational" studies. These studies consistently show that those who read more show more literacy development. The results of such studies are reassuring and consistent with the view that reading results in language and literacy development, but of course correlation is not causality; it is quite possible that those who read better, as a result of more direct instruction in school, then go on to do more recreational reading.

More recent studies in second language acquisition make this interpretation less likely, and point to reading as the cause of literacy development. These studies consistently report a positive relationship between the amount of free reading done and various aspects of second and foreign language competence when the amount of formal instruction students had is statistically controlled (Y.O. Lee, Krashen, and Gribbons, 1996; Stokes, Krashen and Kartchner, 1998; Constantino, S.Y.Lee, K.S. Cho and Krashen, 1997; S. Y. Lee, 2005).

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More recent reports include the Sweet Valley studies, mentioned earlier (Cho and Krashen, 1994, 1995a, 1995b): Adult second language acquirers made obvious and impressive progress in English as a second language simply by reading books from the Sweet Valley series, novels written for young girls (Sweet Valley Kids, Sweet Valley Twins) and teenage girls (Sweet Valley High). Subjects did not attend ESL classes; their main source of English was the novels. All subjects had lived in the US for a considerable amount of time before starting their reading program, and had made little progress in English.

Studies of in-school free reading are considered the gold standard for demonstrating the effectiveness of recreational reading, because they include a comparison group that engages in traditional instruction while the experimental group does free voluntary reading. There are slightly different models of in-school free reading (sustained silent reading, self-selected reading, extensive reading) but they all have this in common: Students can read whatever they want to read (within reason) and there is little or no accountability in the form of book reports or grades.

In addition to earlier studies (e.g. Elley and Mangubhai, 1985; Mason and Krashen, 1997), a new wave of studies from Asia confirms the power of reading for EFL students: In studies done in Korea, children in EFL classes that included reading interesting stories from the internet gained more in English than comparisons did (Cho and Kim, 2004).

In another, EFL elementary school children did classroom activities related to reading newspapers written for EFL students. Nearly all those in the newspaper class voluntarily read the newspapers in their free time at school, and the class made significantly better gains in English than a comparison group (Cho and Kim, 2005). In both studies, readers were more enthusiastic about English than were comparison students in traditional classes.

Studies done in Taiwan have provided consistent results showing that self-selected reading or FVR works for university level EFL students. In two different studies each lasting one academic year, students in classes that set aside time for reading or that encouraged reading outside of class did better than those in several different comparison classes (S.Y. Lee, 2006; Liu, 2005).

The recent study absolutely supported the phenomena of the previous researches even though the current study do not apply the treatment of free voluntary reading, however, they still have the same breathe that reveals FVR has positive relation in students ability in acquiring the second language especially in writing.

D. CONCLUSION

Self-selected recreational reading (free voluntary reading) may not, by itself, be enough to guarantee students' reaching the highest levels of competence in another language. But there is no question that it is effective, that time spent in free voluntary reading is more efficient in terms of language development than a similar amount of time spent in traditional instruction.

This study is only a tiny portion of the evidence supporting the power of reading, but it is, nevertheless, very good news: it supports the hypothesis that the most efficient way of developing competence in a language is also the most pleasant. For language acquisition, at least, the path of pleasure is the best path. That is why free voluntary reading or reading for pleasure which is derived from natural approach may become an alternative way to develop students' competence instead of the ordinary teaching instructions.

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