

THE COMBINED ROLE OF EXTENSIVE READING AND EXTENSIVE VIEWING FOR ENHANCING ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENTS' LITERARY APPRECIATION AND KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The extent to which extensive reading (ER) and extensive viewing (EV) combined can support literature students' literary knowledge, particularly for EFL learners has yet to be established.

Methods. This study undertakes a qualitative approach to understanding the opportunities that each of these modes provide for EFL literature students. The investigation was done through focus group interviews conducted at the end of the course, and student learning journals written every two weeks. The participants were a class of 36 sophomore English literature students. Extensive reading (ER) and extensive viewing (EV) were operationalised as books and movie adaptations of classic literature through reading or watching general fiction and movies.

Results. The results indicated that ER/ EV were valuable for English literature students, and complemented each other. EV appeared to offer a visual coverage to ER which suggested that it could be an effective asset to be used along with extensive reading.

Conclusion. The implications of the current study are for English literature students and teachers alike to consider this combination or each of these modes as a valuable source of input or practice.

Keywords: extensive reading, extensive viewing, literature students, literary appreciation, literary knowledge

INTRODUCTION

One of the key goals of teaching literature is to develop students' literary competence and their ability to appreciate the literary work. Literary appreciation involves the reader gaining a meaningful understanding of a work's theme and insight into its meaning (Fakoya & Ogunpitan, 2001). The pleasure of reading literature stems from comprehending the themes and ideas that are inherently interesting (Abida, 2016). The teaching of literature can become more interesting and stimulating when teachers use effective teaching techniques. Often, teachers rely on lecturing, asking questions, or recitation methods. However, these strategies and techniques are often inadequate because they focus on basic questions (who-what-when-where) and rarely delve into deeper questions (how and why). Dongpeng Li (2011) and Mahmoud Azizi et al., (2020) emphasised that the role of a literature teacher is to nurture and foster students' literary competence. Teachers need to understand how to develop their students' literary competence, which will help them improve their teaching by incorporating innovative learning tasks. This makes literature learning more interesting, which motivated the researcher to conduct this study. Research indicates that the teaching strategies employed by teachers significantly impact student achievement. It is believed that

learners are more motivated to engage in the classroom activities when appropriate teaching strategies are used, guiding them to reach their full potential as learners.

Previous research advocates for the use of evidence-based strategies by teachers to enhance student performance. Graham Stoop (2011) emphasises that effective teachers recognise individual student differences, cultivate collaborative relationships, communicate effectively with parents, offer constructive feedback to students, and employ strategies that encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Annah Jepketer et al. (2015) agree that teaching strategies significantly impact student performance. Effective teaching and learning reflect high-quality teachers and teaching performance, which are crucial for a well-designed educational system (Alam, Hameed, et al., 2023; Alam, Usama et al., 2023; Alam & Usama, 2023; Kušnir & Pavlikova, 2024; Medupin et al., 2015).

Teaching literature requires creativity, ingenuity, and innovation to develop students' literary appreciation skills. Teachers need to create effective learning tasks that help students engage with literature in the most appealing and updated ways. emphasised that teachers play a crucial role in developing students' literary appreciation (Ahmad & Aziz, 2009).

Extensive reading (ER) is widely accepted in ESL and EFL programmes as an effective teaching and learning approach. ER is described as involving learners reading large amounts of material within their linguistic level (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). ER helps develop good reading habits, enhance vocabulary and structural knowledge, and foster a love for reading (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). The main goals of ER are to improve learners' fluency, reading speed, overall comprehension, and reading skills, while providing pleasure, information, and a general understanding of texts.

The success of the extensive reading (ER) approach in enhancing reading skills and motivation (Khonamri & Roostae, 2014; Khonamri & Farzanegan, 2016), inspired several scholars to promote the implementation of extensive listening (EL) both inside and outside of the classroom (Alam et al., 2022; Neziri et al., 2024; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016; Waring, 2008). It was based on the principles of ER that EL was developed and it started initially in the form of reading-while-listening with graded reader audiobooks and Waring (2008) expanded on this by categorising reading-while-listening as a type of EL activity.

Recent developments in extensive listening (EL) have integrated listening and watching with other skills and learning techniques making the practice more feasible and effective. Recently, discussions on EL have included viewing as a complementary activity. This addition diversifies and authenticates the listening experience (Alam, et al, 2024; Khonamri, et al., 2021; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016), helping learners better understand spoken language by providing multimodal input. Authentic materials including videos, podcasts, movies, TV and radio programmes, and other online resources were added to provide a more engaging and realistic learning experience.

Although extensive viewing (EV) has been around for more than a decade and a half, and extensive reading (ER) has also proved useful in many different areas, their combined benefits have not been widely adopted by language teachers especially in literature classroom. This lack of enthusiasm may be due to the limited research and publicity surrounding EV, making its concept unfamiliar to many practitioners. Additionally, until recently, easily accessible EV materials, particularly for elementary and low intermediate learners, were scarce. In EV, learners practice comprehending what they watch (Webb, 2015), which provides visual support. With the availability of more movie adaptations of literary works, creating the opportunity for learners to complement their reading with viewing and vice versa, helps learners to experience the literary work in different ways. This might increase their appreciation of literary works which is what this study intends to explore.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the students' perceptions of their literary appreciation skills through engagement in extensive reading and extensive viewing?
- What are students' responses to ER/EV?

METHOD

Research Design

Qualitative design using focus group interviews, and students' learning journals was utilised in this study. The aim was to investigate the level of students' literary appreciation skills and their literary performance, providing insights for more meaningful literary learning and appreciation.

Participants

The study involved 32 second-year students from the University of Mazandaran who were taking the "Introduction to Literature" course. These students, aged between 19 and 21, were all majoring in English literature. Participation was voluntary, and the students were assured that their data would be kept confidential. The activity was conducted outside of class time to avoid disrupting their regular schedule.

Research Instruments

To examine students' responses to the use of extensive reading with extensive viewing, data were collected through two sets of research instruments namely reflective journals and focus-group interviews. First, a learning journal based on their extensive reading and viewing was assigned to each student. Then, a focus group interview was used to collect students' perception towards the use of ER and EV in understanding and appreciating literary works.

Data Analysis

Reflective journals were utilised to collect information on students' perceptions of understanding literary works through extensive reading and extensive viewing. Audio recordings of the interviews were made to provide more contextual and richer data, facilitating thematic analyses by the researchers. Focus group interviews provided verbal clarifications from participants regarding their journal entries, offering in-depth insights into their responses to the assignment. The qualitative data collected from both the reflective journals and interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through selective data analysis and thematic examination of students' reflective journals and interviews, three primary themes were identified: (a) the effectiveness of combining extensive reading and extensive viewing for comprehending literary works, (b) the encouragement of autonomous learning in reading literary texts with visual support, and (c) the challenges associated with extensive reading and extensive viewing. These themes address the study's two central research questions. The results are presented narratively and are supplemented with discussions.

Theme 1: The Effectiveness of Extensive Reading with Extensive Viewing for Understanding a Literary Work

Most of the students stated that they enjoyed doing ER and EV and found it really effective in coming to a deeper and better understanding of the work of literature they had selected to work on.

As one of the students commented,

I liked to focus on important points of the reading and the movie together in my learning log. It was effective and helpful in understanding the literary work and of course to appreciate it. I really enjoyed the activities.

Another student said:

It was a great experience that I could learn many important things about a literary work that I had never known before. It was also interesting that I could write my own critical analysis of the text in my journal in addition to trying to focus on my problems or areas of strength in both ER and EV.

Generally, students' responses to the use of ER and EV for promoting their appreciation and knowledge of the literary work was positive. As one student recorded in her log:

I had experienced extensive reading in one of my courses before and had already a high positive attitude towards it. What was even more interesting and useful for me was the combination of both ER and EV which was a truly amazing learning experience for me. I feel that my interest, understanding and appreciation for the literary works that I read and watched its movie adaptation increased largely.

The students showed a high level of literary appreciation skills in their reflective journals as well as their responses to the interview questions. The data demonstrates that they have achieved a good level of literary knowledge through both approaches of extensive reading and viewing, which would allow them to comprehend the message of the text better and to enable them to visualise the literary works and compare them to the visualisation offered by the movie producers. Furthermore, the participants were able to develop the skill to take joy in reading literary works.

Theme 2: The promotion of autonomous learning in reading literary texts with a visual support

This section addresses the level of autonomy students developed in literary appreciation and comprehension skills through reading selected literary works and watching their movie adaptations. Based on their responses, they thought that the assignment had helped them to somehow master literary appreciation skills and comprehension without being too much dependent on their teacher. More particularly, they emphasised the fact that reading the story once and then watching its movie was truly effective in answering some critical questions that were raised in their first encounter with the work. The participants also demonstrated a high level of autonomy in literary appreciation skills, as reflected in their journal entries and interview responses. This suggests that they have developed substantial literary competence through both extensive reading

and viewing, allowing them to internalise the textual world and visualise the imagery in literary works, comparing it to that presented by movie producers, all on their own. Additionally, the participants enjoyed reading and watching their own selected literary genres and texts which was another good reason for feeling autonomous and successful. Hence, innovative learning tasks seem to be necessary to further enhance students' literary appreciation skills and knowledge.

Handoyo PujiWidodo and Andy Cirocki, (2015) argues that extensive reading encourages students to take responsibility for their own reading outside the classroom, fostering reading autonomy. Research shows that when students find reading enjoyable, they are more likely to read frequently, leading to better performance in literary reading analysis. This finding aligns with studies which revealed a strong connection between students' English reading performance and their literary appreciation skills (Adejimola & Ojoulape, 2013; Yanto et al., 2020). The research revealed that girls outperformed boys in extensive reading due to their greater engagement in language-related activities. Boys favoured extensive viewing, finding it more helpful for appreciating literary works. This finding aligns with other studies which indicated that girls typically exhibited superior comprehension, read more often, and maintained a more positive attitude toward reading than boys (Lynn & Mikk, 2009; Logan & Johnston, 2009; Alam et al., 2024).

Theme 3: The challenges of extensive reading and extensive viewing

Despite the benefits of the combination of ER/EV, some students presented some of their personal challenges.

One of the main challenges that some of the students mentioned were about the fact that outside of school, they had to manage distractions from extracurricular activities like sports and music and struggled to stay on task. Additionally, television, the Internet, and video games were other issues they said that distracted their attention. For some of the readers, their reading experiences and skills were minimal.

As one student particularly stated:

For my extensive reading (ER) I didn't have much problem in selecting the work I wanted to read because of the availability of a wide range of reading materials. But it became a challenge when I had to make sure if there is a movie adaptation or animation of the book which for many books were not available.

Another student also mentioned her challenges:

For me, it was really hard to take my reading and viewing seriously and plan for it to do it on time. I think it was because we are not used to working independently and taking things as seriously as when a teacher is present and tells us what to do.

Or lack of personal experience and motivation was another challenge stated by one of the male students was:

I really didn't know how to start and where to start from. I have never read any thing in my life outside of class and on my own decision. So, part of the difficulty was related to this feeling of confusion. I couldn't motivate myself to start the assignment perhaps because I have never experienced this before.

Another male student also expressed his lack of motivation as the main challenge for the task:

Not all students enjoy reading, and at first, I thought I might be able to convince myself that I will enjoy reading if I can choose books that I find relatable and intriguing, but to no avail. Watching the movie adaptation was much more enjoyable and much easier for me though.

Overall, extensive reading (ER) and extensive viewing (EV) are approaches that emphasise independent learning through self-selected reading or watching materials with minimal teacher intervention. Students choose books and movies they are interested in and read/watch without the teacher explaining or expecting anything from them. This is often "not perceived as class learning, ... by the students themselves" (Prowse, 2002, p. 144). This was exactly what some of the students in this study stated about their perception of ER/EV.

This study evaluated the level of literary appreciation skills and literary knowledge among students, aiming to enhance these skills through a combination of extensive reading (ER) and extensive viewing (EV). The findings indicated that ER and EV are valuable for English literature students and complement each other. EV provided visual support to ER, suggesting it can be an effective asset alongside extensive reading (Webb, 2015; Yeldham, 2016). The study implies that both English literature students and teachers should consider using this combination or each mode individually as valuable sources of input and practice.

CONCLUSION

To enhance students' enthusiasm for reading literary works and appreciating literature, teachers should make full and reasonable use of innovative approaches tailored to students' actual needs. This involves breaking away from the traditional teacher-centred approach and reforming teaching methods. Adjustments should be made to reading materials, teaching methods should be updated to improve the overall effectiveness of literature instruction.

The advancement of technology and the Internet has greatly expanded the availability of extensive reading (ER) and extensive viewing (EV) materials. Learners can now utilise audio, audiovisual, and multimedia resources. According to Holden

(2008), EL materials include “audiobooks, storytelling websites, spoken word and news websites, interviews, videotapes, TV, YouTube.com, movies and dramas, academic lectures, speeches, and virtually any type of music with comprehensible lyrics” (p. 30). Many of these materials are now accessible, downloadable, and shareable online. Their digital format allows for easy modification and adaptation in terms of content, speed, and presentation. Thus, learners can make use of both ER and EV and easily adjust the speed of the materials to match their comprehension level.

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