The Role of Pleasure Reading in Enhancing Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension:

A Case Study

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Abstract
Effective reading is mandatory for the students to keep abreast themselves of the vast knowledge around them. Venkateswaran (1995) defines reading as a psycholinguistic process by which the reader reconstructs a message, which has been encoded by a writer. He views reading as an interaction among three essential factors: background knowledge, conceptual abilities and learning strategies. Slow reading is a widely recognized problem, in the realm of ESL/EFL, which hinders effective learning (Hamp-Lyon, 1983; Cooper, 1984). And keeping in view the same scenario, this study investigated 74 Saudi medical undergraduates studying at College of Medicine and Medical Sciences (CMMS), Taif University to determine the positive overbearing of an extensive pleasure reading project.
on reading speed, reading comprehension and their attitude towards reading in their leisure time. The reading speed and reading comprehension of the participants were calculated by using graded readers in the beginning and at the end of this project. The data were scientifically analyzed and the results reported that the gains in the reading speed and reading comprehension of the experimental group were significantly higher than the control group. Furthermore, the questionnaire data revealed that the pleasure reading had a positive change in their behavior and majority of the samples declared that they would continue reading in their leisure time in the future as well.

*Key Words:* Pleasure reading, top-down, bottom-up, loud reading, and silent reading
Introduction

The role of efficient reading is well-established in over-all language learning and it has become rather extremely important after the proliferation of information technology. Demands of “the brave world” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1997) are enormous and reading has become an important gateway to personal development, and to social, economic and civic life (Holden, 2004). Effective reading techniques have never been needed more in the annals of history than the present era. It has been noted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2003) that “people cannot be active or informed citizens unless they can read. Reading is “a prerequisite for almost all cultural and social activities” (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 3). An all-encompassing exposure of internet in the academic world has compelled the students to master reading skills to keep themselves abreast of the vast knowledge around them. According to the International Reading Association, “adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history” (Moore et al., 1999, p. 3). The students are faced with a huge challenge of exploring the vast depository of knowledge in the forms of books as well as internet-related material. This task demands that the students should have the potential to go through this storehouse of knowledge efficiently. This is not even possible to think of it without good reading speed and reading comprehension.

Literature Review

Reading has been defined as “a psycholinguistic process” by which the reader reconstructs a message that has been encoded by a writer. “Background knowledge”, “conceptual abilities” and “learning strategies” have been declared as three essential factors which are vital for this interaction (Venkateswaran, 1995). “Reading involves four processing mechanisms with feedback loops: phonological, orthographic, meaning and
context” (Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989, p. 8). Al-Khatayabeh & Al-Masri (2008) have reported that “reading is a language activity that includes a variety of skills” and it has been noticed that “some learners who are good at language are not good readers” (p. 370). This transpires that the reading deficiency is due to inappropriate strategies they use while reading.

Goodman’s (1976) “top-down model” declares reading “a psycholinguistic guessing game” which requires higher order sources of information: the reader’s knowledge of both the subject matter and the world. The above-mentioned model does not ascribe much importance to vocabulary. Whereas in Gough’s (1972) ‘bottom-up model’, vocabulary knowledge is considered extremely important. Eskey (1988) proposed an interactive model which includes top-down and bottom-up processing. His model offers useful insights into the flow of information coming from the text and also from the reader. In his interactive model, both the text and the reader contribute to the construction of meaning and vocabulary knowledge is also considered essential. It has been reported that efficient reading depends on the ability to:

…. discover specific facts, recognize the writer's point of view, read at a reasonable rate, guess the meaning of unknown words from the context, read extended pieces of texts easily, understand how one part of a text relates to another, follow an argument, grasp the gist of what has been read, and note the importance of such logical expressions such as however, and so, finally… etc. (McGovern, 1983 cited in Al-Khatayabeh & Al-Masri, 2008, p. 359).

A widely recognized problem faced by learners throughout the ESL/EFL world is that of slow reading (Hamp-Lyons 1983; Cooper 1984). It is mentioned that along with reading speed, comprehension is also equally important and efforts of achieving reading speed without comprehension is worthless (Nuttall, 1982). Slow reading is often associated with poor reading that involves the processing of information at such a slow rate that does not allow the reader to hold enough detail in their short-term memory to permit
decoding of the overall message of the text (Bell, 2001). O’Sullivan (2003) stated that “improving students’ reading speeds to adequate levels in tandem with their comprehension helps them be better readers” (p. 6). It has been reported that this reading deficiency is rather a serious problem with Arab students and O’Sullivan (2003) has declared that the “problems of Arabic learners of English with reading comprehension are well documented” (p. 6). Aboshiha (2006) interviewed a sample of secondary school teachers who stated “that pupils were very often not motivated and did not enjoy reading in English or even reading in their first language”. He has also discussed the reasons for “their pupils’ apparent lack of interest in developing their reading skills in English” (P. 156). O’Sullivan (2003) stated that Federal National Council’s Committee for Education and Youth and Information and Cultural Affairs has released a report about higher education institutions that expressed anxiety over the “general deterioration” in the English standards of UAE students and particularly in the case of reading. An exploratory research study has investigated Higher College of Technology, UAE students’ performance in reading and reported it lower than the comparable groups of students elsewhere in the world (Marsden, 2001 cited in O’Sullivan, 2003). It has also been reported that HCT students are weaker readers even in their L1 (Arabic) as compared to the “world mean” (Marsden and Wallace, 2001 cited in O’Sullivan, 2003). Arab students' lack of reading habits, both in L1 and the target language, has been mentioned by several other authors (Mustafa, 2001; Shannon, 2003; Wallace, 1996). Naidoo & Ismail (2008) conducted a survey regarding the reading habits of Arab students and quoted the following responses: "I almost never read for pleasure," Nakul Berry, a 17-year-old sophomore student at the American University in Dubai replied. Berry and Rizeq admitted that "unless we have a mandatory reading prescribed by the professor, we don't really go to the library”. Kathy Ray, library director at the American University of Sharjah, said that "some come in to use the computers to check their e-mails or do research. Others come in to work on group projects”. Al-Thibani’s (2007) report has also presented the same responses: “Students here do not read for pleasure but for study …… They are reading under obligation but not for pleasure” said Abdu al-Qadasi, the head of
the library of the college of arts in Sana’a University. Khaled al-A’waj, the manger of the central library in Sana’a University stated that students usually come to the university library for research work and rarely visit it for reading purposes. Several reasons have been identified for this poor reading efficiency. Al-Thibani (2007) interviewed Abdul-Salam al-Rubaidi, a master’s degree top student in the college of Arabic who declared that:

There is no reading culture in our society ……..It is common that a Yemeni person has no one around him who reads—no one in his family who reads, no colleagues who read, no teachers who read. So he begins to feel that it is normal not to read.

There is a lack of a reading culture or reading habit in Arab societies because of the prized oral tradition in these societies (Shannon, 2003). Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ruzic (1983) suggested that in approximately all Arab countries, standard Arabic is actually students’ second language with colloquial Arabic as their ‘mother tongue’. This transpires that English is actually their third language and this fact makes it rather extremely difficult for them to achieve reading efficiency in English. Wurr (2003) recounted many case studies and declared that L1 and L2 reading involves two different “words and worlds”. A Korean student’s following statement highlights this compartmentalization who considers “reading in English as an extension of his school work, an academic task, whereas reading in his native language is more closely associated with personal pursuits and interests” (O’Sullivan, 2003 cited in Wurr, 2003, p. 2). Using simplified texts prior to university entrance (Fox, 1987) and “intensive use of bilingual dictionaries and dependence on teachers” have been identified as major factors that hinder students’ motivation to become efficient readers (Prichard & Nasr, 2004, p. 427).
'Loud reading' is another major factor that negatively affects students’ reading skills and bars them to be efficient readers (Mourtaga, 2006). Mustafa (2002) conducted a research about the teaching of readings skills in UAE schools and his interview data reported that “ninety per cent of the teachers perceive reading as a pronunciation exercise…” (p. 77); “…teachers teach only one reading strategy that enables students to obtain explicit information from a graded passage; a kind of literal comprehension.” (p. 78). His findings suggest that almost all teachers “correlate ‘reading’ with pronouncing and reading aloud” (p. 79). Research has identified that “the ESL reading comprehension difficulties exhibited by native speakers of Arabic may instead result from deficient letter and word identification” (Hayes & Schmauder, 1999 cited in O’Sullivan, 2003, p. 5). Using “the index finger” to refer to every word while reading aloud is another factor that contributes to make reading slow and hinders efficient reading “because it tends to create tunnel vision, overloads short-term memory, and leaves the reader floundering in the ambiguity of language” (Smith, 1994, p. 153). Reading the Holy Quran is another usual practice when people opt for loud reading using their index finger. It is suggested that silent reading is much more effective than loud reading (George, 1975; Weaver, 1988; Smith, 1988) except when the aim is to improve oral reading abilities or to test pronunciation (Weeren & Theunissen, 1987).

Actually, research reveals that most of the work done on Arab students is about writing whereas reading has been a neglected (Mourtaga, 2006). In addition, when talking about reading problems of Arab EFL students, research has reported that majority of the researchers have attributed reading-related problems of Arab students to differences between L1 and L2 (Farquharson, 1988; Lebauer, 1985; Torry, 1971; Block, 1992; Panos & Ruzic, 1983; George, 1975). This attitude has diverted attention from other important factors like slow reading, literal translation, loud reading, insufficient comprehension, total dependence on the print to get the meaning, insufficient linguistic competence etc.

Pleasure reading is one of the measures that is suggested to be used to improve students’ reading speed and comprehension (Pilgreen & Krashen, 1993; Cushing-Weigle & Jenson,
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1996; Bell, 2000; Kusanagi, 2004; Krashen, 2004; Nishino, 2007; Oller & Tullius, 1973; Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Taguchi, 1997; Asraf & Ahmed, 2003; Taguchi et al., 2004; Flowers, 2003; Nishino, 2007). Pleasure reading is referred to “… reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading” (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 6). Nell (1988) has stated that reading for pleasure is a form of play that allows us to experience other worlds and roles in our imagination. Pleasure reading has been conceived as a “creative activity” (Holden, 2004). This term was coined by Palmer (1968) who defined it as the reading of materials in the target language in a rapid and casual way with a focus on quantity rather than quality. But reading for pleasure “…. is so much more than just a form of play or escapism- it is a way of connecting with text” (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 6).

This study will use the term “pleasure reading” as a synonym for “reading for pleasure” (Dungworth et al., 2004), “reading for enjoyment” (Allan et al., 2005) and “reading for enteretainment” (Sonnenschein et al, 2000). It is also frequently referred to as “independent reading” (Cullinan, 2000), “self-selected reading” (Worthy et al., 1998), “voluntary reading” (Krashen, 2004), leisure reading (Greaney, 1980), “engaged reading” (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999), “free reading” (Cobb, 2007), “recreational reading”, “extensive reading” (Day & Bumford, 2002; Hitosugi & Day, 2004), “lucid reading” (Nell, 1988) etc. It has been stated that “education and reading are circular – the more a person has of one, the better the development of the other (Chall, 1996 cited in Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 8). Krashen (1993) offered deep insights into the value of reading for pleasure and stated that when children read for pleasure, they get “hooked on books”, “they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called language skills ….. they will become adequate readers…..” (p- 85). Thus pleasure reading helps them achieve a higher reading rate and better comprehension because of their increased vocabulary, positive attitude towards reading and greater self-confidence.
Gordon & Lu (2008) mentioned that Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) has conducted a research that explored the reading habits of fifteen year old students in 32 countries and reported that 72% students said that they read for pleasure on a daily basis. The study informed that girls read more for pleasure as compared to boys. Research has reported that high achievers in reading literacy were much more likely to read for pleasure as compared to low achievers (OECD, 2002). Anderson et al. (1998) conducted a study and mentioned that the “amount of independent out-of-school reading contributed a variance of 16% in the reading comprehension of fifth graders” (In Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997, p. 420). Krashen (1993) has suggested that comic book reading and other kinds of light reading prepares the readers for higher level academic texts. Bell (2001) and Kusanagi (2004) have also reported substantial gains in reading fluency. It has been suggested that extensive reading can lead to the development of good reading habits (Nash & Yuan, 1992) and larger and more highly automatized vocabulary (Nation, 2001). Bell (2001) conducted a study with elementary level Yemeni students and the findings demonstrated significant gains in reading comprehension test performance of the experimental group that underwent an extensive reading program using graded readers compared to the control group which focused only on intensive reading.

Flowers' (2003) study investigated the importance of reading for pleasure on students’ reading achievement. The population of this study was African American seniors and the findings of this study showed that the amount of time spent on reading outside of school positively impacted their reading achievement. The findings of several studies have suggested that if students are given the opportunity to select reading material of their choice to read during their leisure time then they may be more likely to achieve higher reading rate, enhanced comprehension (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Robb & Susser, 1989) and positive attitude toward reading (Cho & Krashen, 1994 cited in Flowers, 2003; Mason & Krashen, 1997). Lewis & Samuels (2005) reported that 45 of 49 studies suggested that increased volume of reading caused improvement in
reading. Krashen (1982) suggested that extensive reading promotes language learning if the learners are provided with interesting material, and a relaxed, tension-free learning atmosphere.

Several research studies offered useful insights into certain considerations while following free reading projects. Harley (1995) has reported a relationship of “reciprocal causation” between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension: prior vocabulary knowledge is required for effective reading comprehension. The reviewers on the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) have been unable to find a positive relationship between programs and instruction that encourage large amounts of independent reading and improvement in reading achievement, including fluency. Champeau de Lopez (1993) conducted her research in Venezuela and found that her samples achieved 50% increase in their reading speed after following a course comprised of timed and paced readings but she noted a drop of 11%, from 78% to 67%, in their comprehension. Zubaidi (2006) pointed out that this area needs more research. He contended that “the paucity too, of the data available on the contribution recreational reading makes to the acquisition of a second or foreign language, is because recreational reading is seldom indulged in a foreign language.” Cobb (2007) presented his data and argued that pleasure reading cannot provide the readers with sufficient opportunities of developing their vocabulary knowledge to the level that is required to comprehend English texts adequately. Research also identified several problematic areas in following extensive reading. Considerable cost, administrative efforts, skilled teachers to motivate students, appropriate selection of reading material, free time etc., are required for success (Davis, 1995; Urquhart & Weir, 1998).

Objectives of the Study
This project has the following research objectives:

a. To examine the effects of pleasure reading on the participants' reading speed (words per minute)

b. To find out how pleasure reading affects the participants' reading comprehension

c. To analyze the ways in which pleasure reading affects the participants' reading habits and attitudes towards reading

Hypotheses of the Study

If suitable and interesting reading material and appropriate atmosphere is provided to the participants:

1. the post intervention gain of the experimental group in their reading speed will be statistically significant (higher) as compared to the post intervention gain of the control group;

2. the post intervention gain of the experimental group in their reading comprehension will be statistically significant (higher) as compared to the post intervention gain of the control group;

Participants of the Study

Seventy four Saudi freshmen medical undergraduates enrolled at (CMMS) were constituted as the participants of the study.

A: the experimental group (n= 37)
B: the control group (n= 37)

Methodology of the Study

In this study, the researchers selected a type of survey to collect information from a sample that was drawn from a predetermined population. The questionnaire was designed on the semi-structured pattern in order to obtain useful and precise information on specified issues related to this study. Survey research is one of the most common forms of research engaged in by educational researchers. It involves researchers asking a large group of people questions about a particular topic or issue. This asking of questions, related to the issue of interest, is called a survey (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Moreover, the survey helped the researchers to deal with a profile of a large population through representative sampling. The researchers considered all the prerequisites of the survey to produce transparent results of the study. Oppenheim (1992, p. 21) who clarifies the need of this design of research in the following words:

The analytic, relational survey is set up specifically to explore the associations between particular variables. Its design is in many ways similar to that of laboratory experiments. However, like experiments in the laboratory, it is usually set up to explore specific hypotheses. It is less orientated towards representativeness and more towards finding associations and explanations, less towards description and enumeration and more towards prediction, less likely to ask ‘how many’ or ‘how often’ than ‘why’ and ‘what goes with that’.
Data Analyses

a. The researchers used the descriptive statistics namely the means, medians, standard deviations and percentages of the students’ reading speed and reading comprehension.

b. Independent samples t-test was applied to test the differences in the reading speed and reading comprehension and the difference in the gains.

Implementation of the Speed Reading Project

Nearly 100 freshmen students are admitted every year at CMMS as medical undergraduates. For practical courses, these students are divided into 5 groups: nearly 20 students in each group. The researchers were assigned the practical hours for all the five groups that provided them with the ideal situation to experiment this reading project.

The students of all the 5 groups were briefed that they would need to read nearly 50 pages of any material of their interest in the target language. They were asked to volunteer for this project and two groups, group 3 and 5, were selected as the experimental group based on their willingness to do the additional work that would be assigned to them for this project. Two groups, group 1 and 4, were considered control group. Group 2 was not included in the study (neither as experiment nor control) so that both the groups; experimental & control, have same number of participants.
The reading project was started from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} week of the academic term and the researchers told the samples that they needed to collect reading material of their own choice from different sources: internet, newspapers, magazines, journals, reports, printed short stories etc.

Then, they were asked to maintain a diary about their weekly progress (See appendix # 3) so that both the samples as well as the researchers knew the progress of their pleasure reading process. The researchers checked their diaries every week and discussed their individual problems in this regard. During the first 3 weeks, it was mandatory for all the samples to submit one hard copy of their material to the researchers. It was done to serve two purposes: to ensure that each of them was collecting material and to ensure the suitability of the selected material. All the material submitted to the researchers was handed over to the copier center of CMMS so that the samples might select suitable and interesting material for them if some of them could not find any during any week.

Results

The responses of the subjects are analyzed to determine the significance of reading skills by applying three methods. The value of mean, mode, and standard deviation is determined for all the variables. As Brown (1988, p. 154) defines: “the central tendency of groups is often described in terms of means and medians. Comparing the performance of groups will often involve looking at one or both of these basic characteristics.

*Pre-intervention Questionnaire*
The researchers distributed a self-developed structured semi open-ended questionnaire (See appendix # 1) to the experimental group. They were told to respond to the questions mentioned in the questionnaire. The following data were generated.

The questionnaire item 1 elicited samples’ responses about reading English material for pleasure and 28 participants answered into negative whereas only 9 of them responded in affirmative. “Do you enjoy pleasure reading?” was the next question and 30 participants declared that they did not enjoy pleasure reading whereas 7 stated that they did. But they were told to give their option even if they did not do it often. Responding to the third question 29 told that they sometimes read Arabic material during their free time whereas 8 stated that they sometimes read English texts for recreation. The questionnaire item 6 required the participants to mention number of pages they read during one week in the target language. A vast majority of 28 stated that they did not read English material for pleasure. Two participants each reported 3, 4 and 5 whereas the remaining 3 participants declared that they read 10 to 12 pages per week respectively. Reacting to the 7th question, only 5 samples stated that they read some English material during their holidays whereas the remaining 32 reported that they did not read anything during their holidays. The last question was subjective as well and elicited participants’ opinion about the possibility of improving their reading speed and comprehension if they read English texts for recreation in their free time. A vast majority of the respondents declared that it would not help them improve their reading skills and their answers were “no” and “I don’t know”. A few of them did mention that it would be helpful but nearly all of them stated that it would help them increase their vocabulary. All these responses were copied verbatim as the samples wrote them in the first column of table 2.

The last one was a subjective question that asked the participants to write down their favorite topics that they wanted to read in the target language. The total responses were
added that came out to 109 responses in total. Fourteen various topics were reported and all the topics were counted to determine their frequencies. The data detailed in table 1 identifies the topics that Saudi freshmen students of medicine wanted to read in their leisure time.

**Table 1: Participants favourite topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>topic</th>
<th>No of responses</th>
<th>percentage</th>
<th>topic</th>
<th>No of responses</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stories</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cars</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime reports</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Comics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the completion of their twelve-week speed reading project, a post-intervention self-developed structured semi open-ended questionnaire (See appendix # 2) was administered to the experimental group to identify the changes in their attitudes towards pleasure reading. The data were analyzed that generated the following statistics.

**Table 2: Comparison of participants' pre-intervention/post-intervention responses**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Questionnaire items (pre-intervention / post-intervention)</th>
<th>Participants, responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Do you read for pleasure in your free time?</td>
<td>No: 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Do you enjoy pleasure reading?</td>
<td>No: 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Do you read English or Arabic material?</td>
<td>Arabic: 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Do you intend to read English or Arabic material?</td>
<td>Arabic: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>How many pages of English material do you read in a week?</td>
<td>Mean: 1.46 pages per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>How many pages of English material do you intend to read in a week?</td>
<td>Mean: 11.8 pages per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Do you read English material during holidays?</td>
<td>No: 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Do you intend to read English material during holidays?</td>
<td>No: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you think pleasure reading helps/may help you in your studies? Explain How? (Pre-Intervention)</td>
<td>Do you think pleasure reading helped/helps you in your studies? Explain How? (Post-intervention)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"No, I don’t. I read anything for waist the time."

"No, I don’t because I think there is a difference between the textbook language and the entertainment language but they may help one in contact with doctors."

"No I don’t because reading pleasure just help in conversation or discussion but studies depend on medical vocabulary."

"No – Because it is not benefit me in the study."

"Yes, I think that. When you read any material will get many word will help you."

"Yes, it help me in reading and looke at diferent culture."

"Yes, increase from fast reading and increase vocabulary."

"Yes, more reading helped me in fast reading and push me to read anything."

"Yes, I do. Before I was not reading very much but now I read a lot of pages from stories. My reading and understanding developed."

"Yes, it helped me to increase my reading speed and the level of understanding."

"Yes, it helped me in fast reading and also understanding and comprehension of a text."

"Yes, it made me read faster then usual by that I can read more in lesser time."

"It helped me for speed reading with understanding and speaking without shy."

"Yes and it was very helpful. It provided me by vocabulary."

"Yes, because I have known some new words and my reading speed increased. I can finish a lot of material in short time."

"Pleasure reading helped me in reading faster and save much time in studies and also my spelling became better."

"Yes, faster reading, more vocabulary."

"Yes. Now it is very good. Before time to read one page 10 minutes but now different."

"Yes, it kept me faster in reading and by this I can read my medicine materials quickly."
“Yes, it helped in development of spellings & speed. It also helped in understanding of the material. You feel good after the hard work.”

“Yes, it did. Before this term I am read science books and think it was very hard but now that fear is gone.”

**Recording Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension**

Both the above-mentioned components were recorded in the beginning as well as at the end of the pleasure reading project to determine the gains in their reading speed and reading comprehension. The participants’ reading speed and comprehension were recorded on the first day of the second week of the 2nd academic term, 2009. The researchers briefed the participants about the whole process. They were told that they would be given a reading passage with ten comprehension questions and they were supposed to read it as quickly as possible but they needed to ensure that they understood the passage well enough to answer the following questions given on the other side of the paper. The participants were intimated that they would start reading the passage when the researchers asked them to start. A wall clock was hung on the front wall to calculate the time. It was made clear that after the green signal to start their reading they would start reading the passage and write down the time they took to finish the passage. After finishing the passage, they would turn the page and answer the ten comprehension questions about the passage. They were informed that they were not supposed to look at the reading passage after their first reading. Considering the fact that the participants might not be able to understand it fully well, a pilot procedure was executed. The participants were given a specimen reading passage with ten comprehension questions. The clock was set at 12:00 and they were asked to read it and note down the number of
minutes they took to complete the passage. The piloting of the procedure made the whole practice very clear to all the samples.

The same procedure was followed with the experimental and the control group. For all these groups, the clock was set at 11:58 and the participants were told to start their reading at 12:00. They were asked to note down the exact time after they finished their reading and then they should move to the next page to answer the comprehension questions. They were instructed to hand in their papers after writing their names and group numbers. The researchers marked all these papers to check the participants’ reading comprehension. The reading passage contained 404 words that were divided by the time taken by different participants to calculate their reading speed: words per minute. For the sake of calculation, the fractions were converted into round figures according to the following formula: one point was added for 0.50 to 0.99 whereas same reading was kept for 0.01 to 0.49. The data generated were analyzed using SPSS 10. The means, standard deviations, minimum values and maximum values were calculated. The following resulted were generated.

*Table 3: Pre-intervention Independent Samples T-Test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading speed of the samples</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>55.38</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>-.232</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.817 p &gt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>56.14</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension of the samples</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>13.57</td>
<td>-.605</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.547 p &gt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Role of Pleasure Reading

Javid, Al-Khairi

Table 3 details the results of pre-intervention Independent Samples t-test to identify any differences in the reading speed/comprehension of the experimental and control groups. Independent Samples t-test results did not report any significant differences: p > 0.05. The data analysis revealed a very important fact that the participants in both the groups did have extremely wide difference in their reading speed because the standard deviation was 16.02 for the experimental group and 15.2 for the control group. High SD was also witnessed in their reading comprehension (experimental, 13.57; control, 12.31) indicating that both the groups were extremely mixed-ability groups.

Table 4 records the gain in the reading speed and reading comprehension of the experimental and control groups by comparing their pre-intervention and post-intervention readings. The results report a significant increase in the reading speed and reading comprehension of the experimental group as compared to the control group.

Table 4: Pre & post-intervention descriptive analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre-intervention</th>
<th>Post-intervention</th>
<th>Pre/post intervention gain</th>
<th>Pre/post-intervention gain percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading speed</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>55.38</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>102.63</td>
<td>32.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to identify whether both the groups, the experimental and the control, had any statistically significant post-intervention difference as far as their reading speed and reading comprehension were concerned, Independent Samples t-test was applied to the reading speed and reading comprehension of both the groups at the end of the pleasure reading project. Table 5 details the data generated through the independent samples test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading speed of the samples</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>102.38</td>
<td>32.43</td>
<td>2.925</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>85.14</td>
<td>24.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension of the samples</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>61.08</td>
<td>12.19</td>
<td>1.998</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55.96</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings and Recommendations

Comparison of participants' pre-intervention and post-intervention responses to the related questionnaire items, as mentioned in table 2, clearly report an extremely significant difference in the participants’ behavior towards reading in their leisure time. Approximately all pre-intervention responses indicated that the participants did not have any liking for pleasure reading in their free time but post-intervention responses showed a significant positive change in the participants' behaviour towards pleasure reading: majority of them stated that they would read in their leisure time. Furthermore, the analysis of the question "Do you think pleasure reading helped/helps you in your studies? Explain How?" generated participants ' responses that offer valuable insights into the fact that they understood the significance and worth of leisure time reading. The results of the independent samples t-test statistics (p < 0.05) accepted both the hypotheses (Table 5). The comparative analyses given in table 4 report the gains in samples' reading speed (experimental, 84.5%; control, 53.3%) and reading comprehension (27.7%; 13.1%), thus, indicating an increase of 31.2% in the reading speed and 14.6% in the reading comprehension in favour of the experimental group.

The following recommendations are presented in the light of findings of the present study:

i. It must be ensured that a reading-rich atmosphere is provided to the students through certain measures in which they have ample opportunities to select reading materials of their own choice.

ii. It is extremely important that the students should be motivated to read as much as possible so that this extensive reading may develop their schemata of their favorite topics.

iii. It is recommended that the students should be encouraged to maintain regular diary in which they should record the title of the reading materials, number of
pages they read, time of reading, their feelings towards reading that material etc. These diaries should be examined by the teachers especially in the beginning of this process and later on they should be advised to share their diary entries with each other so that their achievements help maintain a healthy and competitive academic atmosphere.

iv. It should be emphasized that the students should not read aloud because that will hinder their speed as well as comprehension because by concentrating on individual words, they will not be able to grasp the overall gist of the passage. It should also be explained to them that they should try to avoid even vocalization and sub-vocalization.

v. The students should be encouraged to make groups of students who have same interest. All the members should be asked to exchange their materials after reading. Furthermore, it is advised they that should discuss their reading experiences with each other so that they feel motivated to read more and more. These mutual discussions will create a sense of achievement in them.

vi. It is also very important to ask them to record their reading speed after every week. This tracking of reading speed by them will inculcate a sense of improvement and they will feel motivated and encouraged to read more and more.

vii. The last but not the least is the factor that the teachers should believe strongly that pleasure reading improves reading speed as well as reading comprehension. Their positive attitude towards pleasure reading will make them exploit their optimum abilities to execute these projects effectively.

Delimitation of the study

This study is delimited to explore and analyze the effects of pleasure reading amongst the students of College of Medicine and Medical Sciences. This study is conducted with a
small number of experimental group (n=74). Also, the study is delimited to a small period of only twelve weeks.

References


The Role of Pleasure Reading


Marsden, N (2001) *How well do our students read in ENGLISH?* PowerPoint Presentation; Abu Dhabi: HCT


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**Dr. Choudhry Zahid Javid** has eighteen year teaching experience in reputed organizations and presently serving Department of Foreign Languages, Taif University in the capacity of Assistant professor of Applied Linguistics. Throughout his professional career he has been actively involved in professional development activities as a resource person and discharged several administrative responsibilities as well. He has authored two ESP textbooks and published several research projects in different fields of ESP/EFL and presented and participated in many international conferences and symposia.
**Dr. Muhammad Al-Khairi** is presently working as the Dean of University Development, Taif University and his area of specialization is Linguistics-acoustic phonetics. He is also serving as the supervisor computer and information technology center and member of the university council, Taif University. He completed his PhD from the University of Florida, USA. He published several research articles and participated and organized several international conferences on various aspects of ELT and higher education.

**APPENDICES:**

*Appendix # 1*

QUESTIONNAIRE (Pre intervention)

Name: ------------------------------------------

Mobile (optional): -------------------------------------------

Email (optional): ----------------------------------------------

1. Do you read for pleasure in your free time?

_________________________________________________________

2. Do you enjoy pleasure reading?

_________________________________________________________
3. Do you read English or Arabic material?

___________________________________________________________

4. How many pages of English material do you read in a week?

___________________________________________________________

5. Do you read English material during holidays?

___________________________________________________________

6. Do you think pleasure reading helps/may help you in your studies?

   Explain How?

   ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

7. What are your favorite topics? Mention three in order of your preference.

   1. _______________________

   2. _______________________

   3. _______________________
Appendix # 2

QUESTIONNAIRE (Post intervention)

Name: ------------------------------------------

Mobile (optional): ------------------------------------------

Email (optional): ------------------------------------------

1. Do you intend to read for pleasure in your free time in future?

___________________________________________________________

2. Do you enjoy pleasure reading?

___________________________________________________________

3. Do you intend to read English or Arabic material?

___________________________________________________________
4. How many pages of English material do you intend to read in a week?

___________________________________________________________

5. Do you intend to read English material during holidays?

___________________________________________________________

6. Do you think pleasure reading helped/ helps you in your studies?

Explain How?

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Date: -------------------

*Appendix # 3*

Student Diary

Name: -----------------------------------------------

Group Number: --------
a. week number/ dates: ________________________________

b. topic/s of the reading material: ________________________________

c. number of pages finished during each week: ________________________________

d. mention the time when the material was read:
   i. ________________________________
   ii. ________________________________
   iii. ________________________________
   iv. ________________________________
   v. ________________________________

e. comments

........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................