

Expectances and Outcomes of an Extensive Reading Programme Carried out among University Students

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Abstract

Intensive reading courses that teach reading strategies and skills may not adequately equip students or produce behavioural changes required for academic studies. An extensive reading programme (ER) was therefore introduced as an adjunct, to support the goals of a reading for academic purposes course. This paper reports on the language learning and literacy skills expectances and outcomes that second year undergraduate students self-assessed as having accomplished as they participated in the ER. Before-and-after (ER) study design was employed, and self-perception questionnaires were administered to generate data that were subjected to descriptive analysis. High percentages of outcome expectations suggest that the students felt that their needs could be met by the ER, believing that it would influence relevant factors in their language learning and literacy skills improvement. Although the ER did not completely meet student expectation levels, it produced very impressive outcomes that recommend ER as a reliable support for reading and language improvement among learners of English as a second language in similar contexts as Nigeria.

Keywords: Extensive reading, academic reading, literacy skills, ESL, expectancy-value theory

Introduction

Reading extensively improves reading comprehension, and those who read voluntarily tend to perform better academically (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007) than those who do not. Studies (Day, 2011) reveal that learners in extensive reading (ER) programmes cultivate a love for reading, develop multi-dimensionally in their reading abilities, as well as grow in language use. ER helps learners to increase reading speed and fluency (Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass & Gorsuch, 2004). Moreover, McKenna (2001) observes that good and poor readers show more distinct difference in attitude towards recreational reading than attitudes towards academic reading. These claims advised the inclusion of an extensive reading programme as a supplement to a regular Reading for Academic Purposes course to afford a set of second year undergraduate students an opportunity to improve their language and literacy skills meaningfully. It was also hoped that students' experience in the exercise could cure students' apathy towards reading, and positively affect their reading attitudes and motivation as they improved on their competences.

This article reports on language learning and literacy skills improvement expectations and outcomes as assessed by the participants themselves. The study is exploratory rather than experimental. No tests were conducted to find out students' literacy or language competence levels before or after the reading exercise. Further, students were their own judges of what they benefitted from the extensive reading programme. Before-and-after programme self-perception questionnaires were used to elicit students' assessment of gains derived from participating in extensive reading programme activities.

Literature review

The practicality of ER in language learning observed over the years since 1980 (Furr, 2011) could not be ignored, particularly because English learners develop diverse domains of their language competence by participating in literature/reading circles. This review highlights the relevance of ER in improving language skills proficiency, reading in particular. And because the ER programme on which this study is based invited participants to anticipate the outcome of the exercise, works on expectancy-value theory in reading are briefly reviewed.

Extensive reading and language skills development

ER programmes engender positive attitude towards English language learning and motivate learners to indulge in tasks that would help them become more proficient in the language. In both ESL and EFL situations, ER is employed to enhance global language development or to focus on particular aspects of learning, reading, language or communicative competence improvement, particularly vocabulary acquisition. Learners improve their language proficiency the more they interact in the language in different media and modes. Extensive reading exposes learners to various linguistic elements and language in use; so that they are able to learn words and structural rules (Tran, 2006).

Words encode concepts and semantic propositions (Toledo & Salager-Meyer, 2009). Therefore, vocabulary knowledge is considered a determining factor in L2 reading and academic performance (August, Carlo, Lively, McLaughlin & Snow, 2006). A language user requires a large vocabulary size to interact in a language, especially in reading – Nations and Hirsh (1992) estimate that a 97-98% vocabulary coverage is required for making meaning from texts. ER programmes create avenues for learners to become conversant with sight and general vocabularies (Day, 2011) as they encounter familiar words over and over in text. Graded reading materials provide a cushion for learning new words in familiar language context. The Word

Detective role in literature circles of ER programmes further focuses learner-reader attention on learning meanings of new words.

Beyond words, grammatical elements, idioms, cohesion devices (Tran, 2006) guide a reader in the negotiation of meaning (Nassaji, 2011). If learners need to encounter new words ten to twenty times to really acquire them, they should see grammatical rules in use for thousands of times to master them (ERF, 2011). Extensive and pleasurable reading not only exposes learners to words, but also deepens their understanding of how language works. They acquire implicit knowledge of discourse structures (Nassaji, 2011), the formal features and conventions of writing (Dupuy, 2006), as they read whole texts.

Integration of all language skills in the process is an appealing aspect of ER. It therefore supports growth in literacy and oracy skills, as well as fluency and accuracy in language use, as learners interact with the language in diverse modes and media when they read alone and when they participate in group discussions. ER gives learners the confidence to speak the language (Earnst-Slavit, Carrison and Speisman-Laughlin, 2009) by providing them with a message and giving them the urge to speak in group discussion (Fredricks, 2012). Earnst-Slavit et al. believe that confidence gained in communicating in English within the classroom in literature circles could encourage English language learners (ELLs) to use the language outside the classroom. Indeed Blanton, Pilonieta and Wood (2007, p. 230) adduce that “discussion is the primary way that reading knowledge, meanings, concepts, interpretations, and understandings are passed around and learned.” Thus, ER ensures wholesome language experience in the learning of the English language.

Literacy circles is also employed for scaffolding reading strategies that students could apply in deconstructing content area texts. Blanton et al. (2007) found that this way of instruction benefitted all categories of learners (weak and strong). Further, such circles helped to integrate disengaged and frustrated adolescent readers and writers in the learning process (Casey, 2008).

The observed outcomes of ER programme over the years and across spectrum of learners have recommended its adoption by learning and national institutions. According to The Korean Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF, 2011), ER compliments intensive reading and aids reading fluency by consolidating and raising awareness of language elements taught under the latter. In line with this assertion, Mahmood (2011) found that ER changed students’ writing and increased their desire to read when it was adopted by The Ministry of Education in Bahrain to support observed language needs of learners. Additional effects observed were changes in personality – such as the cultivation of confidence and positive attitudes towards learning. Prentice (2011) reported similar findings about ER outcomes in Jordan.

Expectancy-value theory of reading motivation

The review so far, largely, has concentrated on language learners. The students in this study, on the other hand, already speak and learn in the English language. However, it has been observed over the years that such students lack adequate control of the language and therefore do not attain proficiency in English language skills to an extent commensurate with their level of education after graduation from the university. Moreover, experience shows that many students find it difficult to read any kind of books during their studies. Thus, it was hoped that the ER programme could create or increase the motivation to read in general, and to read academic books in particular among the students. Since an attempt was made in the study to measure the impact of the ER on motivation to read, a brief review on motivation and related concepts is carried out here.

Motivation is a critical factor in reading, because it determines whether an individual will take action or not (McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence & Jang, 2012), as well as the extent to which reading tasks are engaged. The “intensity of motivation is determined jointly by the learner’s expectancy for success and by the incentive value of the goal” (Hootstein, 1994, p. 475). “By facilitating the persistence and intensity of performing activities” involved in reading, motivation increases reading competence (Schiefele, Schaffnern, Moller & Wigfield, 2012, p. 437). The amount and breath of one’s reading impact reading competence, since the more one reads the better one becomes. It follows that students with low-level reading motivation may fail to develop their reading strategies and sub-skills optimally. On the other hand, if students with poor reading competence find materials suited for their level difficult to comprehend, this could constitute a de-motivating factor to reading. Thus, perceived reading self-efficacy and value or belief about the outcomes of reading could influence reading attitudes (McKenna 2001), “level of motivation, aspiration, and academic achievement” (Martinez, Kock & Cass 2011, p. 352) among students.

Outcome expectation (Schiefele et al., 2012) or outcome expectancies (Barkley 2006) result from beliefs that a given behaviour will produce desired outcomes. Barkley posits that the outcome for those who perceive that the completion of a task is very important is often very different from that of those who attempt the task with low outcome expectancy. By implication, students would indulge in reading and read engagingly only if they believe that the task is of any relevance to them. This proposition on an affect issue presupposes that the student has, to a large extent, control of the cognitive aspect of reading competence. However, where reading competence is poor, other attributes of reading could also be low.

Having been educated in environments that offer very little in [non-academic] literacy activities and book availability, most individuals may fail to develop characteristics of literacy suited to reading at tertiary education level or for growth in different dimensions of reading. There are indications that many university students, having undergone elhi education with suboptimal exposure to prints and reading, failed to cultivate enough reading motivation, positive attitude towards reading or capacity for information-seeking and self-learning. Therefore, the term “struggling readers” in the Nigerian context may apply to a majority who have to read materials otherwise suited to their education level but which are not within their reading ability. This assertion is made bearing in mind that reading for comprehension is different from reading to pass examinations. Reading in general has become a chore to be avoided, or given minimal effort through rote-learning in order to pass examinations, rather than to learn in genuine ways. If students are to read with comprehension, they need support to cultivate reading strategies and sub-skills, habits, motivation and a positive attitude towards reading, even at university.

Much as the students in the ER programme were expected to enjoy their texts, the concern of this paper is the concurrent language learning and language skills improvement that students were to derive from ER related literacy activities. If a high value was placed on it, the more relevant the ER exercise would be in improving different dimensions of their reading experience and growth as well. Heath and Bryant (2000, p. 363) posit that the expectancy-value theory implies that “people orient themselves to the world according to their expectations (beliefs) and evaluations.” Consequently, in line with the use and gratification theory, the authors argue that “the products of belief (expectations) and evaluation influence the seeking of gratifications, which in turn influence media consumption” (p. 363). One would expect that students’ assessment of ongoing

literacy activities as gratifying (outcomes), or otherwise, would influence perception, attitude and behavioural patterns about reading, and therefore the extent of engagement with future tasks at different points in the ER programme. This would ultimately determine outcome produced.

Students were expected to grow in various dimensions of reading, in both cognitive and affective areas during the ER exercise. It was hoped that they would pick up reading sub-skills and strategies as well as find reading and information gaining pleasurable. This study investigates how much they identified with the benefits of ER (expectation) and the gains that they made (outcomes) ultimately. Did they grow in these areas of language and literacy competence that past studies (Day, 2011, p. 14) associated with ER: vocabulary range and knowledge, writing skills, positive motivation and attitudes towards reading, speaking proficiency, listening proficiency and grammar?

Methodology

In this non-experimental classroom research, a before-and-after design was adopted and questionnaires were administered to second year undergraduate students that participated in an extensive reading programme (ER). ER was introduced for practice and as a supplement to a reading for academic purposes course; as a means of reading competence improvement rather than as a research project. Thus, students were not grouped into experimental and control groups, but treated as a whole group. The study became necessary to verify the lecturer's assumptions about students' reading attributes, on the one hand, and on the other, the efficacy of an ER programme in helping students develop/improve cognitive and affective aspects of language and literacy skills. It turned out that some students were already aware that they needed support to improve relevant skills beyond what the core-course, being theoretical, could afford them.

In addition to what teachers think about students' performance, their view of themselves is important in their growth. Specifically, the ER programme could have a long-lasting impact, and in fact become a life-changing experience for some, if students themselves assess the literacy activities they participated in as instrumental in their growth. Further, considering that students' composite growth, academic and language competence, would derive from input from their diverse curriculums and extra-curricular activities, they, rather than tests, were considered the best judges of the benefits they gained from the ER exercise. Thus, a pre-ER questionnaire was administered to explore the expectancy-value beliefs that they brought into the reading programme. The post-ER questionnaire, which was similar to the pre-ER questionnaire, gave the students the opportunity to evaluate what they had actually gained. It seems to me that students became more aware of what they could gain from ER when they completed the pre-ER questionnaire, and this could have activated their task value beliefs (Schiefele et al., 2012) on relevant language and literacy skills at the outset. This in a way made them their own observers, implicitly, regulating and monitoring their own progress (Klingner & Edwards, 2006), which they were able to evaluate in the post-ER questionnaire.

Under the ER programme, each of 96 students read three-four books (page range: 110–299) out of ten titles selected off bookshop shelves by class representatives. At the beginning, each student purchased the book that fell to their group, and after each round of reading, books were reassigned/rotated. The reason students had limited choice, unlike in typical ER practice (Day, 2011, Furr, 2011), was the absence of a relevant library. Further, the number of books had to be limited to what could be taken early in the semester, since the ER was an extra activity that did not attract academic credit in itself.

The students did their best to read books assigned them (and were able to evaluate different writing and publishing elements). Since they had limited time to read, and needed to learn to apply different reading sub-skills, they were asked to read as fast as possible and target general understanding of a book. After the period assigned for reading each selection, the class met at the same hour to discuss respective books in pre-arranged groups. Each person served an earlier assigned role of Team Leader (e.g., prepared general questions about the story), Word Detective (picked 10 new words and explains their meaning in context to group), Connector (connected story world with real life experience), Summariser, Passage Picker (presented important passages in story), or Culture Collector (optional – compared culture in story with own culture). The students embraced the challenging introduction, and enjoyed a sense of control as they discussed their reading in groups with little or no interference from their lecturer.

The “before” or pre-ER questionnaire was administered to ascertain students’ perception of outcome expectancies prior to their ER experience; and the “after” or post-ER questionnaire elicited outcomes produced. Both questionnaires were similar, differing only in the use of tense – while the pre-ER used future tense to express expectation (e.g. [Prefix: “Right now I know that the reading programme will...” – “It will enhance my writing skill.”]), the post-ER used past tense to express achievement (e.g. “It enhanced my writing skill.”). The pre-ER anticipations constitute students’ expectations or outcome expectancies (also expectancy-value beliefs) of the ER and the post-ER self-assessment indicate the outcomes produced.

The relevant section of the questionnaires had 12 items with five Likert-scaled options:

- Certainly not *Low*
- Not so sure
- Don’t know
- Sure
- Very sure *High*

Students indicated in the pre-ER questionnaire how certain they were that the ER would bring improvement in their language and literacy skills, while in the post-ER questionnaire they assessed the extent they perceived that they benefitted from the ER. In addition, an open-ended question in both instruments invited students to comment freely on the exercise.

There was an (unexpected) interval of three months between the two questionnaires occasioned by an unexpected extension of the semester following a sudden shut down of the university after student demonstration. This, nonetheless, did not affect the study, but rather created opportunity for examining the impact of the ER exercise on students’ reading behaviour, for example, an observed increase in voluntary reading. The study questionnaires were administered during regular class hours under the supervision of the lecturer. In both cases, students were not informed before hand that a questionnaire would be administered to them.

The findings of the study are presented using these research questions as a guide:

1. How did students accept suggested outcome expectancies?
2. To what extent did the extensive reading exercise influence language and literacy skills development among students?
3. How do outcomes produced compare with outcome expectancies?
4. What is the relationship between expectancy-value motivationof, and outcome produced by, the extensive reading exercise?

Discussion of findings

Contrary to expectation, students embraced a novel idea, the introduction of an extensive reading programme as an adjunct to a regular course, with very high expectations, anticipating that it would have positive impact on their language learning and literacy skills. Perhaps a weekend reading of their first text, before the administration of the pre-ER questionnaire, inspired their response. Below is a thematic summary of students' initial comments in the pre-ER questionnaire:

- a. Excitement: all 93 students in the study, but one (who complained that ER would take attention away from other academic work) expressed their excitement with this innovative addition
- b. Confessions of reading weaknesses, e.g. apathy towards reading
- c. Expected benefits
- d. Recommendations that ER be introduced at all university levels (in fact, every educational institution in the country).

Theme (c) is relevant in the examination of the expectation that students brought to the ER exercise, and is expatiated on in the discussion of the first research question.

Students' acceptance of suggested outcome expectancies

The value that students placed on the ER exercise determined how much they exerted themselves in completing tasks (Barkley, 2006, Schiefele et al., 2012). Their response reveals the extent of involvement and yields a basis (or control) for evaluating the influence of ER on skills development. It establishes that a behaviour, reading, that could produce an effect, growth in language and literacy skills, took place. Table 1 shows that the majority of the class were either "sure" or "very sure" that the ER exercise would support their needs in language proficiency development.

Table 1. Percentage of students indicating certainty that ER would impact their language and literacy skills (N=93)

Language/literacy skill	Expectation <i>ER programme will</i>	Sure + Very sure
LANGUAGE LEARNING	help me to increase my vocabulary	92.0
	I will gain better knowledge of grammar	87.0
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCIES	improve my language proficiency	95.6
	make it easier to understand lectures (Listening)	59.4
	give me ideas to talk about with my friends (Speaking)	83.7
	enhance my writing skill	70.7
READING	improve my reading skill generally	91.3
	have positive impact on my reading	93.4
	help me increase my reading speed	84.7

	improve academic reading skill	83.3
AFFECT	help me overcome my dislike for reading	47.2
	I will be motivated to read more	80.2

Almost all the suggested outcome-expectancies were relevant to the majority of the class. It is noteworthy that about one half of the class (47.2%) were not favourably disposed to reading prior to the ER and hoped to achieve a behavioural change. Again, quite a large number of the students believed that ER could improve listening to lecture (59.4%). Further, free comments made by students in the questionnaire corroborate their desire to improve on the above features of language learning. Table 2 shows a summary of their comments.

Table 2. Thematic analysis of students' comments on expected benefits of ER

Theme	Frequency (N=75)	¹ Percentage (of N)	Need assessment
Reading skills			Reading competence improvement needs = 58.7%
Skills improvement	23	30.6	
Application of skills taught in class	6	8.0	
Extensive/Recreational reading	19	25.2	
Intensive reading	5	6.6	
Increase comprehension	2	2.6	
Motivate reading	13	17.3	Language learning needs = 32.0%
Language proficiency	6	8.0	
Vocabulary development	18	24.0	Other = 9.3%
World view expansion	7	9.3	
<i>Total</i>	97	100.0	

¹Note: The table represents only a summary of descriptive data and does not suggest agreement or disagreement. *Adapted from* Christopher (2012, p. 118)

In having the students predict what they could gain from the ER, the pre-ER questionnaire helped to engage them in the exercise. The data presented above suggest that the students were (or became) aware of their needs in language learning and acquisition of reading competence. Importantly, they wanted their problems solved. The post-ER questionnaire allowed the students to engage in a self-assessment of changes experienced in their areas of need.

Assessing language and literacy skills improvement outcomes produced by ER

Table 3 reveals that students benefitted from ER in different domains of reading and language competence improvement.

Table 3. Self-assessed outcomes produced by ER (N = 93)

	Sure + very sure of positive impact (%)	Class mean (Max = 5)	Index for category
Language learning	80.7	3.88	78.4% Mean = 3.9

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar • Vocabulary 	76.0	3.89	
Language proficiencies			70.2% Mean = 3.7
Improve language proficiency	80.6	3.83	
Listening	43.0	3.19	
Speaking	86.1	4.10	
Writing	54.8	3.40	
Reading	87.1	3.95	
Reading			79.9% Mean = 3.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading skill 	90.3	4.10	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading speed 	72.1	3.89	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic reading 	77.4	3.76	
Affect (reading)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude 	47.0*	3.52	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation 	72.0	3.66	

*Not applicable = 33.3%. Some students did seem to have negative attitude towards reading prior to the ER.

Growth in reading competence (79.9%) shows the highest gains. It is particularly impressive that the majority (77.1%) of the students found extensive reading useful in the improvement of their academic reading. For one, this was the major goal of the supplementary ER exercise. Second, most Nigerian learners' attention is usually focused on reading academic materials exclusively for literacy growth.

A pre-ER comment by one of the students had predicted that ER would make this impact:

- “The extensive reading programme is a good programme which I like because it will help me improve my academic reading skills and the usage of language.”

(Christopher, 2012, p. 122) [pre-ER]

Other comments by students give more insight on how ER supported academic reading:

- “And when a student is interested in reading anything readable, then learning becomes easier” [post-ER]
- “Any time I am reading other courses and I feel stuffed up, I just pick up my reader and go through a few pages. By the time I finish with this I'm able to read better and assimilate easier” (Christopher, 2012, p. 122) [pre-ER]

Obviously, reading extensively increases reading comprehension (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007, Schiefele et al., 2012). Moreover, ER motivated learners (72%) to read (e.g. Fredricks, 2012, Mahmood, 2011), and enabled 47% of the class to overcome their dislike of reading.

Again, the ER was salutary in language learning (78.4%), enabling most of the students to become more conversant with the grammar of the language (80.7%) and to extend their vocabulary (76%). By increasing meaningful interactions in the language, while reading and at literacy circles, the ER exercise impacted on growth in language skills proficiency, with Speaking (having ideas to talk about with friends) showing more gains (86.1%) than Listening (to lecture, 43%). The next section indicates the extent to which the outcomes produced compare with the expectancies.

Comparing outcomes produced with outcome expectancies

Other than “Speaking,” which shows a percentage outcome produced (86.1%) higher than the outcome expectancy (83.7%), the ER exercise did not meet the class expectation fully. Nonetheless, when the level of success is evaluated against targets, the picture looks impressive. Table 5 shows the level of achievement (percentage) of students’ expectations from the ER.

Table 5. Percentage achievement of ER outcome expectations vs outcomes produced of ER (Percentages)

	Sure + very sure of positive impact of ER (%)		Percentage achievement
	Pre-ER	Post-ER	
Language learning			
• Grammar	87.0	80.7	92.8
• Vocabulary	92.2	76.0	82.4
Language proficiencies			
Improve language proficiency	95.6	80.6	84.3
Listening	59.4	43.0	72.4
Speaking	83.7	86.1	102.9
Writing	70.7	54.8	77.5
Reading	91.3	87.1	95.4
Reading skill	93.4	90.3	96.7
Reading speed	84.7	72.1	85.1
Academic reading	83.3	77.4	92.9
Affect (reading)			
• Attitude	47.2	43.0*	91.1
• Motivation	80.2	72.0	89.8

*Not applicable: pre-ER = 37%; post-ER = 33.3%

The results in Table 5 indicate that the ER exercise significantly influenced improvement in language learning and literacy skills. Further computations reveal the percentages of students that noticed the impact of ER on various aspects of language and reading competences as:

- Language learning = 87.4%
- Language skills proficiency = 87.7%
- Reading skills growth = 91.7%
- Affect improvement = 91.1%

The findings imply that students’ overall performance in reading comprehension and academic achievement should improve as they become better readers and writers.

Relation between expectancy-value motivation and outcome produced

People with high expectancy-value beliefs tend to benefit more from a programme of activities than those with low values, because they are usually better prepared to confront and complete tasks (Barkley, 2006, Bandura, 1997, Zimmerman, 1997). However, experience during ER

activities may contribute to the affect domain positively, leading to those with low self-efficacy and motivation at the outset to produce desired results.

To explore a possible relationship between the value (outcome expectancies) that the students placed on the ER exercise and outcomes produced, the post-ER self-assessment in Reading and Writing skills for the students with high expectation at the beginning of the exercise were analysed. Of 84 students that had high expectation on reading improvement, 72 or 85.7% attained a high outcome, while in writing only 61.5% indicated attaining a high outcome.

The above confirmation of the importance of self-efficacy – narrowly operationalised here as students expectation to achieve good outcome – notwithstanding, further analysis indicate that those students with low expectation values did not necessarily achieve low outcome. Tables 6 and 7 show the dynamics in response for the entire group.

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of expectation (Pre-ER in March) & outcome (Post-ER in June) of ER impact on Reading skill

Period	Reading programme improved general reading skill (June)			
		Not so sure + Don't know	Sure + Very sure	Total
Reading programme will improve general reading skill (March)	Not so sure + Don't know	0	8	8
	Sure + Very sure	12	72	84
	Total	12	80	92

Table 6 shows that all eight (8) students who did not expect ER to make impact on their general reading skill found that it did, but 12 with high expectation did not find ER helpful in improving that skill. Nonetheless, these constitute only 14% of the 84 students who were positive that ER would influence their growth in general reading skill. A similar pattern occurred in writing skill improvement for both the Low and High groups as Table 7 indicates.

Table 7. ER impact on Writing skill: Cross-tabulation of expectation (Pre-ER = March) & outcome (Post-ER = June)

Period	Reading programme improved writing skill (June)			
		Not so sure + Don't know	Sure + Very sure	Total
Reading programme will improve writing skill (March)	Not so sure + Don't know	17	10 (58.8%)	27 (100%)
	Sure + Very sure	25 (38.5%)	40	65 (100%)
	Total	42	50	92

Table 7 shows that 10 out of 17 students who did not expect ER to have a positive impact perceived that they achieved some growth in their writing skills, while 40 out of 65 who expected positive impact made expected gains. The less impressive outcome (when compared with that of Reading skill) may be attributed to a longer time required to observe the impact that

extensive reading is bound to make on writing (Dupuy, 2006), particularly for students who may have failed to use writing as an integral part of their group contribution.

Taken together, these findings suggests that where low expectancy-value is observed gains could still be recorded, and that high expectancy-value among learners would not on its own ensure the achievement of expected outcome without external motivating input by a facilitator or other factors. Again, low self-efficacy or expectancy-value may not preclude a determination to engage and complete a task.

The motivation that students bring to a task or cultivate as they undertake series of activities could make a difference. Although this study did not specifically elicit students' motivation level at the outset of the ER exercise, their pre-ER expectation that the programme would motivate them to read more is taken as motivation to accomplish outcomes. The influence that this had on outcome produced is assessed by cross-tabulating post-ER Vocabulary increase and Academic reading improvement achieved with pre-ER motivation (as explained above).

Almost all the participants (94.6% in March and 96.6% in June) had indicated that they wished to acquire more vocabulary so they could use more words in their communication. This therefore seems an important aspect of language learning and reading to the students. At the beginning of the ER exercise, 92.2% believed that they would increase their vocabulary, but at the end of the exercise, 76% claimed that they made substantial increase. Table 8 shows the relation between motivation levels and perception of success in vocabulary increase.

Table 8. Relation between anticipated ER influence on motivation (to read) and vocabulary acquisition outcome

Period	ER helped to increase vocabulary (June)			Total
		Not so sure + Don't know	Sure + Very sure	
ER will increase motivation to read (March)	Not so sure + Don't know	3	15	18
	Sure + Very sure	18	55	73
	Total	21	70	91

The table shows that a convergence (worked out as 63.7%) occurs were three students neither expected to be motivated nor made gains in vocabulary acquisition, and 55 of those who expected to be motivated made expected gains. On the other hand, 15 (83.3%) out of 18 students who were not sure that the ER exercise would increase their motivation to read (March) made gains in vocabulary acquisition, whereas 18 (24.7%) who believed they would be motivated did not make the required gains. Thus, although the relation between high motivation level and language learning (vocabulary acquisition) is significant – 75% achievement of expectation – the results show that those with low motivation level also made gains. A similar outcome obtains in Academic reading skill.

Table 9. Relation between anticipated ER influences on motivation to read and Academic reading skills outcome

Period	ER improved academic reading skill (June)			
		Not so sure + Don't know	Sure + Very sure	Total
ER will increase motivation to read (March)	Not so sure + Don't know	7	11	18
	Sure + Very sure	18	54	71
	Total	25	65	90

Table 9 shows that students' expectation about ER and increase in motivation to read converged with Academic reading skills improvement achieved to a large extent (67.8% or 7 + 54). The difference is accounted for by 11 (12.2%) students who did not think they would be motivated to read, but experienced improvement, and 18 (20%) with an inverse relation in anticipation and realisation. It is noteworthy that 61% of those with low motivation anticipation (i.e. 11 out of 18) achieved academic reading improvement, while 24.4% of those with high motivation failed to experience academic reading improvement (or perceived that they did not).

These readings indicate that while students with low (intrinsic) motivation may actually take necessary actions, those highly intrinsically motivated at the outset of a programme may also require external motivation; or, that other factors could limit task performance and gains. Besides, other factors, such as a healthy scepticism at the outset of a programme, may account for low motivation expectation/score at the outset of an intervention.

Conclusion

Many factors were at play during the execution of the ER, for example, the lecturer could not facilitate the programme as effectively as she had intended due to other duties. An unexpected semester break interrupted the fourth rotation of books. On the part of the students, academic assignments may have limited the extent to which they could read recreational texts for optimal participation in group discussions. Expectedly, the exercise would have been more tedious for students that were reading at low efficient level (over 60% assessed their reading effectiveness at or below average). Nonetheless, the results are very encouraging and show that ER is a welcome intervention in Nigerian learning situation. Although the outcome produced did not match (unanticipated) high expectations with which students embraced a modest extensive reading programme, the goal of the ER exercise was achieved, and ER is confirmed a veritable instrument for improving language and literacy competences.

The study findings reveal that the ER programme compensated for a low-print environment and mitigated apathy towards reading. It positively influenced reading attitude and motivation and improved language and literacy skills: fluency and accuracy. Thus, the study provides further evidence of the benefits of ER in second language learning situations. ER is relevant in higher education, and Nigerian students will benefit tremendously from ER programmes. ER is salutary to creating active readers, and reduces apathy towards reading when students participate in reading circles.

The administration of a pre-ER questionnaire may have raised students' consciousness on possible gains from the exercise. The expression of their expectation, quantitatively and qualitatively, may have helped the learners to concentrate on identified areas of need. Expectedly, ER increased language in-take, autonomy in language learning as well as collaborative learning. Observed behavioural changes among students indicate that they would carry over new understanding about reading beyond the programme period into academic studies and recreational reading. Since students' expectations were met, they should more readily indulge in independent extensive reading, and find confronting academic texts less daunting than was the case hitherto.

In confirming the expectancy-value theory, that individuals with outcome expectations would persistently complete tasks, the study also revealed that those who could have been adjudged as not possessing this prior energy also obtained good outcome, suggesting that it was not necessarily absent from the outset. It could also be that gratifications (outcomes) observed as students participated in the ER exercise elicited appropriate behaviours conducive to achieving required outcomes (uses and gratification theory). Again, the importance of collaborative learning in motivating learners cannot be ignored.

The gains of the ER, notwithstanding, questions abound. If students were aware that reading would improve their reading competence and language proficiency (pre-ER response), why did they not seek out materials to read? Many excuses could be advanced, such as a socio-cultural environment that does not support voluntary reading, a culture of reading for examination purposes exclusively, poor print environment, little or no literacy activities requiring reading, apparent "institutionalisation" of a no-reading culture (readers are often ridiculed) and poor foundation in reading development at lower educational levels. These factors may prove more significant reading deterrents than the incursion of the Internet and social media, which are often blamed for literacy failures that were already prevalent in the system before their advent. Reading and literacy improvement will take place when all factors in the reading environment are taken into consideration and reading materials and activities are readily available to the ordinary child/person.

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