



The Effects of Input-Flood through Reading English Short Stories and Novels on EFL Learners' Receptive Skills

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Abstract

The present study done to prove The Effect of Input-flood through Reading English Short Stories and Novels on Receptive Skills. One M.A student of TEFL in Islamic Azad University, Abadeh branch has participated in this research. The progress continued for 12 weeks. The result concluded based on the results of IELTS' listening and reading. In the research two instruments were used, the dairies which written by the participant every night and the IELTS test to identify the student's level of proficiency. First, the participant level of proficiency realized by the IELTS test. After reading English short stories and novels, she took part in the test again. Both results analyzed. The results showed that Input-flood through Reading English Short Stories and Novels had effect on increasing reading and listening skills.

Keywords: input-flood, listening skill, reading skill, short stories, novels

INTRODUCTION

Of all four main skills of language learning, reading has an important role in learning and understanding the authentic materials. In an EFL context that individuals do not have opportunity for oral communication and contact with natives, reading can play an important role to promote learning.

Reading in a foreign language has been one of the primary foci of second language acquisition researchers in recent years. Zhou (2008) states that the acquisition of L2 reading skills is a priority for many language learners around the world. Many EFL students rarely experience a situation where they have to speak English on a daily basis, but they might need to read in English quite often in order to benefit from various pieces of information, most of which is recorded in English (Eskey, 1996). Moreover, reading is fundamental for all academic disciplines (White as cited in Lei, Rinehart, Howard, & Cho, 2010). Hasbun (2006) highlights the importance of reading by stating that reading skills

“lie at the heart of formal education” and it is difficult to achieve many things without having the ability to read fluently and with good comprehension. Therefore, every person should be provided with the opportunity to be able to become a skilled L2 reader (Kulaç, 2011). Providing rich input in English is essential for promoting English proficiency. Extensive reading (ER) is an excellent way to provide target language input, Especially in foreign language settings where the target language input is very limited (Entürka, 2015)

According to Palmer (1964), in extensive reading, the learner reads rapidly for getting information and pleasure, without any notice to meaning and linguistic features. So it is a “supplementary reading”. Also, he (1921) noted that in extensive reading the learners study the passage carefully and notice to grammatical point of the text. According to Carrel and Carson (1997), in extensive reading students read longer contents to know the gist and essential parts of the text rapidly without any effort to recognize the structure. So, in learning to read extensively learners obtain a large amount of materials. Moreover, Harmer (2001) stated that the teachers play crucial role in teaching extensive or intensive reading. At first, teachers encourage students to read for pleasure, to enhance their general knowledge, and to develop their skills. Paran (2003) stated that extensive reading is not enough “for developing reading skill, and a more focused approach, including explicit instruction is also needed; it deals with more detailed comprehension and has an important role in teaching reading strategies” (p.40).

The present study was an attempt to work on the effect of input-flood through reading English novels and short stories on receptive skills as a case study. This chapter gives a detailed account of the reading as one of the important language skill and is followed by the importance of input flood and extensive reading.

In EFL context, the learners do not have the opportunity to interact and communicate with the native language speakers; in other words, students do not face real communicative situations. So they should try and find some ways to receive the required comprehensible input. Reading is one of that important ways; in addition, novels and stories make a suitable situation to engage in reading programs more. This study investigates the effect of reading novels and short stories on reading and listening skill as receptive skills in second language learning.

THE STUDY

This study tried to investigate how language skills promoted. The research intended to show how receptive skills (listening and reading) expanded. Input flood instruction is one of the ways in order to develop language skills. By using large amount of input, language teachers select some texts in which a special structure is frequent. It is obvious that high frequency of occurrence would enhance structural saliency and promote the learners noticing. This investigation intended to show the importance of input flood and the relationship between input-flood, listening and reading.

The present study conducted to seek answers to the following questions:

- 1) Does input-flood through reading English short story books and novels have any effects on intermediate EFL learners' listening and reading skills?

- 2) What are the EFL learners' attitudes toward the effectiveness of an input-based language learning approach?
- 3) What obstacles EFL learners may face during an input-based language learning approach?

Research Hypothesis

- 1) Input –flood through reading English short story books and novels has the potential to improve intermediate EFL learner's listening skill.
- 2) EFL learners have positive attitudes toward the effectiveness of an input-based language learning approach.
- 3) EFL learners face some obstacles during on input-based language learning approach.

METHOD

Participants

The present qualitative study used a case study research design (Yin, 2008) with one individual as the primary unit of analysis. According to Yin, the results of this research design can strengthen the internal validity of a single participant case study if patterns are found to coincide with other research results. Case study is a qualitative descriptive research that is used to look at individuals, small group of participants, or a group as a whole. This case study was conducted with one adult female (between 25-30 year-old). She is studying TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) at M.A level in Islamic Azad University, Abadeh Branch and she had some experiences of teaching English as a second language. Also, She was interested to engage in ER program for three months the study began in April to July (2016). She had already passed all of their courses, and she wanted to defend their thesis in recent year. Her English proficiency was in intermediate level.

The participant does not have any English background. She is Iranian and speaks Persian as her mother tongue. She does not have any experience of living in English speaking countries.

Instruments

In this case study, the researcher benefited from two instruments. The first one was the IELTS test which used as a placement test before and after the procedure. The second one was the dairies written by the participants every night before going to bed. In these dairies, she talked about what happened over the course during the day and the procedure. She also wrote about their feeling and individual experiences, thoughts and comment on events outside the writer's direct experiences.

Procedure

First of all, the participant took part in an IELTS test. The participant started ER in April 2016. She advised to select her own reading materials on the basis of what seemed most interesting to her and to stop reading if the book was either not interesting or too difficult. The participant maintained to read approximately 60 minutes in a day. Data were collected throughout the 12-week treatment period. However, as she started to read

extensively, she often talked about their reading experiences when she met. Neither ever said that she wanted to stop extensive reading prior to the end of the project in July 2016. The participant of this case study read at least 1000 pages from these short stories and novels that listed below:

- 1- The phantom of the opera, Jennifer basset, 44 p, stage one
- 2- Fly away home, Patricia Hermes, 42 p, stage 2
- 3- Pride and prejudice, Jane Austen, 108 p, stage 6
- 4- The hat, john Scott, 22p, stage easy starter
- 5- The room in the tower, Rudyard Kipling, 46p, stage 2 elementary
- 6- Apollo's gold, Antoinette Moses, 48p, stage 2
- 7- Far from the madding crowd, Thomas hardy, 104p, stage 5
- 8- East of Eden, john Steinbeck, 102p, stage 6
- 9- The house on the hill, Elizabeth laird, 31p, stage 1
- 10- Persuasion, Jane Austen, 104p, stage 4
- 11- Little women, Louisa May Alcott, 88p stage 4
- 12- Women in business, David Evans, 60p, stage 2
- 13- Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Thomas hardy, 136p, stage 6
- 14- The secret garden, Frances Hudson Burnett, 72p, stage 3
- 15- Seven wonders of the ancient world, Abdullah Ghanbari, 48p, stage 3
- 16- Seasons and celebrations, Jackie Maguire, 22p, stage 2
- 17- American readings, Robert Grindell, Leonard Marelli, and Harvey Nadler, 223 p, stage 6.
- 18- Great Expectations, Charles Dickens, 422p, stage 6

Data analysis

The scores of the two IELTS tests with self-experience of the participants (her dairies) might show if the input-flood through reading English novels and short stories had any effect on EFL learner`s listening and reading skills or not. Also analyzing her written dairies would show the barriers that participant might face during the learning a language via an input-learners based program.

RESULTS

Dairies

In order to facilitate participant's understanding, the participant used some reading strategies in the table below shows types of reading strategies, which used in the dairies. The strategies divide into 4 categories: how to read, what to read, when to read and others. The numbers in the table show the weeks the strategies appeared.

Table 1. Number of weeks the strategies

How to read	The number of weeks the strategies appeared
Translate into Persian	1,2,3,5
Not translate	2,6,9,10,11,12
Use appendix (word list)	1,2,3,4,5
Divide a long sentence into sections	1,3,5,7,9
Use a dictionary	1,2,4,5,8
Not use a dictionary	2,3,7,9,10
Read more than one time	1,2,4
Pay attention to onomatopoeia	1,2
Understand polysemous words from the context	1,2,3
Guess the word meaning from the context	1,2,3,5,7,10,11,12
Pay attention to illustrations	1,2,3,6,7,8
Not depend on illustrations	1,2,3,10,11,12
Empathize with the character(s)	2,3,4,5,10
Visualize the story	2,3,6
Read along with an audio CD	6
Read aloud	2
Increase the reading speed	1,2,4,5,6,9
Concentrate while reading	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10

Table 2. How to read

Read a story you already know	2,4,12,1,7
Read a cinematized story	8,7,3
Read a lot of easy books	2,11
Read longer books	1,6,8,7,10
Read shorter books	1,2,3,4
Find a favorite series	2,4,8,9,11,12

Table 3. When to read

In the morning	1,3,5,7,8,10
In the evening or at night	2,4,6

Table 4. Other

Build a habit of reading	11,12
Set concrete goals	12

The 'How to read' category yielded mixed results, it shows both bottom-up strategies (e.g. translating into Persian and dividing a long sentence to sections) and top-down strategies (e.g. guessing the meaning from the context and visualizing a story). It was clear that participant held on both strategies. For example, the participant used illustrations to understand the story in Week 4, but she decided not to depend on illustrations in Week 8, and then she guessed the meaning of new words in Week 10.

IELTS test

The test used at the beginning and in the end of the study was reading and listening modules of IELTS practice test. Each Module included 40 items reasonably arranged from easier to ones that are more difficult. Following tables describe the item types and the results of the experimenter.

The following table shows the results of the listening module.

Table 5. Results of the listening Module

Section No. and No. of items	Item type	Psycholinguistic Classification	First score	Second score
S.1 (1 to 5)	Simple completion	Recognition	3	4
S.1 (6-10)	Simple completion	Recognition	2	2
S.2 (11-14)	Answering questions (choices given)	Recognition	2	4
S.2 (15-20)	Summarizing details (Choices not given)	Comprehension	4	4
S.3 (21-30)	Simple completion (choices not given)	Recognition& Comprehension	5	5
S.4 (31-35)	Simple completion (choices not given)	Comprehension	3	3
S.4 (36-40)	MC items	Recognition& Comprehension	2	2
Total listening score			21	24

As shown in the table, the listening had four parts with 40 questions. The question were more difficult as it moved forward. It was hoped that the researcher could conclude the effect of reading English short stories and novels on the receptive skills. The result of the IELTS tests and experience of the researcher in reading English short stories and novels could help finding the effect of input flood.

The following table details the results of the reading module.

Table 6. Results of the Reading Module

Paragraph No. & No. of items	Item type	Psycholinguistic Classification	First score	Second score
P.1 (1 to 7)	True-False	Recognition	3	3
P.1 (8-13)	MC items	Recognition	2	4
P.2 (14-22)	Finding main idea (choices were given)	Recognition	8	7
P.2 (23-26)	Understanding details (Choices not given)	Comprehension	3	4
P.3 (27-31)	Finding main idea (choices were given)	Recognition	1	3
P.3 (32-35)	Finding Main idea (choices were given)	Comprehension	3	2
P.3 (36-40)	Simple completion (answers not given)	Comprehension	1	3
Reading total score			21	26

The reading part as shown in the above table has three long passages with 40 questions. The difficulty level of questions are also depicted based on Farhadi, Jafarpour and Birjandi (1994. p.25) psycholinguistic classification.

Recognition type questions are the easiest type of questions which the answers can be easily found in the passage. Comprehension type questions are more difficult questions because it needs the readers' analysis and comprehension of the passage. The table shows the participant's score before and after the research. It was hoped that the results and the opinion of the participant helped to understand whether the experience of reading English short stories and novels improved her reading comprehension or not.

As mentioned above the score of second test's reading was 5 marks more than the first test. According to the scores and the answers of each question in the test it will be show if there is any positive relationship between input-flood and improving reading skill or not. In the following the questions and answers of reading section will be analyze.

DISCUSSION

Reading and listening are language's receptive skill and the sources of language input for EFL/ESL learners. They play crucial roles in promoting the learners' competence. Reading input flooding can facilitate the acquisition of target language features by increasing their frequency of occurrence.

As it mentioned before the participant of this study take part in a an input-flood based construction during a 12 week process(3 months).She read more than 1000 pages of short stories and novels, also more than 9000 words. It is obvious that reading in a large amount will have an effect on language skills. According to the dairies and IELTS test results a positive effect and attitudes are toward input flood based structure. The scores increased in IELTS test, the participant answered 24 correct questions in listening part, and 26 correct answered in reading part. The right answered questions in reading parts are more related to question (8-13) question (27-31) and question (36-40) .These parts were related to comprehension and recognition (according to psycholinguistic classification). It can be conclude that reading short stories and novels because of frequency of repeated words and structures has a positive effect on reading comprehension and recognition of participant. In addition the participant get improved in finding main idea because it's a special quality of reading passages of long story ,the participant should concentrate to remember and processing the events of all chapters. Also it helps her to get the main idea easier than before. Checking the answered of listening IELTS test showed an improving .She said in her dairies that she can recognize listening words in second IELTS test better than first IELTS test. As mentioned before input flooding cause incidental vocabulary learning. So her vocabulary corpus increased and she can recognize and understand more words than first IELTS test. She has good feeling for taking apart and continuing the process of reading however she tired sometimes.. According to Sadeghi (2016) input flood through listening English movies has positive effect on receptive skills. Rikhtegar and Gholami (2015) indicated that input flooding could enhance the acquisition of the English simple past tense.

In addition, Tabatabaei and Yakhabi (2009) found that although learners' language production could enhance the accurate use of grammar, input flooding has a decisive role in speech complexity. Wagner-Gough & Hatch (1975) assumed that as what in input-flood instruction showed the more a certain language structure is repeated in the input, the higher will be the chance of paying attention to it. As it mentioned in other studies Brown (2001) proved that reading and listening input-flooding provide language learners with saturated input that can be converted into intake if the required mental processes are available and if the amount of the input is sufficient, too. (Krashen, 1994).

Balcom and Bouffard (2015) investigated the role of input flood and explicit instruction on learning adverb placement in L3 French. Their result showed the beneficial effect of the flooded input in assisting learners to learn adverb placement.

With Lee and Huang (2008) who showed that enhanced input affects learning grammatical items through reading tasks and facilitate the acquisition of the target form through exposing learners to the saliency of input.

In what follows, the research questions answered in light of the findings of the study:

1) Does input-flood through reading English short story books and novels have any effects on intermediate EFL learners' listening and reading skills?

The analysis of the results of dairies which participant has written during the research as the reading continued by her the speed of reading, reading comprehension, not using of dictionary, not translating to Persian and so on will increase. Third result clearly show that the process of input flood through reading English short stories and novels have an positive effect on reading skill as a receptive skill. Also the result of first and second IELTS test which has been used to find the proficiency level of student at the beginning and end of the study, shows an increasing mark in participant reading and listening skills, we can indicated that both IELTS test and documents from dairies prove a positive effect and improving the participant receptive skills. Like all of the other case studies the result can't be generalized to all the cases and studies.

2) What are the EFL learners' attitudes toward the effectiveness of an input-based language learning approach?

The analysis of the results of dairies show that the participant have positive attitude during input flood process, in some dairies she told that I'm very lucky and optimistic about taking apart in this study and I feel that I will be better and better in my reading and listening at the end of the process. Therefore it showed that EFL learners like who participate in this study has positive and optimistic attitude toward the effectiveness of an input-based language learning approach.

3) What obstacles EFL learners may face during an input-based language learning approach?

As all of the studies which done before, specially case studies and qualitative researches, also According to the result of dairies the first obstacle is time consuming of the qualitative studies specially case studies. It takes long time to see the results. The second one is sitting for an hour or more for reading. If you have an important job to do or you

want to go an important trip it is hard and boring. Another was when you decide to change the series of stories and exactly choosing an appropriate series to continue reading. Some series of high-level stories have many long and difficult sentences with hard words and grammars. Accordingly it was confusing for participant to understand the meaning of the sentences, also she should have a dictionary by her side to check the words sometimes. In addition, it has written by participant that all of her feelings, tempers and the events, which happen around her during the research, will affect her process of reading, for example, the noises outside of the room can disturb her concentration or any bad events can make her disappointed and it influence her reading comprehension during that day.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study imply that input flooding provides an opportunity for Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate level to extend their capabilities for gaining knowledge about the English language features. Using flooded input could be a way to draw on EFL learners' prior knowledge of the content and stimulate participation that is more active. The result of this study could be of interest to EFL teachers who seek new techniques to improve students' receptive skill. Exposure to saturated input as a relatively new technique for boosting reading and listening ability can bring about considerable progress. It could assumed that increasing frequency of occurrence of a feature in the input makes it more noticeable, draws learners' attention to the intended form, and facilitates the acquisition of target structures. Presumably, salient implicit input converts to intake, shifts to long-term memory, and becomes available in future interactions. Input flooding leads to better comprehension and improves reading ability. The researchers of the present study suggest the integration of listening and reading input flood in EFL classes to provide exposure to both of the skills. However, this study was a small-scale study with participant who selected from a language school in an EFL setting. Thus, the findings should generalized to other settings and participants with caution. Further studies can elucidate whether the findings are broadly applicable.

The pedagogical intervention in this study is helpful in an input-poor language learning Context where learners have in sufficient opportunity to encounter the target language outside the classroom.

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