

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENCE ARTS AND COMMERCE

An Interactive Extensive Reading Program for a Senior High School English Class in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Extensive reading has been considered the important key to developing language proficiency. Students can acquire vocabulary, word usage and grammatical knowledge naturally from texts while reading. Meanwhile, they will be oriented to the discourse structure of essays, news reports, stories, fictions, to learn global structure of different genres or rhetoric modes. Furthermore, students will be inspired to think over the issues in stories, news happenings and novels and gain independent thinking ability while reading widely and extensively. Therefore, extensive reading is a necessary top-down process for language learners or ESL/EFL learners to develop their language proficiency and independent thinking ability besides the bottom-up process, which focuses more on the word and sentence levels of reading. In this study, modified extensive reading integrated with group scaffolding interactions was applied to a class of eleventh grade students. Then it investigates the impact of the top-down process reading instruction. This interactive extensive reading was modified by the researcher to integrate extensive reading with group scaffolding interactions and discussions, in which students could interact with group members to discuss issues and problems in the storybooks which they were reading together. Thus, students could learn and inspire one another, and develop language proficiency as well as thinking ability. Students completed reading one book in about one

month and answered questions on the worksheet. They read four books in the semester. To conduct the study, first, in the beginning of the semester, a background information questionnaire was conducted to collect the background information of the students, such as gender, their English learning habits, the length of their learning English, how much time they spent on studying English and the number of the students passing GEPT, etc. Then, modified interactive extensive reading with group interactions was implemented by using graded readers for 30 minutes or one session for group activities every week. After the practices of extensive reading for one semester, a survey was implemented to investigate the students' concepts about this interactive extensive reading practice and their changes in attitude and motivation towards English learning. The data collected from the Background Information Questionnaire were presented through tables and graphs. Besides, a descriptive statistical analysis was employed to analyze the quantitative data collected from the Response Questionnaire to obtain mean, standard deviation, etc. The results show that the students responded to the interactive extensive reading program quite positively with a mean of 3.52 in terms of their attitudes toward English learning and 3.43 in terms of basic concepts in learning English. This result indicated that the students benefitted from the program. The paper was finalized with pedagogical implications and suggestions for future studies.

Key Words: Extensive Reading, Interactive Reading, English Learning, Senior High School, Taiwan

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study, Goal and Purpose

For years, the Ministry of Education has been promoting "Reading Movement" among elementary students and preschool kids because successful reading is seen as the key to the academic success of students and eventually to the competitiveness of a country. That was why over a decade ago, in the US, the Bush Administration was promoting "Reading across America" program and implementing "No Child Left Behind" Bill. As a result, graded readers were recommended to teachers and parents for young learners to read. At schools, various measures were adopted and practiced, e.g. Reading Passport, Reading Corner, Mini Library in the classroom, Reading Week, etc. to promote widely reading activities after classes.

However, all these measures and activities were oriented to first language learning of Mandarin reading rather than English learning in Taiwan, also to young children and primary school students rather than high school students. On the one hand, it seemed that the reading movement was not promoted in the field of English teaching. On the other hand, after students graduated from elementary school and moved up to junior high schools, our educational system seemed to be led to a totally different orientation, i.e., an exam-driven schooling system. Students at junior high schools were guided and regulated through various kinds of tests and examinations all the way through junior high to senior high schools and led to Entrance Exam for higher education. For examination and scoring convenience, language courses including both Mandarin and English were taught mostly in a

bottom-up decoding process. Students were requested to memorize sounds, spelling and meaning of words. The grammatical structures were taught explicitly and tested. Gradually, students were trained and oriented to finding a correct answer to feel secure and get as high scores as possible for all subjects, and the value and nature of education, to nurture independent thinking ability and a whole person, was most of the time twisted, neglected, or even forgotten.

Under the condition, textbooks were selected and supplemented with some reading comprehension passages as extra reading materials. Usually, few story books were adopted to teach in a top-down reading process in class because there were always some teaching progresses to follow and to cover up the tested materials. Consequently, at high school levels we found most of high school students were tortured to memorize correct answers to the questions in the tests and trivial linguistic and grammatical knowledge for the purpose of taking exams and earning higher scores from the exams.

In this way, to train students' independent thinking was completely neglected and students were deprived of developing their language proficiency through widely extensive reading as well as developing their holistic thinking ability through reading stories, fictions and novels.

Therefore, the purpose and goal of this study was intended to apply extensive reading to offer another orientation for junior or senior high school students to develop their thinking ability as well as language proficiency and see how this top-down reading process approach could work to change students' concepts and attitude in learning English so as to facilitate their language proficiency. To achieve the goal of this study, the research questions were addressed as follows:

1. What are students' concepts and attitudes towards extensive reading after one semester's practice of interactive extensive reading every week?
2. Does the interactive extensive reading activity increase students' motivation in learning English?

Significance of the Study

Due to the special test-oriented schooling system in Taiwan, a lot of high school learners are suffering from memorizing trivial bits of knowledge of each subject and boring teaching, they gradually lose their interest in learning year after year. In the meantime, constrained by the schooling framework, many high school teachers struggle with teaching and feel frustrated about the situation. Hence, it is worthy of conducting this study to offer another possibility of teaching English in a top-down process through extensive reading practice. With this alternative model at hands, high school language teachers could be encouraged to have a try and cope with exam-constrained educational system and conduct language teaching more happily and effectively. Moreover, students can learn language more efficiently, naturally and holistically to develop their English proficiency and independent thinking training as well.

RELATED LITERATURES

Reading Processes: Bottom-Up, Top-Down, and Interactive Processes

Reading has always had a significant position in second language teaching and learning. In the past decade, many countries in the world such as the US, Finland, New Zealand, have been promoting reading among young school children in order to upgrade their overall country competitiveness to compete in this globalization age. In Taiwan, reading has also been a big issue on the agenda of the Ministry of Education since last decade. The government has been budgeting annually to promote reading across among elementary graders.

In academic research, generations of scholars and researchers have cultivated and defined the nature of the reading process at different ages. For decades, reading skills, strategies and comprehension have been viewed as keys to academic success and reading instruction has been widely emphasized at every level of schooling. Simultaneously, in the academic field, theories and practices of reading nature and reading instruction have been inquired and revitalized in both the first and second language reading from time to time.

In early 1960s and 1970s, reading was seen as a bottom-up decoding process of reconstructing the author's meaning through recognizing the letters and words and building up a meaning for a passage from the smallest units at the bottom to larger and larger units at the top such as phrases, clauses and sentential connections (Fries, 1963 and Lado, 1964). Hence, students learn to derive meaning from decoding printed texts. If students have reading problems, that means they have decoding problems. Meanwhile, before 1970, reading was not a first concern in second language teaching, for oral and aural language skills were primarily concerned under the paradigm of "Audiolingual Method" and structuralism. Hence, in a broader sense of bottom-up reading process, decoding sound-symbol relationships and commanding oral dialogue were considered as the major steps in developing reading proficiency (Rivers, 1968).

Then, since 1970s, there was a psycholinguistic model of reading influencing views of first or native language reading, proposed by Goodman (1971, 1973) and Smith (1971), which also had an impact on the second/foreign language reading. In this perspective, readers made predictions and reconstructed meaning from written language by using cues in the language systems of graphic, syntactic and semantic levels. And the most important of all was to confirm the predictions by relating them to past experiences and knowledge of the language.

This model was later characterized as a concept-driven, top-down pattern (Anderson, 1978; Stanovich, 1980). According to Stanovich (1980), top-down models viewed fluent readers as being actively engaged in hypothesis testing as he proceeded through texts, and higher-level processes drove the flow of message through lower-level processes. In other words, in this reading process, the readers used their background knowledge and personal experiences to predict and confirm information and had their active participation in comprehending a text.

In the top-down view of reading process, not only is the reader an active participant in the reading process but also his prior knowledge and experience play a prominent role in the process. The prior

knowledge includes linguistic knowledge of the text, called “linguistic schemata,” the knowledge of the content area of the text, “content schemata,” and that of the rhetorical structure of the text, “formal schemata.” (Carrell, 1988: 4)

However, the models that are widely accepted nowadays are interactive models, which are seen the most comprehensive description of the reading process (Anderson, 1999). According to Eskey (1973), the decoding model was inadequate in describing the reading process because it failed to recognize readers’ participation and contribution by utilizing their prior knowledge and expectations about the text. Following this trend, second language reading scholars such as Clarke (1979) and Widdowson (1978, 1983) started to view second language reading as an active process in which the reader is an active information processor who makes prediction while scanning only parts of the text. As schema theory has proposed (Carrell, 1988), effective and efficient reading, no matter it is in first or second language, requires both top-down and bottom-up strategies functioning interactively, as called interactive models.

Extensive Reading

As discussed above, ideally both bottom-up and top-down models are required for readers to read fluently either in first or second language. As such, fluent, mature and successful readers utilize bottom-up and top-down processes, so-called interactive models, at the same time while reading. However, in reality, most of second language readers are developing readers with limitation and inadequate skills in both processes. Thus, in the long run, as advocated by Eskey and Grabe (1988), only through extensive reading can both top-down and bottom-up skills and strategies be developed gradually over time because students learn to read only by reading. Therefore, interest in extensive reading in foreign and second language learning is booming and this growth of interest in extensive reading has led many teachers and many schools to promote extensive reading in the languages’ courses.

Then, what is extensive reading? According to Richard Day (2011), “Extensive Reading (ER) in the EFL/ESL context is an approach to teaching reading whose goal is to get student reading in the English language and enjoying it” (p.10). The key and well-established principle is that learners learn to read by reading. Thus, extensive reading is defined as reading that exposes learners to large quantities of material within their linguistic competence.

According to Apple (2005), extensive reading has been considered the important key to developing language proficiency. It has been positively correlated to learners’ gains in grammar knowledge, word recognition, reading scores on comprehension tests, written performance, and even oral production. Students can acquire vocabulary, word usage and grammatical knowledge naturally from the context while reading. Meanwhile, they will be oriented to the discourse structure of essays, passage, news reports, short stories and fictions and learn global structure of genres. Furthermore, students will be inspired to think over the issues and problems in stories, news happenings and novels and gain independent thinking practices while reading widely and extensively. Therefore,

extensive reading is an unavoidable top down process for language learners or ESL/EFL learners to develop their language proficiency besides the bottom up process to work on the word and sentence levels of reading.

Actually, all the research into extensive reading points towards what Stephen Krashen (1993b) calls “free voluntary reading” (p.23) as the source of the benefits that extensive reading can create (Krashen, 1993b: 23), in which reading is easy and pleasurable to offer comprehensible input, and the language learning benefits increase along with the amount read. Based on Bamford and Day (2004), extensive reading approach emphasizes that students read a great quantity of books which are easy for them to comprehend. Thus the approach actually challenges teachers in terms of identifying the right books and locating the appropriate materials for students because the approach in some way de-emphasizes language and skill work, which teachers might find that they need to modify to some degree their regular teaching activities.

Bamford and Day (2004) have organized activities from many classroom teachers and managed them into five different parts: Organizing Extensive Reading, Oral Fluency, Writing, Reading, and Vocabulary. Organizing extensive reading consists of five sections, too, i.e., getting started, introducing reading material, motivating and supporting reading, monitoring reading, and evaluating reading. Usually, extensive reading does not involve heavy duty testing, so the evaluating activities are recommended as one-minute reading, cloze test, one-sentence summary test, and speed answering.

Meanwhile, Bamford and Day (2002) also provided principles of the Extensive Reading Approach as follows:

1. The reading material is easy.
2. There must be a wide variety of reading material on a large range of topics.
3. Students choose what they want to read.
4. Learners read as much as possible.
5. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
6. Reading is its own reward.
7. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.
8. Reading is individual and silent.
9. Teachers orient and guide their students.
10. The teacher is a role model of a reader. (pp. 137-140)

In an extensive reading approach, students who read extensively are usually not given any traditional reading comprehension questions on the books they read. They choose which books they are interested in reading and read large quantities of books within their linguistic competence at their own pace. Student self-selection offers a great deal of flexibility, which meets the needs and interests of individual student and allows them to develop their language competence at their own speed.

According to Day and Bamford (1998), the main objective of extensive reading is for students to

develop reading fluency; i.e., encountering words repeatedly will increase reading rate. As a result, in class it is probable that some students might keep vocabulary notebooks; others might join in discussions with peers.

In conclusion, as Pino-Silva (2006) puts, extensive reading involves (a) the reading of large amounts of L2 written material, (b) for pleasure, (c) with the purpose of learning to read by reading, and (d) graded books appear to be the basic materials on which most programs are based. However, we still need to notice that extensive reading needs to fit within the aims and objectives of the school curriculum; or the extensive reading program may fail from lack of direction or purpose. In addition, it is only part of a larger language learning program because extensive reading is only one type of reading instruction.

Contexts in Taiwan

In Taiwan, for decades Taiwanese students have been suffering from an exam-driven educational system, especially at junior and senior high school stages. Most of them are frustrated with boring teaching following textbooks. With a framework of teaching text books and testing the contents regularly and frequently to prepare for scheduled exams, and in the long run for entrance exams, most students' interests in learning English have actually been destroyed little by little by boring teaching routines and limited and dry learning materials.

As well, English teachers are mostly frustrated with time pressure and limited space for varying teaching activities and materials. Under the condition, there is really a need to investigate how to design a more attractive high school English teaching curriculum with various learning materials and activities to elicit students' interest in learning English and guide high school students to set up a solid foundation in learning a foreign language in a correct way. As a consequence, students are able to achieve high level of English proficiency and also be well prepared to succeed in their entrance exams for higher level of learning and education and future career development.

As Chang (2006) indicates in the article of "A study on EFL supplementary materials in junior high schools," it is necessary for teachers to make good use of supplementary materials to meet different students' needs because supplementary materials can enrich the variety of teaching. The results of the study further show that teachers use supplementary materials because textbooks do not include sufficient topics and can not enhance reading comprehension.

Furthermore, with test constraints and traditional concepts of teaching four skills separately, most high school English teaching starts from reading words, sentences, and texts, and then practicing reading aloud, followed up with quizzes on words and sentences. Most of English teaching at high schools is screwed and constrained by an exam-based format. However, a lot of studies have shown that language should be taught as a whole, like whole language approach advocated by Goodman (1986) and other scholars such as Edelsky, et al. (1991), Freeman & Freeman (1988, 1992), and Froese (1996).

Chang (2006) also urges that elementary school teachers connect reading and writing undergrounded

reader response theory in a thematic unit. In the article of “Reading and writing connection through reader response theory in a thematic unit,” she pinpoints that traditionally reading and writing have been considered two different language skills and studied separately in EFL and ESL classrooms, but actually the two skills can be taught in a sound instructional model under reader response theory. Besides, traditionally English teachers at high school seem short of the concepts that teaching how to learn is even more important than teaching the materials. In a case study on high school students’ learning strategies conducted by Cheng (2006), the results show that EFL learners’ vocabulary learning is incremental and a cumulative process involving wide aspects of knowledge and indicate that teachers’ explicit instruction on vocabulary learning strategies have a beneficial impact on learners’ vocabulary learning. Yu and Chen (2006) also stress the importance of learning strategy teaching among junior high school students with different levels of academic achievement. Therefore, English teaching at high school stages really need to emphasize and teach how to learn rather than just teach the language.

According to social-constructivists (Bruffee, 1984, 1986; Harre, 1984; Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978; Wittgenstein, 1953), learning is viewed the conceptualization of knowledge as a social artifact maintained through a community of peers. Vygotsky (1978) proposed the zone of proximal development (ZPD) advocating a learner actual development is through independent problem solving and his/her potential development under guidance of more advanced learners or adults or through collaboration with more capable peers, which consequently was elaborated as scaffolding concepts in the learning and reading processes. However, this kind of socio-cultural approach to language learning is seldom practiced in an exam-screwed learning environment in Taiwan educational system.

With the shortcomings of our exam-oriented high school English teaching in my mind stated above, I designed this extensive reading program to implement at a private senior high school and investigate how students responded to this comprehensive English curriculum.

In the meantime, in a traditional English class of high school, extensive reading program or orientation seems a luxury only for the most advanced level students as outside reading activities after class. A whole book teaching and learning have never been in a formal curriculum though it might be promoted as outside class reading activity. Nevertheless, without wide immersion into a text-rich environment, how is a language learner able to achieve a high level of language proficiency? This is the reason why I conducted this study on extensive reading program, integrated with socially scaffolding group interactions in a tenth grade English class.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study intends to apply extensive reading integrated with group interactions to an eleventh grade English class of about fifty students and investigate the impact of this practice and the students’ change in concepts, attitudes and their learning motivation.

First, in the beginning of the semester, a background information questionnaire were distributed to

the students to collect their background information such as age, gender, the length of learning English, their habits of learning English, and the number of the students who passed GEPT (General English Proficiency Test). Then, extensive reading was conducted 30 minutes' for group activities per week by using graded reading books. After the practices of extensive reading for one semester, a survey was implemented on the students' responses in terms of their concepts, attitudes and learning motivation.

A Modified Extensive Reading Program with Group Interactions

This extensive reading practice were modified and integrated with group interactions, for it was believed that social interactions and scaffolding activities would help students learn even more than individual reading. First, the class of about fifty students was suggested to group students into nine groups. Each group had 5 or 6 members with at least one advanced learner as the leader of the group and other 4 or 5 general members. Then, each group of students chose their favorite leveled reader of about 400 words, 500 words, or even higher levels, to their interest. All members in a group read the same story book for about 4 weeks. When a group finished reading a book, all group members filled in a work sheet to answer some simple questions or copy some new vocabulary or good sentences. So, in one semester, all students read about 4-5 story books. The teacher of the class guided slightly in the very beginning of the program by selecting 9 graded story books of 5 or 6 copies each, grouping students and preparing 9 worksheets for each book, and instructing about the practicing procedures of the program for the whole semester. Finally at the end of every 4 weeks, the teacher collected the work sheets from each group.

This reading activity were arranged and fixed on one period of 30-45 minutes in the morning session before official classes started every week, not occupying regular class time to prevent it from interrupting class hours and teaching schedules. However, the group interaction of reading the same book in a group could enhance the group member to discuss the story and interact after class or even communicate with one another at home through the internet. In this way, to learn to read one whole book together and complete reading 4 to 5 books in a semester could greatly facilitate the language proficiency of each participant at the end of the program.

The Setting and Participants

One class of eleventh graders at a private senior high school in southern Taiwan was approached to be the participants of this study. In total, there were about 50 students participating in this modified extensive reading program.

Data Collection Procedures

In the first stage, students' background information was collected through a questionnaire and the number of the students passing elementary GEPT was recorded, too. Then, the students were oriented to the modified extensive reading program in the second week of the semester. In the whole

semester, all students completed reading four books and their worksheets were collected as part of the data.

In the second stage, around the end of the first semester, a survey was conducted to investigate students' attitudes, concepts, and motivation. This survey consisted of several categories of attitudes, concepts, learning motivation, etc. to investigate the responses of the students. Under each category, there were several statements with Likert Scales of 5 points for the students to respond.

The major concern of this study was to find out if students' attitude, concepts and motivation were changed, if participants English story books reading habits were formed through this semester's orientation, and if there was impact on students' English learning in future. Actually, it was expected that this deep-rooted conceptualization about extensive reading could influence the students' cognitive development in the long run through continual self-study reading practices throughout their life.

Data Analysis

For the quantitative data collected from the surveys, a statistical analysis was conducted to get descriptive results, such as means, standard deviation, etc. In the meantime, the students' English learning experiences and the number of the students passing GEPT before practicing the modified extensive reading program were also collected to understand their background information and English-related learning activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section reports the results from the two surveys: 1. The Questionnaire of Background Information; 2. The Feedback Questionnaire of Students' Response.

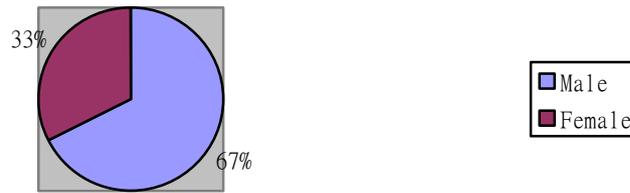
I. The Results from the Survey of the Background Information

In the beginning of the semester, a survey to investigate the background information of participants was conducted to understand their previous English learning experiences and activities. In total, there were 47 questionnaires collected, one was half blank, considered invalid. Thus, there were only 46 valid questionnaires analyzed in this study.

1. Participants

There were 46 valid questionnaires in this study, among them 31 male and 15 female students responding to the survey. The collected information is presented as follows:

A) Gender : Male: 31, Female: 15



B) Age : 30 (16 years old), 15 (17 years old), 1 (18 years old), presented as follows:

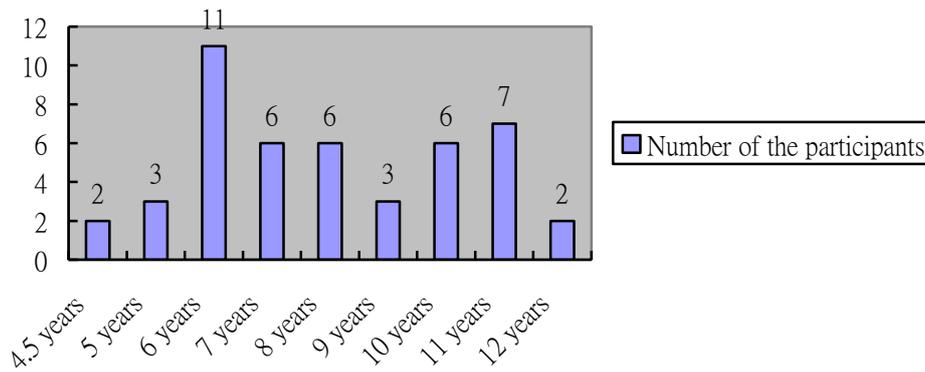


C) English Learning Experiences

Among 46 students, 2 of them had been learning English for 4.5 years, 3 of them 5 years, and 11 of them 6 years. This means that 5 of them might start learning English when they entered junior high school, while 11 of them started from the sixth grade at the elementary school. Besides, 6 of them had been learning English for 7 years and also 6 of them had been learning English for 8 years. And 3 of them had been learning for 9 years. This means that 15 of them started English learning from the grade 3 and grade 4. Moreover, 6 of the participants had been learning English for 10 years and 7 of them 11 years. The longest learning case is 2 of them who had been learning English for 12 years, which indicated that they started learning English since they were in kindergarten. The data were presented in a table as the following:

Table 1: Length of Learning English (N=46)

Years:	4.5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	(Mean: 7.9 yrs.)
No. of Sts.:	2	3	11	6	6	3	6	7	2	(Total: 46)



Based on the table and graph, it was found that only 11% (5/46) of the students started learning English when entering to junior high school, while 89% (41/46) of them began learning English before junior high school. Meanwhile, 52% (24/46) started learning English before 5th grade, and even 19% (9/46) started learning English since kindergarten.

D) Time to Study English Every Day

In terms of time to study English every day, there were 32 (70%) of them who studied less than one hour every day, 12 (26%) between one and two hours. Two of them did not respond to this issue. None of them study English over two hours. This result showed that the majority of the participants spent less than one hour studying English, while there was 26% used more than one hour to study English.

Table 2: Time to Study Eng Every Day (N=46)

Hours	Less than 1 hr.	Between 1 & 2 hrs.	Over 2 hrs.	No response
No.	32 (70%)	12 (26%)	0	2 (4%)



E) Experiences to Study at Cram Schools

There were 32 (70%) out of 46 who had ever attended cram schools to study English, while 13 (28%) of 46 had never studied at cram schools. Among them, there is one who didn't respond to this issue. Then, this result indicated that the majority of the participants, more than two third (70%), had

experiences in learning English at cram schools.

Table 3: Experiences to Study at Cram Schools (N=46)

	Yes	No	No response
No.	32 (70%)	13 (28%)	1 (2%)

F) To Take GEPT or Not

In terms of taking GEPT, there were 15 out of 46 (about 33%) who hadn't yet taken this English proficiency test, while there were 30 (65%) of the participants ever taking it. Among these 30 participants, only one (2%) of them had passed the first stage of intermediate GEPT, 19 (41%) passing the second stage of the elementary GEPT, and 10 (22%) passing the first stage of the elementary GEPT. There was one student who didn't respond to this issue. Table 4 summarizes this finding as follows:

Table 4: The Number of the Students Who Passed GEPT (N=46)

Not yet response	1 st stage of Elementary	2 nd stage of Elementary	1 st stage of Intermediate	No response
15 (33%) (2%)	10 (22%)	19 (41%)	1 (2%)	1

II. The Results from the Feedback Survey at the End of the Semester

A survey was conducted after practicing modified extensive reading program for one semester to investigate participants' responses to the program. The following were the results of the survey. There were four categories to understand their responses: I. Attitudes toward learning English (including 10 statements), II. Basic concepts of learning English (6 statements), III. English learning styles (11 statements), IV. English reading habits (9 statements). The questionnaire was designed to have 5 Likert scales for the students to respond from strongly disagree of 1 point to strongly agree of 5 points. The data of the questionnaire went through statistical analysis to gain descriptive results of means and standard deviations (Please refer to Appendix A).

Among four categories, the participants responded to Category I of attitudes towards learning English most positively with the highest mean of 3.52. This indicated that this extensive reading program had changed greatly the students' attitudes towards learning English. Then, the mean of Category II of basic concepts of learning English is 3.43, which is quite positive, too.

For Category I: Attitudes toward learning English, among ten statements, the item of "I consider English is very important," gained the highest point, 4.52. Then, "English will help me gain a

promising job for my future career,” gained 4.48, the second high point. This pinpointed that most students realized the importance of learning English. In contrast, “I like to write English,” gained the lowest point, 2.43.

For Category II: Basic concepts of learning English, among ten statements, “By Reading, I increase my word power,” gained the highest points of 3.92, while the second high was 3.65, “By reading, I increase my independent thinking ability.” Two scores represented that students considered extensive reading program beneficial most to increase word power and independent thinking ability. Meanwhile, “I can understand the traits of various genres of English and their differences,” gained only 2.43, which indicated that students hadn’t yet had a chance to be familiar with various genres of English at the stage of 10th grade.

The mean of Category III of English learning styles was 3.06, a little bit lower than the average of 3.15. Among ten statements, “I learn English by listening to English songs,” gained the highest point of 4.28, and learning by watching movies, 3.72. On the other hand, few students learned from tutors with only 1.83 points.

Among four categories, Category IV in terms of English reading habits had the lowest mean, 2.59, which indicated that the practices of modified extensive reading program for one semester did not change much their English reading habits. In this category, item of “I like to read English in a quiet space,” gained the highest point of 3.52, while the lowest was “I have a habit to take notes in my journal while reading English,” 2.07. These indicated that most students had a habit to read English in a quiet space; however, few of them had a habit to take notes while reading.

The following table presents the responses to the program from the students with mean and standard deviation in terms of 4 categories:

Table 5: The Participants’ Responses to the Modified Extensive Reading Program

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Category I: Attitudes toward Learning English						3.52	0.96
Category II: Basic Concepts of Learning English						3.43	0.86
Category III: English Learning Styles						3.06	1.05
Category IV: My English Reading Habits						2.59	1.05

CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, owing to the special bottom-up reading instruction in the exam-driven educational system in Taiwan, it is worthy of conducting this study of practicing modified top-down extensive reading teaching with group scaffolding interactions. The results of the study show the positive impact on the participants’ attitudes toward learning English and also their basic concepts in learning English. The results of this study demonstrate the positive feedbacks from the participants and also show the significance of the top-down extensive reading instruction, particularly in terms of

increasing word power and independent thinking ability. This indicates that top-down extensive reading program provided an alternative reading instruction for the participants to practice in their English reading development. In other words, the study demonstrates an optional teaching model of teaching English at high school under the exam-driving orientation of educational settings in Taiwan, i.e., besides bottom-up process of reading practice, an alternative approach of modified top-down extensive reading process with scaffolding interactions should be complemented and provided to high school students to implement English instruction.

The point of this study is to show to high school English teachers how they can cope with the unavoidable exam-driven environment by conducting an alternative top-down extensive reading instruction with group social interactions to help students develop their language proficiency naturally and greatly along with holistic thinking training on various issues and problems through story books. With the modified top-down extensive reading instruction along with group scaffolding interactions at hands, high school English teachers might be encouraged to try some optional ways of teaching and, as a result, to be able to cope with exam-driven surroundings and conduct English instruction more effectively with more various teaching approaches.

The most important is to help more and more high school students in Taiwan enjoy learning English and gain their English language proficiency successfully, in particular, to have more top-down holistic thinking practices through extensive reading, and at the end they would develop life long capacity and competence to enjoy learning any other foreign languages in their life and be a successful life long learner and self-educator in every way.

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Appendix A:

The Participants' Responses to the Modified Extensive Reading Program

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Category I: Attitudes toward Learning English						3.52	0.96
1. Learning English is interesting to me.	6	5	22	9	4	3.00	1.08
2. I like western cultures.	1	3	14	19	9	3.72	0.92
3. I like to listen to English.	3	6	17	11	9	3.37	1.13
4. I like to speak English.	3	11	23	9	0	2.83	0.82
5. I like to read English.	6	6	23	9	2	2.89	1.00
6. I like to write English.	11	13	14	7	1	2.43	1.08
7. I like to make friends with foreigners.	2	4	17	8	15	3.65	1.15
8. I consider English is very important.	1	0	4	10	31	4.52	0.83
9. English can help broaden my vision towards this world.	1	0	6	16	23	4.30	0.86
10. English will help me gain a promising job for my future career.	0	1	5	11	29	4.48	0.77
Category II: Basic Concepts of Learning English						3.43	0.86
1. I have basic understanding about western cultures.	1	9	21	14	1	3.17	0.84
2. I can understand the traits of various genres of English and their differences.	4	16	20	5	1	2.63	0.87
3. By reading, I increase my writing ability.	0	5	11	23	7	3.70	0.86
4. By Reading, I increase my word power.	1	2	8	24	11	3.91	0.88
5. By reading, I acquire grammatical concepts.	0	5	17	18	6	3.54	0.85
6. By reading, I increase my independent thinking ability.	0	3	20	12	11	3.65	0.89
Category III: English Learning Styles						3.06	1.05
1. I only study English textbooks.	12	17	14	1	2	2.22	1.00
2. I learn English by reading English fictions.	5	12	21	5	3	2.76	1.00
3. I learn English by reading English magazines.	1	6	18	15	8	3.41	0.95
4. I learn English by watching English movies.	0	4	17	13	13	3.72	0.95
5. I learn English by listening to English songs.	0	2	4	19	21	4.28	0.80
6. I learn English by listening to English radio programs.	2	13	20	8	3	2.93	0.94
7. I learn English from my tutors.	21	17	4	3	1	1.83	0.98
8. I learn English by traveling in a foreign country.	7	10	10	8	11	3.13	1.39
9. I learn English by overseas short-term study	6	9	14	9	8	3.09	1.27

programs.							
10. I learn English from foreign friends.	4	6	16	10	10	3.28	1.19
11. I have invented and practiced my own English learning method.	6	5	19	13	3	3.04	1.08
Category IV: My English Reading Habits						2.59	1.05
1. I like to read various genres in English.	9	10	22	5	0	2.50	0.93
2. I have a habit to read various genres of English.	12	14	15	5	0	2.28	0.97
3. I have a habit to read my favorite genre of English.	11	10	17	6	2	2.46	1.06
4. I have a fixed time to read various genres of English.	10	16	16	3	1	2.33	0.96
5. I tend to read by myself various genres of English.	8	9	21	6	2	2.67	1.04
6. I like to read various genres of English with classmates and share my reflections.	11	10	19	5	1	2.46	1.04
7. I have a habit to take notes in my journal while reading English.	16	15	10	3	2	2.07	1.01
8. I like to read English in a quiet space.	5	3	13	12	13	3.52	1.25
9. I like to read repeatedly those favorite English genres.	8	5	17	10	6	3.02	1.24
Average						3.15	0.98

Author Biography

Dr. Yueh-miao Chen, Professor of English, earned her ED.D on English Education, Arizona State University, in 1992. She has been teaching various undergraduate and graduate courses such as Language Acquisition: Writing Development, Research Method, History of the English Language, and languages related courses at the Department of Foreign Languages & Literature, National Chung Cheng University, Chiayi, Taiwan, since spring, 1993. During 25 years of her professional journey, she has served as head of the department two terms, from 1998-2000 and 2008-2011. Meanwhile, she has attended international academic conferences around the world almost every year to present and share her research outcomes and publish her articles in journals. Her research interests are on English education, English as a foreign language teaching and learning, writing development, language acquisition, history of English language and teacher education. In recent years, she has also paid her attention to Taiwan national identity movement as an activist by writing poems to inspire Taiwanese people.