

The Impact of Pleasure Reading on Enhancing Writing Achievement and Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

Reading opens up wide-reaching paths for knowledge as it deepens the feelings of empathy. Therefore, it represents a unique skill consists of a mixture of several procedures that encourage the interaction with printed words for content and pleasure. The current study tries to identify the impact of pleasure reading on enhancing writing achievement and reading comprehension. The study has employed different data collection methods, such as published research, articles, books, theses, and dissertations that are related to the study matter to provide answers to the following question: ‘*Do pleasure reading have an impact on enhancing writing achievement and reading comprehension?*’. The results reveal that; pleasure reading has a positive impact on enhancing writing achievement and reading comprehension. In addition to, pleasure reading provides readers with entertainment, relaxation, comfort, as it also offers them a creative outlet and means of escape, which, in turn, affect positively effect on the writing performance. Moreover, reading helps learners develop their writing experience by inspiring them, expanding their vocabulary, and improving their grammatical structure. The current study recommends applying more reading programs into schools to encourage reading. It also suggests conducting more studies in order to realize the true potential of reading and its impact on learners’ written works and reading comprehension.

Keywords: ability, achievement, comprehension, fluency, language, language acquisition, learning process, literacy, pleasure reading, reading, reading comprehension, writing achievement.

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Introduction

Reading is a complicated process that comprises of equally complicated skills that require dynamic participation from the reader's part (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010). Some scholars and researchers point out their perspective about reading and its process in order to highlight its complexity, as it creates questions within the reader's mind, which requires comprehensive thought to be answered. In other words, reading can be considered as a thinking process that requires the reader to comprehend, understand, and even employ different skills to gain the desired information from a text, such as concluding, predicting, questioning, and drawing conclusions (Zainal & Husin, 2011; Küçüköğlü, 2013).

Reading has opened up wide-reaching paths for knowledge that non-readers are unable to access; it is also implied by many recent studies that reading deepens the feelings of empathy, and presents the reader with a greater understanding of others' mental states, if only temporarily (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Bal, & Velkamp, 2013). Furthermore, pleasure reading develops better reading comprehension skills among readers; increases their fluency, and displays higher levels of general knowledge (Whitten, Labby, & Sullivan, 2016; Mol & Bus, 2011).

Pleasure reading also embraces the human interaction with written texts (Grosman, 2011) and triggers the senses, such as sound, touch, and observation in order to create experiences in the reader's mind in ways that were not previously thought of. It is a frequent, yet enjoyable experience that continues to grow, where the boundaries and variabilities of the reading experiences can continue to expand and evolve (Tarulli, 2014).

Alternatively, writing is believed to be one of the most crucial skills that learners should aim to develop. For many years, the writing is taught merely to boost the mastery of grammar rules as well as vocabulary items (Lin & Maarof, 2013; Alqahtani, 2015). Yet, recent theories have come to realise the importance of such language skill in achieving language proficiency. As far as writing is concerned, reading is also a crucial skill that presents an array of information that cannot be taught throughout the course of teaching writing. In addition, choosing the most suitable approach for teaching writing should be considered in light of the contributions that reading could offer to improve the learning process of writing skills (Rouabah, 2012).

Thus, the importance of conjoining reading and writing has been stressed by Salehi, Asgari & Amini (2015) "Reading is not uniquely a single skill but a mixture of several skills and procedures in which the readers interact with printed words for content and pleasure. Writing, speaking, grammar, vocabulary items, spelling, and other language sub-skill can be taught through reading. p.306" they state that both reading and writing share similar features, making it more beneficial to learn both skills concurrently and in a properly balanced manner.

To reach a certain level of a sufficient comprehension, a reader must employ certain reading skills that increase the awareness of what is, how, and what to be read. Consequently, this can help gifted readers recognise the true purpose of reading, allow them to approach it with that purpose in mind, use successful strategies when coming across similar texts with similar purposes, monitor the level of comprehension in those texts in light of the purpose in mind, and, if necessary,

adjust the strategy use in accordance (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2014; Ahmadi, Ismail & Abdullah, 2013).

Sullivan & Brown (2013) argue that reading isn't an applicable habit. In similar context, People for Education (2011) has reported that pleasure reading has been declining in recent years, and as years go by. Thus, the main problem the present study is trying to find explanations and provide answers to know why there is sharper declines in the number of people who read for recreational purposes that is considered an alarming rate. Consequently, this gives a certain warning to social and cultural institutions to counter unsolicited consequences that might bring to the point of making-or-breaking societies and their intellectual achievements. The current study aims to answer the following questions:

- Does pleasure reading have an impact on enhancing writing achievement?
- Does pleasure reading have an impact on enhancing reading comprehension?

Literature Review

Pleasure Reading

Definitions of Pleasure Reading

Santos (2015) has defined pleasure reading as any form of reading that is fundamentally or socially prompted and is considered as a pleasing activity for the reader. It refers to the act where the reader would read on his or her own will rather than being forced, which stimulate positive emotions that inspire him or her to make reading a personal desire. Pleasure reading can be also referred to as out-of-school reading, voluntary reading, independent reading, leisure reading, recreational reading, and self-selected reading.

Jung (2016) also defines pleasure reading, where he described it as reading that is performed primarily for enjoyment and recreational purposes. It includes an extensive range of genres and publications that reading within a school environment would allow; it is also not necessarily restricted to the printed material and could include online reading as well.

While Bull (2017) defines pleasure reading as a non-oriented relation with texts as a way to pass time and for enjoyment, he also describes it as the type of reading, which is voluntary and is performed out of the reader's choice that involves a text of interest to the reader. He further explains that pleasure reading is not distinguished by the experience being pleasurable, but rather by the purpose of the reading.

Importance of Pleasure Reading

It is strongly supported by Howard (2011) that people resort to pleasure reading unconsciously to obtain everyday-life information and has to do with their personal characteristics and strong developmental theme. Mikkonen (2017) argues that during the time pleasure reading, people tend to gain insights regarding self-identification, self-recognition, and self-creation, all of which that help the readers throughout their transition from childhood to maturity.

It is also noted that pleasure reading is seen as a social practice that is significant when it comes to communication, taking part in life outside of the person's direct circle, and understanding the world. There are also two prime reasons for pleasure reading, which revolve around, sharing

knowledge with close people, such as friends and family, meeting people's expectations, and fitting into the surrounding environment (Doğan, 2014). Pleasure reading enriches one's passion and even boosts their self-confidence (Wilkinson, 2015).

2.1.3. Benefits of Pleasure Reading

The principal benefits of pleasure reading are quantity, purposeful reading, and fluency; as Young-Scholten & Limon (2015) argue, books are the only reliable source that provides comfortably read quantity of texts, while fiction is the only reliable source that provides texts that can improve a learner's eloquence and cognitive linguists. This is pointed out by Grosman (2011) " In this connection it is worth mentioning that cognitive linguists are also interested in the results of the reader's interaction with texts that in psychology are conceived of as 'the mental representation of the text p.162". This reflects the experience of native speakers, who are capable of progressing from fiction to non-fiction text with ease (Claridge, 2011).

According to Wilhelm & Smith (2016), Smith, Wilhelm & Fransen (2016), and Chowdry Chowdry, Crawford, Dearden, Joyce, Sibieta, Sylva & Washbrook (2010), it is suggested that pleasure reading is essential for children, as it strengthens their educational achievement and social mobility, and increases their cognitive development. When the children is at the age of five to ten, it would be easier to stimulate reading activities and attain a high level.

This suggests that pleasure reading is not based entirely on children's ability to read more, but rather on the fact that the act of reading is actually linked to the increase of cognitive progress over time (Alvermann, 2017; Cummins, 2015). From a strategic perspective, this strongly supports the necessity to guide and inspire children to read during their spare time.

Apparently, the advantages of pleasure reading do not hold to native readers alone, but to foreign readers as well. Many strong associations have been identified between pleasure reading, foreign vocabulary acquisition, and morpho-syntax (Waring & Nation, 2004). For foreign readers, pleasure reading can aid them in establishing the foundations for achieving both of literacy and active citizenship, which can be acquired by drawing upon experiences and expectations from the foreign sociocultural setting (Abbiss, 2016). However, while there is no lack of the number of books that are intended for native readers, foreign readers' capability to read for the sake of pleasure depends on the capability to access texts that are both engaging and easily read (Nash, 2017).

Writing Achievement

Definitions of Writing Achievement

Al-Asmari (2013) defines writing achievement as the capability of expressing one's own ideas and thoughts through the written form in either a second or a foreign language while ensuring a level of accuracy and coherence.

Galbraith (2014), on the other hand, defines writing achievement as the outcome of five dimensions, which are: 1) taking a clear stance regarding the issue, 2) supporting that stance with relevant and accurate information taken from the source materials, 3) using information from said

source materials, 4) organizing ideas in logically and effectively, and 5) expressing said ideas in one's own words with both clarity and fluency).

In addition, Dahlia (2016) defines writing achievement as the outcomes of one's learning experience that were obtained during the writing process within a particular field, such as knowledge and skills; these outcomes show the level and status of the person's learning experience and their ability to apply what they have learned throughout a standard test.

Factors Affecting Writing Achievement

Writing skills are considered to be quite complex and are hard to teach at times, given that not only do they need the person to master the grammatical and rhetorical devices, but they also need to master the conceptual and judgemental elements as well (Masjhari, 2010).

There are notable factors that influence writing achievement; the first of which is rich vocabulary, as it allows people to express thoughts in a way that draws the interest of their targeted audience (Ruday, 2014). The second is organisational ability, which refers to the person's ability to present ideas in a logical arrangement and an effective sequence (Yıldız & Yekeler, 2017). The third is elaborating ideas in a way that allows the idea to develop fully and flow smoothly from one sentence to another, and from one paragraph to another. Consequently, the sentence consists a unity and coherence (Sudirman & Tiasari, 2015). The fourth is the capability of using a diverse range of sentences to state thoughts and ideas accurately and fluently (Sulaiman, 2017).

In addition, there are some other factors that influence writing achievement. According to KIRMIZI (2009), reading habits is one of the key elements that affect writing. It has been noted that most learning instruments rely on language acquisition, which, in turn, emphasizes the level of reading comprehension among learners. There are also psychologies elements that can affect the learning achievement that include intelligence, attitude, interest, motivation, and competence. Moreover, there are several other elements that can govern students' learning achievement throughout the learning process, such as attitude, self-concept, interest, motivation, and learning habits (Dahlia, 2016).

Reading Comprehension

Definitions of Reading Comprehension

According to Mckee (2012), reading comprehension is defined as the capability of understanding texts, analysing the information found in these texts, and the ability to interpret the writer's statements and intents correctly.

However, Hans & Hans (2015) define reading comprehension as the capacity at which a person can comprehend a text. This type of comprehension arises from the written words and how they bring about knowledge existing outside the text. In other words, comprehension in this sense is a complex yet creative process that depends on the four skills of language (phonology, pragmatics, semantics, and syntax).

In addition, Bulut (2017) states that reading comprehension refers to the act of thinking and forming meanings before, during, and after reading. He also states that reading comprehension

is one of the main language skills that entail interpretations and identifying the details that are found in written materials, whether they are clear or not.

Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension

Sanford (2015) believes that reading comprehension is affected mainly by six factors, which are working memory, vocabulary, prior knowledge, word recognition, reading strategies, and the motivation to read. This is supported by a number of researchers, such as Moghadam, Zainal & Ghaderpour (2012), who state that vocabulary items do affect reading comprehension positively, as committing lexical errors is one of the recurring errors, thus, forming a prominent barrier. It is also supported by Alfaki & Siddiek (2013), who believe that people use their already-existing information – i.e. prior knowledge – in order to understand any text they would encounter, and it also builds their confidence and security through activating their prior knowledge in regards to the text.

As for the working memory, Swanson, Zheng & Jerman (2009) state that poor working memory is one of the factors that have an impact on the person's ability to read competently and be able to understand texts. Furthermore, Birsch (2011) believes that reading comprehension relies on word recognition in order to be achieved quickly and allow the reader to receive knowledge from a text. In accordance with Gilakjani & Sabouri's (2016) findings, it has been indicated that suitable reading strategies do play an essential role in the improvement of reading comprehension skill among learners, especially English as a foreign language readers.

As for motivation, its effect on reading comprehension has been discussed in a study by Blay, Mercado & Villacorta (2009); they divide motivation into two kinds; The first kind, is intrinsic motivation, that stems from the person's willingness and drive to perform the learning task and acquire new skills and experiences. While the second kind, extrinsic motivation is caused by exterior influences, such as rewards, punishments and other variables in an attempt to manipulate one's motivation. In short, motivation, especially the intrinsic motivation, has a larger influence on reading comprehension.

Discussion

It is strongly believed that pleasure reading is a vital mean to acquire information among readers, especially young ones. It allows them to enhance their skills and supports them with the knowledge they need to understand themselves, others, their relationships, and values, which, in turn, would assist them throughout their transition into adulthood. Reading isn't merely a single skill, but a mixture of numerous other skills and procedures, such as writing, grammar, vocabulary items, spelling, speaking, and other sub-skills that can be taught through reading, where readers are voluntarily exposed to printed texts for the sake of content and pleasure.

The current study has explored whether writing achievement and reading achievement are affected by pleasure reading. Learners must recognise the significance of reading and how positively it affects their abilities in extending their knowledge and acquiring the skills necessary to improve their learning experience; it is also believed that pleasure reading might have a noteworthy effect on learners' writing achievement. There have been numerous relations, which

have been identified among pleasure reading and vocabulary achievement, as these relations can be a useful source when attaining literacy, which involves both reading and writing skills. In addition, the more a person indulges in reading, the higher the potential of picking up on words subconsciously. Reading contributes to people's vocabulary growth and provides them with a better writing experience where they can utilise those words in their writing than those who don't read. In other words, it's been suggested that both vocabulary production and acquisition can occur through self-initiated (i.e. pleasure) reading experiences that involve reliable and appealing materials. Moreover, being exposed to and interacting with written texts and vocabulary would not only help learners increase their vocabulary items, but it would also help them improve both their language and writing skills.

Fascinatingly, the connection between reading and writing is interchangeable, yet, the impact of reading on writing is more significant than the impact writing has on reading. The current study shades the light to that reading promotes one's growth and development and allows them to understand their personal and social environments. It does not only enhance one's personal, spiritual, and mental growth, but it also offers entertainment, inspiration, and information in regards to how they view themselves and others. In summary, the attitude toward reading significantly affects the reading comprehension and writing achievement among readers and learners. Thus, it is suggested applying more reading programs into schools in order to encourage reading. It is also recommended performing more studies that aim to understand the true potential of reading and its impact on learners' written work and reading comprehension.

Conclusions

The current study attempts to identify what pleasure reading can play positively on enhancing writing achievement and reading comprehension. As per previous studies, and after examining the literature above, the researcher is able to conclude some important points that can enrich the research in the field of this study.

Firstly, when it comes to Pleasure reading, it can be concluded that it has a positive impact on enhancing writing achievement and reading comprehension. It helps improve literacy and enhance the thinking skills, as well as clarify and explore future goals and interests. Another interesting point found that Reading skills can be strengthened and improved through employing both reading and writing skills. Both points are supported by Cambria & Guthrie (2010) and Genlott & Grönlund (2013), Graham & Hebert (2011) and Küçükoğlu (2013)

Secondly, when it comes to writing achievement and skills, the analysing of the previous literature has led the researcher to conclude that written texts are usually derived from pleasure reading, where the reading text is self-selected rather than imposed on the reader. **Moreover**, Pleasure reading provides readers, especially young ones, with historical knowledge and information regarding the current events. Moreover, it helps them develop positive feelings, such as compassion and empathy, which would empower them to act upon their beliefs, and understand the consequences of improper behaviors. Interestingly, Pleasure reading provides readers with entertainment, relaxation, comfort, as it also offers them a creative outlet and means of escape, which, in turn, affect positively writing performance; this is supported by Jung (2016) and Bull

(2017), Zainal & Husin (2011), Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman (2014), Abbiss (2016), Koopman & Hakemulder (2015), and Bal & Veltkamp's (2013) studies.

Lastly, Reading helps learners develop their writing experience by providing them with inspiration, an extensive pool of vocabulary items, and grammatical structure. Furthermore, Pleasure reading increases reading speed and comprehension, motivates the attitudes of the reader toward learning the target language, develops their language competency, and improves their language skills, which is reinforced by Whitten, Labby, & Sullivan (2016) and Mol & Bus (2011) and , Salehi, Asgari & Amini (2015) & Kirmizi (2009).

Limitations and Further Research

While this study has generally answered the proposed research questions, further research on pleasure reading, writing achievement, and reading comprehension need to be investigated.

The current study is based on related studies and articles that have addressed the topic of the impact of pleasure reading on enhancing writing achievement and reading comprehension or the topics that relate to them. The study has faced some difficulties when it came to acquiring related literature, as there was a lack of research that addresses the issue. It can also be due to the fact that the current study has applied the analytical method, which is inapplicable in any other context, which, to the researcher's best knowledge, calls for the need to conduct more studies that would investigate the impact of pleasure reading on enhancing writing achievement and reading comprehension.

Findings of such studies would offer beneficial insights for instructors and students likewise. Additionally, such findings would offer invaluable resources for textbook writers and curriculum designers, as well as future researchers within the field of this study. The current study has employed different data collection methods, such as published research, articles, books, theses, and dissertations that are related to the study matter.

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