The Selection of Material in Extensive Reading Program

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Abstract: Extensive reading has enjoyed the increasing popularity from L2 educators as a potentially effective form of L2 reading instruction. However, many researchers tend to ignore the importance of selection of material. The paper is an attempt to explore the appropriate criteria of qualified graded readers, which can be helpful for English teachers and learners in ER program.

Keywords: Extensive Reading; Graded Readers; Selection of Material

1. Introduction

One of the crucial factor in Extensive reading programmar is nothing but the selection of material. A diversity of materials can be selected as ER materials, such as language learner literature, children's books, learners' own stories, newspapers, magazines, children's magazines, popular and simple literature, young adult literature, comics, and translations (Day & Bamford, 1998: 97). Among these, the most widely used is language learner literature called 'graded readers.' Basically, Graded readers are books written for learners of English using limited lexis and syntax, the former determined by frequency and usefulness and the latter by simplicity(Hill, 2008). There are different kinds of series across the worldwide market, such as *Cambridge English Readers, Oxford Bookworms, Penguin Readers* and so on. In addition, there are two types of graded reader: the rewrite and the simple original. Although there has long been a heated debate   on Graded readers, they are the most suitable materials which are able to provide sufficient and comprehensible input for different students in junior high school.

2. Materials to be used

2.1 Reasons for using graded readers

2.1.1 Appeal of fiction

It is true that people can learn by reading, but they would feel frustrated to read boring and difficult books. According to EPER Database, the majority of titles are fiction. Hill (2008) states the advantages of fiction are that the context is universal and a combination of narrative and dialogue much easier to read than expository prose. Moreover, those story-based books which functions as films bring new flavor of input resources to students and color students' daily life. Ultimately, students' willingness to continue reading will be increased dramatically.

2.1.2 Wide range of series to provide a sufficient quantity of varied input

On the other hand, graded readers characterized as a diversity of titles ranging from child classic legends to horrible stories provide various inputs to maintain students' spontaneous interest and cater for students' different tastes. Take the series of Oxford Bookworms as an example; there are more than 200 titles in current market. More importantly, the admirable consistency of linguistic level within stages provides pupils ample opportunities to build up their competency in a coherent and stable fashion.

2.1.3 Providing appropriate books with individual student

The two reasons above only reveals that graded readers are able to deliver a large quantity of inputs, but the problem lies in how to ensure that the books chosen by students are in their comfortable zone so that they can read fluently. From this perspective, the combination of Graded readers and EPER Test is vital to allocate the most suitable books for individual pupils in mixed level classes. The principle behind is that the students' performance in the EPER Test will enable the class teacher to assess which level each student

is capable of starting at. In this sense, ER is a concept that not only highly values reading as a private exercise but also respects individual differences. On contrast, without this "matching system", students are likely to try to read above their comfort level, not for enjoyment but because they think it is the best way to make progress by enlarging vocabulary. What is even worse, those who are equipped with the motto termed as "no reading pain, no reading gain" may stick the suffering of struggling to continue reading or uninteresting texts, believing that stopping and changing the material is an admission of defeat. This is a symptom of what might be called the "macho maxim of second language reading instruction". In all, the "matching system" plays the determining role in providing comprehensible input for each student.

2.2 Reasons for using class readers

Using class readers means that all the students in a class works on the same book at the same time. Armed with a decent budget, I intend to use class readers for its two benefits. At first, teacher can make full advantage of the chance to present exactly how to actually read extensively as well as check the process. This is particularly true for those who are not equipped with autonomy. Secondly, it provides an interesting 'alterative reality' the whole class can share. In short, using class readers is one of the most effective strategies in scaffolding students and engaging them in a reading community, particularly in the initial stage. However, it is not easy for a project manager to make the final decision on readers when facing a large variety of series flooding in the market. therefore, it is wise to make decisions on the EPER databas from series of Oxford Bookworms.

3. Material management

3.1 The reasons for establishing class library rather than central library

As long as the books are decided, the next consideration , which is equally vital for ER programmes is how to establish an elaborate system to manage and maintain materials, which is a crucial element in ER programmes. Hill(1991:81) states that "it is the scarcity of proper system of management that attribute most to the clash of schemes started by enthusiasts" Although the idea of setting up both central library and class library is strongly recommended, it is unrealistic to create a central library in this case for two reasons. At first, the geographical location of the main library in the school is so remote that it takes at least twenty minutes to get there. Secondly, the shortage of full-time librarians is another concern. Therefor , I will discuss the measures of establishing a dynamic class library.

3.2 Managing books in class library

Many ER experts hold the view that it is class teacher's responsibility to design a class library system and run it smoothly. However, reflected on my experience, it can be more feasible and efficient if teachers empower the students to take the responsibility. Firstly, dealing with hundreds of books in one classroom can be a huge challenge for most teachers who are struggling with massive curriculum work. More importantly, such transformation serves to trigger students' motivation and promote their engagement. In addition, based on my experience, in spite of pupils' young age, any task can be completed excellently by students' determination and commitment if teachers trust them. Therefore, rather than detailing management techniques, I will deliver some basic strategies, leaving more space for students to explore. Overall, there are four areas in the creation of the system that have to be taken into account.

4. Conclusion

To some extent, the success of this ER programme can be largely influenced by the appropriate selection of material and its management. Besides, it is vital to take measures to increase students' engagement and motivation, such as "empowering students" to manage class library. In terms of the future exploration on this topic, EFL teachers should follow the path and pay more attention   to the implementation of ER programmes in hundreds of Chinese Universities , which deserves our endeavor as well in the future.

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