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“Reading books in their original language : A case study”

“Lectura de libros en su lengua original: Estudio de un caso”

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•Extensive reading:

•Reading a number of texts for a lengthy period of
time, without the addition of homework or follow up
(Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

•Extensive reading benefits have been
recognized by a number of researchers,
as it seems to facilitate second language
development in a number of ways.

1. Reading for pleasure could be intrinsically
motivating while helping to develop reading
fluency (Wang & Guthrie, 2004).
2. It could enhance not only reading skills,
but also writing and listening skills
(Hafiz & Tudor, 1989).
3. It can consolidate already known vocabulary
(Waring & Takaki, 2033).
4. Incidental vocabulary acquisition occurs when
words appear in their natural context.

5. Readers are able to write more correctly, using
already known words “in a significantly more
appropriate manner” (Tudor & Hafiz, 1989, pp.175).
Spelling is strongly enhanced, even from a
small number of exposures (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006).
6. Reading research has shown that “incidental
learning of vocabulary” occurs through
extensive reading” (Coady, 1997).

-It is accepted that first language vocabulary
learning occurs incidentally.

-However, when the learner is engaged in
extensive reading there are unresolved
issues with the “incidental acquisition” of
second language vocabulary.

- Reading for meaning alone did result in significant acquisition of L2 vocabulary, but direct instruction led to acquisition of an even greater number of words, as well more depth of knowledge. Extensive reading is a time consuming and an unpredictable process (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997).

- Most studies do not contribute to the understanding of the acquisition process. They do not investigate the factors that lead to word retention (Meara, 1997).

- Guessing the meaning of unknown words in a natural context can be challenging and imprecise. To accurate contextual guessing it is necessary to understand “at least 98% of the words in the text” (Huckin & Coady, 1999, p. 184).
- The learner has to know about 5000 word families (Furula, 2012).

The knowledge of the basic 3000 word families is necessary to read successfully, and to acquire new words in a natural way (Coady, 1997). Then, the good readers of L1 can be expected to transfer their reading strategies to L2 (Laufer, 1997).

Most of the studies on “extensive reading” are quantitative. The results are analyzed using pre-and-post tests to find empirical evidence.

- However, there are few studies involving the learning experience itself through extensive reading. That is, the student as a first person, recounting his or her experiences in a journal that records their reflections (Leung, 2002; Ming Chuan (2007).

Purpose of the study

- To explore the effectiveness of an extensive reading program in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension.

- To examine during six months, whether there are any real differences in the knowledge of spelling, meaning and grammar of Spanish.

- To understand the process of learning through a journal written by the learner that shows his retrospective and introspective records.

Method

Case Study

This study was designed because the learner does not have opportunities to practice and improve his Spanish, besides the regular 90 minutes classes per week.

- Philippine, male, college student, 22 year-old, living in Japan for 12 years.
- Highly motivated young learner who knows English and Japanese.
- Spanish classes: One year (about 90 hours).
- Extensive reading: Six months

Spanish background:

1. **Textbook** (around 90 hours, 2013 June - 2014 May.)

-*Entre Dos Mundos* (Kikuda W. & Tamba M.)

-*Camino Real 1* (Hosono S. & Uechi N.)

-*El Principito* (De Saint-Exuperi A., 1987) (only for correct pronunciation.)

2. **National Geographic. Tejedoras peruanas. Edition in Spanish.** Heinle Cengage Learning (only for reading and listening.)

Materials:

First attempt: *"El fantasma del castillo"*.

Colección "Barco de vapor" for children.

Too difficult for verb conjugations.

Second attempt: *Graded Spanish reader. 1ra. etapa.*

it is a book for beginners, but the number

of uncommon words was too high.

Third attempt: *El misterio de la llave. Nivel 1.*

The story is appealing and it mostly uses present tense.

Procedure

- 1.The learner every week wrote a journal on his experiences (progress, frustrations, achievements, challenges, how prior knowledge was helpful, etc.)
- 2.Every week, he told the teacher about the reading, as if he was a story-teller.
- 3.As there were problems with verbs, he underlined verbs and reviewed them, to be sure that he knew the dictionary form of each of them.
- 4.Another source of data were tests on spelling and questions about specific persons and situations of the story.

5. Questionnaire:

- a)Do you find the book easy or difficult to read?
 - b)When encountering unknown words, what did you usually do?
Did you skip the words or guess the meaning from context or look them up in a dictionary?
 - c) How often did you ignore unknown words?
What kind of words did you tend to ignore?
 - d) When do you think that you guessed successfully?
 - e)How often did you look up unknown words in a dictionary? What kind of words did you look up in a dictionary?
 - f) Do you use a monolingual or a bilingual dictionary?
 - g)Do you think that you are learning new words from reading a book in Spanish?
- Comments

Results

Summary of Journal entries:

Easy parts:

- 1.Because I'm an English speaker, it is easier for me to understand the whole sentence.
- 2.Before reading I had learned the basic rules of verbs, thus making it easy to pinpoint which word is a verb, noun or adjective.
- 3.I lived in the Philippines for 13 years. It was a Spanish colony leaving our mother tongue Tagalog with a lot of Spanish words, which give me an advantage in identifying words and their meaning.
- 1.Most of the verbs and nouns are repetitive. I remember them.

• Hard parts:

1. Because I know better the present tense of verbs, it is hard for me to identify words in past, future and other tenses.
2. Because I remember verbs by their infinitive form it took me a longer time to search for the meaning of the verbs whose meaning I don't know.
3. Because of my lack of vocabulary and other forms of verbs, it was hard for me to fully understand some sentences.
4. It was hard to understand fully every word, but it was easy to understand the whole sentence.
5. It was hard for me to understand some native expressions such as "no va a ser facil".
6. It was hard to understand verbs that have pronouns in them, for example (lo esperaba" o "hacerlo".

• Gains:

1. Comparing by studying Spanish by textbook I find now easier to learn and understand how verbs work.
2. While reading the book it helped me widen my vocabulary better than by textbook.
3. In case of verbs it is easier to know what form that verb is, and how to use those verbs in that certain form.
4. It is easier to understand the meaning of words while reading rather than studying them in the textbook because you can know how to use words with different meaning.

Conclusions

- Spanish pronunciation is easier as it follows clear rules, then extensive reading can help to build a vocabulary.
- Verbs are a little complicated.
- It is necessary a good grammatical base. However, an intermediate learner can benefit from intensive reading.

- Reading out loud, checking for repeating structures, associating types of sentences, and trying to figure the meaning by context, helps to be aware of the process of individual learning.
- It helps to find words in their natural context.

- It is a good method to enhance autonomous learning.
- Explaining the book as a story-teller helps to feel a sense of achievement.
- The most important challenge is to find the time, discipline, and commitment to read extensively, especially at the beginning. Also helps the chosen book.

- **Writing a journal** permits:
 - a) Being self-aware of the process of learning and to focus on specific problems.
 - b) Attention is highly engaged, as the student has to relate in his own words, what he understood of the story and answer questions.
 - c) It also helps the teacher to re-direct the teaching and put emphasis in some grammatical problems.

- The inclusion of the journal recordings was very effective and helped to reinforce learning.
- It was like “breaking codes”, and the experience of telling a story in another language was the best source of motivation for this student.

Thank you

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