



The Effects of a Short-Term Extensive Reading Course in Spanish

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The study investigates the effects of a seven-week extensive reading course in college-level Spanish. A stand-alone course in extensive reading was offered as an elective for students at the intermediate through low-advanced levels of Spanish. Subjects completed two pre- and post-course tests of Spanish proficiency, a questionnaire about their attitudes toward reading and their motivation to read in Spanish, and they wrote weekly reflections about their reading. Study participants improved significantly on one of the two measures of Spanish proficiency. Results also showed an overall increase in intrinsic motivation, and a decrease in extrinsic motivation to read in Spanish. Subjects also reported significantly less use of a dictionary at the end of the course. Students' weekly reflections complemented the quantitative results and revealed highly favorable reactions to extensive reading.

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The benefits of extensive reading have been well-documented in English as a second or foreign language for learners at various levels of instruction. However, a review of extensive reading research yields relatively little on the application and effectiveness of extensive reading in other languages. The present study seeks to document the effects of extensive reading in Spanish as a foreign language, thereby adding to the somewhat limited amount of research in this area in languages other than English.

Understanding the effects of extensive reading in Spanish seems especially important given the prominence of Spanish as a world language and its importance in the US, where the present study was conducted. According to U.S. government census data, 13% of the U.S. population speaks Spanish in the home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Furthermore, Spanish is by far the most widely studied foreign language in the US, accounting for more than half of the total foreign language course enrollments in 2009 (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2010). The broader goal of the

present study is to further our knowledge of methodology and best practices in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language.

Literature Review

Although research on extensive reading in languages other than English is rather limited, there have been studies of both extensive and extended reading in other languages, including French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. One difference in studies of extensive reading in languages other than English pertains to the availability of reading material. There is a wealth of language learner literature available for English language learners at all levels of proficiency. Some publishers offer graded readers in Spanish, French, and German, but the selection is much more limited than that available in English, and there is a noticeable lack of graded readers for beginning students at a low level of proficiency. Furthermore, languages other than English lack a common scale, such as the one developed by the Extensive Reading Foundation, for categorizing books by level. This makes the task of acquiring appropriate reading materials and identifying appropriate levels much more challenging for those who teach languages other than English, and instructors often provide reading materials written for native speakers.

Such was the case in a study on reading in intermediate college French by Dupuy (1997). Students read a combination of instructor-assigned and self-selected readings, including short stories, poems, short novels, songs, and newspaper and magazine articles. At the end of a 15-week semester, students completed a short survey in which they reported that reading was more beneficial than grammar instruction for language learning. The learners also indicated a strong preference for a combination of instructor-assigned and

self-selected readings, as the instructor-selected readings exposed them to a wider variety of texts that they would not necessarily have chosen on their own. Finally, students reported that their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar had improved as a result of reading.

In another study in French as a foreign language, Pigada and Schmitt (2006) conducted a case study that explored whether extensive reading can augment a learner's vocabulary knowledge. A learner's knowledge of 133 words was measured during one-on-one interviews to determine whether vocabulary learning had occurred during one month of extensive reading in which the subject read four graded readers. The results showed that the learner's knowledge of 65% of the words under assessment was enhanced in some way, either in terms of meaning, spelling, or grammatical knowledge.

Arnold (2009) conducted an evaluation study of a modified extensive reading program in an advanced college German course. Eight students read self-selected online material in German for a total of seven 75-minute class periods. The approach allowed for learner autonomy, but the instructor was not able to pre-select material at the *i minus 1* level. Based on book reports, written reflections, and questionnaires, Arnold concluded that the online reading program had resulted in increased motivation to read, increased reading ability and confidence in reading, and had encouraged students to engage in more pleasure reading in German.

In another study on reading in German as a foreign language, Maxim (2002) introduced a German romance novel to students in a first-semester German course. A control group consisting of 27 students and an experimental group of 32 students followed the same syllabus and textbook

for the first 4 weeks of a beginning German course. For the remaining 10 weeks of the semester, students in the experimental group read an authentic German romance novel in class, while students in the control group practiced grammar and vocabulary. The novel was extremely difficult for the students, so rather than engaging in silent sustained reading the students engaged in what the author describes as “community reading” or “group-work reading.” This consisted of a series of tasks in which students worked in pairs or small groups to recognize, reproduce, and analyze the major events of the novel. At the end of the semester, both the experimental and the control groups made significant improvements in their reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge, but neither group had an advantage over the other. Maxim concluded that first-semester German students can follow and understand an unsimplified German novel, and that the approach fostered effective L2 reading habits by practicing reading in a way that did not assume word-for-word comprehension.

Hitosugi & Day (2004) studied the effects of extensive reading in Japanese as a foreign language. Extensive Reading was added as a component of a second semester Japanese course at a US university. Due to the lack of language learner literature in Japanese, students read Japanese children’s books. After 10 weeks of extensive reading, students improved their scores in a traditional measure of reading comprehension and, although not statistically conclusive, improved more overall than students in a control group who did not engage in extensive reading. A questionnaire of student affect administered before and after the extensive reading program showed an increase in attitudes toward and motivation for learning Japanese.

In a case study of extensive reading in beginning Japanese, Leung (2002) examined

her own experience learning Japanese through a 20-week program of extensive reading in which she read comic books, children’s textbooks, and children’s storybooks in Japanese. Extensive reading was supplemented with meetings with a private tutor. As both the author and the subject, Leung documented her experience through a learner diary, audio-recordings from her tutorial sessions, and two vocabulary tests. Leung found that extensive reading had improved her reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Extensive reading also promoted a positive attitude when she found materials that were at her level, although she became discouraged when attempting to read materials that were too difficult.

Another case study of extensive reading in Japanese (Tabata-Sandom & Macalister, 2009) focused on a native speaker of English who volunteered to read extensively in Japanese for 3 months. At the beginning of the study, the subject identified the difficulty in finding appropriate reading materials and her insufficient knowledge of kanji as factors negatively affecting her motivation to read in Japanese. The latter variable persisted to some extent throughout the study, although by the end she had become more optimistic about her ability to learn kanji and read Japanese. She also noticed that reading was more enjoyable when she read things that interested her. The 3 months of extensive reading further resulted in changes in her reading behavior. The participant described a strategy of ‘mental notes,’ by which she noticed features of Japanese while she read and was able to turn passive knowledge to active knowledge. She also reported less use of mental translation over time.

De Burgh-Hirabe & Feryok (2013) present a model of motivation for extensive reading in Japanese as a foreign language. Nine students of Japanese at the high

school level volunteered to read extensively outside of class. Factors influencing their motivation to read were identified from journal entries and individual interviews with each subject. Motivation changed over time as a result of changing influences in the subjects' academic and social lives, such as their perceived progress and feelings of success, the interest and ease of reading materials, distractions and self-regulation, and the external demands of a national examination. The changing nature of the subjects' motivation and the interaction of motivational influences fit within the authors' complex and dynamic model of motivation for extensive reading. The authors emphasize the importance of offering varied reading materials, and they conclude that required reading, in or out of class, is more likely to be effective than voluntary reading.

Previous studies of extensive reading in Spanish have found affective benefits as well as greater gains in vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Rodrigo (1997) studied 26 college students who completed a semester-long extensive reading course in Spanish. Students read both self-selected books and required readings, for a total of ninety hours of reading over a fifteen-week semester. Rodrigo found that students made significantly greater gains than a control group on tests of grammar and vocabulary. A majority of the students who took the extensive reading course also self-reported that reading extensively had stimulated their interest in Spanish, increased their self-esteem, and led to improvement in their Spanish skills.

In a study by Stokes, Krashen, and Kartchner (1998), 59 students of Spanish at the university level were asked to complete a test on the subjunctive and fill out a questionnaire in which they self-reported information about their formal study of Spanish, the amount of time they had

lived in a Spanish-speaking country, the amount of free voluntary reading they had done in Spanish, and the instruction they had received on the subjunctive. Free voluntary reading was the best predictor of performance on the subjunctive test and the only one that showed a significant effect. The authors acknowledge that the effect was small and that their measure of the amount of time students spent reading was "crude," as it was based on student self-reports.

Rodrigo, Krashen, and Gribbons (2004) compared three instructional approaches in Spanish: 1) an extensive reading class in which students read both assigned and self-selected texts; 2) a reading and discussion class in which students completed the same assigned readings as in the first group, but without the self-selected readings; and 3) a traditional grammar and composition class, which emphasized explicit instruction of vocabulary and grammar and included only intensive reading. There was no significant difference among the groups on a cloze test at the end of the semester, but the two reading groups made significantly greater gains in vocabulary than the traditional group. The two reading groups also showed improvements on a test of grammar, while the traditional group got worse. The authors conclude that reading for pleasure was at least as effective, or more effective, than traditional instruction.

In a study of extensive reading as an added component to an existing course, Hardy (2013) found that students at the low-intermediate level made greater gains in Spanish proficiency than a control group as measured by a multiple choice test of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Students in the experimental extensive reading group also showed a decrease in extrinsic motivation based on pre- and post-course questionnaire

responses. Qualitative data also revealed very positive reactions to extensive reading in Spanish.

A study by Rodrigo (2011) also revealed affective benefits of reading in Spanish. Intermediate level students who read two books in Spanish showed a significant improvement in their attitudes toward reading in Spanish based on responses to a pre- and post-course questionnaire. A positive experience with reading in Spanish was also reported by more than 90% of students at the beginning level who read just one book extensively.

Finally, Liburd and Rodrigo (2012) observed more positive attitudes toward reading in Spanish in a second semester university course. Six students, three in an experimental extensive reading group and three in a control group, responded to a questionnaire about their attitudes toward L1 and L2 reading before and after a five-week course. The three students who read one graded reader per week for five weeks showed a more positive attitude toward reading, while the attitude of three students in a control group did not change.

The studies reported above on extensive reading in languages other than English provide consistent evidence of the affective benefits of reading extensively. They are also at least suggestive of greater language proficiency resulting from extensive reading, although many are either case studies or look at small groups of learners. Prior studies also range considerably in the amount of time that extensive reading was implemented, ranging from only 1 month (Pigada and Schmitt, 2006) to 20 weeks (Leung, 2002). There remains a need for quantitative research on the effects that extensive reading has on language proficiency and further examination of the length of time needed to reap the benefits of extensive reading.

The purpose of the present study is to add to the modest body of existing research on extensive reading in Spanish by combining qualitative and quantitative analysis of a short-term program. The following research questions were posed:

1. Will reading extensively for only seven weeks have a significant effect on students' proficiency in Spanish?
2. Will students' attitudes toward reading and motivation to read in Spanish change after seven weeks of extensive reading?
3. Will reading extensively for a short period of time affect students' beliefs about the way Spanish can be learned?

The present study differs from previous research on extensive reading in Spanish in several ways. First, it differs from Rodrigo (1997) and Hardy (2013) by considering the effects of a course lasting only seven weeks, and with subjects at differing levels of ability. Unlike the studies by Stokes, Krashen, and Kartchner (1998), Rodrigo, Krashen, and Gribbons (2004), and Liburd and Rodrigo (2012), the present study combines qualitative data with quantitative analyses of not only Spanish proficiency, but also motivation and attitudes toward reading.

Method

The study aims to build upon the body of literature reported above by examining the effects of a short-term extensive reading program in a mixed ability class on Spanish proficiency, motivation to read, and attitudes toward reading in Spanish.

Context

The study was conducted at a small, private, liberal arts college in the United

States. The college has a foreign language requirement for which all students must complete either two semesters of beginning language, or one semester of a foreign language at the intermediate level or above. Following national trends, Spanish is by far the most commonly studied of the four modern languages offered at the college, and some students continue their study of Spanish toward a minor or major. For the latter, strong reading skills are essential, as the major curriculum places a heavy emphasis on the literatures of Spain and Latin America. Furthermore, senior Spanish majors have to write a senior project, or *tesina*, in Spanish as well as completing oral and written comprehensive examinations, exams taken over a two-day period that test a senior's knowledge of his major field of study. A course in extensive reading was added to the existing course offerings to see if it might give students an additional boost in their reading comprehension skills in addition to increasing their interest in reading and motivation to read in Spanish.

Participants

Extensive Reading was offered as a stand-alone elective course for students at the intermediate through low-advanced levels. Students who had completed the equivalent of three to five semesters of college-level Spanish were invited to enroll. The course met for three hours per week for one half of the academic semester, or seven weeks, for a total of twenty-one in-class contact hours. Class time was devoted almost exclusively to silent sustained reading (SSR), although the first and last days of class were devoted to diagnostic testing; and students participated in four "book chats," which took up part of class time on the days that they were scheduled. While students were engaged in SSR during class, the instructor, a native speaker of English, also read in Spanish, thereby pro-

viding a model of pleasure reading in L2. In addition to in-class reading, students were expected to read in Spanish for one additional hour per day outside of class.

Reading Material

Students were provided with information about extensive reading at the beginning of the course (see Appendix A). Following the principles set forth in Day & Bamford (1998, 2002), students were encouraged to choose books according to their own interests and level of language proficiency. They could choose from a variety of books in a departmental collection, available for perusal during each class session, which included graded readers, adapted classics, and children's and young adult books in Spanish. The instructor also took students to a nearby public library, where they were shown the library's collection of children's, young adult, and adult literature in Spanish. Students had the opportunity to get a library card and check out books, and they were encouraged to return to the library on their own.

Data Collection

In order to measure possible changes in students' language proficiency as well as their motivation and attitudes toward reading in Spanish, three pre- and post-tests were administered:

1. A 100-item cloze test;
2. Brigham Young University's Computer Adaptive Placement Exam (CAPE), a multiple choice test of vocabulary, grammar, and reading;
3. A questionnaire about students' reading habits, attitudes toward reading, beliefs about reading, and motivation to read in Spanish (see Appendix B).

To create the cloze test, eight reading passages were selected from sample Diplomas in Spanish as a Foreign Language (DELE) exams (Instituto Cervantes). Two Spanish professors from the same institution who had previously taught intermediate Spanish and were therefore familiar with the proficiency level of the students, read the passages and indicated which they thought were at the most appropriate level of difficulty for students at approximately the high-intermediate level in the curriculum. Based on their feedback, four passages, which corresponded to levels B1 and B2 of the Common European Framework, were selected. Following the recommendation of Mason and Pendergast (1993), the first paragraph of each passage was left intact in order to provide context, and in subsequent paragraphs every 10th word was omitted. The cloze passages were then distributed to fourteen college-educated native Spanish speakers from five different Spanish-speaking countries. The original passages and the responses of the native speakers were used to create an answer key. A few of the native speaker consultants left items blank, so those items were eliminated from consideration. In the end, an even 100 items remained.

Brigham Young University's CAPE, a multiple choice test of grammar, vocabulary and reading, provided a second and more general measure of Spanish proficiency. It is also used as a placement exam at the host institution as well as many other universities in the United States.

The questionnaire on motivation and attitudes was modeled in part on Mori (2002) and Apple (2005), both of which drew from Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. The first part of the questionnaire gathered information about students' reading habits and perceived reading abilities, while the second part of the questionnaire consisted of thirty ques-

tions on a Likert scale. The questionnaire is much shorter than Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, but comparable in length to the questionnaires used by Apple (2005) and Mori (2002). A relatively shorter questionnaire was used so as not to take up too much class time, and also to avoid testing fatigue on the part of subjects. Following Mori's (2002) framework for reading motivation, items on the questionnaire were designed to assess Intrinsic Value of Reading and Extrinsic Utility Value of Reading. Statements relating to students' beliefs about language learning were also included as a way of determining whether students' attitudes toward traditional approaches to language instruction might be affected by extensive reading.

Qualitative data were collected in the form of reading reflections, which students submitted once per week beginning in the second week of the course. Students were asked to reflect on the books that they were reading and their relative difficulty and interest; on the process of reading; whether or not they enjoyed reading; and whether the reading was helping their Spanish. The prompts provided to students can be found in Appendix C. Students were asked to write their reflections in Spanish, but were given the option of using occasional English phrases if they could not express themselves adequately in Spanish.

Finally, students were asked to keep a reading log modeled loosely on the form suggested by Schmidt (2004) (see Appendix D). Each day that students read extensively in Spanish, they recorded the following information on their logs: the date, the title of the book read, the number of pages read, the number of minutes read, and a simple indication of the relative difficulty of the book and their opinion of it. The logs included time spent reading both

in and outside of class. The instructor collected the logs once per week to monitor their reading. There were no tests, but students were assigned grades at the end of the course based on their attendance and participation in SSR during class, the amount of time they read, as reported in their reading logs, and the completion of their reading reflections.

Results

A total of sixteen students completed the course. Based on self-reports in their reading logs, the students read an average of 46 hours and 45 minutes during the 7-week course, or 6 hours and 41 minutes per week (see Table 1). This was just short of the set goal of 7 hours of reading per week. The correlation between time read and improvement on the two tests of Spanish proficiency was not significant.

Language Proficiency

The standard repeated measures (matched pairs) t-test was used to test the null hypothesis that the scores did not increase on average for the CAPE or the cloze test. The average CAPE score—which reflects knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and

reading comprehension—increased from pre- to post-course, but the increase was not significant. For the cloze test, however, the results were different. Only 14 of the 16 students enrolled in the course took the cloze test both pre- and post-course, so only those 14 were included in the analysis. High reliability would imply that students with high scores on the test before the class are likely to also score high after the class. This is confirmed by the measures of reliability, as shown in Table 2 (Pearson's r and Cronbach's α), which show high consistency in the scores before and after the class. However, the mean increased by about 7 points. The test indicates that the average of increases in individual scores from pre- to post-course was significant ($p=0.001$). Furthermore, the large effect size of 0.995 indicates a sizeable increase in the average scores on the cloze test at the end of the course. A considerable increase in the minimum score suggests that initially weak students improved their proficiency the most. A summary of these results can be found in Table 2.

Thus, changes in cloze test scores show a significant improvement in Spanish proficiency after seven weeks of extensive reading.

Table 1:
Self-reports of time spent reading

Mean time read over 7 weeks	46 hours, 45 minutes
Minimum	20 hours, 24 minutes
Maximum	64 hours, 32 minutes
Mean time read per week	6 hours, 41 minutes
N	16

Table 2:
Pre- and post-course data on cloze test

	Cloze pre	Cloze post
Mean	48.86	56.14
Standard dev	16.56	13.24
Standard error	12.21	14.04
Minimum	14	37
Maximum	83	88
N	14	14
Pearson's r	0.90	
Cronbach's alpha	0.94	
H0: $\mu_{\text{post}} - \mu_{\text{pre}} \leq 0^*$		
p value	0.001	
Effect size**	0.995	

*where μ -difference indicates average of differences in individual scores

**Cohen's d effect size for matched pairs

Attitudes, Motivation, and Beliefs about Language Learning

Students rated the statements on the questionnaire on a scale of 0 to 4, with 0 meaning strongly disagree/not at all and 4 meaning strongly agree/excellent (see Appendix B). Cronbach's alphas were calculated for questions relating to motivation to read and beliefs about language learning in order to test for internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha values for each group are included at the end of Appendix B. Based on these, the following groups can be identified with high levels of Cronbach's alpha at or above 0.700: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and translation (see Appendix B). Groups representing social learning and beliefs about language learning are borderline cases of internal consistency, while the Cronbach's alphas for the groups corresponding to grammar and vocabulary learning show very low levels of internal consistency. According to these results, the last four are

not considered as separate and consistent groups in the analysis.

The standard repeated measures (matched pairs) t-test was used to test the null hypothesis that the mean value for the group did not change from pre- to post-course. Students showed a consistent and significant ($p=0.017$) increase in intrinsic motivation. The effect size was small (0.23). A significant *decrease* was observed in extrinsic motivation ($p=.000$) with a small effect size (-0.34). Significant decreases were also observed in students' attitudes toward social or group learning, and in their beliefs about vocabulary learning. Of the 3 questions related to vocabulary, responses to one increased slightly (*Vocabulary is the most important part of learning Spanish*), but responses to the other two decreased (*When I read in Spanish, I look up words that I don't know* and *I can learn new vocabulary by reading in Spanish*).

Table 3:
Changes in questionnaire responses

Groups	Average		St. deviation		p-value	d.f.	Effect size
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post			
H0: $\mu_{\text{Post}} - \mu_{\text{Pre}} = 0$							
Intrinsic	2.41	2.61	1.18	1.10	0.017*	90	0.23
Extrinsic	2.72	2.46	0.98	0.98	0.000**	115	-0.34
Translation	2.19	2.15	0.80	0.78	0.401	25	-0.05
Social	2.92	2.58	0.63	0.70	0.024*	25	-0.41
Beliefs	2.70	2.55	1.04	1.00	0.050*	111	-0.16
Grammar	1.96	2.01	0.82	0.85	0.292	29	0.10
Vocabulary	3.05	2.69	0.89	0.92	0.006**	47	-0.38

**significant at 1%, *significant at 5%, matched pairs t-tests

Although only a single item, a significant increase was observed in response to the question *How would you describe your reading ability in Spanish?* This increase in perceived reading ability is consistent with the group's significant improvement on the cloze test.

Reflective Journals

Most of the students in the class submitted all six reflective journals, as assigned, but one student submitted only two. In reflecting on the books that they read, their progress in reading over seven weeks, and their enjoyment of reading, students' reactions were overwhelmingly positive. A few recurring themes stand out and will be illustrated with representative quotes, all translated from the original Spanish.

Reading strategies

Many students reflected on the process of reading and how their own reading changed, especially with respect to unknown vocabulary. Some students ad-

mitted to reading with a dictionary, even though they had been instructed not to do so. However, students also indicated that they began to rely more on contextual cues over time and no longer needed to rely on translation. This shift in reading strategies resulted in greater enjoyment in reading.

... my reading style in Spanish is changing because of the course: now, if I can, I try to read without a dictionary. I try to learn the new vocabulary through context rather than "What does this mean?" I'm excited about the course and I'm ready to read more. (PS, Week 2)

I'm beginning to read without translating words into English. Now I read for enjoyment without thinking about the fact that I don't know some words ... I enjoy reading much more than I thought I would. (AB, Week 4)

Entering the last class, I have learned that reading in Spanish isn't as difficult as I thought. The process of reading is

easy if you can think in Spanish when you read. When I started the class, I was trying to translate every word to English, but now I know that it's better to read in Spanish and try to understand it like that. (PJ, Week 7)

Ease of reading

Some students found reading difficult at the beginning of the course, especially reading silently for an hour at a time. However, students invariably found that reading became easier and more enjoyable within the first few weeks.

I thought that seven hours each week would be difficult, but time flies ... Lately, this class has been better than I ever expected. (AB week 3)

... I think that I have begun to enjoy reading in Spanish more and more, even though I still have problems understanding everything I read. One thing that I've seen is that the time flies when I'm concentrating on an interesting book. (FG, Week 3)

I think that I'm still improving my reading ability in Spanish. The process of reading is much easier than it was at the beginning of the class. (PJ, Week 6)

One student expressed dissatisfaction at the beginning of the course because of his reading level in Spanish, and because he could not find books that were easy or interesting enough for him in the instructor's classroom collection:

It's a bit difficult to read for an hour every day because I have a lot of homework for other classes and it's difficult to concentrate on a book in Spanish. I'm not very good at reading in Spanish—this makes it difficult, too. Sometimes I read a boring book and this makes it

difficult to read for an hour. I'm not advanced in Spanish, making these books a little hard for me to understand. (AW, Week 2)

Then during a trip to the local public library at the beginning of the third week of the course, AW found young adult books that he had read as a child. He found these interesting, and his prior knowledge of the stories enabled him to read them more easily in Spanish. At the end of week five he wrote:

It's easier every day for me to read in Spanish and it's fun for me, too. It's no longer work for me to read, I'm starting to read for pleasure. I'm sad that this class is only a half-semester class. I'm happy with how I'm doing and I'm excited for the next weeks. (AW, Week 5)

By the end of the course he wrote:

This class is very fun and beneficial for me. The class was difficult at the beginning because I couldn't read very well in Spanish. Nevertheless, after a few weeks of reading constantly, I've become more comfortable and better in Spanish. I love the classes because they are an escape from reality and very relaxing. Now I like to read in Spanish and I'm going to read more for pleasure. (AW, Week 7)

AW was not the only student who was drawn to children's and young adult novels in Spanish translation. The *Magic Tree House* (*La casa del árbol*), *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (*Diario de Greg*), *Judy Moody*, and *Harry Potter* series were all popular choices.

Language and cultural learning

One student recognized that he was learning about cultures of the Spanish speaking world from the graded readers available from the instructor:

[a character in the book] learns about the Mayas and also about the Spanish and the conflict between the two. It's a good story and I learned a lot about the two cultures and also a lot of new words. (JP, Week 6)

This book was followed by a simplified version of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, about which the student wrote:

This week I read a very famous book by Miguel de Cervantes that is called *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. I have wanted [to read] this book for two years and finally I have the perfect opportunity... I liked this book a lot and want to read the second part next week (JP, Week 6)

Most students identified improvements in their reading comprehension in Spanish, and many identified improvements in their vocabulary, their reading fluency, and even their writing and speaking ability in Spanish:

With reading, many words are easier to understand. With each book that I read, my comprehension gets better and better (JK, Week 3)

I think that my reading abilities have improved a lot. I have learned new verbs, sentences and idiomatic expressions, not from studying, but from reading for pleasure. I'm sad that this class is going to end soon. (LS, Week 5)

I have started to be more comfortable with the process of reading in Span-

ish. The time that I have spent reading in this class has helped me to think in Spanish when I'm reading. I've learned more vocabulary that will be useful when I'm reading in the future. I think that the class will help me with my speaking and writing ability as well as my reading ability. (PJ, Week 5)

My reading ability in Spanish has developed a lot in the past weeks . . . I can read in Spanish without looking for words that I don't know and still understand the book. This class is very beneficial. (AW, Week 6)

. . . I have seen that now I'm reading much more fluently. I'm also writing much better in Spanish. This class has opened my eyes to what it really is to read. (FG, Week 6)

Changes in a reluctant reader

Special note will be made of RO, a Mexican-American heritage speaker who grew up speaking Spanish in the home, but did not develop literacy skills in Spanish. RO makes an interesting case study because he readily admitted that he did not like reading, but registered for the course at the recommendation of one of his professors as a way to improve his Spanish. As he writes in his first journal during the second week of the course:

For me, reading in Spanish is very difficult because I have never read much in my life. The only thing I have read were, like, the names of stores or restaurant menus, but I have never read books in Spanish and it's very difficult for me. Like one day I spent about an hour and a half to read about ten pages. I have never liked reading in any language, but what I think is that this class will help me with my Spanish. (RO, Week 2)

His attitude had already begun to change by the end of the third week:

But in any case I'm enjoying reading in Spanish more and more because I like the selection of books. (RO, Week 3)

In the sixth week of the course, he began to read a Harry Potter book in translation and wrote the following:

I'm not going to lie to you, I've seen some of the Harry Potter films in recent years, but I have never read a book. I can't tell you the number of people who have told me that the Harry Potter books are better than the movies. I never believed them, and I never liked to read until this year. And less in Spanish! I'm in the first pages of the book, but I can already see the difference. I chose this book because it's something familiar, I already know some of the main characters and it's easy to visualize what's happening. But again I'm not going to lie to you, the book is difficult for me, sometimes there are a lot of words that I don't understand and I have my computer on Google translate to discover the meaning of the words that I don't understand. Forgive me. But as I said, the story is going very well, I'm in the first pages (chapters) of the book, but people who told me to read the book before seeing the movie are right. I'm enjoying it a lot. I agree! (RO, Week 6)

In his final reflection on the last day of the course, he wrote:

With this being the last journal of the semester, I feel relief and at the same time sadness. I say that I feel relieved because I don't have to read ten to fifteen hours per week anymore! I also know that this course only lasts a half semester, but it was very difficult because never in my life have I had to read so many books.

Nevertheless, I'm happy with this class because I feel that my Spanish has improved and I'm very excited to be able to go to Mexico to talk with my father on Friday [the beginning of the college's spring vacation] and I hope that he says something about my Spanish. (RO, Week 7)

Discussion

In response to the initial research questions, the short-term course had a significant effect on students' reading ability in Spanish as measured by a cloze test. However, students' scores on the CAPE did not improve significantly. This may be because the CAPE is a more general test of Spanish proficiency, including multiple choice questions of vocabulary and grammar as well as reading comprehension. It may be that the 7-week program was not enough time for students to improve significantly on this broader measure of proficiency.

The course also affected students' motivation to read, resulting in a significant increase in intrinsic motivation and a significant decrease in extrinsic motivation. These findings are consistent with those of Hardy (2013), who also found a significant decrease in extrinsic motivation accompanied by a consistent but not statistically significant increase in intrinsic motivation in a low-intermediate Spanish as a foreign language class in which extensive reading was an added component.

While one might predict an increase in intrinsic motivation following a course in which students read for pleasure, the decrease in extrinsic motivation is more difficult to account for. There is evidence that extrinsic motivation has a negative effect because the offer of an extrinsic reward suggests that the activity for which one is rewarded is somehow unpleasant (see, for

example, Krashen, 2011, Chapter 4). Furthermore, if a student is motivated extrinsically, his or her motivation will last only as long as the reward is offered. If our goal as educators is to instill a love of reading and encourage lifelong reading habits, then a decrease in extrinsic motivation seems to be a highly positive outcome.

Responses to the pre- and post-course questionnaire revealed a significant decrease in dictionary use. This finding was further supported by students' self-reports in their reading reflections. Students reported that they relied on dictionaries while reading during the first few weeks of the course, even though they had been explicitly advised not to do so (see Appendix A). However, they later indicated that they shifted away from dictionary use and translating toward understanding words from context and, in some cases, thinking in Spanish. A similar result was found by Tabata-Sandom & Macalister (2009), whose subject reported a decrease in mental translation over a 3-month period of extensive reading in Japanese.

A surprising result was found in students' perceptions of vocabulary learning. Many students mentioned in their reflections that their vocabulary had increased as a result of reading, yet responses on the questionnaire showed a decrease in students' belief that they could learn new vocabulary through reading. One possibility might be the way that students understand vocabulary learning. Through reading, learners acquire new words incidentally rather than by studying them explicitly or attempting to learn them consciously. Perhaps the statement on the questionnaire (I can learn new vocabulary by reading in Spanish) was interpreted in terms of conscious, deliberate vocabulary study. In any case, this apparent contradiction is difficult to account for and merits further investigation.

Comments in reading reflections also underscored the importance of having an ample selection of books that are interesting and easy enough, as well as guidance from the instructor toward books at an appropriate level. Students' written comments in the first few weeks of the course suggest that they were choosing books that were too difficult for them. Similar findings were reported in the case studies by Leung (2002), de Burgh-Hirabe & Fer-yok (2013), and Tabata-Sandom & Macalister (2009), whose subjects reported becoming discouraged or demotivated when attempting to read unsuitable materials in Japanese as a foreign language.

The popularity of children's and young adult books among students in the present study is quite good news for instructors of Spanish, especially since the selection of available graded readers in Spanish is somewhat limited compared to the vast number available in English. Although Day and Bamford (1998) recommend language learner literature as the best option at the beginning and intermediate stages of learning, translations of young adult literature proved to be a highly popular and effective option for the subjects in this study. Children's books in Japanese also proved to be an effective choice for the learners in the studies by Hitosugi and Day (2004) and Leung (2002). For instructors who do not have an adequate supply of graded readers, a local public library could offer a beneficial and free resource for students. On the other hand, instructors should be somewhat cautious in recommending unsimplified texts given the findings of Beglar & Hunt (2014). In their study of Japanese students of English as a foreign language, the reading of simplified graded readers resulted in greater reading gains than unsimplified texts.

The present findings are consistent with those of Pigada and Schmitt (2006) and

Dupuy (1997), both of whom reported increased vocabulary knowledge as a result of extensive reading in French as a foreign language. The findings are also consistent with those of Rodrigo (1997), who found that students in an extensive reading class made greater gains than a control group on tests of grammar and vocabulary. However, the subjects in Rodrigo's study completed 90 hours of reading in Spanish, substantially more than the present study, in which students read just under 47 hours on average. This shows that significant benefit can be gained in a short-term program with a modest amount of reading.

Many of the subjects in the current study expressed their increasing pleasure in reading over the seven-week course, and some indicated their intention to continue reading in Spanish. It would be valuable to monitor a group of readers in Spanish as a foreign language over a longer period of time to determine whether the changes in attitude and motivation revealed here would hold over time. This would be an interesting question to pursue for future research, particularly as it relates to de Burgh-Hirabe and Feryok's (2013) model of the dynamic and changing nature of motivation to read extensively.

Conclusion

While the present study provides additional evidence of the benefits of extensive reading, there are a few limitations. First, the amount of time students reported reading cannot necessarily be taken at face value since the data come from student self-reports. The temptation to over-report was countered, to the extent possible, by reminding students of the institution's code of conduct and academic honesty policy, which prescribes expulsion for two documented cases of academic dishonesty. Since the subjects in the study were university students enrolled in other class-

es, it was impossible to control for exterior influences that might have had an effect on the subjects' reading ability, motivation, and attitude toward reading.

In spite of these limitations, the present study supports the inclusion of extensive reading in the Spanish as a foreign language curriculum. Students who engaged in extensive reading for only seven weeks showed a significant increase in their reading ability as measured by a cloze test. This finding was further supported by students' perceptions that their language skills had improved, as indicated by their responses on a questionnaire. The short-term course also had a significant effect on students' motivation to read and their attitudes toward reading in Spanish, resulting in an increase in intrinsic motivation and a decrease in extrinsic motivation. Students also showed a shift away from dictionary use and translation toward thinking in Spanish and understanding a text more holistically through contextual information. Even a highly reluctant reader showed striking changes in his attitude toward reading over the course of seven weeks.

The significant results observed after just seven weeks are particularly notable given Krashen's (2001) claim that the effect of extensive reading increases over time, and that it may take more than one semester to observe significant increases in language proficiency. Similarly, Apple (2005) found no change in motivation after a single semester of extensive reading in English as a foreign language in Japan. Depending on the way the program is implemented and the amount of reading that is done, significant results can be obtained in a short-term program lasting less than a single semester.

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Appendix A

Instructions Provided to Students

- Choose easy books that interest you from the Department of Modern Languages collection or from the Crawfordsville District Public Library.
- Sign out books in the notebook that I bring to class. Please return each book as soon as you are finished with it so that other students might have a chance to read it. When you return a book, be sure to sign it back in.
- Do not use a dictionary while you are reading! If a book is too hard and there are too many unknown words, put it back and choose a different book.
- If a book is too easy or just not interesting to you, return it and choose a different one. Read only what you enjoy.
- Please handle the books with care and respect, as many other students will read them. Please do not write in them, and use a bookmark rather than turning down the pages. They are expensive to replace, so I hope that they will last a long time.
- You will never be tested over the books that you read as part of Extensive Reading. However, I do ask you to complete a weekly reading log (*registro de lectura*) to document the amount of time, the number of pages, and the books that you read. These logs will also help me to determine the relative popularity and difficulty of the books in the collection, and they will enable me to recommend books for other students in the future. I will collect your reading logs once per week.
- We will have an occasional “book chat” (*conversatorio*) in class during which you and your classmates will tell each other about the books you have read.
- Most of our class time will be spent in “silent sustained reading” (SSR). You will also be expected to read a substantial amount outside of class.
- Reading is silent and individual. Please find a quiet place to read without distractions. Remove yourself physically from distractions such as the television, e-mail, social networking, phone calls and texting.
- You may not use class time to complete readings assigned for other classes.

Appendix B

Questions about Reading Motivation, Attitudes, and Beliefs

Strongly Agree=4

Agree=3

Neither Agree nor Disagree=2

Disagree=1

Strongly Disagree=0

1. I read in Spanish in order to learn about things that interest me.
2. I read in Spanish only so that I can pass my Spanish classes.
3. By reading in Spanish, I hope to understand more about the cultures of Latin America and Spain.
4. It is a waste of my time to learn to read in Spanish.
5. I want to improve my reading in Spanish in order to get better grades.
6. Vocabulary is the most important part of learning Spanish.
7. I want to be able to read in Spanish in order to read classic literature.
8. When I am reading something interesting in Spanish, I sometimes lose track of time.
9. When I read in Spanish, I translate what I read into English.
10. When I read something interesting in Spanish, I don't think about grammar rules.
11. I like reading about new things in Spanish.
12. I work harder on Spanish reading assignments when they are graded.
13. When I read in Spanish, I look up words that I don't know.
14. It is important to be able to read in Spanish because I might study abroad in the future.
15. I enjoy reading stories in Spanish.
16. I can learn Spanish best by studying grammar rules.
17. I like participating in class discussions about what I read in Spanish.
18. I am willing to read difficult Spanish materials if the topic is interesting.
19. I want to read literature in the original Spanish instead of in translation.
20. The best way for me to understand Spanish is to translate into English.
21. I feel good when I understand what I read in Spanish.
22. Reading Spanish texts is a good way to learn about Spanish-speaking countries.
23. I like talking with my friends and/or classmates about what I read in Spanish.
24. I dislike reading in Spanish.
25. I only read in Spanish when it is required for homework or an assignment.
26. It is important to read in Spanish to prepare for my future career.
27. Spanish literature is too difficult for me to read.
28. I can learn new vocabulary by reading in Spanish.
29. Reading in Spanish is important for daily life.
30. Reading in Spanish helps me to improve my overall ability in Spanish.

Appendix B Continued

Groups:	Cronbach's Alpha Values:	
	Pre-	Post-
Intrinsic motivation: 1, 8, 11, 15, 18, 21	0.776	0.710
Extrinsic motivation: 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 25, 26, 29	0.744	0.765
Beliefs about Language Learning: 9, 10, 13, 16, 20, 28, 30	0.520	0.586
Vocabulary: 6, 13, 28	0.420	0.250
Translating: 9, 20	0.841	0.738
Grammar: 10, 16	0.550	0.028
Social: 17, 23	0.562	0.458

Appendix C

Journal Prompts

Journal 1:

- Where do you read outside of class and what do you do to avoid distractions?
- How easy/challenging is it for you to read in Spanish for an hour each day?
- Are your reading strategies or the way you approach reading changing in any way? If so, how?

Please also comment on any particular book or books that you have been reading. Do/Did you like the book(s)? Why or why not? How was the difficulty level? etc.

Journal 2:

As before, you can write about any specific books that you have been reading, their interest, and their level of difficulty; and please also reflect on the reading process more generally. For example, do you enjoy reading extensively in Spanish? Do you find it tedious? Does the time pass quickly, or is it hard to read for an hour at a time? Do you notice any changes in your reading habits or ability? etc.

Your reflection doesn't have to be very long - a good paragraph or two is enough. Please write in Spanish, but if there's something you don't know how to express in Spanish, it's okay to put that idea in English.

Journal 3:

For your next reading journal, please write about two things:

1. Our visit to the Crawfordsville library. Was it interesting? Useful? Did you find any books you like? etc.
2. Our in-class books chats/conversatorios. Do you like them? Do you get anything out of them? Would you like to continue to do them?

As always, you are also encouraged to include any other observations about the books you are reading and the reading process.

Journals 4-6:

There is no special topic for this week--just reflect on what you have read in the previous week and on the reading process in general.

Appendix D

Reading Log (Translated from the original Spanish)

Reading Log
Spanish 276

Name: _____

Date	Title	Pages	Minutes in Class	Minutes at Home	Difficulty: easy, so-so, difficult	Opinion: excellent, good, okay, boring
01/16	Don Quijote de la Mancha (adapted classic)	53	30	20	so-so	excellent
TOTAL						