

An ethnographic study covering engagement with pleasure reading by a group of adult learners of English as a second language.

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Introduction

Krashen (2004): that pleasure reading helps learners to improve their literacy and oral skills. Furthermore Hermes et al.(2008) and (Krashen 2004) demonstrates that pleasure reading is a popular learning tool and even more so when it does not come at an economic cost (McQuillan, 1994).The Simply Cracking Good Stories Scheme was set up by Professor Martha Young-Scholten and Dr Margaret Wilkinson to provide adults with low literacy levels in their second language, engaging fiction that is easy for them to read. The fiction is written in accordance with the principles of Organic Grammar to ensure that learners are gradually introduced to certain grammatical features (Young-Scholten and Wilkinson, 2010). This study sets out to see how learners engage with the stories and what they gain from pleasure reading.

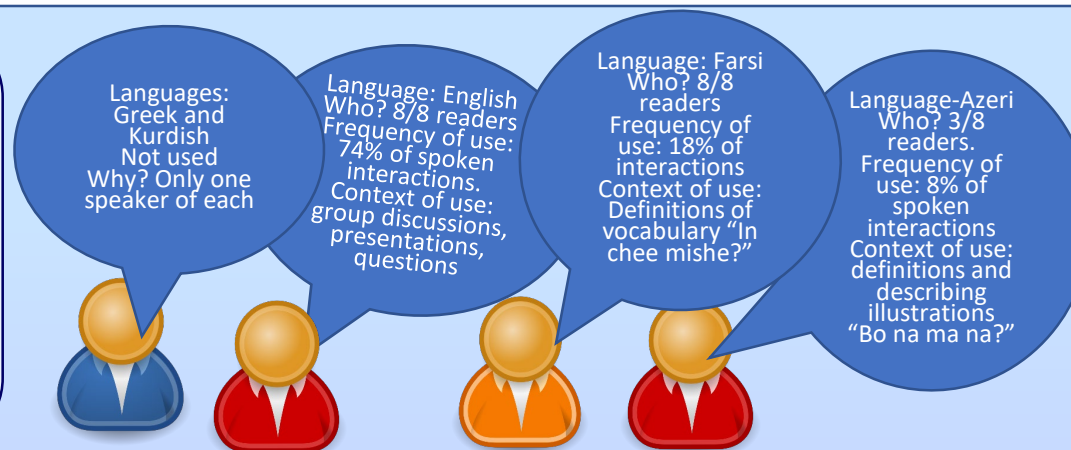


Figure 1 –visual representation of readers language use, “what does...mean?” in highlighted languages

Aims

- To explore the nature of interactions between multilingual speakers in a reading group consisting of English reading materials
- To collect qualitative data regarding what learners have gained from regular pleasure reading

Method

Eight adult learners were observed for approximately 2 hours each week for 10 weeks. Their methods of engaging with the fiction were recorded, so were the languages that they used with one another and the contexts in which these languages were used. After ten weeks, the learners answered a survey, asking them which methods of engaging with pleasure reading, assisted in their pronunciation, reading fluency and comprehension of the books.

Definitions

Organic Grammar- a theory which posits that development of certain aspects of grammar are primarily controlled by innate linguistic mechanisms and thus acquired in a specific order.

Grapheme- the smallest possible unit of meaning which equates to a sound in a written language system.

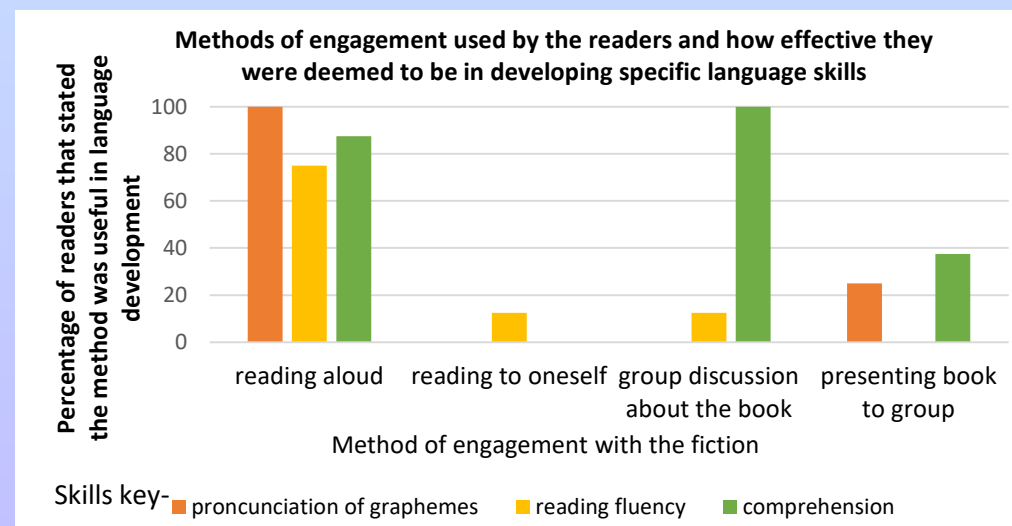


Figure 2- methods of engaging with pleasure reading and their impact on language development

References-Hermes, V., M.A Hile, and J.L. Frisbie. 2008. 'Reviving literary discussion: book club to go kits'. *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 48: 30-34.
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 Wilkinson, M. and M. Young-Scholten. 2011. Writing to a brief: Creating fiction for immigrant adults. In C. Schöneberger, I. van de Craats and J. Kurvers (Eds.) Nijmegen: Centre for Language Studies. Low Educated Adult Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. 103-213.
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Discussion

Figure 1- From 100% of reading group interactions, 18% of interactions between group members occurred in Farsi. These interactions consisted of speakers defining vocabulary for one another in a language they all knew. 8% of interactions occurred in Azeri; again the purpose of interactions was to define vocabulary and to occasionally refer to what an illustration showed.

Figure 2 shows that the most efficient method of engaging with the Simply Stories fiction was reading aloud and group discussions. Reading aloud provided more opportunity for speakers to feel comfortable to ask questions regarding pronunciation and meaning, hence it assisted in overall language development. Group discussions about the reader's chosen book did not aid in pronunciation as there was no opportunity for feedback to be given. Despite this, readers reported that it positively impacted their fluency and comprehension and in turn their overall confidence when reading and speaking the second language.

Conclusions

- Readers should feel welcome to speak their first language, other language when engaging with pleasure reading in the second language they are learning
 Why?
 This is because speakers can refer to their first language for definitions of words they do not know and in the long term this may improve their fluency in and comprehension in English.
- The most efficient method in aiding pronunciation of graphemes, reading fluency and comprehension for the readers was reading aloud.