

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

In the profession of the teaching of English, I have long been concerned about how I can better facilitate students in their journey of learning to read English for Academic Purposes (EAP) within an EFL context. With this area of interest, new research trends in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and the assessment of the student population provided me the reasons to examine the motivational aspects of second/foreign language (L2) EAP reading. This empirical study is positioned to explore issues in the interface of L2 motivation and EAP reading. Effects of pre-reading materials on EAP reading motivation and comprehension were compared between students from two college sites. Learner preference over different types of motivational materials was investigated and the relationships between reported preferences and individual learner differences were explored.

Background and Rationale

Initiated by the concern about how L2 EAP reading can be better facilitated, I reviewed the literature, assessed the learner population, and decided to explore ways to stimulate the desire in students to read, instead of doing the traditional approach of “teaching them how to read.” The search motivated me to explore concepts not taken by previous research studies. Instead of dealing with cognitive processes of reading, I chose to investigate motivation among various affective factors. A pedagogical focus directed me to work on the manipulation of state motivation instead of on the description of trait motivation, which has dominated L2 motivation research in the past. Among various types of instructional strategies for motivation, e.g. attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS) from Keller’s (1979, 1983a, 1983b, 1987a, 1987b, 1987c, 1999a, 1999b) ARCS model, I chose *attention* as the primary objective of intervention in my study because in the ARCS model, *attention* is the first component and seen as a prerequisite for learning (Keller, 1987a). Arnone and Small (1995) theorize that without learner attention and interest, there can be no

relevance, confidence, and satisfaction potential (Small, et al. 1996). Based on Keller's (1987b) guidelines for designing motivational strategies, two different kinds of attention-getting treatments were designed and another, a traditional cognition-oriented treatment, served as a reference point for comparison purposes. As depicted in Figure 1 below, the starting point of this study was L2 EAP reading and it flowed in a downward progression as indicated in the diagram. Eventually, the attention component of learners' situational motivation became the focal point of the entire investigation. The remainder of this section explains the rationale in a comprehensive manner.

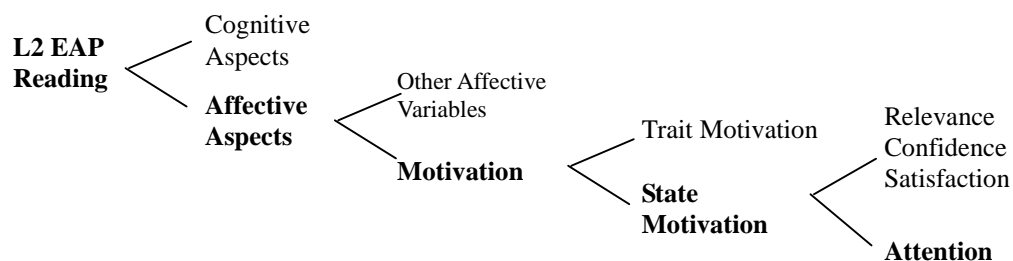


Figure 1. Positioning of the study

The Role of Reading in English for Academic Purposes

English as an international language is used differently and for diverse purposes in the global community. From the viewpoint of utility, how a second or foreign language is actually used will determine to a great extent how it is taught and learned. While the backwash effect of English tests on learning and instruction has received great amount of attention recently and caused tremendous change in language test development, how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is ultimately used by our students has seldom been highlighted in the area of EFL pedagogy.

For the majority of students in Taiwan, English is nothing more than a required course (an important one though) in elementary, junior, and senior high schools; and finally, the one-year long freshman English course that is mandatory in college or at the university level.

After the first year of college, when English is no longer a course to study for midterm and final exams, English could literally disappear altogether from the students' daily environment. In the students' normal social interactions, they have little opportunity to listen to or speak the language. Even when the student overtly attempts to expose himself or herself to the language, there is little opportunity for this to occur. It should be noted that even in higher education, considering the homogeneity of students' language and ethnic background, very few instructors in colleges or graduate schools give lectures or conduct classroom discussions in English. Neither are students required to prepare oral or written reports of any nature in another language other than their native tongue.

However, there has always been one major exception. That exception is the large amount of reading in English that is mandatory in many fields of academic study. From economics to engineering, from medicine to sociology, texts written for native English speakers are imported into Taiwan and serve as the major source of knowledge acquisition for the students here. Many non-English-major students demonstrate achievements in their professional fields despite the fact that they do not speak or write English at an acceptable proficiency level. But the prevalent use of English texts makes it almost impossible for knowledge acquisition if students cannot read English efficiently and sufficiently for academic purposes.

The same imbalance among the four skills in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) appears in other ESL/EFL contexts. Jordan (1997) collected surveys from ESL environments in the United Kingdom and the United States on students' EAP difficulties. Although reading did not appear to be a major problem found in those surveys, Jordan stated that "...the greatest *need* of students is the ability to read textbooks" (italics by the original author) (Jordan, 1997, p. 50). His speculation that reading academic texts will be the biggest requirement for students in most EFL university situations is exactly what is observed here in Taiwan. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) described the same phenomenon when they

discussed the EAP curriculum:

Reading is probably the skill needed by the greatest number of EAP students throughout the world. Many textbooks are available only in English and most of the specialist international journals are published only in English. Even if the medium of instruction is not English, therefore, students throughout the world need to be able to read in English. (p. 185)

The Motivational Aspects of L2 EAP Reading

A brief review of the literature about the teaching and learning of L2 reading makes one believe that the cognitive aspects of L2 reading should be the exclusive approach. Learner motivation may be a concern, but it seems to have only a minor peripheral role in the learning process. The implicit assumption is – whatever is taught is to be learned. In reality, learners seldom come into classrooms ready to learn as most teachers have expected. They are usually bored, tired, and disinterested in learning tasks. Anticipated effects of teaching in terms of cognitive development cannot succeed in the absence of a willingness to learn.

Fortunately, the issue of motivation has not been ignored altogether in the literature of applied linguistics. Dubin, Eskey, and Grabe (1986), before they devoted an entire volume to discussing various cognitive issues, strongly emphasize the important role of motivation in L2 EAP reading. EAP reading instruction has little chance to succeed if the instructor attends solely to the cognitive aspects of learning at the expense of motivational concerns. As Eskey (1986) states:

For any approach to teaching to succeed, no matter how true to the latest “scientific principles,” it must take into account the real needs and desires of learners – that rather loosely defined cluster of goals, inclinations, and biases which we call “motivation” – and we must therefore give some thought to what motivates people to read, or not to read, anything. (p. 3)

With a concern about the motivational aspects for the development of EAP reading, my decision to explore the effects of motivational strategies for EAP reading were reinforced by two reasons – the observed research trends in applied linguistics and a consideration of the needs of the learner population. An explanation in a more comprehensive manner is presented in the following two sub-sections.

New Research Trend into the Affective Domain

Concerns about motivation and other affective variables are more apparent in the latest trend in SLA research in general. It is found that cognitive variables alone could not fully explain the process of learning to read. Models which include affective variables provide a more complete perspective on the reading process. Schumann (1998) and his colleagues have pursued a line of SLA research on the neurobiology of affect on language. They argue that SLA is emotionally driven and emotion underlies most, if not all, cognition development. With a specific focus on reading, Mathewson's (1994) *Model of Attitude Influence upon Reading and Learning to Read* aims to “bring affect back from the epiphenomenal realm to which much contemporary reading research has consigned it and to reestablish its dynamic interrelationships with cognition” (p. 1157).

Unlike previous cognition-exclusive reading models, such as LaBerge and Samuel's (1985) bottom-up model, Goodman's (1971) and Smith's (1982) top-down model, and Rumelhart's (1985) interactive model, Mathewson's theory delineates how attitude, together with the internal emotional state and external motivators, contributes to reading. Mathewson's (1994) model features two routes leading to ultimate reading behaviors, a central and a peripheral route. By way of the central route, attitude toward reading, including prevailing feelings about reading, action readiness for reading, and evaluative beliefs about reading, directly influences an intention to read or continue reading. Intention to read is also formulated via peripheral route through internal emotional state and external motivators. The intention to read, after being determined through both the central and

peripheral routes, leads to reading behaviors in terms of text selection, attention, strategy use, and comprehension.

In Mathewson's earlier versions of the model (Mathewson, 1976, 1985), attitude toward reading was central because it predicted such behaviors as attention to and comprehension of reading selections. However, in his revised 1994 version, Mathewson no longer focuses as strongly as before on a direct route from attitude to reading because a positive attitude only results in reading if other influences favoring formation of positive intentions to read are present. External motivators, such as incentives, purposes, norms, and settings outside of the readers, may have an important role in influencing their intention to engage in a reading activity. Mathewson's (1994) new model, influenced by Allport's (1961) concept of functional autonomy, suggests that reading behavior initiated by external incentives would have a chance to become functionally autonomous and intrinsically rewarding with the passage of time.

Mathewson's theory not only takes the focus of reading instruction beyond technical skills training, but also opens up a window for investigating the instructional design of reading for motivational purposes. Since learners' attitude toward reading, i.e. a persuasion via central route, is more stable and less subject to change in a classroom setting, the author decided to focus specifically on external motivators, i.e. the persuasion via peripheral route, and examine their effects on intention to read as realized in situational motivation.

Consideration of the Target Learner Population

Other than the new research trends in applied linguistics, the characteristics of college learner population in Taiwan are another reason for me to focus on the motivational, rather than cognitive-only, aspect of L2 EAP reading. Taiwanese college students are experienced EFL learners (with learning experiences of six to ten years or more) who have learned extensively the "what" and "how" of EFL reading. Nevertheless, they may not have the internal drive to practice simply because they are not motivated. Without initial and

continuous motivation, learners do not put forth efforts to read extensively, which is mandatory for the mastery of reading skills. Teacher's emphasis on cognitive aspects of EAP reading cannot receive its due effect if a motivation to read is lacking in students.

Reading, as Eskey claimed, "...must be developed, and can only be developed, by means of extensive and continual practice. People learn to read, and to read better, by reading" (Eskey, 1986, p. 21). For the experienced EFL learners in Taiwanese colleges, it seems to me that the cognitive aspects of learning can take care of itself once we can deeply involve the learner in the reading activity. In the area of research on interests and learning, Hidi (1990) suggests that when interest is high, there does not have to be as much effortful selective attention and that interest could result in more spontaneous attention, less cognitive effort, and a positive influence on learning. Therefore, following Mathewson's (1994) model, I hypothesize that if teacher intervention can bring learners' situational motivation to a certain level and actively engage them in the reading materials, it is possible that the necessary reading skills will be practiced, cognitive functioning will be exercised, and reading competence may eventually be improved with the passage of time.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the above rationale, it is desirable to design an alternative approach to the facilitation of L2 EAP reading, with a focus on attention arousal for the subsequent reading material instead of on cognitive skill training. The outcome may be an enhanced situational motivation to engage in the reading task, instead of specific skill acquisition. With such situational motivation elicited, if there is any, it can be expected that learners will exercise their existing cognitive ability in the reading process and in the long run they may gradually obtain reading competence. The problem becomes:

- How can this kind of reading facilitation be designed?
- Is it feasible to appeal to learners' motivation instead of cognition in an EAP reading

situation?

- If there is any effect on motivation, how long will it last? How stable is it?
- How do learners perceive this kind of reading facilitation?
- Do learners have specific preference patterns?
- Are learner preferences related to their trait motivation or ability?
- Do learners under different educational systems react differently?
- What are the implications for EAP reading learning and teaching in terms of theory and pedagogy from this attempt?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine, with two groups of college participants from different educational systems in Taiwan, the effect of attention-arousal strategies versus cognitive ones on readers' situational motivation, including their immediate subjective perceptions after the treatments and their perceptions when the treatment effect had been mediated by the actual reading experiences, as well as on comprehension. Learners' preferences over different treatments and the reasons behind them were also investigated. Furthermore, the relations between preferences and learners' motivational orientation were explored. The ultimate goal of this study is to provide additional empirical evidence for existing reading and motivation theories, to discuss the implications for the improvement of existing reading and motivation theories, and to examine the applicability of motivation theories in the field of applied linguistics.

Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in the study:

1. Did participants from the vocational-oriented and the academic-oriented colleges¹ differ in (a) pretest motivation scales, (b) pretest proficiency tests, (c) situational motivation, and (d) EAP reading comprehension?
2. To participants from both or either one of the school sites, which of the three treatments (Vocabulary List, Self Appraisal, or Case Study) best motivated them to read before and after the reading tasks?
3. To participants from both or either one of the school sites, which of the three treatments (Vocabulary List, Self Appraisal, or Case Study) facilitated comprehension best?
4. To participants from both or either one of the school sites, which of the three treatments (Vocabulary List, Self Appraisal, or Case Study) did they most and least prefer? Why?
5. To participants from both or either one of the school sites, did those with different preferences differ from one another in their motivational orientations and/or proficiency levels as measured in the pretests?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be viewed from the areas of L2 motivation research,

¹ In the education system in Taiwan, after the nine-year compulsory education in elementary and junior high school, students enter either the higher education track or the vocational education track (each under the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Technological and Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education) if they continue to study in a school setting. In the higher education track, students go to senior high schools that prepare them to enter universities for further academic pursuit. In the vocational education track, students go to vocational high schools that are designed to prepare them for the lower-level job market. Under the vocational education track, students have options to continue their education in different programs: (a) a four-year program (四年制技術學院) similar to a university, (b) a preliminary two-year program (二年制專科學校) similar to the freshmen and sophomore years in a regular four-year university, and (c) an advanced two-year program (二年制技術學院) similar to the junior and senior years in a university for students who have finished the preliminary two-year program. The higher education track is usually the preferred choice when students are academically more competent. The two groups of students participated in this study were from an advanced two-year program under the vocational education track and a national university under the higher education track.

motivation research in educational psychology, and L2 reading research.

In the area of L2 motivation, the results will provide empirical evidence to existing theories, in particular for the *interest* part among the four course-specific components under the *learning situation* level in Dörnyei's (1994a) three-level educationally-oriented L2 motivation framework. Moreover, Dörnyei (2001b) summarizes existing L2 motivation research into four types (survey, factor analytical, correlational, and LISREL studies) and points out two further categories that have not been pursued much in the past but which he considers as having vast potentials: experimental and qualitative studies. The present experimental study attempted to contribute to this relatively unexplored area. More specifically, Dörnyei highlights one recent motivational domain where experimental studies are indispensable, i.e. the testing of the effectiveness of motivational strategies. Up to 2001, he had found only one unpublished study of this type and attributed the phenomenon to difficulties in technical and methodological issues (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 236). Chang and Lehman (2002) is another one that [appeared more recently](#). The present investigation tried to deal with methodological challenges Dörnyei highlighted and examined the effectiveness of specific motivational strategies in an EFL reading situation.

By enlarging the focus and viewing from a more general perspective on learning motivation, the attempts demonstrated in this study corresponded with recent conceptual shifts in motivation research as highlighted by Volet (2001) in that it moved from:

- a decontextualized to a situated and experimental approach;
- stable motivational traits to dynamic conceptualizations of motivation;
- a dominance on cognitive aspects to multi-dimensional aspects;
- single-level to multi-level conceptualizations and analyses; and
- single to integrated or multidimensional theoretical perspectives.

In terms of reading research, this study is one of the very few studies in the L2 reading

research field that dealt with the motivational instead of the cognitive aspect of reading. It moved beyond exclusive concerns on cognitive aspects of reading and focused instead on the motivational influences of instructional intervention. In particular, it took into account some important components from Mathewson's (1994) *Model of Attitude Influence upon Reading and Learning to Read* and examined how effective external motivators can affect learners' intention to read. Results from this study should be able to generate more thoughts on ways to operationalize teaching principles and feedback to theory construction.

Definition of Motivation and other Related Terms

It is necessary to clarify the definitions of some important terms since they are usually very confusing. Many researchers (e.g. Dörnyei, 2001b; Keller, 1983b; Skehan, 1989) have discussed the complexity involved in defining the term *motivation* since it has an extensive array of meaning and researchers disagree strongly on virtually everything concerning the concept (Dörnyei 2001b, p. 7). The common ground for a definition of motivation seems to lie in two major elements – the *direction* and *magnitude* of human behavior (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 8). Keller (1983b) has previously expressed the same viewpoint with the same choice of words and elaborated the concept as the *choices* people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and *the degree of effort* they will exert in that respect (Keller, 1983b, p. 389). It was also emphasized (e.g. by Keller, 1987a & Dörnyei, 2001b) that motivation, although a good predictor, does not lead directly to achievement.

Educationally-oriented motivational strategies, in Keller's ARCS model, are operationalized as four distinctive components – attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. Classroom teachers are advised to work on these four areas to induce higher motivation in learners. The *attention* component was formerly referred to as *interest* in earlier versions of the same model to describe the same concept. Keller (1987b) defines attention as a broad term encompassing interest and curiosity. Arnone and Small (1995),

following Keller's model, perceive learner interest, specifically curiosity, as the foundation of motivation. Therefore, in this study, I focused specifically on the *attention* component of situational motivation and examined the situational motivational consequence in terms of learners' perceived *interest*. The discussion of the results determined from participants' reported interest was also associated with literature on the concept of *curiosity*.

In this chapter, I have first defined the positioning of this study. I have then discussed how this empirical study on situational motivation evolved from an initial concern on EAP reading facilitation. The importance of motivation in my research context and the reasons to investigate the effectiveness of specific motivational strategies were explained. I have also discussed research questions and pinpointed the significance of the study. In the following chapter, I will review the related literature in more detail.