

The Effects of ER on Reading Attitudes: A Review of the Research

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ABSTRACT

This study reviewed published research on the effects of extensive reading (ER) on reading attitudes in second language (L2) learning contexts. Eligibility criteria for studies included using a clearly defined ER approach, doing ER for a minimum of 10 weeks, and having either a pre/posttest or between groups design. Common results reported post-ER improvements in reading attitudes, and positive changes in affective factors such as anxiety, comfort and self-confidence. Frequent pedagogical recommendations included providing a variety of interesting reading materials, doing post-reading activities and increasing the time doing ER.

BACKGROUND

Reading attitude

Reading attitude, defined as a system of feelings related to reading that cause a learner to approach or avoid a reading situation, is a crucial affective factor of L2 reading and a primary motivating factor in the decision to read. The importance of developing positive reading attitudes is also emphasised in Nuttall's virtuous reading cycle.

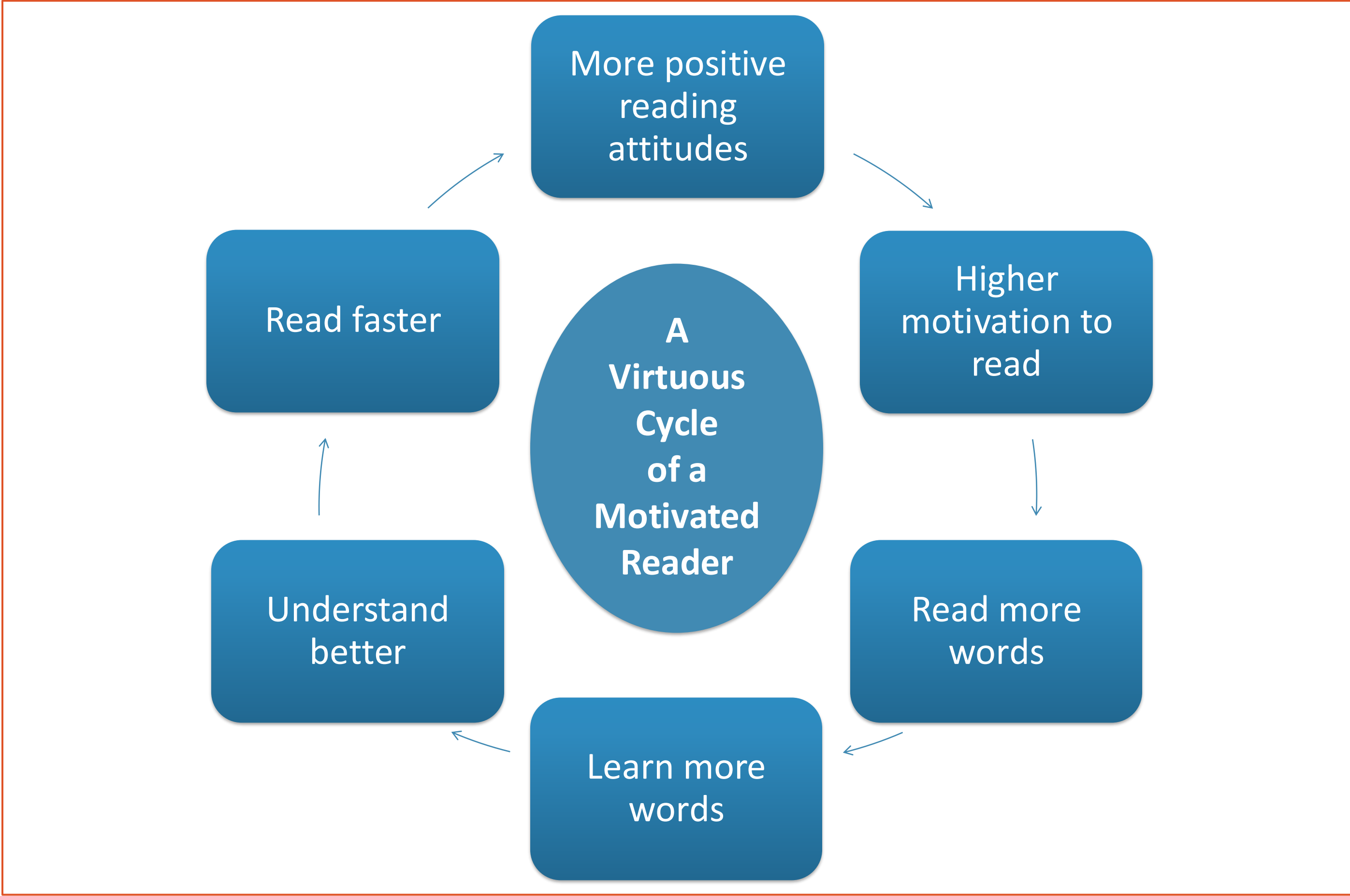


Figure 1. A virtuous cycle of a motivated reader (adapted from Nuttall, 2005).

Purpose of the study

Extensive reading has been advocated as a way of developing positive reading attitudes. However, as ER is an underutilized approach to reading instruction more evidence of its efficacy is needed. This study, by reviewing research on the effects of ER on reading attitudes, aimed to identify effective ER practices for developing reading attitudes in language learning contexts.

PROCEDURE

Summary of included studies

Pre / Posttest design	Between groups design	Paper-based ER	Online ER	Paper-based and online ER
21	9	19	9	2

Review procedure

1. Initial searches conducted on sites including Google Scholar and ERIC using terms such as “extensive reading reading attitudes”
2. Articles screened to see if they met the eligibility criteria
3. Eligible articles closely read, especially the methodology, results and discussion sections
4. Key results and recommendations noted and summarized

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MOST COMMON FINDINGS

- Significant post-ER improvements in L2 reading attitudes
- Post-ER reduction in the affective factor of Anxiety
- Post-ER increase in the affective factor of Comfort
- Post-ER increase in self-confidence in L2 reading
- Post-ER decrease in perceived Practical Value of L2 reading
- Changes in Intellectual Value and Linguistic Value were often insignificant

MOST COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide a wide range of interesting, relevant and level-appropriate reading materials
- Give learners opportunities to talk about what they read in activities such as group discussions
- Use post-reading activities such as short quizzes or reports as motivational tools
- Increase the time spent doing ER, both per day/week and overall
- Do a comprehensive pre-ER orientation to ensure learners have a good understanding of ER and its possible benefits

FUTURE RESEARCH

As almost all research to date has been conducted on ER programs using either paper-based or online reading materials it would be useful to directly compare approaches in the same context to examine differences in their effects on reading attitudes. Also, more longitudinal studies would be beneficial to understanding the long-term effects of ER on reading attitudes.

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