

The Effect of an Extensive Reading Program on the Writing Performance of Saudi EFL University Students

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the effect on an extensive reading program on the writing performance of Saudi EFL university students. The sample of the study consisted of 48 students randomly chosen from King Saud University- College of languages and Translation- and assigned to experimental and control groups of 24 students each. Data of the study were collected within two months period via a pre-posttest design for equivalent groups. The control group was taught by the regular teacher with the direct administration of the researchers, however, the experiment group was taught by the researchers. The researchers assessed the effect of the extensive reading program on the writing performance of the Saudi EFL university students. Results showed that the experiment group outperformed the control group on the measure. This indicated that the extensive reading program may have a significant positive effect on learners' writing performance.

Keywords: Extensive reading program, Writing performance, Saudi EFL University students, Reading skill, Writing skill

1. Introduction and Background

Reading is an important language skill and highly complicated act that everyone must learn it. Reading is not solely a single skill but a combination of many skills and processes in which the readers interact with printed words and texts for content and pleasure. Through reading, one can teach writing, speaking, vocabulary items, grammar, spelling, and other language aspects. Moreover, Zainal and Husin (2011) pointed out that reading involves many complex skills that have to come together in order for the reader to be successful. For instance, proficient readers recognize the purpose for reading, approach the reading with the purpose in mind, use strategies that have proven successful to them in the past when reading similar texts for similar purposes, monitor their comprehension of the text in light of the purpose for reading, and if needed adjust their strategy use.

Zainal and Husin (2011) also stressed that writing is the learned process of shaping experiences into text, allowing the writer to discover, develop, clarify and communicate thoughts and feelings. It requires the development of thinking skills. According to Applebee (1984) and Emig (1977) writing is the externalization and remarking of thinking, and to consider writing as separate from the intentions and beliefs of the writer is not to address composition as a reflective tool for making meaning.

Writing is a powerful means of communication by which students learn better to express themselves. Teaching and learning to write in any language is essential area that influences students performance and language learning. Moreover, learning to write in English as a foreign language has been an essential professional educational issue that serves various educational purposes and meets certain learning needs upon which the foreign language learners' progress depends. English writing plays fundamental intercultural and traditional roles in business, work places, and governmental activities across the world geography (Parks, 2000; Thatcher, 2000). Writing has been called the core of education and has been described as an important path of language learning. Leki (2003) believes that writing plays a major gate-keeping role in professional advancement. In general, learning to write is considered a proof that one has indeed learned a language. Furthermore, EFL learners are challenged because of their incomplete command of grammar and vocabulary with which they express their thoughts and ideas. They tend to struggle with fluent written expressions because of their limited vocabulary and insufficient knowledge of grammatical structures (Al-Meni, 2008). Therefore, many EFL educators have continuously sought beneficial ways to facilitate the writing process and improve learners' writing performance, and using extensive reading programs may provide that.

Tsai (2006) stressed the importance of connecting reading and writing in college EFL courses. Tsai stated that

Teachers of English as a second or foreign language have tended to teach reading and writing separately from each other. However, reading and writing do share similar properties and students are more likely to benefit from the instruction that makes reading and writing activities go hand-in-hand and supplement each other. Applying this notion to actual teaching situations would not be a difficult challenge when EFL writing

teachers take into account students' needs, are aware of the advantages of the reading/writing connection, and carefully design teaching practices. Given that the separation of reading and writing instruction in EFL contexts makes students perceive reading as a decoding process and writing as only a task of constructing grammatically correct essays, it is especially vital for EFL teachers, through the reading/writing connection, to provide students with abundant opportunities and resources to help them become reflective readers and writers. More importantly, students need to be instructed to realize that both reading and writing are acts with communicative purposes and are inseparable. Only by doing so can students improve language proficiency through reading and writing activities, and develop these two literacy skills in a meaningful way.

Furthermore, many researchers have emphasized the role of extensive reading in language learning in general and writing skill in particular. First, it can provide comprehension input. Krashen (1982) argued that reading leads to language acquisition provided that certain preconditions are met. These include interesting material and a relaxed tension – free learning environment. Second, it can enhance reader's general language competence. Grabe (1991) emphasized the importance of extensive reading in providing learners with practice in automat city of word recognition. Third, it increases the students' exposure to the language that readers receive, which is seen as important to their potential to acquire new forms from the input. Elley (1991) reviewed a number of studies which showed rapid growth in language development compared with readers' regular program. There was a spread of effect from reading competence to other language skills. Fourth, it can increase knowledge of vocabulary. Nagy and Herman (1987) claimed that children between grades three and twelve (above grade level) learn up to 3000 words a year. Fifth, it can lead to the improvement of the writing performance. Stotsky (1983) and Krashen (1984) showed the positive effect of reading on learners' writing skill. Sixth, it can consolidate previously learned language. Finally, it helps to build confidence with extended texts. Kembo (1993) pointed to the value of extensive reading in developing learners' confidence and ability in facing these longer texts. Therefore, it can be said that the use of extensive reading in foreign language teaching and learning not only benefits reading proficiency but also the overall language proficiency as well. Zamel (1992) stated that "writing development always includes reading development".

Although there are various ways of implementing extensive reading in educational settings, Day and Bamford (2002) provided a good guideline for conceptualizing extensive reading in a teaching/learning process. According to them, the top ten principles are: the reading material is easy; a variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available; learners choose what they want to read; learners read as much as possible; the purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding; reading is its own reward; reading speed is usually faster rather than slower; reading is individual and silent; teachers orient and guide their students; and the teacher is a role model of a reader.

Despite the growing amount of research supporting the use of extensive reading for improving second language competence (e.g. Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Tudor and Hafiz, 1989; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Elley, 1991; Pilgreen and Krashen, 1993; Cho and Krashen, 1994; (1995a); (1995b); Constantino, 1994), many teachers are still uncertain about how

effective it is. Therefore, in this study the researchers investigate whether Saudi EFL university students' writing performance could improve with extensive reading treatment.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

From this researchers' personal experience and observation, many university professors complain about EFL students' inability to organize their ideas logically, their lack of suitable information to cover the assigned topics, their poor vocabulary, their structure and spelling mistakes, and their writing patterns (the narration and description patterns usually dominate their writing). Moreover, Saudi EFL students also complain about being unable to write efficiently. The researchers also notice that most students get low grades in their writing exams. Therefore, the need arises to investigate this problem (the EFL students' inability to write effectively) that faces those who work in the field of English language teaching at the university level in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and find solutions to it. The researchers also suggest a technique to develop students' writing ability. They believe that using extensive reading may have a significant role in helping students develop their writing skill.

Furthermore, the researchers notice that most students are not aware that reading actually can help them in writing. Therefore, the present study aims at investigating the effects of reading on the students writing performance.

1.2 Significance of the Study

It is common for teachers to use different techniques in the language class to help their students improve their language skills. The use of extensive reading to improve the writing achievement is widely recommended in the educational literature and its role in the foreign language classroom has been the concern of many teachers and scholars (Abou Baker, 1996; Khater, 2002; Helal, 2003; and Bakir, 2004). In the current environment of research-based practices, many educators may be skeptical about allowing the use of a new educational tool until the effects of that tool have been clearly documented through quantitative research. The present study investigates the effect of an extensive reading program on the writing performance of Saudi EFL university students, which is an issue previous studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, did not tackle fully. To the best knowledge of the researchers, this is the first attempt to determine whether or not Saudi EFL university students' writing performance significantly improves when they are exposed to the extensive reading program. Therefore, it is hoped that :

- 1) The students will be able to produce meaningful writing paragraphs, essays, letters, reports, short stories, articles, compositions, and summaries, and the reading program may help to determine students' progress in previously mentioned skills as well as their mastery of the writing sub-skills such as thesis statement, relevance, coherence, cohesion, exposition, quantity, unity, wording, and grammaticality.
- 2) It will help researchers involved in the educational process gain insights into extensive reading and its effect on writing skill and seek to improve it overtime.
- 3) It may encourage further research, which in turn, may lead to the enrichment of the field

of extensive reading and its effect on writing skill in general and language teaching and learning in particular.

- 4) It will help teachers to better understand the issue and integrate it into their classroom routine in general and in the writing class in particular.
- 5) The findings of this study may be able to open the mind of the students towards the importance of reading to improve their writing performance.
- 6) The findings of the study may be able to help the students to see the difficulties in writing that they may face if they do not have the habit to read and could motivate them to read more.

1.3 Objective of the study

EFL university learners are required to write reports, research papers, summaries, and essay examinations to show that they know and understand the thoughts of others and can synthesize the new knowledge into their own thinking. Their success is determined by how effectively meaning is conveyed. The ability to produce well-written articles enhances their academic success. Therefore, students should be taught and trained on how to produce well-organized writings.

Because extensive reading should be an important part of the university curriculum and especially because the effect of extensive reading on writing performance has not been widely studied, the present study attempts to investigate the effect of an extensive reading program on the writing performance of Saudi EFL university students. Thus, it is hoped that using extensive reading programs in the classroom would help students improve their writing abilities and create a positive attitude towards writing.

1.4 Hypothesis of the Study

This study attempts to test the following hypothesis:

Using extensive reading has a positive effect on the writing achievement of Saudi EFL university students and eventually leads to developing all areas of language competence.

1.5 Question of the Study

The present study attempts to answer the following question:

Is there a statistically significant difference between the achievement of the experiment group and that of the control group due to the treatment?

1.6 Definition of the Terms

The extensive reading program: in this study, the extensive reading program is defined as the English reading material selected by the researchers on the basis of the students' abilities and in light of their teachers' perception in order to enhance and foster the students' ability.

Writing performance: in this study, writing performance is defined as the experimental group students' ability to write paragraphs, letters, summaries, compositions, essays, etc.. Students

are also required to show mastery of the following: thesis statement, relevance, coherence, cohesion, exposition, quantity, unity, wording, and grammaticality.

1.7 Variables of the study

The variables of the present study include the following:

- The independent variable is the method of teaching which has two levels, the extensive reading program and the traditional method.
- The dependant variable is the students' performance in writing.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The generalizability of the findings of this study may be limited by the following:

- This study is restricted to two groups of students at the College of Languages and Translation at King Saud University.
- The findings are bound by the time limit for the period in which the study was conducted.
- Females were not included in the present study.

2. Review of Related Literature

Recently many research papers were conducted to ascertain the effectiveness of extensive reading strategy in universities and schools. Although the effect of extensive reading on writing performance receives considerable emphasis in English as a first language, EFL teachers traditionally discourage it. The researcher reviewed some of the most related studies to the topic of the present study.

Beach (1984) studied the effect of reading ability on 60 seventh-grade students narrative writing quality . The findings of the study indicated that reading ability had an effect on the quality of personal incident writing.

Schneider (1985) examined how re-reading functions in the composition process of six college students – three skilled writers and three unskilled ones. In fact, he tried to describe how reading and writing processes interact during composition. It was found that re-reading has an important function in helping writers shape the meaning of their written pieces.

Janopoulous (1986) studied the relationship between pleasure reading and second language writing proficiency. The findings of the study revealed a significant correlation between pleasure reading and students' proficiency in written English.

Murdoch (1986) investigated the effect of integrating writing with reading on developing and improving students' writing achievement. The findings showed that if writing with its mechanics were integrated into activities or exercises based on reading texts, students would no longer view writing as an unpleasant task, but as a natural part of language learning. Moreover, it was found that students' writing performance substantially improved.

Shahan and Lomax (1986) proposed three models that explain the reading-writing relationship. Their models includes the interaction of reading and writing, reading-to-write, and writing-to-read. They used path analysis to investigate the effect of reading on writing. The results proved that the reading-to-write was superior to the other two models.

Hafiz and Tudor (1990) investigated the effects of an extensive reading program and accuracy of using lexical items on Pakistani primary school pupils' second language learning. They found that the students had statistically significant gains in their vocabulary base and writing and the influence of extensive reading program supported the idea that students learn to write through reading.

It was suggested that teaching composition via the integration of writing with other language skills could make writing tasks more effective and purposeful. Zaher (1990) investigated the effect of a proposed unit based on the integration of the writing skill with other language skills, mainly with reading. it was found that there was a tangible increase in the students' use of varied types of structures while writing after the treatment as compared to their writing performance before the implementation of the proposed unit. In other words, it was found that the students confined themselves mainly to simple structures and a limited number of compound and complex structures on the pre-test, while after the treatment, the students' use of compound and complex structures in writing increased significantly. Thus the findings of the study supported the hypothesis that teaching writing through integrating language skills would help students improve their writing performance.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996) suggested that reading activities will be of a great assistance to improve and promote too many writing activities at the beginning and advanced levels. They stated that the outcome of a reading activity serves as input for writing, and writing heads students to further reading sources and references. They also indicated that there is a need for students to read texts and analyze them logically, which is considered as a key component in their academic writings.

Mason and Krashen (1997) investigated the effectiveness of a one-semester reading program on Japanese university students' linguistic competence, reading and writing skills. The findings of the study revealed statistically significant gains and positive attitudes in the students' reading ability and writing skill .

Bell (1998) stressed that reading extensively offers teacher worldwide engagement in a focused and motivating reading program to lead students along a passage to be independent and resourceful in their reading and language learning, and furthermore to be well-improved and naturally-respondent to form texts, thoughts and ideas in writing.

Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) indicated that voluntarily-pleasurable reading has empirically proved to bring about positive impacts on developing writing skill. They confirmed, regardless of students' ages and levels, that written texts actually derive partly from self-initiated and self-selected reading texts.

Wong (2001) defined literacy as the ability to read and write. Therefore, he introduced an extensive reading program in Hong Kong to motivate students to read and thus enhance their

English proficiency. He suggested that general reading skills are strengthened through more effectively connection between reading and writing.

Helal (2003) studied the effect of a proposed self-access reading program in the light of the integration between reading and writing in developing the writing performance of Egyptian first year secondary students. It was found that the reading program was effective in developing the writing performance of the experimental group.

Smith (2003) concluded that when children read more narrative texts such as short stories, poems, and fiction books, they would raise their concern over structure and function of expository texts. He also claimed that topical bibliography and commentary could incorporate expository texts into school curriculum, which are considered a rewarding experience and a primary function for students to enhance their expository writing.

Bakir (2004) studied the effectiveness of using extensive reading in improving the attitudes towards learning English and writing performance of Palestinian tenth grade students. Students in the experimental group practice reading extensively as a pre-writing activity, while students in the control group were exposed to the regular textbooks. The findings of the study ensured the effectiveness of using extensive reading in improving students' writing performance and their attitudes towards learning English.

Hany (2007) examined the effect of using the reading for writing approach on developing the writing ability of Egyptian EFL learners and their attitudes towards writing. This small scale study enabled students to develop their writing skills and their attitudes towards writing, with no statistically significant differences between males and females. The study corroborated the efficacy of the reading for writing approach as a feasible tool for enhancing the writing ability of Egyptian EFL learners and their attitudes towards writing.

Shen (2009) examined the impact of a reading-writing connection project on the first-year EFL college students who studied English as a required subject. The results of the study indicated that the learners' literacy developed not only in linguistic progress but also in critical thinking as well as in personal growth. Reading helped the EFL learners' development of their writing with the stimulus, structures, vocabulary, and prior experience (schema). It was also found that the reading-writing connection had a positive impact on the EFL college students' reading metacognitive awareness (i.e., looking back what they read), as well as their reflection of personal values and experience transaction. The findings of the study suggested that reading and writing should be integrated in teaching for the reason that they are not separated skills, but mutually reinforced in EFL classroom.

Yoshimura (2009) investigated the effects of connecting reading and writing and a checklist to guide the reading process on EFL learners' learning about writing. In this research, ways of reading which are likely to promote the development of writing ability were sought and operationalized into checklist questions for EFL reading instructions. The findings of the study showed that connecting reading and writing has positive effects and that the checklist helps students consider genre and efficiently integrate the reading and writing processes.

Theoretical rationale and research evidence from L1, ESL and EFL supports the relationships

between reading and writing as well as the advantages of encouraging students to read as much as possible to enhance their writing ability. Kirin (2010) gave details of a 15 week reading experiment with a group of Thai EFL learners who were encouraged to read and, by the end, were then sub-divided for statistical analysis on the basis of their reading amounts. Designated 'high' and 'low' groups, this represented the volume of their exposure to comprehensible input. All subjects had their essay writing abilities measured every five weeks throughout the entire engagement with simplified reading books. The findings of the study showed that the high ability learners' writing improved, while low ability learners' writing abilities did not improve despite additional reading involvement over the four months of the experiment.

Alkhalwaldeh (2011) examined the awareness among Jordanian Eight grade students of the relationship between EFL reading comprehension and writing and the associated effect on writing skill development. The Descriptive findings of the study demonstrated that the impact of reading on writing was exhibited in the provision with vocabulary needed for writing, general ideas and background knowledge to write compositions together with the linking words and using the reading text to check spelling. The findings of the study also revealed that high achieving students scantily referred to the reading text while low achieving counterparts excessively relied on it. It was also found that there was a positive impact pertaining paragraph development and the structure of the topic as well as beginning and end of the composition. Moreover, analysis of covariance revealed significant differences between the above two groups in writing skill achievement ascribed to the effect of reading comprehension. The study finally encouraged using the reading text as a model by students to benefit from in their writing.

De Rycker and Ponnudurai (2011) examined which of these two presentation modes, viz., interactive online reading or print-based reading, help today's ICT-iterate generation of Malaysian students write better argumentative essays. They found that 61% of all essays are 'good', with 39% rated as 'average' to 'poor'. They also found that the interactive online reading condition yields superior task performance and that it also produces proportionately more essays with a 'good' thesis statement. Both findings are statistically significant.

Erhan (2011) analyzed the effects of the cooperative integrated reading and composition technique and the traditional reading and writing pedagogical methods for primary school students. It was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the reading and writing skills of the experimental and control groups in terms of academic achievement and retention. This difference was discovered in favor of the cooperative integrated reading and composition technique.

Zainal and Husin (2011) studied the effects of reading on writing performance among faculty of civil engineering students. The results showed that reading has positive effects on students' writing. Generally the results of this study indicated that reading and writing are connected to each other. It is effectively help students in writing in several ways.

Based on the literature, the researchers found out that numerous studies were conducted and several extensive reading programs were introduced in the Western countries, while very few

ones were carried out in the Arab world to investigate the role of extensive reading in developing the students' achievement in writing. All of the reviewed studies showed a strong relationship between reading and writing.

The present study is similar to the reviewed studies in the general aim of investigating the effect of extensive reading on the writing performance of Saudi EFL university students. However, the effect of extensive reading on Saudi EFL university students has not received much attention in the literature. Therefore, this fact empowered the researchers to focus the attention of the study on the effect of extensive reading on the writing performance of Saudi EFL university students.

3. Method, Sample, Instrument and Procedures

The present study was carried out with King Saud university students – following a randomized control-group pretest-posttest design. The subjects were randomly assigned to two groups. Each group was then assigned at random to either the control group or experimental group. The treatment consisted of two levels: the method of the extensive reading program and the traditional method alone. The experimental group undertook the first level of treatment and the control group undertook the second level of treatment. The experimental group students were exposed to the extensive reading program four 50-minute periods a week for two months of the experiment. However, the control group students were not exposed to the extensive reading program during the course of the treatment. Both groups were subjected to a writing pretest immediately before starting the experiment and the same test was administered as a post test immediately after it.

The population of the study consisted of all Saudi EFL university male students at King Saud University in the first semester of the academic year 2013-2014. The sample of the study consisted of 48 students who were chosen randomly through the random sampling techniques in the statistical package of SPSS. Then the 48 students were randomly assigned into experimental and control groups of 24 students each.

In order to answer the question of the study, the researchers prepared an extensive reading program and a writing test.

The extensive reading program consisted of four units. Each unit has four lessons including reading and writing activities to be performed by the students and are relevant to their needs and abilities after practicing various reading topics. The program included narrative, argumentative, descriptive, scientific, and expository texts. The researchers selected the material on the basis of the students' level. It is hoped that by offering students the opportunity to be situated among reading materials selected from different fields of knowledge, the present program may improve the writing performance of Saudi EFL university students. In brief, the program is designed to help the students to understand and engage in this active reading process more effectively so that they can become good writers.

The extensive reading program was then evaluated by a jury of three English language university professors, two specialists in evaluation and assessment and two educational psychologists at King Saud University. Based on the remarks of the jury, the preliminary

version of the program was modified to suit the level of the students.

The program was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2013-2014. The program consisted of an introductory classroom period and four units each unit took two weeks, this means eight 50-minute periods. Therefore, the program took 32 classroom periods over a period of two months. Moreover, the introductory classroom period was used to introduce students to the program, its aims, and the writing skills they are going to develop. The importance of using intensive reading programs in developing the writing skills was also explained. Moreover, each student in the experiment group received a copy of the program.

The writing test was administered to the control and experiment groups before and after the treatment. Students were asked to write an essay explaining why star college athletes are better known and more popular than top students, and show what effects this situation has on college life. Concerning the rating of the students' writing, the researchers used the following checklist to evaluate the students' writing performance: (a) thesis statement, (b) relevance, (c) coherence, (d) cohesion, (e) exposition, (f) quantity, (g) unity, (h) wording, (i) grammatically. The total score was 45, 3 points for each skill. Two English language instructors rated the students' writings. The two raters were asked to evaluate each of the nine writing skills separately, then the overall marks were calculated.

To ensure the reliability of scoring of the writing test, three raters from the correlation was calculated. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Writing Test Interrater Reliability

The interrater Correlation	Correlation	Significance
Interrater correlation between the first and second rater	0.96	0.01
Interrater correlation between the first and third rater	0.97	0.01
Interrater correlation between the second and third rater	0.96	0.01

Table 1 shows that the writing test interrater reliability is statistically significant (0.93) at 0.01.

4. Findings, Discussion and Recommendation

The broader aim of the present study was to evaluate the impact of an extensive reading program on the writing performance of Saudi EFL university students. This section represents the findings of the study, the discussion of the findings, and the recommendations.

The question of the study investigates the effect of an extensive reading program on the Saudi

EFL university students' writing performance. It compares the extensive reading program method with the traditional method. The researchers hypothesize that the students who were taught through the extensive reading program method would show better achievement in writing than those who were taught through the traditional method. This hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The data were collected through a pretest-treatment-posttest design for the equivalent groups and analyzed via the statistical package SPSS. An independent t test was carried out to determine achievement of the two groups on the pretest. Table 2 represents the results.

Table 2. Results of the t Test of the Means of the Achievement of the Two Groups on the pretest

	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Sig.
PRETEST	Control Group	24	12.71	3.35	1.21	0.233
	Experimental Group	24	11.48	3.53		

Table 2 shows that the difference between the achievement of both groups on the pretest is not statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Thus, since there is no statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups on the pretest, the two groups were assumed equivalent. Another independent-samples t test was conducted to determine whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups' achievement on the posttest. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3. Results of the t Test of the Means of the Achievement of the Two Groups on the posttest

	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Sig.
POSTTEST	Control Group	24	13.92	2.82	-2.058	0.045
	Experimental Group	24	23.32	1.88		

Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant difference at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the achievement of the experimental group and that of the control group on the posttest in favor of the experimental group. This indicates that using the computer in English language instruction to the university students has a positive effect on students' achievement. The mean score for the experiment group on the posttest was 23.32 while that of the control group was 13.92.

Moreover, in spite of the fact that the difference between the achievement of the experimental group and the control group on the pretest was not statistically significant, to eliminate initial differences, a one-way ANCOVA was carried out. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4. Results of the Test of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Means of Squares	F	Sig.
Pretest	56.677	1	56.677	22.653	0.000
Group	123.681	1	123.681	49.433	0.000
Error	95.075	38	2.502		
Corrected Total	273.512	40			

Table 4 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on the posttest. The achievement of the experiment group, measured by the difference between the pretest and the posttest, was significantly better than that of the control group.

The findings of this part of the study are consistent with studies conducted by [Beach \(1984\)](#), [Schneider \(1985\)](#), [Janopoulous \(1986\)](#), [Murdoch \(1986\)](#), [Hafiz and Tudor \(1990\)](#), [Zaher \(1990\)](#), [Grabe and Kaplan \(1996\)](#), [Mason and Krashen \(1997\)](#), [Bell \(1998\)](#), [Ferris and Hedgecock \(1998\)](#), [Wong \(2001\)](#), [Helal \(2003\)](#), [Smith \(2003\)](#), [Bakir \(2004\)](#), [Hany \(2007\)](#), [Shen \(2009\)](#), [Yoshimura \(2009\)](#), [Kirin \(2010\)](#), [Alkhaldeh \(2011\)](#), [De Rycker and Ponnudurai \(2011\)](#), [Erhan \(2011\)](#), and [Zainal and Husin \(2011\)](#). All of these studies showed that using extensive reading in English language instruction in general and in improve their writing skill in particular. They also found that extensive reading does offer students certain educational benefits.

Moreover, the findings of the study agree with the hypothesis of that study as it was found that the extensive reading program has a positive effect on the Saudi EFL university students' performance in writing.

The researchers demonstrate that the difference in the achievement of the students was attributed to using the extensive reading program in the writing classes. The experimental group subjects significantly improved their writing performance in a period of two months. The improvement achieved by the control group subjects, however, was not statistically significant. By comparing the results achieved by the two groups, the researchers reached the conclusion that the improvement achieved by the experiment group may have been attributed to the way they render instruction: the extensive reading program.

Furthermore, the differences between the two groups may be attributed to many other reasons. First, using the extensive reading program in the writing classes is a novelty. This novelty may have encouraged the students to deal with it enthusiastically, which may have been reflected in better writing achievement. Second, reading many different texts and doing many reading and writing activities helped the students develop healthy reading and writing habits and at the same time paved the way to promoting the writing performance through the consistent exposure to the meaningful content of the texts. The conditions provided by the extensive reading program promoted total attention that led to greater understanding of the content, which in turns led to improving writing performance. Third, training students via the

extensive reading program encouraged them to use the skills they learned when writing an essay on a certain topic which surely leads to develop their writing performance. Fourth, it is sure that Saudi EFL students knew enough about writing skills and its sub-skills, but they lacked the opportunity to put them into real practice. Once they were taught the definitions of each skill and its sub-skills, and were provided with enough activities and encouragement, they were able to apply them successfully. Fifth, using the extensive reading program was effective in motivating the students to read a wide variety of texts and to write a great number of essays on different topics, which in turns, improved their writing performance. Sixth, the program was useful in motivating the students to read on different genres (narrative, argumentative, descriptive, scientific, and expository texts) which increased their writing proficiency. Seventh, the reading passages the students exposed to offered them a good opportunity to see how a main idea is developed through out a passage. Moreover, they offered the students a range of vocabulary to be used later on in their writing. Besides, the students were able to collect necessary ideas and information for writing through reading the passages. Finally, integrating reading and writing with relevant topics was an important factor because the students realized the relationship between reading and writing, which minimized the feeling of boredom and kept them active all the time. This supports that of Grabe and Kaplan (1996) who suggested that reading activities will be a great assistance to improve and promote too many writing activities at the beginning and advanced levels. They also stated that the outcome of a reading activity serves as input for writing. Zamble (1992) stressed that the teaching of reading and writing cannot be torn apart nor can be arranged in linear order so that one necessarily precedes the other. Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) also indicated that voluntary-pleasurable reading has empirically proved to bring about positive impacts on developing writing skill.

In light of the findings of the present study, the researchers can say that the use of extensive reading inside the classroom tends to make learning more interesting. Extensive reading programs can promote motivation. Moreover, the findings of this study suggested that integrating extensive reading programs into writing instruction, was effective for enhancing students' performance and provided a positive learning experience.

This study represents a preliminary effort to empirically examine the effect of intensive reading program on Saudi EFL university students' writing performance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Further research is needed for a thorough understanding of this issue and for the confirmation of its findings. This is especially true when conducting research with more variables than those in the present study. It is also recommended that this study be replicated with a larger number of participants and over the whole semester or the whole year. In addition, it would be interesting to compare results across levels of proficiency as well as gender. Researchers are further recommended to study the effect of extensive reading programs on school students' writing performance. In addition, further studies might describe what teachers should do with extensive reading in their own classrooms. It is also recommended that another study be conducted to investigate the effect of the program on the learning of other language skills such as reading and oral skills. Research in this area should identify the needs of both language learners and instructors and the role that effective

extensive reading education and integration can play to meet learners' needs. Finally, universities, ministry of education and other educational institutes are recommended to make use and benefit from the extensive reading program of this study as well as similar ones when designing their curricula.

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