



Power of Reading: Reading as a Strategy for Learning English

Padam Lal Bharati

Department of English, Saptagandaki Multiple Campus

Abstract

Why don't language acquirers take advantage of the power of reading goes the heading of Krashen's 1997 article in which he cites studies that establish with evidence that through extensive reading learners can acquire larger vocabularies, do better in spelling, writing skills and in tests of grammar. In other words, he claims that reading serves as powerful means of developing one's competence in the second language because it provides the required input. Drawing from my own experience of exclusively relying on reading strategy for English language learning, I argue, with Krashen, that extensive reading or free voluntary reading is a powerful means of developing the second language competence (Kim & Krashen 1997, Krashen 2004). I adopt autoethnography as my method of inquiry and look back upon my own recollections of how I utilized 'reading' as a default strategy in developing a working knowledge of the English language. I use a retrospective composition I wrote back in the year 2012, which recounts my struggle for learning English through my school years to the days of my early career as a teacher of English, as my data text and adopt qualitative interpretive analysis.

Keywords: reading, second language acquisition, input hypothesis, free voluntary reading (FVR)

Emergence of the Research Issue

Although Nepal is a multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic country, few of its own national languages, besides Nepali, are taught in Nepal. Instead, the English language, originally the language of the British people, finds a prominent place in Nepalese education system. From its early influence on Nepalese elites (Kerr, 1999; as cited in Poudel, 2016) ever since the British had contact with Nepalese people in the second half of the 18th century to its formal introduction in Nepalese education

Corresponding E-mail: padam.lal@smc.edu.np

system, although only for the Rana family at that time, by Junga Bahadur Rana when he returned from his visit to Europe in 1851 (Shrestha, 2008), English has always been taught as a foreign and international language. After democracy was established in 1951, the broader population was explicitly given access to education (Dawadi, 2018), and since then English has been taught in schools giving it a heavy curricular weightage (Giri 2015). Citing various instances of the prominence of English from various educational and public spheres, Giri (2015) claims that English has been serving in Nepal instrumental, regulative, interpersonal, and creative/innovative functions, as required for a language to gain a local language status suggested in Kachruvian framework.

Articles like Giri (2015), Shrestha (1983) and Shrestha (2008) argue that English language is quite common in Nepal, and a preference of most Nepalese parents. However, studying English as a subject has always remained a tough challenge for majority of students studying in Nepali medium schools and colleges. English is a difficult subject to study for many students (Akbari, 2015; Phyak, 2016; as cited in Chand, 2021, p. 48). At the school level or at university level, English is one of the subjects in which many students ‘fail’ as they consider it to be an exceedingly difficult subject (Ahmed, 2015). Successful or unsuccessful, students in Nepal go through English courses at school or university levels, some with full awareness and motivation, and some only to due to compulsion or because it is a compulsory subject in the curriculum.

These days around there are several resources available for learning English. Besides receiving instructions in the classrooms from smart teachers who employ a variety of modern pedagogical approaches and techniques (Sheralieva, Rasulova & Khalikova, 2022), learners on their own can find and watch English movies, and access language learning videos, teachers’ blogposts, language learning applications (e.g., Duolingo) and other supplementary materials online and offline. They may search friends in their vicinity or on social media to interact and practice their language with. However, stories were different when under-resourced Nepalese village students struggled to learn the English language 30 years ago.

Back in late 1980s and early 90s, when I was a student in a hill-based government-aided Nepali medium school, English used to be introduced from fourth grade onward. Although in the modern times, with technological advancements, various alternative

English language learning materials have been made widely available to learners even in Nepal, back then the only materials available were the English textbooks. In the hilly districts of Nepal, even the textbooks barely reached in time. Thus, I and my contemporaries solely depended on the classroom instruction and the reading of textbooks for learning English. In our time listening skills were not incorporated in the curriculum and the only listening we did was listening to teachers in the class. Speaking skill was not focused either. The only speaking we did was recitation of the passages or dialogues from textbooks. There were no speaking opportunities outside the school. Thus, our, or rather mine, default strategy, throughout the school and college levels, of learning English has been ‘reading’. In this article, I recount my own tale of ‘learning English through reading’ being based on autobiographical reflections I composed in 2012.

Reading as a Language Skill and a Learning Strategy

ELT textbooks and authors tend to talk of English language learning skills as being divided into receptive and productive. Reading and listening skills in which meaning needs to be drawn from the text or discourse are regarded as receptive skills, and speaking and writing in which learners have to actually produce language themselves are termed productive skills (Harmer, 2020). These language skills are also classified as being primary and secondary skills, with listening and speaking as belonging to the former category and reading and writing as belonging to the latter. Following Krashen (1987), these skills are even expected to be acquired, at least in the case of first language acquisition, in natural order with listening and speaking followed by more complex skills- reading and writing. Viewed thus, reading is considered a more advanced skill than listening and speaking.

Linse (2005) defines reading as a “set of skills that involves making sense and deriving meaning from the printed word.... [i.e.] we must be able to decode (sound out) the printed words and also comprehend what we read” (p.69). For Anderson (2003) also, the aim of reading is comprehension. Emphasizing the comprehension part, Ur (2012) reiterates:

In the context of language learning, reading means ‘reading and understanding’. A student who says, ‘I can read the words, but I don’t know what they mean’ is not, therefore, reading, in this sense, but merely decoding: translating the written symbols into their corresponding sounds. (p.133)

We know reading skill is a composite of many specific subskills. Defining reading as the capacity to identify words and phrases, Heaton (1990) lists some sub-constructs or subcomponents of the reading skill, such as, relating sounds with their corresponding written symbols; work out the meanings of words by understanding clues related to word-formation and context; comprehend overtly stated information and understand relations within the sentence; understand links between parts of a text; notice time and space relations, and also sequence of ideas; comprehend conceptual meaning; speculate and predict what will come next in the text; recognize the main idea and other prominent features in a text; make generalizations and draw conclusions; perceive ideas not explicitly stated by making inferences and interpreting figurative language; read for general and specific information; read critically; and follow a flexible approach and adopt different reading strategies according to the type of the text and one's purpose.

Thus, reading is not just running our eyes along the lines of the text or sounding out the words. It comprises 'higher order thinking skills' and is more complex than merely deciphering individual words (Linse, 2005). For second language learners, reading skill is much more problematic. Peregoy and Boyle (2004) mention three factors that determine the second language learners' success in reading, namely- "the child's background knowledge, linguistic knowledge of the target language, and the strategies or techniques the child uses to tackle the text" (as cited in Linse, 2005, p. 69).

Reading can also be used as a strategy for (second) language learning. For Mart (2018), "reading is one of the most effective ways of foreign language learning" (p.92). I believe it is true of many learners of English in the countries where it is not a native language or where it cannot be 'picked up' from the environment. Many learners like myself have learnt English language exclusively by reading it, partly because we lacked opportunities of practicing listening and speaking (except in the classrooms). In this regard, Bright and McGregor (1970) opine that reading is the most enjoyable approach to learn a language, since it is through reading, students come across memorable words and expressions. They further point out:

Where there is little reading there will be little language learning. ... the student who wants to learn English will have to read himself into a knowledge of it unless he can move into an English environment (Bright, & McGregor, 1970, p.52).

For many learners, reading may be the only activity in the course of second or foreign language learning. Of course, reading may be followed by taking down notes, and writing exams based on what one has read. Linkon (2016) argues that reading may be the single most common learning activity in higher education. While many faculty use lectures, discussions, exams, or writing assignments as part of their pedagogical practice, almost all of the faculty members assign readings. Nation (1997) reports about the benefits of such extensive reading. Reviewing various ‘book flood’ input-focused extensive reading studies conducted by various researchers, Nation argues that there is a wide range of language-learning benefits from reading activity including improvement in reading and a range of language uses and areas of language knowledge as well as affective benefits as well. He is of the opinion that achievement in reading and related skills, most remarkably writing, motivates learners to enjoy learning and to value their study of English.

Horst et al. (1998, citing Stenberg, 1987; Wodinsky & Nation, 1988) claim that reading is ‘well-established’ as one of the primary methods of learning new words; it is crucial for the development of a first language, and it is also thought to be crucial for the development of a second language.

Theoretical Support

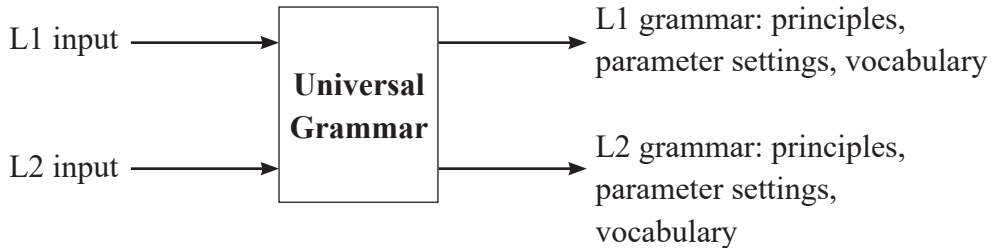
In drawing propositions for this article, I have worked within the confines of mentalist/generativist theory of linguistics lead by Chomsky (1964, 1972, 1981) along with the comprehensible input hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985). Chomsky, the chief proponent of cognitivist/ generativist movement argues that human infants are born with an innate language acquisition device (Language Faculty consisting of Universal Grammar, UG; Radford, 2009) which enables any normal human child to acquire language from experience, and thus language acquisition is a subconscious but active mental process. For Chomsky, (2000, p. 4), “evidently each language is the result of the interplay of two factors: the initial state and the course of experience. We can think of the initial state as a “language acquisition device” that takes experience as “input” and gives the language as an “output”—an “output” that is internally represented in the mind/brain.”

Thus, Chomsky focuses on exposure to ‘input’ with which human mind can build grammar or knowledge of language. Although Chomsky himself says nothing

about second language acquisition, the UG mechanism is also said to be available for second language acquisition by supporters of UG theory.

Figure 1

The Universal Grammar model of first language acquisition extended to second language acquisition



-Adapted from Cook, (2007, p.229)

Assuming sufficient input as the precondition for language acquisition, Krashen (1981) also puts forward his Input Hypothesis (IH). For Krashen (1984) input which is comprehensible is "the only true cause of second language acquisition" (p.6). Aligning his theory with Chomsky's model of language acquisition involving Language Acquisition Device (LAD), Krashen in his (1989) article claims that language is subconsciously acquired- i.e., one is not consciously aware of acquiring a language as one's conscious focus is on the message, and not the form. Also, the acquired knowledge remains subconsciously in the brain as "tacit knowledge" in Chomskyan terms.

Being roughly based on these theoretical assumptions, I argue that I used 'reading' as my second language input, and that has led me to acquisition of the English language.

Methodology

The data on which I base my arguments are my own retrospections, recollecting the 'lived experiences' of learning English starting from school age onwards which I happen to have composed about a decade ago in 2012 and saved them somehow. In doing so, I have adopted autoethnography as my approach to inquiry which attempts to systematically describe and analyze personal, lived experiences for the purpose of relating to or interpreting cultural experiences. Autoethnography, as a qualitative

research method, combines auto (self) and ethnography (study of culture) to explore and understand personal experiences in the context of culture and society (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). According to Ellis (2004), autoethnography is "an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 26). This approach challenges established ways of "doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially conscious act" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010, para. 1).

In writing this article, I am adopting the interpretivist paradigm of arriving at understanding of reality through subjective interpretation of lived experiences, and the practice of combining the methods of autobiography and ethnography. As an autobiographer, I am narrating my own story, outlining different phases of the English language journey of a rural village youth in an under-resourced context. As an ethnographer, I am reviewing my own situation in the context of Nepalese rural village educational culture of 30 years ago which provided very little support in terms of methods and materials for learning English. However, my orientation here is not much 'political' but more linguistic, attempting to understand how conducive my reading experiences were to second language acquisition.

Reflections and Interpretation

Earliest Memories

I believe, for most individuals of my generation who went to school in Nepalese rural villages in late 1980s and early 90s, the English language learning experience was largely along the lines I have laid down in my stories. Here is a piece of a composition I wrote in 2012 recollecting my earliest experience of being introduced to English.

I was brought up in a desolate hill community where nobody spoke English. I started learning English alphabets from the fourth grade. The earliest memory I have of learning English is that of reciting word-meanings translated into Nepali:

CAT = cat mane biralo (means cat)

DOG = dog mane kukur (means dog)

COW = cow mane gai (means cow)

The teachers who taught me ABCD at school were all Nepalese. I had very little exposure to authentic English in my childhood years, the time considered to be crucial for learning or acquiring a language. These days parents and family members are seen

hovering over their kids helping them with their English homework, but I had nobody at home who could help me with (English) homework. Although, in the later years, I sometimes listened to the 8 o'clock English news, if my grandfather did not turn off the radio, from Radio Nepal without any motivation, barely understanding anything, I did not see an English newspaper until I went to college years later. At school, we had only 45-minute English class six days a week, but we did not speak much English inside the class, let alone outside. The only English we spoke was the recitation of passages and dialogues from the textbooks. And teachers gave us grammar rules and we memorized them. They provided us with meanings of English words in Nepali, our mother tongue, and translated the lines for us, which we parroted. We even memorized readymade essays. We wrote memorized answers in exams. I often passed the exams with flying scores because I was good at memorizing back then. I am not blaming the teachers. They did the best of what they could. That was the pedagogy of the time, the Don Lucas method.

The tale of my early experience with English points out a few things. First, the age at which English was introduced to students used to be 9/10 (i.e, when they/we were in the fourth grade) unlike now when the school children begin learning their first ABCD as early as the age of 3. Lenneberg (1967), the proponent of the critical period hypothesis, states that the first few years of life, i.e., the childhood, is a crucial time within which an individual can acquire a language if exposed to adequate stimuli. During my critical period, the only stimuli I received were school textbooks and grammar rules in the notebooks, not much exposure to natural language use. Secondly, the major task I engaged in was reading for 'memorization' if not for comprehension- although translations by teachers helped us comprehend the texts. Thirdly, the textbooks that were used were not authentic texts, but simplified materials prepared for the classroom purpose. The authentic texts are those texts which were produced to fulfil some real-life communicative functions in the language community where they are used (Little, & Singleton, 1988) Whatsoever, grammar-translation method, the classical method of the time (Larsen-freeman & Anderson, 2011) had its day, and it produced results because I passed the tests, which probably tested memories rather than language skills.

The Real Predicament

Although I had completed my school education from Nepali-medium government-aided school, I had the audacity to choose Major English when I came to

college. However, when I started the college, I discovered that six years of 45-minute English classes at schools, and the school English textbooks had barely prepared me for facing the college English texts, and here is the story of the predicament I faced when I first encountered college texts which were authentic.

When I came to college I was, for the first time, appalled by the complexity of the English texts. They were so alien. There were so many strange words, so difficult to pronounce and so complex to spell. At first, I tried to proceed with the method I had learnt at school. I started making a list of the new words that I encountered in the texts and memorizing their meanings in Nepali. That was a hopeless attempt as the word lists were despairingly long. I soon gave up and surrendered to the complexity of English. I thought I was very dull, which I still believe I am! I just sat in the English literature classes listening to the tutor who never translated anything into Nepali. I understood nothing for the first three months. Things went right over my head. My school had not prepared me for that kind of English lessons. I thought I would go nuts! I again started gobbling the word meanings I copied from an English-Nepali dictionary. I started memorizing the summaries of the stories I found in guidebooks. I tried reading the original texts, but they were impenetrable. There were some stories, some essays, and the novel 'Old Man and the Sea' by Hemingway in the first year of the intermediate major English course. Of the novel, I understood nothing, but I still remember the line: man can be destroyed but never be defeated, which the tutor so much focused on. I spent several hours in desperate attempts and thought I would get nowhere. When I sat for the annual English literature test, I was thunderstruck. I had never learnt to write sentences of my own. I started sweating because I felt that, for the first time in my life, I was going to fail a test! In my bewilderment, I did not know what I wrote in the test paper and how the three long hours passed. When the results came out, my score in literature was 33. I did not fail but after that test I realized that I had been wrong all along in my approach.

In case of first language acquisition, children develop the working knowledge of their L1 within 3-4 years of age because they are exposed to natural language use every day. As this section of the story illustrates, the amount of English I had gone through at school (45-minutes of English class on weekdays for six years) had not taught me enough English to face the college texts. This seems to be the case of 'insufficient input', and one needs sufficient comprehensible input to acquire a

language (Krashen, 1984). It appears that there used to be a huge gap between the school and the college curriculum. A number of things can be blamed for this gap. First the amount of reading I had done at school was very inadequate. Next, the types of reading texts (simplified) used in school were different from those (authentic) that were used in the college. Thirdly, the college English curriculum presented texts that were culturally so alien which we could not comprehend even if we could decode. The reason, I could not understand the novel “Old Man and the Sea” was because I, being a resident of a landlocked country, had never known anything of the sea and sailing culture before. The input content would have been more comprehensible for me if our won folk tales or mythologies had been presented in English. Pioneer of the Comprehensible input Hypothesis, Stephen Krashen argues that we acquire language when we understand what we hear or read, or more specifically, “comprehensible input is the essential environmental ingredient...” (Krashen, 1989, p. 440). My techniques and strategies might have been also wrong, but the major problem was the input which was way beyond my comprehension level.

Changing the Strategies

Since I had no power to change the curriculum and the texts prescribed by the university, what I changed in my second year at the university was my strategies. Here is the story of how my second year laid the foundation of my English.

So, from the second year onwards, I gave up memorizing altogether. I struggled through the original texts and concentrated on comprehension rather than on committing things to memory. I started using an English-English dictionary and used it only when it was utterly necessary. Even till my second year at college, reading widely for pleasure was not my hobby. My whole time was occupied by course books. One important habit I developed during that year was 'making my own notes'. I read the texts many times, used teacher's notes and other bazaar notes to understand the content but I made my own notes, in my own sentences, right or wrong. I scored 47 in my second-year literature test. That was not a good score, but I knew that I would not fail any English test then onwards. I grew confident. That year laid the foundation of my English. I knew how to read. I subscribed to The Himalayan Times, a newspaper available in English, for six months with the hope of improving my English. I made a point of at least going through each headline. At first, I found the journalistic jargon

shocking but gradually, I got the sense of what they meant. I could hardly taste the literariness of the literature. All my time was spent trying to understand the literal meanings of the texts. The first novel that I read, with some interest and understanding, was 'The Moonstone' by Wilkie Collins, but I could not at all follow Rudyard Kipling's 'Kim'. I would not have read either book had they not been the course books. Of all the literary texts, I found poetry to be the most difficult because I could never decipher what the poets meant to say between the lines. They still frighten me. 'Lord of the Flies' by William Golding was the first non-course novel which I tried with meager success and that was when I was in BA third year. Then somebody handed me 'Sophie's World' written by Norwegian writer Jostein Gaarder and I found that comprehensible and fascinating. Only after finishing my BA, I started buying and borrowing books to read for pleasure. By then, I had fully realized that my low score in BA had been due to my poor English and the only way to improve my English was to read voraciously. Then I began to read whatever I could lay my hands on, all fiction and non-fiction whichever were available, some with partial success, some with full enjoyment and some with utter disappointment. I had not yet become a good reader who could appreciate the texts but just an amateur reader – I just read because it was fun. But, anyway, I succeeded in developing reading as a habit or more importantly, as a hobby. Some of the good books I read during those years were 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles' by Thomas Hardy, 'Pride and Prejudice' by Jane Austen, 'War and Peace' by Leo Tolstoy, 'God of Small Things' by Arundhati Roy, 'The Alchemist' by Paulo Coelho, 'A Brief History of Time' by Stephen Hawking and 'My Experiments with Truth' by Gandhi etc.

This section of my story demonstrates some strategic changes in my approach that worked. Reading was difficult for me, but I responded with more reading. Making my own notes of the material I read, consulting English-English dictionaries, additional reading of the national newspaper *The Himalayan Times* which somehow presented 'comprehensible input' to me, and finding interesting content to read were some strategies that dominated my approach.

Note making has been recognized as a well-known study technique by teachers. Babu (2015), reviewing various studies (Kiewra, 1985; Fisher and Harris,

1973; Annis and Davis, 1975; Di Vesta and Gray, 1972; Barnett et al., 1981) on the value of note making, concludes that many students who make notes perform better than those who do not, and making notes is effective on recalling and supports students' learning. Similarly, an English-English dictionary is also regarded as an 'essential and invaluable resource' for English learners at different levels (Taylor, 2004). The reading of English newspaper, which somehow contained more familiar 'comprehensible' content compared to the English literature textbooks also facilitated my learning, which, I believe, validates Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis. The additional reading helped me acquire more vocabulary and spelling (Krashen, 1989); and "vocabulary is one of those things where the rich get richer" (Hinkel, 2009; as cited in Nurmukhamedov, 2012, p. 10). Lastly, my free voluntary reading (FVR) (Krashen, 2004) or "engaged reading" (Ivey & Johnston, 2015) of the self-selected self-paced books (novels) of my interest and developing reading as a hobby provided me a foundation so that I could reach a higher proficiency.

Reading to Teach and Teaching to Read

Being a student and reading textbooks to pass the exam and reading the texts to make your students understand them as a teacher seem remotely related. In my experience, a good student is not guaranteed to become a good teacher. Rather, a good teacher always remains a good student or a learner. Next, reading to teach involves, 'reading with a purpose' (Linderholm, 2014), which is more focused than free voluntary reading. Here is the story of what happened when a student became a teacher.

When I started teaching in an English medium boarding school, I found that my BA and all my reading had not prepared me even for teaching kids. The job was challenging because, as an English teacher, I was required to speak English. That was the rule in the boarding school. I entered the class and somehow delivered my first lesson in English. I had never spoken English before! I do not know how my first students liked my English. But I got selected. However, I realized that I needed to learn the basics again with greater precision: the correct spelling of the words and correct structures. I had to consult grammar books and dictionaries several times. I did not know how hard my kids worked but I had to spend hours at home making preparations. The children's textbooks were challenging! In fact, I feel like I read and learnt more English while teaching at boarding schools than during my own school and college years. When I corrected my students' writing, I learnt to write precise answers. ...

Learning English as a foreign language and an academic discipline has, thus, not been an easy task for me; and I believe it is also true of many others like me i.e., people without English schooling and exposure, and for those who do not have any special motivation for learning it. English is still one of the most difficult subjects for many public college students all over Nepal, because many of them come from Nepali medium schooling backgrounds from the villages and rural parts. It is natural that many of my students, in Nepali medium classes complain that they do not understand English texts. Neither do I! Many texts are way beyond my capacity. I obviously have to read a text several times before I can begin to understand it. So, when they talk of a particular text being invincible at first go, my answer to them is, "My dear, how could you hope to understand it at first reading when your teacher has to read it five times?" (Whatever applies to me, though, might not apply to you if you are a genius, which I am not!) But you really need to read a text several times, consulting dictionaries and references, when necessary, before you are able to make anything out of it.

Although becoming a teacher means much more than just ‘reading a lot’, and life of a teacher is a ‘multidimensional space’ (Fuller and Brown, 1975), the amount of reading one does increases after one becomes a teacher. Reading for fun and putting down a book when it is impenetrable or boring is not an option for a teacher; one has to read and re-read the text, comprehend it by all means and be prepared to interpret it if one wants to survive as a teacher. The style of reading also changes- you apply multiple strategies of reading- skimming, scanning, intensive reading, extensive reading, and analytical reading (Harmer, 2020). Consequently, one develops one’s language skills more precisely in the process of such reading. Finally, the more one reads, the more one learns to read adopting and adapting strategies that suits one best. And the more one reads, the more one realizes the *power of reading* (Krashen 2004).

Although after finding a teacher’s job, I was engaged in more focused reading, the earlier free voluntary reading seems to have developed my basic competence in English language. The fact that I was able to speak in my first boarding school class even though I had never engaged in speaking activities before supports the claim that “extensive pleasure reading can contribute to oral/aural competence as well” (Cho and Krashen, 1994, 1995a, 1995b; as cited in Kim & Krashen 1997, p.27)

Conclusion and Implication

My journey of learning English starting from the first introduction to ABCD in the fourth grade to developing a teaching knowledge of the language reinforces my original proposition that the knowledge of a language can be acquired exclusively through reading because, of all the activities I engaged in, reading was the activity which stood out most prominent. This ‘reading’ provided the required input, although not early enough in my life. My leaning or acquisition of the English as a second language began to happen as I flooded myself with more reading (FVR), utilizing varying strategies, including note-making and reading for a purpose. It is not very clear from my stories what my motivations were, especially in my college days, but once you have “boarded the train there is no getting off” as the famous Sylvia Plath metaphor goes. I was self-determined to get through the English courses in the BA, thus somehow the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of Deci & Ryan (1985) seems to be at work in my drive behind the continuous struggle. Another fact which emerges from my story is that developing a foundation of language is a time-taking process-although I was probably developing the basics from school age onwards, it took me at least one year of intensive reading to grow confidence to tackle any English text. Its implication for SLA theory is that the second language, like the first language can be acquired, through exposure in the form of reading; or it happens subconsciously when you are reading novels or newspaper, provided what you are reading is interesting and comprehensible to you. Likewise, the language knowledge that you acquire through reading passes over to development of other skills- I was able to speak English, irrespective of pronunciation errors and fluency issues, all of a sudden when I entered to teach my first class as a result of my continual reading. However, my partial endorsement, here, of input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) or power of reading (Krashen, 1997, 2004) is not intended to downplay the importance of output-focused approaches as Swain (1995), Gass (1997) and others have suggested. My story simply suggests that self-selected and free-voluntary reading engagement worked for me and might work in other situations.

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