

CRITICAL READING AND MOTIVATION IN IRAQI EFL PREPARATORY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to look at how Critical Reading (CR) practices can be adapted to regular EFL reading courses in order to boost student motivation. Its goal is to determine the significance of three fundamental characteristics of CR courses in improving motivation, decreasing external control, allowing students to express their personal realities in classroom processes, and achieving optimal arousal. Students in the ELT preparatory year participated in the research. According to the data, incorporating these three aspects into EFL reading courses improves student motivation. Traditional reading classes, on the other hand, will lack the crucial novelty of CR courses, which is gaining a new skill, within the adaptation for students with strong self-efficacy and English competence. And hence, this study suggests that students' intrinsic motivation for EFL reading lessons will be expanded for students with high levels of English proficiency if the former two features are supported through tasks designed to raise optimal arousal to compensate for the lack of novelty in traditional learning classrooms.

Keywords: EFL Reading, motivation, critical reading.

INTRODUCTION

EFL classroom practices, like those in many other educational contexts, run the risk of alienating students from the learning process. Because of the possible difference between real language use outside the classroom and language learning practice inside the EFL classroom, the rather artificial form of language classrooms, where language abilities are broken down into their components, can produce anger. As a result, the pupils are placed in a situation where "learning becomes abstract and detached from reality" (Ushioda, 1996:42). This is likely most visible in the Iraqi setting, strangely, among high school foreign language department students. These kids are highly motivated to learn the language, but their enthusiasm is sapped by classroom activities (Icmez, 2005). These students have high self-efficacy, defined goals, and strong extrinsic motivation, such as university education and job possibilities, as well as a passion for the language. As a result, it's startling to observe that their expectations for an interest in language acquisition in formal education are significantly lower than their drive to learn the language. The alienating effects of school instruction on pupils can also be seen in the early stages of ELT students in the preparatory year. Although the correlation between the CR course and student motivation is negative in some cases (Kramer-Dahl, 2001; Granville, 2003) and manifests as student resistance to the course, in other studies, the correlation is positive and results in an increase in student motivation for reading lessons, particularly in contexts where students report alienation from the educational process (Leal, 1998; Icmez, 2005). These findings suggest that CR techniques have the ability to improve students' intrinsic motivation by a) strengthening the relationship

between students' own realities and reading lessons, b) minimizing external control while enhancing student control, and c) generating appropriate arousal in the classroom. The goal of this study is to see if using the CR processes above in a regular reading classroom can boost student motivation.

MOTIVATION

The research on motivation includes a variety of perspectives on humans, ranging from subjects within a system to active agents. Human beings are viewed as relatively predictable beings in the early studies, with the assumption that given equal conditions, they will react in predictable ways to their surroundings. This is known as "reinforcement theory" (Stipek, 2002: 19). Not only do these theories fail to explain the immensely complex and sometimes unpredictable character of human conduct, but they also ignore human agency.

This understanding's reductionist approach gave birth to studies that suggested a different way of looking at motivation. Integrative vs instrumental motivation is a well-known example of such study (Gardner, 1985). Integrative motivation refers to a desire to study a language for its own sake, as well as its culture and the people who speak it, whereas instrumental motivation refers to the desire to acquire a language for practical and economic reasons (Gardner, 1985), such as finding work. Although Gardner's (1985) studies imply that the integrative – instrumental dichotomy gives useful information for immersion situations, newer research contradicts Gardner's (1985) findings in both EFL and immersion contexts (Brown, 1994). (Kouritzin, Piquemal, and Renaud 2009). The outcomes of this study also call into question previous research conclusions that integrative motivation is more likely to lead to task perseverance than instrumental drive.

Cognitive Approaches to Motivation

With the shift in understanding human beings to a more conscious, agency-oriented perspective, motivation theories have shifted to a perspective in which humans are viewed as active beings that actively choose to engage in a task. The concept that humans are conscious and that the same stimuli can produce different outcomes in different people because they have different thoughts and beliefs is the basis for cognitive approaches to motivation.

Cognitive methods to motivation are useful for understanding how different motivations for learning a language lead to varied levels of persistence in the undertaking. This is especially true in EFL environments, where the above-mentioned instrumental – integrative dichotomy is absent by nature, and where all language learners have instrumental motivation, but only a few continue to learn the language. Self-respect, for example, is sometimes "valued more" than any external, "monetary reward" (Stipek, 2002: 40- 41). As a result, as will be detailed below, these theories provide useful insight into the motivation of the participants in this study:

According to Social Cognitive Theory, there are three interconnected motivational factors:

- 1) People's own "cognitive/emotional factors", like beliefs of capabilities,
- 2) "Environmental factors", and
- 3) "Behavior or performance" of people (Alderman, 1999: 16).

This theory claims that enabling people to develop objectives for themselves will motivate them to work toward them without the need for external reinforcement on a regular basis (Stipek, 2002: 41). Another key aspect in motivation is self-efficacy, or one's belief in one's own talents (Dornyei, 2001; Alderman, 1999). Achievement Theory, like Social Cognitive Theory, maintains that a learner's expectation of success determines motivation (Dornyei, 2001). He does, however, provide a linear model in which the drives to succeed and avoid failure are represented as opposing poles (Atkinson, 1966; Stipek, 2002). Self-efficacy, however, is based on more than just the expectation of success or the avoidance of failure; interpersonal and social interactions are equally important (Gu, 2009). Although the linear model of Achievement Theory has been criticized for failing to capture the complex nature of human beings (Stipek, 2002), Rotter's addition of the locus of control, i.e. an individual's beliefs and values, to Achievement Theory is important for this study because it helps account for individual differences in motivation (Icmez, 2005; Leal, 1998).

Learners' views and values are divided into two categories: "internal/ contingent" and "external/ not contingent" (in Weiner, 1974: 5). The contrast between contingent and non-contingent is further explored in Attribution Theory. It states that people evaluate their prior experiences to figure out what caused success or failure, emphasizing people's awareness (Ushioda, 1996). That is, in addition to "people's expectations connected to future events," it incorporates the function of past experiences into the construct (Stipek, 2002: 63). Weiner adds two new categories to the mix: "stability" and "controllability" (Weiner, 1974: 6).

While effort is necessary (internal, unsteady, and controllable), ability is contingent (stable, and uncontrollable), and luck is non-contingent (external, unstable, and uncontrollable). Motivation can be the "cause or outcome of learning success," as Ushioda points out (Ushioda, 1996: 9).

Intrinsic Motivation

Naturally, the above motivation theories are influenced by epistemological perspectives that see humans as either passive recipients of external influences or active aware beings. All of the theories examined thus far, however, have one thing in common: they regard learning as an external force imposed on people. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is based on the premise that humans are active beings in need of autonomy and with a natural curiosity (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Deci and Ryan, 1992; Ushioda, 1996; Ushioda, 2003). As a result, mastery and arousal in the face of novelty are important notions in intrinsic motivation.

1. Mastering Competency and Optimal Arousal

Developing competency, according to intrinsic motivation, is a vital component of motivation and the reward itself, which is self-sustaining (Deci and Ryan, 1985). However, after the proficiency in that single task is acquired, the learners express ennui (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

As a result, an appropriate challenge/arousal level is also required (Deci and Ryan, 1992). Feelings of pleasure, which are linked to intrinsic motivation, are common manifestations of optimal arousal and mastery (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ushioda, 1996). For example, according to Stipek, most kids dislike schoolwork because it fails to foster competence and mastery (2002). Stimuli that are not at all dissimilar or novel will not pique an individual's interest, while stimuli that are too dissimilar to the individual's expectations will be ignored, causing worry (Berlyne, 1966: 30). It's worth noting that in

this study, school procedures' inability to provide appropriate arousal for children in their later years of school play a significant influence in their low desire for classroom procedures.

2. External Control

Deci and Ryan (1985) suggest that humans must be free of external rewards or pressures to be organically driven. It's critical that people believe they have control over their lives rather than an external element (Deci and Ryan, 1985). As a result, kids who believe they have control over their school environments and learning experiences are more likely to be intrinsically motivated (Ushioda, 2003).

According to the Self-Determination Approach, while extrinsic rewards enhance activity participation in the short term, they have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation in the long run (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Furthermore, when the extrinsic reward is removed, individuals who previously received an extrinsic reward become less engaged than those who were never offered an extrinsic reward (Deci and Ryan, 1985). "Whether people freely choose to engage or persevere in an activity, or their ratings of their interest in or enjoyment of a particular activity" is how intrinsic motivation is commonly measured (Stipek, 2002: 134).

3. Intrinsic motivation in language classrooms

When any formal education is involved, school learning is normally segregated from personal life. Furthermore, the longer students are in formal school, the wider the gap between them and the rest of the world (Corpus, McClintic-Gilbert, and Hayenga, 2009). However, in Iraq, the university exam's backwash effect on school education produces even more estrangement from school practices. Due to the immense importance assigned to this exam, a very strong external control, the demands of the university exam affect the school practices in the framework of this study. As a result, it's critical to figure out how to make meaningful connections between school procedures and kids' lives.

The foregoing hypotheses have various consequences for language classrooms in this regard. According to the theories discussed above, "communicative success" is a crucial part of motivation (Ushioda, 1996: 32). Success in communication can provide a person a sense of "self-confidence, happiness, and meaningful progress in their own learning" (Ushioda, 1996: 33). These tasks can help students relate to the learning experience if language is utilized as a means to a meaningful purpose rather than an end in itself (Ushioda, 1996; Dornyei, 1997). Similarly, Nikolov's research emphasizes the importance of meaningful classroom tasks that stimulate student communication above distant integrative or instrumental reasons in student motivation to learn a foreign language (1999). The utilization of real-life materials in the classroom is an effective technique to help students connect their lives outside of the classroom to the procedures in the classroom (Ushioda, 1996).

Critical Reading Practices and Motivation

In terms of motivation, studies on CR and writing propose two basic underlying factors. The first is the utilization of genuine materials (Wallace, 1999). Although authentic materials are used in standard reading courses, CR takes a distinct approach to authentic texts by problematizing them in ways that relate to the students' actual lives.

Second and linked to the previous argument, CR methods often provide students more control in classroom activities (Wallace, 2003; Leal, 1998). In other words, students are encouraged to share their own personal experiences, thoughts, and criticisms, whereas student input in this study is limited to language practice in typical reading classrooms.

Despite the paucity of research on critical language awareness (CLA) and motivation, Leal's study (1998) sheds light on the importance of CLA in enhancing student motivation by bridging the gap between the classroom and the students' own reality. Her study, which took place in Brazil and involved grammar instruction, is comparable to this one in that the pupils are dissatisfied with the classroom methods and lack enthusiasm. CLA processes, on the other hand, which involve asking students to choose the texts to be examined and encouraging them to share their opinions about the texts evaluated, lead to a rise in student motivation. That's all, folks, says one student. That dull stuff... texts like "The cat leaped off the roof"... the text has to be current and relevant to our lives (Leal, 1998: 4) Based on these considerations, CR recommends connecting the learning experience to the students' personal experiences, which has an impact on book selection, student participation, and classroom communication. In other words, CR strives to create a classroom environment that allows for genuine two-way communication, where students can teach the teacher just as much as the teacher can educate the students.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Eight guys and sixteen ladies from the preparatory year participated in this study. The pupils were expected to be extremely enthusiastic in learning English. However, a group interview with the class at the start of the year to find out what the students expected from the reading course found low motivation for reading classroom processes. The students were asked what they hoped to achieve as language learners at the end of the course and how they planned to do it. Surprisingly, the students' comments revealed a lack of enthusiasm for the reading course, as well as a high level of estrangement from high school reading practices, which included extensive exam preparation. Reading practices were adapted from CR to assist lessen the alienation students reported and improve intrinsic drive for the course, based on studies on the relationship between CR and student motivation.

METHOD

Following the teacher/diagnosis researchers of the aforementioned alienation, adjustments based on CR practices were made in the course to address the issue. As a result, action research was adopted as a methodology. Although the primary goal of action research is to improve practice, it also allows for the generalization of small-scale research into larger educational contexts (Cohen et al. 2000).

Although planning is the first stage of action research, it follows a cyclical pattern in which executing on plans is followed by observing and reflecting on the results, which leads to additional planning. As a result, the teacher/researcher made adjustments during the course and used surveys and interviews to sustain the contact, as action research has recursive cycles and requires continual interaction between the teacher and the students throughout the study. It's also worth noting that students were assured throughout the course that their responses to the surveys and interviews would have no bearing on their

overall course marks. It might be argued that the reading course conducted for this topic accounts for just 25% of their grades, in addition to other mandatory courses such as grammar, writing, and listening and speaking. Throughout the course, however, the students were assured that their candid responses were expected in order for the course to be more valuable to both the participants as language learners and the researcher as the course's teacher. Furthermore, to avoid students' possible biased responses to please the teacher, the questionnaire was given after they took their exams.

PROCEDURE

Reading techniques were adopted from motivation-boosting CR techniques. These include incorporating students' own experiences into classroom procedures, providing students more influence over L2 procedures, using authentic texts from a range of genres, and enhancing optimal arousal to assist students in mastering competency, or CR skills. Following the diagnosis of a lack of motivation for the reading course, the students were asked to: 1) bring authentic texts of their own choosing to class; 2) express their opinion as readers of the texts through class discussions after reading the texts; and 3) conduct a five-week global warming research project.

The first stage was to hold a class discussion on what types of texts the students would like to read in the course and the class came to the conclusion that they all had various interests, ranging from short stories to news reports. The students and the teacher/researcher came to an agreement at the end of the conversation, with the students presenting actual texts of their choosing to be collected in a folder from which the class would choose which texts to read in the following lessons. This method aims to reduce external control by providing students more control over the texts they read in class, as well as to establish a link between the students' realities and the classroom procedures. Despite the fact that the goal was to reduce external influence, the teacher/researcher had a hand in selecting the texts based on the course's requirements. External control was still present in this regard, albeit to a lower amount than in the typical course. Students were also encouraged to voice their thoughts on the texts both before and after reading them, both as individuals and as EFL learners. EFL learners, as Wallace (2003) points out, are usually outsiders to authentic texts, lacking the historical and socio-cultural context that influences the text's development and perception. As a result, allowing students to make their own remarks and share their thoughts on the book aimed to assist them make a connection between the text and their own lives. One issue with enhancing optimal arousal and assisting students in mastering competency in such circumstances in typical reading courses is that the students are already excellent language learners with high levels of language proficiency and self-efficacy. As a result, helping individuals improve their reading skills is less likely to boost optimal arousal than helping them learn a new ability.

Optimal arousal is more readily attainable in a CR course. As a result, in order to provide optimal arousal for the students and to encourage them to use reading as a means rather than an end, as suggested by Ushioda (2003), the students were asked to conduct a five-week research project on global warming, with the hope that the research would stimulate curiosity and optimal arousal. The kids choose the topic for their project.

INSTRUMENTS

As previously noted, the students were given a group interview at the start of the academic year, which revealed a lack of enthusiasm for reading class processes. The students were then given a questionnaire adapted from Icmez to understand more about their motivation levels as language learners (2005). Prior to the research, students were asked about their motives for learning English and ELT, as well as their reading course habits. (See Appendix).

The second questionnaire was presented to the students at the end of the course to look at their motivation for reading lessons, any changes in their approach to reading lessons, and the reasons for a possible change.

Finally, students were given a follow-up interview in which they were asked to expound on their responses to Questionnaire 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Motivation for Reading Lessons: At the Beginning of the Course

The students were asked about their previous experiences as readers in L2 educational settings, school, and language courses during the first week of the academic year.

Table 1. High School In-Class Reading Practices

Reading Practices	Frequency
Practicing for university exam by reading short paragraphs with multiple choice questions	24
Reading texts from texts books with true/false, multiple choice, and open ended comprehension questions	24
Translating short texts into Arabic	11
Summarizing short stories	7

They expressed boredom when it came to reading processes. Reading short paragraphs with comprehension questions as preparation for the university exam, translating texts and summing up short stories, all selected by the course teacher, and answering comprehension and vocabulary questions at the end of written passages in their course books were among their reported reading practices. They also stated that authentic works were not included in their high school reading curricula. Students expressed boredom with paragraph questions, saying, "Even if we didn't really grasp what the paragraph was about, we could answer the questions by just removing the numerous choices," as one student put it. "Boring," "easy and "monotonous" were used to describe paragraph questions. These reactions indicate that these practices are lacking in appropriate arousal. As the intrinsic motivation theory says, after mastery of certain reading tasks, motivation fails to self-sustain and falls due to the lack of a direct relationship between these activities and the students' lives and an increased degree of external control (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ushioda 1996). When asked what types of reading practices they favor, students indicated that they prefer texts and activities that allow them to contribute by "expressing themselves" and reading texts that are "interesting."

Students' Motivation for Studying English

These students had already chosen to enroll in an ELT program; therefore they had a high level of self-efficacy and perseverance in their English studies. These pupils, like those in a prior study with Anatolian High School foreign language students (Icmez, 2005), had a high perception of past experiences, which led to a high perception of future expectations. To learn more about the participants, they were asked why they chose to study English and ELT.

Table 2. Reasons for Studying English

Student response	Frequency
Good job prospects	20
Enjoyment of learning a foreign language	20
Communication with people from other countries	20
Travelling	15
To study abroad	12
Perception of self as good at English	10
Following technological developments	8
To be an English teacher	8
Interest in British/American culture	3
Interest in the people and culture of the English speaking countries	2
To live abroad	2
Interest in English literature	1
Other:	3
“To be a respected member of the society”	
“It was easier than other subjects in high school”“I was bad at science subjects”	

Table 3. Reasons for Studying ELT

Student Response	Frequency
I enjoy studying English and I want to have a good job	8
I enjoy studying English	5
I want to have a good job	4
I have always been good at English	2
I am better at English compared to other academic subjects	2
I want to get a good job and English helps me communicateI with anyone in the world	2
am not good at science and I want a good job	1

Tables 2 and 3 reveal that the most essential motivations for learning English and ELT are sentiments of enjoyment and the possibility of finding work in the language. Although, as shown above, motivation theories propose a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, these reactions point to the dynamic character of human beings and the complexity of people's belief and value systems. Even if we assume that these individuals began studying English solely for the sake of an

extrinsic reward, it resulted in persistence, as 17 of them had been studying English for 3 years or longer at the time of this study, which is linked to intrinsic drive. Although a curiosity in the language itself indicates self-sustaining intrinsic drive (Williams and Burden, 1997), this desire does not always express itself in academic tasks, as evidenced by the students' comments in the interview.

Although travel and living abroad is the second most common reason given, the low number of replies showing an interest in the target culture(s) indicates that students regard English as an international language. Similarly, 20 students out of 24 say they learn English to communicate with others, but only two of these twenty students say they have a specific interest in the culture or people of English-speaking nations.

Students' motivation to study English as an international language is especially important because they also cited a lack of emphasis on the communicative element of language in their high school language classes. Another important point to note is that, while students express a strong interest in communication when asked to tick all relevant statements in the first question, only two student's mention the role of English as an international language in communication when asked to write down their reasons for studying ELT. It's reasonable to claim that this reflects the students' goals, which include a desire to learn the language as well as work chances. Students' replies highlighting their academic achievement as language learners demonstrate high self-efficacy, or the perception that their performance outcomes are internal and stable as a result of their excellent ability. Because ability is internal, steady, and unpredictable, it is more likely to achieve persistence in effort, ensuring success (Ushioda, 1996). These comments suggest that these pupils' high efficacy stems from their previous experiences. At the same time, it changes students' expectations for future achievement, corroborating Rotter and Skinner's hypotheses (Stipek, 2002) As a result, as Ushioda proposes, performance outcomes are frequently recursive, as in this study (1996).

While these responses reflect strong self-efficacy, the responses claiming that those pupils were awful at science courses show low self-efficacy in that discipline, as Atkinson's Achievement Theory suggests (Dornyei, 2001). The drive to avoid failure, rather than high self-efficacy as language learners or the accomplishment motive shapes these students' choices to a large amount (Atkinson 1966).

The role of integrative vs. instrumental motivation is a final aspect worth considering. Although the role of this distinction in EFL contexts has been questioned for some time (e.g., Lukmani in Brown 1994, Williams and Burden 1997), it is worth repeating that instrumental motivation can result in task persistence in EFL contexts, such as the context of this study, where being a part of the target culture is not a primary concern in the participants' lives whereas instrumental motivation is.

To summarize, the participants' most prevalent reasons for choosing and sustaining effort in studying English were an interest in the language and a high extrinsic benefit, such as potential career chances.

Students' Motivation for the Reading Lessons

The students were given a questionnaire at the end of the course to learn about any change in their motivation for the reading lessons (see Appendix 2). Responses in this questionnaire generate two main categories, as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Differences in the Ways Students Approach Reading Lessons

Students' response	Frequency
competence	8
participation and persistence	11
Enjoyment	2
Not specified	1
No response	1
Negative	1

Twenty-two students say their attitude toward reading lessons has improved. The majority of the responses are divided into two categories: competence and participation, as well as persistence.

Developing confidence as a reader, reading in detail, reading more attentively, being able to study in L2, and finding it simpler to read in L2 are among the responses that show competence growth. In addition, two pupils reported that they preferred reading classes. As previously stated, intrinsic motivation is measured by a sense of pleasure (Stipek, 2002). One student mentioned that their approach to reading classes had changed for the better, but did not elaborate on why.

Increased participation and persistence are among the responses.

persisting in reading larger texts, increasing extra-tuition reading, being more involved in reading lessons, studying more regularly, discussing the text, and increased engagement as a result of activities. Students were also asked to compare their current reading lessons to previous reading classes.

Table 5. Comparison of Reading Lessons with Previous Reading Lessons

Beneficial and enjoyable in prep year	Frequency of these categories in answers
Competence	8
Communication	12
Competence related to real life	10
Participation	1
Place of real life in classroom	1

When asked to compare previous reading lessons with the current one and state what they thought was beneficial and enjoyable about either of these courses, the students' responses center on communication and developing competence through the connection to their daily lives in their reading course in university preparatory year. Competency, communication, and competence through incorporation of daily life in classroom activities are the three primary types of responses to this topic. While one student mentions improved participation, another emphasizes the importance of real-life experiences in the classroom. This student's response, on the other hand, makes no connection between the role of real life in the classroom and competency.

Improved reading skills are among the answers that indicate increased competence. Learning to conduct research and producing a report on it is one response, while other replies in this category refer to improving reading skills, such as having talks about the book to help them read the text more successfully.

Group work and classroom conversations regarding the texts are included in all of the responses in the next area, communication. Finally, competency through a connection to students' daily life includes reactions to the use of texts from a number of genres on a variety of topics. Two people said the texts were about their life, while one person said the study they did was on a problem he cares about. One student responds that the texts were relevant to her life, but she doesn't say whether she considers this as a means of gaining competence.

Finally, one student mentions being active and participating in class, but she makes no mention of debates or group/pair work. Students were asked if they thought it was good to read a variety of works from various genres. The respondents express confidence in their responses, saying, "(Now) I know that I can read any text." We don't always read essays or biographies of people's lives when we read. We read brochures, commercials, poems, and short stories..." she says, highlighting the impact of these texts on her reading outside of the EFL classroom. "If the content in the lectures is the same type of text, even if the topic is intriguing, it can grow old after a while," another student said. But reading a variety of texts was delightful for me," she says, pointing to the importance of arousal in text selection.

Table 6. Practices that Make a Reading Lesson Good

Beneficial and enjoyable in prep year	Frequency of these categories in answers
Competence	11
Communication	10
Competence related to real life	8
None	1

The students were then asked to recollect an excellent reading lesson and say what they thought was good in that session in order to extract information about what classroom techniques they found stimulating in the course. Communication, competence, and real-life text/activities are the three primary areas in which the answers fall, as with the previous questions. Increased student control in classroom procedures is one solution. Although it may be argued that replies connected to communication are also about improved student control, this response specifically mentions control: "I could choose the material (to be read in the classroom)." Other communication responses include group work, discussion, and sharing their thoughts on the materials. The reactions to competence can be classified into three subcategories: study and interrogating the text through group and class discussion, and the texts.

Questionnaire 2 was followed by an interview in which the students were invited to expound on their responses to Questionnaire 2. The participants noted in the follow-up interview that the talks about the text before reading to learn about their thoughts on the topic helped them learn about other students' opinions, which improved their own comprehension and capacity to articulate them. One youngster said, "It's not only learning from peers." I was also able to show them something by telling them my ideas," she said, referring to the collective knowledge they generated throughout the talks about the readings. The comments that indicate real-life competency allude to a variety of genres and issues, as well as the study they conducted. The students were also asked to elaborate on what they thought of their research in a follow-up interview, and their responses indicate that they found it beneficial to conduct their own research, to suggest changes in their own environment, namely the university campus, and to learn more about global warming, which was their research topic. However, their responses to this question, as well as their responses to other questions referencing research, indicate optimal arousal for the activity itself rather than for the entire course, unlike developing CR skills, which demonstrate optimal arousal for the entire course, affecting all classroom practices and activities. The findings are not surprising, given that the research focused on supplying students with reading material rather than teaching research abilities. Students' replies to the research project topic center on two primary points: learning about global warming and becoming aware of a real-world situation. One student stated he didn't like the activity and didn't find it beneficial, and two students said that while they learned about global warming during the research process, they didn't like the study topic because it made them feel helpless, as if they couldn't do anything about it. Following the return of the questionnaires, one student expressed these issues, prompting the researcher to ask the other students if they had similar reservations.

Despite the fact that three other students expressed similar concerns, they concluded after a brief conversation with their classmates that, even if they couldn't make a significant change on a global scale, the differences in their personal habits and understanding could be regarded significant.

CONCLUSION

The disparity between the pupils' motivation for studying the language and for reading instruction is maybe the most relevant issue raised by this study. Although students are highly motivated for a variety of reasons, including those mentioned above, their motivation and expectations for reading courses are surprisingly low, owing to the inadequacy of school practices in providing optimal arousal for students

with high levels of English proficiency and the alienating effect of the university exam on students in school education. Increased student control, including increased student communication (Ushioda, 1996), asking students to choose course materials and projects (Leal, 1998), creating an environment where students' own realities can find a place in the language classroom (Dornyei, 1997), and so on, are among the CR practices and studies on intrinsic motivation. According to Deci and Ryan (1985) and Ushioda (1996), students reported enhanced competency in reading abilities, increased involvement, communication, and the competence they require outside of the reading classroom. The authentic texts from various genres served to raise arousal levels and foster a sense of competence, and the practice of including students in the text selection process boosted student control in the EFL classroom (Wallace, 1999; Wallace, 2003; Leal 1998). Similarly, requiring students to incorporate their personal experiences into the reading texts increased student control. As a result, the student replies show an increase in classroom participation as well as reading persistence as students, both of which are intrinsic motivation aspects as stated above.

Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that CR practices can provide students with a much-needed sense of control over classroom practices by relating to their own realities through the use of real-life, authentic texts from a variety of genres in contexts similar to those of this study, as well as encouraging students to express their opinions as readers of the text. However, unlike in a CR course, where developing CR skills evokes curiosity and novelty, optimal arousal for reading procedures was still missing in this study, unlike in a CR course, where developing CR skills evokes curiosity and novelty, which is essential for students with high levels of proficiency. Although requiring students to conduct ongoing research on global warming was intended to bring novelty, this project acted more as a continuation of traditional reading habits. As a result, there is still a need to include a novelty aspect in these courses. As a result, more study into how to increase optimum arousal as a key component of reading activities in ELT classrooms is required.

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire 1

Name:

Age:

SECTION A: ABOUT YOU

1. Please tick the appropriate box

Male Female

2. How long have you been studying English? Please tick the appropriate box

1-3 years 4-6 years 7-10 years more

3. How many hours do you spend studying English out of class (i.e. extra-tuition)?

Daily _____ hours

Weekly _____ hours

4. Please tick the appropriate box(es)

I'm learning English because:

- I want to get a good job.
- I enjoy learning a foreign language.
- I want to study abroad.
- I'm interested in British/ American culture.
- I'm interested in English literature.

- I want to travel and see other countries.
- I want to pursue my career in future.
- I want to be able to communicate with people from other countries.
- I like the culture and people of the English speaking countries.
- I want to live abroad.
- I want to use Internet more efficiently.
- I need English to follow the technological developments.
- Other.

Please specify _____

5. Why did you choose to study ELT? Please write below

6. Please tick the appropriate box according to how often you read the following items (in English and/ or in Arabic).

daily	weekly	occasionally	never
books			
magazines			
newspapers			

comics			
poems			
other			

SECTION B: ABOUT THE ENGLISH LESSONS

1. Which of the following areas of English, i.e. speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, do you find enjoyable? Please tick the appropriate box(es)

I enjoy very much	I enjoy	I'm not sure	I don't enjoy very much	I don't enjoy at all
a) speaking				
b) listening				
c) reading				
d) writing				
e) grammar				

2. How many hours do you spend studying in each of the following areas of English weekly (e.g. homework or extra-tuition)?

speaking ____ hours listening ____ hours reading ____ hours
 writing ____ hours grammar ____ hours

3. Which of the following areas of English, i.e. speaking, listening, writing, grammar, do you find beneficial? Please tick the appropriate box(es)

	Very beneficial	beneficial	I'm not sure	Not beneficial at all	Not very beneficial
a) speaking					
b) listening					
c) reading					
d) writing					
e) grammar					

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire 2

Name:

Age:

SECTION A: ABOUT YOU

1. How many hours do you spend studying English out of class (e.g. homework, extra-tuition)?

Daily _____ hours

Weekly _____ hours

SECTION B: ABOUT THE READING LESSONS

1. What do you find the purpose of the reading lessons to be? Do you find them beneficial? If yes, please write how you find them beneficial.

2. What kind of texts did you read in reading lessons?

3. Which ones did you enjoy?

4. Think of a good reading lesson you had in this course. Why was it good?

5. Please compare your reading lessons in this course with the reading lessons you had before. Are your reading lessons in any way different from the previous reading lessons you had? If yes, please explain in what way(s).

6. Is there any difference in the way you approach reading lessons? If yes, please explain in what way(s).

7. If you find your reading lessons to be different from your previous reading lessons, please state if the difference is positive or negative and explains WHY.

8. Please write your opinions on the following components of the reading course. Did you find them beneficial? Did you find them enjoyable?

i. Selection of texts

ii. Discussions about the texts before and after reading the texts

iii. Group work

iv. Research project on global warming

9. Please circle either YES or NO and explain why.

i. I feel more confident as a reader. YES / NO

Because _____

_____ ii. I feel that I have

benefited from this course as a reader. YES / NO

Because _____

10. Please write two things you liked and two things you didn't like about

the course.

• What I liked:

a) _____

b) _____

•What I didn't like:

a) _____

b) _____

Please use this space for any additional comments
