

MIDDLE AND SECONDARY EDUCATION DISSERTATIONS

Personalized Texts and Second Language Reading: A Study in Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if 1) reading personalized texts influenced novice language learners' self-efficacy in reading in the target language, and 2) if feelings of efficaciousness promote communicative competence. The study utilized a quasi-experimental research design with a pretest and posttest (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017) and a correlational analysis.

The participants were 38 diverse, novice, Spanish students from a large, suburban, high school in the southeastern United States. During the study, the researcher collected self-efficacy data via a Google form as participants completed the pre- and post-Spanish reading self-efficacy questionnaire. The National Spanish Exam (NSE) provided the linguistic competency data. The NSE is an annual, online, standardized examination offered by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese.

An analysis of variance showed that no statistically significant difference existed in the reported levels of self-efficacy in reading in the target language between the experimental, personalized-text, group and the control, publisher-provided text, group. However, while the differences were not statistically significant, the participants from the experimental group reported greater growth in pleasure reading than did the control group. In both the control and the experimental groups, 84.2% of the participants reported reading at least one book within the past 30 days. However, this quantity represented only a 10.5 % increase for the control group, but a 26.3% increase for the experimental group. Furthermore, all the experimental group participants had read at least one book within the past 30 days. Moreover, this group's avid readers maintained their previously reported reading quantities, while the percentage of those reading two to three books, rather than zero or one, grew by 67%. The control group's more dedicated readers increased slightly the number of books they reported reading, but the number of nonreaders within the group also increased.

While publisher-provided and personalized texts produced nearly identical growth in self-efficacy in reading in the target language, the personalized texts produced a high degree of engagement among the participants. Future research might explore the sources of this engagement as texts only influence self-efficacy and language acquisition when they are read.

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