

---

11-1-2011

## Does Recreational Reading in Native Language Influence Foreign Language Learning Process?

Selami Aydin

Balikesir University, selami.aydin@yahoo.com.tr

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>



Part of the [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), and the [Social Statistics Commons](#)

---

### Recommended APA Citation

Aydin, S. (2011). Does Recreational Reading in Native Language Influence Foreign Language Learning Process?. *The Qualitative Report*, 16(6), 1554-1573. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2011.1317>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).



## Does Recreational Reading in Native Language Influence Foreign Language Learning Process?

### Abstract

Limited studies have been conducted on the effects on recreational reading in native language on foreign language learning, whereas no findings exist on the effects of recreational reading in Turkish as a native language (L1) on English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. Thus, this study aims to investigate the effects of recreational reading in L1 on the process of learning EFL. The sample group consists of 70 learners and a background questionnaire, interviews, oral presentations, classroom discussions, essay papers, and responses to examination questions were used for data collection. The results indicated that recreational reading in L1 has some significant contributions to EFL learning although it has some negative effects.

### Keywords

Recreational Reading, Turkish as a Native Language, English as a Foreign Language Learning, Qualitative Research

### Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

### Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the junior students of the ELT Department of Education Faculty of Balikesir University for their participation in the study, Tutku Basoz and Dilek Tufekci Can for their proofreading, and the journal reviewers and editors who helped to improve the paper.

## **Does Recreational Reading in Native Language Influence Foreign Language Learning Process?**

Selami Aydin

Balikesir University, Balikesir, Turkey

---

*Limited studies have been conducted on the effects on recreational reading in native language on foreign language learning, whereas no findings exist on the effects of recreational reading in Turkish as a native language (L1) on English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. Thus, this study aims to investigate the effects of recreational reading in L1 on the process of learning EFL. The sample group consists of 70 learners and a background questionnaire, interviews, oral presentations, classroom discussions, essay papers, and responses to examination questions were used for data collection. The results indicated that recreational reading in L1 has some significant contributions to EFL learning although it has some negative effects. Key Words: Recreational Reading, Turkish as a Native Language, English as a Foreign Language Learning, Qualitative Research.*

---

The present study was conducted under the guidance of two reasons. Firstly, as relevant literature indicates below, while recreational reading in English has considerably positive effects on native, second, and foreign language acquisition/learning processes, the influence of recreational reading in one's native language on English as a foreign language (EFL) learning still remains as an untouched research area. Secondly, although English is taught widely as a foreign language in Turkey, there is a lack of data on the effects of recreational reading in Turkish as a native language (L1) on EFL learning. With these concerns in mind, the research focuses the effects of recreational reading in L1 on EFL learning process.

For Holden (2004), reading is a very important gateway to personal development, and to social, economic and civic life. Furthermore, it helps learning about people, history, languages, science, mathematics, and all other content. In terms of language acquisition and learning, reading, one of the main language skills, develops language acquisition and learning. Specifically speaking, as presented in the section of literature review below, recreational reading improves autonomous learning, creativity, intelligence, comprehension, communicative competence, literacy development, motivation, and attitudes towards language learning. However, research results indicate that reading enjoyment has declined significantly in the last years (Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004).

As for the scope of the present study, it was found that the frequency of recreational reading in L1 among Turkish EFL learners is quite low (1.37 books for each month). In accordance with the researcher's observations and EFL learners' experiences, the main reason behind the low frequency of recreational reading in L1 is the exam-centered education system. That is, EFL learners graduating from high school programs focus on tests to achieve the Foreign Language Examination, an official and central

examination for the selection and placement of students in EFL-related programs at universities. As the examination includes multiple-choice reading and grammar items, students' main focus is on gaining experience only about solving the reading questions. Finally, during the language education at high school, they complain that they do not have time for recreational reading in both L1 and EFL. In addition, in the departments of English language teaching in Turkey, reading skills are presented integrately with writing skills in teaching programs. In relation to reading skills, the course includes a wide range of authentic reading materials including newspapers, journals, reviews and academic texts in order to comprehend contrasting viewpoints and to predict and identify main ideas and to decode intersentential clues. It also aims to equip students with intensive and extensive reading habits and with critical thinking skills such as synthesizing information or analyzing a problem. Yet, as it is difficult to achieve the course goals in a three-hour reading and writing class, one of the possible ways to achieve the goals is recreational reading as an extensive reading activity. Thus, as Turkish EFL students have a quite low frequency of recreational reading not only in EFL but also in L1, the study aims at investigating the effects of recreational reading in L1 on EFL learning after a recreational reading process outside the classroom.

In conclusion, given that there exists no certain data about the effects of recreational reading in native language on foreign language learning process, the present study aims at investigation of recreational reading in L1 on EFL learning. As the studies on the issue are too limited to draw conclusions, the findings of the research will contribute to EFL learning and teaching process. In this sense, EFL learners and teachers are the target groups that will form the implications and recommendations obtained from the study. In addition, the results found in the study will be beneficial to research activities on the issue in terms of measurement of effects of reading on L1 on foreign language learning and teaching.

The studies reviewed on recreational reading were categorized under three subsections. The first subsection reviews the research on recreational reading in English as a native language. The second section consists of a review of the studies on recreational reading in English as second language (ESL), while the third one presents a review of the studies on recreational reading in English as foreign language (EFL), as well as the effects on recreational reading in native language on foreign language learning process.

### **Recreational Reading in English as a Native Language**

The studies on recreational reading in English as a native language have mainly focused on the relationships between the reading process and certain factors such as race, socioeconomic factors, reading environment, amount of reading and attitudes. To begin with, Gunter (1994) designed a practicum to motivate first-grade students in a rural community in southeastern United States to read independently for pleasure in the classroom and at home. The data revealed that students read at least one book per week during their free time from the classroom library. In terms of the attitudes towards recreational reading in English as a native language, the goal of the practicum in Corridon's (1994) study was to improve students' attitudes towards reading. For this purpose, the activities encouraged increased reading time in and out of the classroom. A

positive change in attitudes was observed in many participants though some maintained the opinion that reading is a boring activity. Moreover, Ageletti, Hall, and Warmac (1996) described a program intending to motivate elementary students to read for recreational purposes. The data indicated that overload in school curriculum, parental values of recreational reading, modern technology, and available resources correlated with the amount of time students spent for reading for pleasure. Finally, McCarthy, Nicastro, Spiros, and Staley (2001) described a program implemented to improve attitudes toward recreational reading for a population consisting of kindergarten, first, third, and fifth-grade students from one urban and two suburban school districts in a major metropolitan area in northern Illinois. The findings indicated that there was a variety of outside influences on the students' motivation to read for recreational purposes. These outside influences included lack of modeling by parents and teachers, lack of reading ability, past failures in reading, other outside interests such as television, video games, and sports, inappropriateness and scarcity of reading materials at home, and inappropriate instruction in the classroom. The data showed that the students' recreational reading habits improved, their desire for their teacher to read aloud to them on a daily basis increased, and that their reading habits at home were positively influenced.

The research results also indicated that recreational reading in English as a native language has positive effects on autonomy, creativity, and intelligence. For instance, Burnett and Myers (2002) examined the literary practices of four children, and concluded that while literacy presented by these children reflected community literacy practices, they also acted with considerable autonomy and creativity in reading choices. Furthermore, given the problem that with each passing year it becomes increasingly harder to maintain student motivation to read and improve reading comprehension, Buschick, Shipton, Winner, and Wise (2007) aimed at increasing reading motivation in elementary and middle-school students through the use of multiple intelligences. Their results revealed that there was an increase in the number of students reading at home, visiting a library, and feeling comfortable and confident when approaching a new word in reading. Finally, the authors noted that the teacher researchers became more tolerant of the students' needs and behaviors that are attributed to their dominant intelligence.

### **Recreational Reading in English as a Second Language**

Some studies focused on recreational reading in ESL and certain factors such as achievement, time of reading, and age. For instance, in terms of time spent on reading, on the other hand, Pichette's study (2005) examined the relationship between the time spent on reading and reading comprehension in ESL acquisition. The results revealed that low-proficiency learners showed low, non-significant correlations between time spent on reading English and English reading comprehension, while correlations for high-proficiency learners were moderate and significant. To add, the findings suggested that if ESL reading is used to enhance second language (L2) reading development, it may not serve that purpose effectively for beginning and intermediate learners, whose working memory is still taxed by word decoding processes. Similarly, Greenberg, Rodrigo, Berry, Brinck, and Joseph (2006) investigated whether the extensive reading approach that has been utilized with ESL learners can be utilized in a classroom for adults who have difficulty with reading.

Some other issues related to recreational reading in ESL are language development, comprehension, communicative competence, acquisition and literacy development, and attitudes. To begin with, Constantino (1995) described how reading for pleasure for 20 minutes of each class period in a beginning and intermediate-level reading course for adults in ESL resulted in language development in terms of reading, writing, and comprehension, as well as increased confidence. Also, Crandall, Jaramillo, Olsen, and Peyton (2002) described the ways to develop students' English language and literacy skills and to make academic content challenging, interesting, and accessible. They noted that free reading is one of the opportunities for second language development. Moreover, Chang and Krashen (1997) argued that free reading in a second language done outside the school makes an important contribution to literacy development and academic achievement, and that it is responsible for competence in writing style as well as other aspects of literacy. Krashen (1997) also argued that free voluntary reading has a place in the programs whose primary goal is the development of academic second-language competence. Finally, Constantino (1995) supported Krashen's theory on the benefits of free voluntary reading and the impact pleasure reading makes on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) results. The improved TOEFL scores indicated a measurable and viable result of reading for pleasure as well as an intangible attitudinal change on the part of the students.

### **Recreational Reading in English as a Foreign Language**

Some studies examined the relationship between recreational reading in EFL and certain factors such as time of reading, achievement in foreign language learning, motivation, attitudes and creativity. To provide an example, Raemer (1996) underlined that students who read more will eventually surpass their classmates who have not developed reading habits. With regard to motivation, Tercanlioglu (2001) examined the nature of Turkish students' motivation to read. The study findings suggested that students read both for extrinsic and intrinsic reasons. On the other hand, Yang (2001) investigated the effects of reading mystery novels on adult EFL learners studying English for the purposes of pleasure or career development. The results showed that novel readers made substantial proficiency gains, and that there were important motivational benefits as well. As an example of the relationship between attitudes and recreational reading in English as a foreign language, Cho and Krashen (2001) described how a single positive experience in self-selected reading of children's books resulted in a profound change in attitudes toward recreational reading among Korean teachers in EFL learning, and concluded that after the experience, nearly all teachers reported that they were interested in using sustained silent reading in their classes. Finally, with regard to creativity, Wu (2000) used journals and image notebooks to examine EFL university students' cognitive skill development as they completed pleasure-reading activities that preceded creative writing tasks. The results suggested that the students were successfully empowered to create their own short stories by using the writing skills they learned both in and out of class from extensive reading of mystery or detective stories.

Another research area concerns the effects of recreational reading in EFL on vocabulary acquisition, and specifically the amount of vocabulary. For instance, Bray (2002) looked into the design, implementation, and integration of a task journal in EFL to

promote reflection on the reading process and to offer students practice with a practical strategy for vocabulary building, and discussed the role of independent reading. Similarly, Hsueh-Chao and Nation (2000) examined the percentage of text coverage needed for unassisted reading for pleasure.

### **The Effects of Recreational Reading in Turkish as a Native Language on English as a Foreign Language Learning**

A limited number of studies have been conducted on the effects of recreational reading in native language on foreign language learning. Among them, Cevallos (2008), in her case study, described how the subject's journey as a reader evolved from a poor reader who did not like to read in elementary school. The subject credited self-selected reading for her improvement as a student in her native Ecuador, and gave reading much of the credit for her competence in English. As a result, the findings indicated that there exists a transfer across native and foreign language, and that reading in native language creates competence in foreign language.

No study was found on the effects of recreational reading in Turkish as a native language on EFL learning process though some studies focused on Turkish readers. For example, Oncu (1998) descriptively analyzed strategy use in Turkish as native language and EFL reading, while Kurtul (1999) focused on the effects of culture and Turkish as native language reading skills on foreign language literacy. Moreover, as previously mentioned, Tercanlioglu (2001) examined the nature of Turkish students' motivation to read. Finally, Aydin (2003) examined the feasibility of transference between native and foreign language regarding reading strategies.

In conclusion, the studies demonstrated that recreational reading in English as native language is correlated with some factors, and has significant contributions to development of readers in terms of autonomy, creativity and intelligence, whereas recreational reading in ESL has considerably positive effects on language achievement, language development, comprehension, communicative competence, acquisition, literacy development and attitudes. Finally, the results of the studies on recreational reading in EFL show that time of reading, achievement in foreign language learning, motivation, attitudes are some significant factors that affect reading process, and that they improve vocabulary acquisition. However, it should be noted that few studies were found on the effects of recreational reading in native language on EFL learning process. These studies show that reading skills transfer across the two languages, and that recreational reading in native language creates competence in foreign language. Thus, it is not possible to draw conclusion from the studies mentioned about the issue.

Moreover, no study was found on the effects of recreational reading in Turkish as a native language on EFL learning process. Yet, a few studies focused on the use of inferencing as a reading strategy and proficiency in reading and figuring vocabulary meanings from context, strategy use in Turkish as a native language and EFL reading, the effect of culture on foreign language literacy, and feasibility of transference between native and foreign language with regard to reading strategies. To conclude, the present study seems to contribute to the relevant literature on the effects of recreational reading upon L1 on EFL learning process. With these concerns in mind, the study has one

research question: What are the effects of reading in Turkish as a native language on English as a foreign language learning?

The author of the present paper completed his Ph.D. dissertation on the efficiency of computers on testing writing skills. Then, he turned his interest toward interdisciplinary research on the relationship between technology, foreign language testing, and writing skills. Yet, following the curricular arrangements including a class in which reading and writing skills are taught integratively in the first grade of the English language teaching (ELT) department, the topic of the paper seemed significant to the author due to the reasons presented previously. In other words, the outcomes of the research are directly related to his students' EFL learning process. The author also intends to develop a scale that aims to measure the effects of recreational reading on L1 on EFL learning in a quantitative study.

### **Method**

Prior to conducting the research, a research proposal that included an outline in which the significance, purposes, research methodology and tools of the study were demonstrated was presented to the head of English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at Necatibey Education Faculty of Balikesir University. The researcher informed the participants about the research process, their role in the study, the ethical standards, and the significance and contributions of the study, and stated that the participation was voluntary. Then, the students participating in the study were informed before, after and during the research process about the aims and the contributions of the output to their professional development. Furthermore, the importance of reading skills in foreign language learning and teaching processes, and the possible contributions of the present study to the related field in theory and practice were discussed in classroom sessions. In addition, the identities of the participants were protected. They were also informed that the data would be used for academic purposes, and that their identities would be protected. After International Review Board (IRB) approval that was sought through the faculty was granted, the author attempted to locate the participants. As the existing research involved interviews, essay writing, examination results, and oral presentations, a claim for exemptions were presented. Next, the study was conducted after explaining the research ethics and purposes of the research to the students. As a final note, it should be noted that the IRB, also called Independent Ethics Committee (IEC) or Ethical Review Board (ERB), is a board that is designated to approve, monitor, and review behavioral research involving humans with the purpose of protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects participating in research.

The study was conducted qualitatively as the presentations, discussions, interviews, essays, and responses to the examination were used to provide data from the subjects' perspective. That is, in the current study, the students' personal opinions deriving from the instruments were used to elicit data as it did not seem possible to arrive at conclusions holistically and heuristically in a quantitative study in a natural setting. The qualitative research process included three steps. First, the research issue was defined as the negative and positive effects of recreational reading in Turkish on EFL learning process. Secondly, oral presentations, classroom discussions, interviews, essay papers, and responses to examination questions were utilized to collect data. Finally, in order to



validate the findings and to see if the data are valid, the data derived from the mentioned sources were compared using the concept maps.

At the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 2009-2010, the author of the current paper asked his 95 students who take the Advanced Writing and Reading one Class to read one classical novel for each week in their free time, and they read a total of five books during five weeks. They were free about choosing the writers and works. In total, the participants read 350 books by 71 writers, 112 of which were the works of Turkish writers, and 238 of which were works translated into Turkish. All of the students were informed about the research project, and among them, 70 learners stated that they participated voluntarily in the study. It should be noted that the author of this paper was also the lecturer of the mentioned class and the researcher who conducted the present study.

### **Sample Group**

The sample group of the study consisted of 70 freshmen studying in the ELT Department of the Faculty of Education at Balikesir University. Fifty seven of the students were female (81.4%) and thirteen were male (18.6%) whereas the mean age was 19.1 in the age range of 18 to 22. All of the participants were EFL students with an advanced level of English. They all previously studied English during their high school education, graduated from intensive language programs, and attended the ELT department after they passed the Foreign Language Examination. The mean score of reading for recreational purposes was 1.37 books for each month before they participated in the study. The students participating in the study were informed before, after and during the research process about the aims and the contributions of the output to their professional development. Furthermore, the importance of reading skills in foreign language learning and teaching processes, and the possible contributions of the present study to the related field in theory and practice were discussed in classroom sessions. To conclude, the participants stated that they participated voluntarily in the study. As a final note, as underlined above, the researcher was also the instructor of the participants taking the class of Advanced Writing and Reading one Class

### **Tools**

The data collection instruments consisted of a background questionnaire, interviews, oral presentations, classroom discussions, essay papers, and responses to examination questions. The background questionnaire interrogated the students about their gender, age and the number of the books they read in a month. In the interviews, the authors asked the participants about their opinions on the contributions of recreational reading in Turkish to EFL learning. Additionally, the negative effects of recreational reading in Turkish on EFL learning were inquired in the interviews. Furthermore, during oral presentations and classroom discussions, the students talked about their experiences. The students also produced two essay papers separately on the contributions and negative effects mentioned. Finally, the participants responded to two questions that interrogated the mentioned issues in their final examination at the end of the semester.

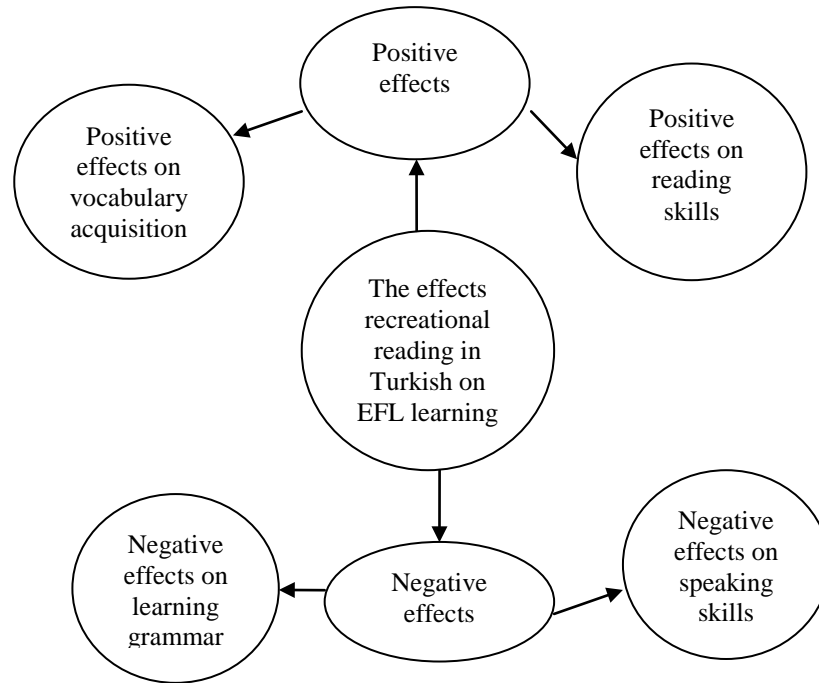
## **Procedure**

The study employed a three-step procedure: recreational reading, data collection and data analysis.

**Step one: Recreational reading in Turkish, note taking and presentations.** At the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 2009-2010, the students were asked to read one classical novel for each week in their free time, and they read a total of five books during five weeks. They were free about choosing the writers and works. In total, the participants read 350 books by 71 writers, 112 of which were the works of Turkish writers, and 238 of which were works translated into Turkish. Appendix A presents the numbers and the most preferred writers.

**Step two: Data collection.** Five instruments were used to ensure the validity of the obtained data: oral presentations, classroom discussions, interviews, essay papers, and responses to the examination questions. First of all, the students were asked to prepare weekly notes about the effects of recreational reading in Turkish after they finished reading each book, to present their opinions before their classmates in a five-minute session, and to discuss their ideas in the classroom. The researcher only took notes during the presentations and discussions without any intervention and interruption. Secondly, after they finished reading five books, the students were asked to prepare two separate essays that focused on the positive and negative effects of reading process on their EFL learning process. Next, the researcher also interviewed the students in small group sessions about the issues. Finally, after two months, the students responded to two questions in their final examination on the effects of recreational reading activities on EFL learning. All the data were collected by the researcher.

**Step three: Data analysis.** After the data collection process, the data obtained from each source were analyzed separately by the researcher, and transferred into five concept maps. A sample of the concept maps is given in the following figure below (see Figure 1). In the concept mapping process, the irrelevant statements were excluded in the limits of the research question that interrogated the effects of recreational reading on L1 on EFL learning. In addition, the data were rechecked before and during the transfer into the tables. That is, the analysis process included a three-step check to ensure whether the data from different sources seemed similar and whether the statements were in the scope of the research question. To end, The data from different sources seemed similar following a comparison of the statements in each concept map. In other words, similar statements indicated that the data ensured validity. Finally, the data from five concept maps were combined and presented in numbers and frequencies in percent in two tables (See Appendix B and C).

Figure 1. *Concept Maps*

## Results

The results of the study are divided into two sub-sections. First, the findings on the contributions of recreational reading in Turkish to EFL learning are presented (See Appendix B). Next, the results concerning the negative effects of recreational reading in Turkish on EFL learning are presented (See Appendix C).

### Contributions of Recreational Reading in Turkish to EFL Learning

The findings indicated that recreational reading in Turkish as a native language has some considerable contributions to the cognitive skills of EFL learners. First of all, the students believe that recreational reading improves their memory and intelligence. In addition, for them, it improves their thinking skills and imagination, as one of the participants states below:

I have never gone to Moscow. I have never been to a war zone. I have never fallen in love. However, I went to a lot of places, heard a lot of things, met a lot of people, and read much about love. Now, I see that the books I read activated my imagination.

Furthermore, recreational reading helps improve their critical and creative thinking skills. Secondly, they believe that it helps them improve their research, analysis and synthesis skills, and acquire knowledge about a variety of topics, as seen below:

I am not interested in history. Yet, I know much about the war between Frenchmen and Russians from Tolstoy's works. I mean I can talk and write in English about the war because I learned much.

Another effect of recreational reading in Turkish as a native language is related to linguistic skills. For the learners, reading in Turkish, first of all, is a good way to understand the differences and similarities between Turkish and English. Next, they state that it offers them ideas about the changes in a language and the development of languages, as one of participants says:

It was interesting for me to see how French language influenced the rich and upper class people in Russia in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Also, I understand that French influenced Turkish novelists in 19<sup>th</sup> century. This led me to think about why and how a language influences another, and to examine this process during reading.

Thirdly, they believe that reading in Turkish also improves productive, communicative and comprehensive skills in English, as seen below:

In order to speak well, I believe that I have to know much about any subject. Novels are good sources for obtaining information about many different subjects. I learned that I can speak and write better as long as I know more.

Finally, as the students read the translated versions of the works in various foreign languages into Turkish, they perceive that recreational reading also improves their translation skills. Specifically, they underline that they can discern the translation mistakes in texts, and have awareness about how to use words in context while they are translating from English to Turkish or vice versa, as underlined below:

In some books, I found some translation mistakes. This led me to understand that translation is very important. A translator should be very skillful in addition to being very good at both languages. Moreover, when I read, I also thought about how to correct the mistakes and how to improve the sentences.

Finally, they believe that it also helps conceiving cultural and linguistic relationships. Namely, recreational reading helps understanding the effects of foreign and native cultures on various languages and makes them understand easily the idioms used by various cultures, as given below:

The translations of the idioms in the book were interesting for me. Thus, I prepared a list of the idioms to compare them in Turkish and English. Maybe, in the future, I can study the idioms used in different languages.

Another significant contribution of recreational reading in Turkish to EFL learning concerns the affective states of the learners. The participants believe that recreational reading positively changes their perceptions towards learning the target language, and causes positive attitudes towards the foreign language they learn. Also, they state that they are motivated by reading in Turkish for EFL learning. Finally, the students believe that reading in Turkish also improves their self-confidence in terms of foreign language learning, as noted by a participant:

The more I read, the more confident I feel myself. This encouraged me reading in English. I mean it has become a habit for me; and it doesn't matter if I read in Turkish or English.

Recreational reading in Turkish also contributes to reading skills in the target language. In terms of reading as a receptive skill, the participants believe that recreational reading improves reading comprehension and skills. For instance, they think that it helps understanding better the main ideas and details in the target language, as seen below:

In my writing classes, I am supposed to prepare an outline before writing. I thought that professional writers also prepare outlines. Thus, I prepared a few outlines for some paragraphs I read, and saw that preparing outline is also a good way to summarize a book.

In addition, they think that it encourages reading and causes positive attitudes towards reading in English and they are also motivated by reading in the target language. Finally, they emphasize that reading in Turkish also enhances reading frequency and speed, and develops reading habit and curiosity.

In terms of productive skills such as speaking and writing, some benefits of recreational reading can be noted. The participants state that it can improve speaking skills and help improving rhetoric in both languages. They also believe that reading in Turkish improves the fluency and accuracy in speaking in the target language, as one of learners stated:

In my opinion, reading good sentences is a way to speak better. When I read, I noted some sentences that I liked best. Then, I often thought ways to express that sentence in English. Thus, during my presentation, I am planning to read the sentences I noted in English.

For the participants, recreational reading in Turkish improves writing skills and rhetoric and contributes to fluent and accurate writing in the target language. The students underline that it also contributes to creative writing and helps them developing a style for writing. Additionally, for them, it causes awareness about using transition words, orthographic and punctuation rules. Finally, they stated that it provides them with a point

of view on any topic, helps developing main ideas and details, and finally, gives ideas about paragraph development in EFL writing process, as noted below:

I always believed that writers produce descriptions in their works in order to write longer and longer. After reading a few novels, I saw that descriptions in the books are necessary. Thus, I decided to use descriptions in my papers more frequently.

Finally, recreational reading in Turkish, for EFL learners, has some contributions to obtaining grammatical knowledge and vocabulary acquisition. Firstly, the participants believe that reading books in Turkish helps them understand and learn the usage of grammatical rules, patterns and structures in context, to compare the native and foreign languages in terms of grammatical elements, and, finally, it makes them focus on the messages and meaning rather than grammatical accuracy, as stated by one participant:

I know English grammar well. In the books, I found how grammar rules are used in meaningful sentences. Also, I had a chance to compare the rules in English and Turkish. I learned that grammar is a very important feature that helps produce good sentences.

Secondly, the EFL learners stated that recreational reading also improves vocabulary in the target language. That is, the students can understand a variety of words in context for both native and foreign languages, and develop awareness about word roots and loan words, as one participant states:

I learned that the word “samovar” is used both in English and Turkish. Then, I learned that the word samovar originates from Persian and is also used in Russian.

### **Negative Effects of Recreational Reading in L1 on EFL Learning**

The findings on EFL students’ opinions about the effects of recreational reading in Turkish indicate that it also have some negative effects on EFL learning. To begin with, the students believe that recreational reading in native language creates a barrier for both oral and written production in target language. The learners also underline that reading in Turkish is a barrier to conceiving the idioms in English. In addition, for them, it prevents thinking in the target language and interferes between native and foreign language, as underlined by a learner:

Reading books causes to change my ideas but, during the English classes at high school, my teachers always used to warn us that we have think in English when we speak and write. Now, I am reading in Turkish for a long time and see that it causes thinking in Turkish. In this sense, I can tell that reading in Turkish prevents me from thinking in English.

As for reading skills, recreational reading in the native language creates a barrier to read in the target language, causes demotivation for reading in English and for using dictionaries during reading English, as one of the participants notes:

Reading in Turkish is enjoyable and easy for me. There are a few words that I don't know. This also makes me relaxed when I read. However, I noticed that I feel nervous when I try to understand a text in English. Especially, I don't like to waste time with my dictionary because this discourages me from reading in English.

For the learners, it also prevents fluent speaking in target language, and results in the production of translated sentences from Turkish to English due to thinking in Turkish while speaking. Finally, some students complain that recreational reading in Turkish leads to forgetting about English grammar and confusing the grammatical rules, patterns and structures as well as forgetting vocabulary in target language, as one highlights:

Turkish and English grammar is rather different from each other. The rules in Turkish do not seem similar to those in English. Thus, I think it is impossible to learn more about English grammar when we read in Turkish. Also, I am afraid that I will forget English grammar as long as I read in Turkish.

### **Conclusions**

Two main results were obtained from the study. The first is that recreational reading in Turkish as a native language has some significant contributions to EFL learning, and secondly, it also has some negative effects. Mainly, recreational reading in Turkish as native language has significant contributions to the improvement of ELF learners' memory, intelligence, critical and creative skills, imagination, and linguistic skills. Moreover, it is a way to improve EFL learners' productive, communicative and comprehensive skills, grammar knowledge and vocabulary acquisition, and to increase their motivation and awareness about the relationship between culture and language, and motivation. Nevertheless, some EFL learners believe that recreational reading in L1 prevents written and oral production in the target language as it causes thinking in English, and demotivation towards reading in English.

### **Discussion**

Below is the discussion of the results found in the present study. First, the results of the present study indicate that recreational reading in Turkish as native language has significant contributions to the improvement of ELF learning process as Schon, Hopkins and Vojir (1981) noted that reading skills are transferred across the two languages, and Cevallos (2008) previously found that recreational reading in native language also creates competence in a foreign language. Secondly, to our knowledge, there are no studies on the issue with regard to Turkish EFL learners; therefore, the results in the present paper

will constitute the first step for a research cycle on the effects of recreational reading in Turkish as a native language on EFL learning process.

Given that recreational reading in L1 has significant effects on EFL learning process, some practical recommendations can be listed. First of all, EFL teachers should encourage and motivate their students to read in their native language outside the classroom, as recreational reading has considerable effects on ELF learning process. For this purpose, as Dupuy, Tse and Cook (1996) suggest, teachers should create a classroom environment in which a variety of books are present, allow their students to choose their books, give time for independent reading in the classroom, and allow discussion sessions about the outputs of recreational reading. Moreover, teachers should create environments in which their students can express themselves in English both orally and in writing since some learners perceive that recreational reading in L1 prevents written and oral production in the target language. As a result, reading in EFL should not be neglected as relevant literature demonstrates that reading in ESL and EFL has considerable positive effects on language achievement, language development, comprehension, communicative competence, acquisition, literacy development, attitudes, and motivation.

The current study seems significant in terms the contributions to further research activities on the issue. First, the current study creates a model for qualitative studies, and helps researchers to examine the factors that may affect the EFL learning in terms of recreational reading in native languages. In other words, the findings in the research can be used for obtaining and investigating the variables for analytic and quantitative studies. Another contribution of the research is that the findings can be transferred to other populations. That is to say, as English is globally taught in almost every community, further research can be conducted using some other languages as native languages. In addition, while the sample group of the study consists of adults EFL learners at advanced level, further studies may focus on various ages of EFL learners at different levels. As a note on the limitations of the study, the subjects of the study were limited to 70 EFL learners in the ELT department at Balikesir University. The scope of the study was confined to the data collected qualitatively using interviews, oral presentations, classroom discussions, essay papers, and responses to examination questions.

## References

- Ageletti, N., Hall, C., & Warmac, E. (1996). *Improving elementary students' attitudes toward recreational reading*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED398553)
- Aydin, S. (2003). *The feasibility of transference between native language and foreign language regarding reading strategies*. (Master's thesis). Marmara University, Turkey. Retrieved from National Thesis Center of Turkish Higher Education Council. (133658)
- Bray, E. (2002). Using task journal with independent readers. *Forum*, 40(6), 6-11.
- Burnett, C., & Myers, J. (2002). "Beyond the frame": Exploring children's literary practices. *Reading: Literacy & Language*, 36(2), 56-62.
- Buschick, M. E., Shipton, T. A., Winner, L. M., & Wise, M. D. (2007). *Increasing reading motivation in elementary and middle school students through the use of multiple intelligences*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED498926)



- Cevallos, T. (2008). My journey as a reader: Home run research. *Knowledge Quest*, 36(3), 64-65.
- Chang, J. S., & Krashen, S. (1997). The effects of free reading on language and academic development: A natural experiment. *Mosaic*, 4(4), 15-15.
- Cho, K., & Krashen, S. (2001). Sustained silent reading experiences among Korean teachers of English as a foreign language: The effect of a single exposure to interesting, comprehensible reading. *Reading Improvement*, 38(4), 170-174.
- Constantino, R. (1995). Learning to read in a second language doesn't have to hurt: The effects of pleasure reading. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 39(1), 68-69.
- Constantino, R. (1995). The effects of pleasure reading. *Mosaic*, 3(1), 15-17.
- Corridon, L. B. (1994). *Improving third-grade students' attitudes to reading through the use of recreational reading activities*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Nova University. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED369043)
- Crandall, J., Jaramillo, A., Olsen, L., & Peyton, J. K. (2002). Using cognitive strategies to develop English language and literacy. *Eric Digest*, 1-7.
- Dupuy, B., Tse, L., & Cook, T. (1996). Bringing books into the classroom: First steps in turning college-level ESL students into readers. *TESOL Journal*, 5(4), 10-15.
- Greenberg, D., Rodrigo, V., Berry, A., Brinck, T., & Joseph, H. (2006). Implementation of an extensive reading program with adult learners. *Adult Basic Education: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Adult Literacy Educational Planning*, 16(2), 81-97.
- Gunter, J. C. (1994). *Motivating first-grade students to read independently for pleasure through a whole language program*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Nova University. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED384857)
- Holden, J. (2004). *Creative reading*. London: Demos.
- Hsueh-Chao, M., & Nation, P. (2000). Unknown vocabulary density and reading comprehension. *Reading in Foreign Language*, 13(1), 403-430.
- Krashen, S. (1997). Does free voluntary reading lead to academic language? *Journal of Intensive English Studies*, 11(1), 1-18.
- Kurtul, H. (1999). *The role and importance of culture and L1 reading skills in foreign language literacy*. (Master's thesis). Canakkale 18 Mart University. Retrieved from National Thesis Center of Turkish Higher Education Council. (87701)
- McCarthy, S., Nicastro, J., Spiros, I., & Staley, K. (2001). *Increasing recreational reading through the use of read-alouds*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED453541)
- Oncu, O. (1998). *A descriptive analysis of strategy use in L1 and L2 reading by Turkish EFL learners*. (Master's thesis). Anadolu University, Turkey. Retrieved from National Thesis Center of Turkish Higher Education Council. (73384)
- Pichette, F. (2005). Time spent reading and reading comprehension in second language learning. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 62(2), 243-262.
- Raemer, A. (1996). Literature review: Extensive reading in the EFL classroom. *English Teachers' Journal*, 49, 29-31.
- Sainsbury, M., & Schagen, I. (2004). Attitudes to reading at ages nine and eleven. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 27, 373-386.
- Schon, I., Hopkins, K. D., & Vojir, C. (1981). The effects of special reading time in Spanish on the reading abilities and attitudes of Hispanic junior high school students. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 14(1), 57-65.

- Tercanlioglu, L. (2001). The nature of Turkish students' motivation for reading and its relation to their reading frequency. *Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 1(2).
- Wu, S. (2000). *Journal writing in university pleasure reading activities*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED463650)
- Yang, A. (2001). Reading and non-academic learners: A mystery solved. *System*, 29(4), 451-466.

## Appendix A

### The Names of the Authors and the Number of Books

Foreign Authors		Number	Turkish Authors		Number
1	L. Tolstoy	37	1	P. Safa	22
2	C. Aitmatov	32	2	O. Atay	18
3	F. M. Dostoyevsky	23	3	R. N. Güntekin	16
4	H. Balzac	12	4	T. Buğra	15
5	I. Turgenyev	10	5	Y. K. Karaosmanoğlu	5
6	C. Dickens	10	6	A. Mithad	5
7	J. London	10	7	S. Ali	4
8	M. Gorki	9	8	H. Z. Uşaklıgil	3
9	J. Steinbeck	8	9	O. Kemal	3
10	J. W. Goethe	8	10	O. Pamuk	3
11	V. Hugo	6	11	H. R. Gürpınar	2
12	A. Pushkin	6	12	N. Kemal	2
13	G. Flaubert	5	13	E. Şafak	2
14	J. Austin	5	14	H. E. Adıvar	2
15	E. Zola	5	15	F. Baykurt	2
16	E. Hemingway	4	16	S. P. Sezai	1
17	P. Coelho	3	17	M. Rauf	1
18	K. Hamsun	3	18	P. Mağden	1
19	S. King	3	19	A. Kulin	1
20	P. Istrati	3	20	R. M. Ekrem	1
21	H. B. Stendhal	3	21	S. İleri	1
22	F. Kafka	3	22	Y. Kemal	1
23	J. Mauro	2	23	B. Uzuner	1
24	G. Orwell	2	Total		112
25	M. Morgan	2			
26	N. V. Gogol	2			
27	Voltaire	1			
28	S. Tamaro	1			
29	P. Suskind	1			
30	M. E. Montaigne	1			
31	H. Hesse	1			

32	A. France	1
33	A. Gide	1
34	L. Davies	1
35	A. Daudet	1
36	S. Mayer	1
37	D. Diderot	1
38	S. Collins	1
39	A. Amirrezvani	1
40	M. Binchy	1
41	C. Brown	1
42	R. L. Stevenson	1
43	A. Camus	1
44	B. Werber	1
45	A. Dumas	1
46	E. Bronte	1
47	A. Christie	1
48	P. S. Buck	1
	Total	238

## Appendix B

### Contribution of Recreational Reading in L1 to EFL Learning

#### Statements

<i>Cognitive Skills</i>	Number	Frequency (%)
Recreational reading in native language improves memory and intelligence.	16	3.72
It improves thinking skills, imaginary, critical and creative thinking.	44	10.23
It develops research, analysis, and synthesis skills.	5	1.16
It helps obtaining knowledge on different topics.	4	0.93
<i>Linguistic Skills</i>		
It increases awareness about the similarities and differences between native and target languages.	12	2.79
It increases awareness about the changes and development of languages.	4	0.93
It improves productive, communicative, and comprehensive skills in target language.	25	5.81
It helps improving translation skills, noticing translation errors and mistakes, and using words in context during translation.	23	5.35

<i>Affective States</i>		
It causes positive perceptions and attitudes towards foreign language learning.	17	3.95
It enhances motivation and self-confidence in language learning.	6	1.40
<i>Speaking Skills</i>		
It helps improving speaking skills and rhetoric in both languages.	18	4.19
It improves fluency and accuracy.	14	3.26
<i>Reading Skills</i>		
It improves reading skills and comprehension.	12	2.79
It causes positive attitudes towards reading in both languages.	11	2.56
It increases reading frequency and speed.	9	2.09
It causes motivation, encourages reading, and creates reading habit and curiosity.	13	3.02
It makes easier to understand the main ideas and details.	4	0.93
<i>Writing Skills</i>		
It improves writing skills and rhetoric.	11	2.56
It contributes to fluent and accurate writing.	5	1.16
It helps developing points of view, main ideas and details about various topics.	14	3.26
It gives ideas about how to create well-developed paragraphs.	6	1.40
It contributes to creative writing and having a writing style.	4	0.93
It causes awareness about signal words, orthographic and punctuation rules.	5	1.16
<i>Grammar</i>		
It helps learning grammatical rules, patterns and structures in context.	38	8.84
It helps comparing and learning similar and different grammatical elements in the two languages.	16	3.72
It helps focusing on the messages and meaning instead of grammatical accuracy.	5	1.16
<i>Vocabulary</i>		
It improves vocabulary in the target language.	46	10.70
It helps understanding a variety of words in context in both languages.	11	2.56
It increases awareness about loan words and word roots.	7	1.63

*Language-culture relationship*

It helps conceiving the relationship between culture and language.	18	4.19
It helps understanding the idiom and culture relationship.	2	0.47
It helps understanding the effects of culture on various languages.	5	1.16
Total	430	100

**Appendix C**

## Negative Effects of Recreational Reading in L1 on EFL Learning

	Number	Frequency (%)
<i>Linguistic Skills</i>		
It reduces oral and written production in target language.	8	8.33
It causes interference between native and foreign languages.	3	3.13
It prevents thinking skills in the target language.	19	19.79
<i>Speaking Skills</i>		
It prevents oral production in the target language.	13	13.54
It prevents speaking fluency.	3	3.13
It causes to produce translated sentences from native language to target language.	2	2.08
<i>Reading Skills</i>		
It prevents reading in the target language.	8	8.33
It causes demotivation about reading in the target language.	9	
It makes difficult to use dictionaries during reading in the target language.	3	3.13
<i>Writing Skills</i>		
It causes thinking during writing in English.	5	5.21
<i>Grammar</i>		
It results in forgetting about English grammar.	4	4.17
It causes confusion about grammatical rules, patterns, and structures.	9	9.38
<i>Vocabulary</i>		
It prevents vocabulary acquisition in the target language.	5	5.21

*Language-culture relationship*


---

It creates a barrier to understanding the idioms in a foreign language.

---

Total	96	100
-------	----	-----

---

**Author Note**

Selami Aydin (Ph.D., 2004, Ataturk University, Erzurum, Turkey) is an assistant professor at the Department of English Language Teaching at Balikesir University. His research has mainly been in language testing, EFL reading and writing, affective states, and technology in EFL learning and teaching. His articles have appeared in some national and international journals. Aydin teaches ELT courses for pre-service English teachers. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed to: Selami Aydin, Balikesir University, Necatibey Education Faculty, ELT Department, 10100 Balikesir Turkey; Phone: 00 90 5336261741; Fax: 00 90 2662495005; E-mail: [selami.aydin@yahoo.com.tr](mailto:selami.aydin@yahoo.com.tr)

The author wishes to thank the junior students of the ELT Department of Education Faculty of Balikesir University for their participation in the study, Tutku Basoz and Dilek Tufekci Can for their proofreading, and the journal reviewers and editors who helped to improve the paper.

Copyright 2011: Selami Aydin and Nova Southeastern University

**Article Citation**

Aydin, S. (2011). Does recreational reading in native language influence foreign language learning process? *The Qualitative Report*, 16(6), 1554-1573. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR16-6/aydin.pdf>

---