English Language & Literature Teaching, Vol. 17, No. 3 Autumn 2011

Korean EFL Students' Reader Responses on an Expository Text and a Narrative Text*

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Lee, Jisun. (2011). Korean EFL students' reader responses on an expository text and a narrative text. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 17*(3). 161-175.

This paper examines Korean EFL high school students' reader responses on an expository text and a narrative text with the same topic. The purpose of the study is to investigate whether they have different reading models depending on the two genres and whether there are any differences depending on the learners' proficiency levels. The analysis focuses on textual, critical, and aesthetic reading models in the reader responses written in English by science-gifted high school students (N=30). The results show that the participants have different reading models in reading an expository text and a narrative text. They tend to read the expository text in a more critical way while reading the narrative text in a more personal and emotional way. Moreover, regardless of the proficiency levels, they wrote longer responses on the narrative text than the expository text. However, the proficiency level of English does not support any significant differences in the types of reading models. The findings provide Korean EFL high school students' characteristics in L2 reading and suggest the pedagogical implication to pursue linguistic development as well as reading for pleasure.

[reader response/twin texts/reading instruction/Korean EFL high school students]

I. INTRODUCTION

English education in Korean high schools spends a great amount of time, energy, and money preparing for KSAT or other exams like TOEFL and TEPS. Due to this trend English reading classes mainly deal with psychologically meaningless texts, far from the students' real life, which makes learning English less interesting and more

* This research was advised by Prof. Do Seon Eur and Prof. Yusun Kang at Korea University.

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passive (Eur, 2001; Lee & Eur, 2009). Also, reading for foreign-language acquisition concerns studying a text and considering any unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar. This heavy focus on linguistic features might reduce the learner's interest (Kim, 2010, p. 78).

Another trend in Korean English education is to train its learners to be 'English functioners,' following the functional-notional approach. The field of second language acquisition has tended to dehumanize learners in favor of input, intake, and language-as-grammar, considering language learning as a change of 'parameter settings' (Hall, 2005). Instead, we need to foster 'English thinkers' in the upcoming future by developing an English education that promotes constructing meaning and critical awareness involving students' own lives. English acquisition should be a part of language socialization, enhancing learners' growth in linguistic area as well as in cognitive, affective, and cultural development (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Kramsch, 2002). In this sense, we may assume that aesthetic reading, which is "essential to the beginning of a process of organic growth … can nourish both aesthetic and social sensibilities and can foster the development of critical and self critical judgment" (Rosenblatt, 1995).

II. BACKGROUND

1. Reader Response Theory

Reader response theory has been interested in the relation between reader and text in terms of the processes of interpretation and understanding (Kim, 2010). In the past five decades, literary theorists and reader researchers have viewed reading as transaction among the text, reader, and the context, rather than extraction of the meaning from the text intended by the author (Barnitz, 1985; Beach, 1993; Carrell, 1988; Goodman, 1967; Grabe, 1991, Irwin, 1986; Sweet & Snow, 2003). More specifically, Rosenblatt (1982) categorized reading into two extremes: efferent reading and aesthetic reading. While reading expository texts to get information, readers tend to be less emotional and pay more attention to getting the gist from the text. While reading literature, on the contrary, readers are inclined to react based on their own emotions, thoughts, and attitudes based on their prior experiences. Readers bring culturally instantiated world views to the reading task that profoundly affects the way they engage and response to a text (Beach, 1990).

Even though some other scholars have criticized reader response theory in that it does not provide a critical reading (Lewis, 2000; Wade, Thompson, & Watkins, 1994),

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there are more who propose that a third stance, a critical one, should be added to Rosenblatt's aesthetic and efferent stances (Cai, 2008; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; Yenika-Agbaw, 1997). Dressman (2001) also supports Rosenblatt saying that she has always encouraged readers to examine the social implications embedded in the pleasure they take from their involvement in a text. Probst (2002) points out that readers come to the text with a unique history and a unique set of circumstances, abilities, and inclinations. Thus, it is natural that they shape an understanding of the text and their own reading of it. The complicated process of shaping begins with the unique individual's aesthetic response, and then may extend into a vast array of fascinating questions about reader, text, author, culture, society, gender, history, and more.

Cai (2008) suggests critical reading can be developed from the connections between aesthetic reading and critical reading. Aesthetic reading is not just personal, pleasurable reading detached from the reader's belief system and contextual concerns of social political issues. These personal responses are charged with social political implications. In sum, aesthetic reading may contain critical elements that can be developed into systemic critical analysis of the text. Also, aesthetic reading may betray the reader's assumptions, expectations, and attitudes that need to be addressed so that the reader can learn to read the text critically. However, more research is needed to see how personal, pleasurable responses may contain potential to develop into critical reading.

Based on reader response theory, Bogdan and Straw (1996) suggested Reading Process Models: the transmission model, the translation model, and the transactional model. The transmission model views the reader as a passive receiver who reads to extract the author's intended meaning. The translation model expects readers to decode the message presented implicitly or explicitly without reference to their own experiences. The transactional model allows readers to interpret a text given their own personal goals and purpose within a particular context. Thus, meaning is constructed by the reader with respect to his/her prior knowledge of the topic, previous reading experiences, and situational objectives in the transactional model.

The authors believe only the transactional model emphasizes the reader's active construction of meaning, so the distinction between the transmission and translation model is much less salient than the difference between either of the two and the transactional model. The models show different engagement patterns among readers and the ways they construct meaning and respond to a text. Remaining consistent with the transactional model should lead to more critical and personal engagement with the text. In contrast, the transmission model leads to fewer transactions, particularly personal and aesthetic reaction, but a greater emphasis on remembering what the text says.

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In order to improve reading and logical skills, many language and literature teachers regularly apply the reading process based on reader response theory (Kim, 2010, p. 75). To do so, as Hancock (2004) claims, teachers should construct response prompts to encourage students' written responses. She proposed four dimensions of structured teacher prompts for reader response: cognitive, experiential, aesthetic, and interpretive. Akrofi, Janisch, Button and Liu (2010) modifies Hancock's model by switching interpretive to evaluative. The possible prompts are as following:

1. What do you think is best about this book? (cognitive)
2. What is the book telling you or what do you think about after reading the book? (cognitive)
3. After reading the book, how do you feel? (aesthetic)
4. Does the book remind you of something in your life? (experiential)
5. Would you want to read this book again? (evaluative)

2. Twin Texts

Bakhtin (1981, 1986) drew attention to the multiple origins of linguistic utterances with everyday dialogues, as well as in literacy genres, or to what he called the dialogic nature of language. Intertextuality is a routine part of human interaction, and speakers may engage in this practice in an unconscious way or may exploit it for various interactional purpose (Shegar & Weninger, 2010).

Among the linguistic utterances having intertextuality, twin texts refer to two books, one fiction and one non-fiction (informational), on the same (or related) topic (Camp, 2000). Teaching units of study that contain fictional and information books on the same topic can "build knowledge, develop text-related vocabulary, and increase motivation to explore the topic under discussion" (Soalt, 2005). This use of both fiction and non-fiction sources to explore a theme is commonly called twin-text teaching. Focusing on a common theme helps students identify and understand the text structures of both fiction and expository text. Twin-text teaching prompts teachers to motivate students on the joys of reading while expanding on the students' interest in factual information (Furtado & Johnson, 2010; Vacca & Vacca, 1999). Camp (2000) and Soalt (2005) equally affirm that there is a heightened interest and increased attention among students when informational texts are read with comparable fictional texts. More explicitly, Soalt (2005) states that this disjunction between informational and fictional texts on the same topic and the gaps between truth and artifice provide rich ground for developing students higher order comprehension abilities. Camp (2000) suggests using twin texts is a viable method for both teaching and learning critical reading and thinking skills while making reading enjoyable.

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Based on these ideas, the present research considers investigating Korean EFL high school students' reader response when they are asked consider twin texts. As Chin (2009) claims, the first step to understanding L2 reading development is to elucidate the target L2 readers' nature. The present research considers the following research questions:

1. Do Korean EFL learners show different reading models in their reader responses on an expository text and a narrative text?
2. Are there any differences depending on their proficiency level?

III. METHOD

1. Participants

In this study, a sample of 60 Korean EFL high school students' reader responses written in English (30 reader responses of an expository text and 30 of a narrative text) was analyzed. The 30 students in 10th and 11th grade are taking an English reading course in the spring semester of 2011 in a science-gifted high school for the gifted in Gyeonggi. They desire to get higher scores on the exams like KSAT, TEPS, and/or TOEFL to enter prominent universities in (sometimes out of) the country. The samples were drawn from the 137 students, who are taking the course, since they hold valid TEPS scores from 440 to 900. They are divided into two groups according to their TEPS scores: 15 in the intermediate (440-552, hereafter Group 1) and 15 in the advanced (700-900, hereafter Group 2). They have been required to read both expository and narrative texts in and out of classroom for their English courses through the whole semester.

TABLE 1

The Mean TEPS Scores of the Two Groups

TEPS scores	Group 1 (N=15)	Group 2 (N=15)
Mean	490.73	739.87
Range	440-552	700-900
Standard deviation	50.873	53.322

2. Materials

The text for the reader response on an expository text was taken from a passage entitled *Robots* from *Advanced Reading Power* by Mikulecky and Jeffries (2007), one

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of a series of reading-skill practice books for precollege students. The passage has 950 words, and its readability by Flesch-Kincaid standards indicates 10.1. For the reader response on a narrative text, a short story entitled *The Curious Robot* was used. It has 1,080 words, and its readability by Flesch-Kincaid standards indicates 7.0. These two different text types on the same topic would allow a reliable comparison of the participants' reader responses since the narrative text has a somewhat easier readability but a larger number of the words in it.

3. Procedure

The participants in the present study were asked to read the given expository text, *Robot*, and write more than one paragraph in English for their reader response as an assignment. It was emphasized to follow the given prompt concerning whether they agreed with the author based on their background knowledge. The students had been given weekly assignments to write reader responses of six expository texts for the three weeks beforehand. A week later, they were asked to read a narrative text, *The Curious Robot*, and to write their reader response in English with the same prompt and procedure.

4. Transcription and Coding

The written reader response was analyzed by the CLAN software for Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES) (MacWhinney, 2000). The data was analyzed using sentence as units because sentence boundaries are considered large enough to see the readers' ideas and feelings rather than using idea units or preposition units. A grammatically incomplete sentence, i.e., adverbial clause followed by subordinated conjunction (e.g., *Because the robot has the purpose of their life*), is regarded as a complete sentence when it starts with capitalization and ends with a period or other proper punctuation marks.

In order to account for characteristics in reader response, text-based inferences, critical evaluations, and personal reactions were examined as suggested by Schraw and Bruning (1996). To explore text-based reading, rhetorical questions, retellings, and elaborative inferences were coded. For critical reading, engagement, descriptiveness, relevance of information, new understanding, text structure/style, and credibility were analyzed. For personal reactions to account for aesthetic reading process, emotions, relation to life, empathy, and personal opinion were coded (see APPENDIX A).

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5. Reliability of the Coding

Four randomly selected reader responses (two on the expository text and the other two on the narrative text) which constituted approximately 25% of the current data, were coded by a master degree candidate majoring in English language education other than the researcher to test the reliability of the designed coding system. Cohen's kappa, a measure of inter-coder agreement that corrects for chance, was 0.88.

IV. RESULTS

Sixty reader responses were gathered: fifteen reader responses on the expository text (hereafter RE) from each Group 1 and 2, and fifteen reader responses on the narrative text (hereafter RN) from each Group 1 and 2. The number of words, the number of sentences, and the sentence length of the participants' reader responses are counted and listed in TABLE 2.

TABLE 2

The Length of Each Reader Responses of the Two Groups

	Group 1		Group 2	
	RE	RN	RE	RN
Number of words				
Mean	128.4	311.7	179.7	309.7
Range	69-189	109-471	94-301	143-451
Standard deviation	42.6	109.1	70.2	94.1
Number of sentences				
Mean	9.4	23.4	10.4	18.73
Range	5-16	8-41	6-21	9-29
Standard deviation	3.6	10.4	3.97	5.47
Sentence length				
Mean	13.2	13.1	16.4	15.8
Range	8.9-17.6	9-17.9	10.5-23.5	11.2-19.8
Standard deviation	2.8	2.6	3.4	2.8

The REs were far shorter than RNs in both Group 1 and 2. The average number of words of REs in Group 1 is 128.4, but that of RNs is 311.7. The average number of words of REs in Group 2 is 179.7, but that of RNs is 309.7 Those of RNs are respectively 41% and 58% higher than those of REs in each group. Similarly, the numbers of sentences of REs in Group 1 is 9.4 and that of RNs is 23.4. Also, the numbers of sentences of REs in Groups 2 is 10.4 and that of RNs is 18.73. The numbers of sentences of RNs in each group are 40% and 56% higher than in the REs

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as well. On the other hand, the sentence length is similar for both types of response. The Group 1's average sentence length in REs and RNs are 13.2 and 13.1, and the Group 2's are 16.4 and 15.8 respectively. This similarity may reveal that the students' individual proficiency level of English is consistent in their reader response on the different genres of texts.

Next, the participants' reading models shown in their reader responses are examined. TABLE 3 summarizes the averages and standard deviations of the types of reading in their REs and RNs. The participants are more involved in text-based and aesthetic reading when they read the narrative text than when they dealt with the expository text. On the contrary, they read more critically when they read the expository text than when reading the narrative text. Especially, when they read the narrative text, the average of aesthetic reading is significantly higher than the other two reading models. This shows that the participants reveal more critical perspectives when they read the expository text but more personal and emotional perspectives when they read the narrative text.

TABLE 3

The Average of Reading Models on Expository Text and Narrative Text

	RE	RN	*t* Value (*df*=29)
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	
Text-based reading	2.33(1.62)	6.27(4.17)	-5.03, p=0.000
Critical reading	4.97(2.22)	2.90(3.13)	2.721, p=0.011
Aesthetic reading	2.20(2.38)	11.67(5.76)	-10.014, p=0.000

p<.0001

This tendency is consistent when the group differences are considered depending on the proficiency level of English (TABLE 4). The group differences only explain their grammatical ability as seen above. In terms of reading models, it hardly shows any significant differences.

TABLE 4

The Average of Reading Models on Expository Text and Narrative Text of Group 1 and 2

		Mean(SD)	
		Group 1	Group 2
RE	Text-based reading	2.33(1.4)	2.33(1.9)
	Critical reading	4.53(2.3)	5.4(2.1)
	Aesthetic reading	2.07(2.6)	2.33(2.2)
RN	Text-based reading	7.07(4.3)	5.47(4.0)
	Critical reading	3.73(4.1)	2.07(1.4)
	Aesthetic reading	12.27(6.7)	11.07(4.8)

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V. DISCUSSION

The Korean EFL high school students show noteworthy differences in their reader responses on the expository text and the narrative text respectively. The length of reader responses for a narrative text increases voluntarily more than that of the expository text regardless of the proficiency level. When the students read an expository text, they tend to read it in more critical ways than when they read a narrative text. The differences may result from the textual features, but it should still be noted that they are science high school students with a wider range of background knowledge and higher interests in the given topic, robots, which might lead them to criticize and judge a bit more enthusiastically. In the reader responses on the narrative text, on the other hand, students display more personal reactions such as emotion and empathy. For example, they wrote that they found the story funny and interesting. These emotional responses are rarely seen in the reader responses on the expository text. Moreover, it is notable that the proficiency level does not support any differences in reading models. Both low-scoring students and higher-scoring students read the expository text critically and the narrative text personally and emotionally. The group differences only reveals that the higher the TEPS scores are, the greater the number of sentences and the number of words per sentences were produced. The present study could suggest that Korean EFL high school students have genre awareness on expository and narrative texts.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the reader response analysis, the present study supports that Korean EFL high school students have different reading models in expository texts and narrative texts with the same topic. Specifically, when they read expository texts, they tend to read more critically. On the other hand, in narrative text reading, their reader responses have more personal reactions, that is, aesthetic reading according to Rosenblatt (1982). These findings suggest a pedagogical implication to high school English instruction in order to move from traditional reading skill training to higher-order thinking skills including critical reading and reading for pleasure.

Despite the positive evidences and findings from a limited group of the participants should be taken with caution. Since this research is conducted with a particular group of participants, the findings cannot be generalized beyond this group. Future research should engage a larger number of participants in different teaching and learning settings.

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Another future direction for this research area may take other reader response modes (e.g., reader response journals in speaking, individual and group responses, different types of teacher's prompt and the following responses, etc.). As far as it is considered important to encourage Korean high school students to enjoy learning English, it would be worth looking for the ways in which teachers can keep the students reading for pleasure as well as improve their English ability.

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APPENDIX A

Coding Scheme

Representative statements in each of the 13 subcategories

Text-based inferences

1. Rhetorical questions: *Did we get what we wanted in the end?*
2. Retellings: *the writer is listing the advantages of robot and strengthen the disadvantages of robots.*
3. Elaborative inferences: *I think the writer really likes robots and have positive view about robots*

Critical evaluations

4. Engagement: *I became quite interested in this article due to the first paragraph.*
5. Descriptiveness: *The vivid, descriptive words made it easy to envision this.*
6. Relevance of information: *The story was full of important information.*
7. New understanding: *we can get some information about the development of robots and recent usages.*
8. Text structure/style*: I thought the style was very different because it incorporated the descriptiveness of fiction, while discussing a nonfictitious subject.*
9. Credibility: *I do not know whether I can trust the author.*

Personal reactions

10. Emotions: *The article made me feel angry and despondent.*
11. Relate to life: *I have seen many movies with this idea or perspective.*
12. Empathy : *Many innocent people and animals became victims.*
13. Personal opinion: *Robots will take away more jobs than creating.*

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APPENDIX B

Sample Student's Reader Response with Analysis

Reader response on the expository text

I think this material is from a book for major who want to be a expert of robotics.

➔ Relevance of information

This material showed us about history of birth of robot.

➔ Retellings

I can get information about how robots were made.

➔ New understanding

Also it told us about how invention of robot affect to companies.

➔ Retellings

Next it showed us about how it changed its shape.

➔ Retellings

First it was just used for factories and next it used for science experience or send to do very hard work like get a sample from rocks or volcanoes after that it shaped like animal and then it is used for play or race.

➔ Retellings

I can get lots of informations of history of robot.

➔ New understanding

It showed us lots of real examples, so I can believe his story.

➔ Credibility

And I think he knows very well about robot, so I think he qualified to write about this topic.

➔ Credibility

I can agree with him easily because he showed us exact information and examples.

➔ Credibility

Reader response on the narrative text

I think these robots are wrong.

➔ Personal opinion

They think humans are lazy and stupid.

➔ Retellings

They think people made them because they were more superior.

➔ Retellings

Though it is wrong.

➔ Personal opinion

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We made robots for doing a hard works that can hurt people so we can live more safely and comfortably.

➔ Personal opinion

Also in contents it said human lives no purpose but it is wrong.

➔ Retellings

Our purpose is live.

➔ Personal opinion

It is purpose of all life and robot is just made for help our lives more comfortable.

➔ Personal opinion

Therefore it is different from robot which it made for positive purpose.

➔ Personal opinion

I think author of this novel think people are needless for earth.

➔ Elaborative inferences

He may think earth with people is worse than earth with full of robot.

➔ Elaborative inferences

However I think it is wrong because of these reasons.

➔ Personal opinion

Also I think people replace themselves to robot will never happen.

➔ Personal opinion

People are not so silly that replace themselves to robots which made for improvement of their lives.

➔ Personal opinion

So I think this novel's assumption is wrong.

➔ Personal opinion

It can't be happen.

➔ Personal opinion

Because of these reasons I think this novel is not good.

➔ Personal opinion

It may reflect little part of world like laziness of people or lead a meaningless life.

➔ Personal opinion

However it generalize a very little part of people into whole of people.

➔ Personal opinion

And it made world very special world that we killed ourselves for reduce people and increase robots.

➔ Personal opinion

This is putting the cart before the horse.

➔ Personal opinion

So I don't agree with this novel.

➔ Personal opinion

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Example in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Secondary

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Received in July 15, 2011
Reviewed in August 20, 2011
Revised version received in September 15, 2011

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