

## **Extensive and intensive reading in the EAP class**

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**Abstract:** Reading classes in EAP programs usually give more emphasis on intensive reading since teachers can give more explicit and guided instructions on reading skills and vocabulary. Extensive reading, on the other hand, often serves as additional activities. Some teachers may consider extensive reading impractical due to the limitation of time and curriculum in language learning at the university level (Macalister, 2007). With long hours of study time and other activities in the English for Academic Purpose (EAP) program, extensive reading assignments could be seen as a burden for the students. However, Wang & Wang (2013) point out that for the last three decades the role of extensive reading becomes more significant in language learning. This study aims to examine the students' attitudes towards the implementation of extensive reading in comparison to the intensive reading in class and how the students benefit from each practice. This study will survey twenty international students by employing questionnaires as well as interviews to gain their responses. The result is expected to shed light on how the extensive reading should be implemented together with intensive reading in the program.

**Keywords:** Extensive reading (ER), intensive reading (IR), attitudes, benefits

### **Introduction**

Mastering reading skills is important for students in their process of learning in higher education. It becomes more challenging when the reading texts are not written in the students' native language. Therefore, the students who enter universities need to have the required reading skills in the target language, in this case English, in order to be successful in their study. Not only do they need to read, but they also need to speak, listen, and write in English. For that purpose they take an intensive EAP program for three semesters before they start their undergraduate program conducted in English. In this program they learn Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening, and Grammar classes for academic purpose for thirteen weeks per semester. They have a 75 minute session for each class five days per week.

Wang & Wang (2013) point out in their study that ER becomes more significant in language learning. In general, scholars also indicate that the combination of IR and ER is beneficial to improve reading proficiency. Thus, the implementation of ER in a Reading course should not be ignored. However, this means that the students will have more reading activities, especially outside class. Some students may support this but some may feel that this is burdensome since they also have a lot of assignments and homework from other classes after class time. Consequently some students are reluctant to do it. For this reason this study tries to find out the students' perception on the implementation of ER as an obligatory assignment aside from their IR in class.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the students' attitudes toward the extensive and intensive reading?
2. How do the students benefit from the extensive and intensive reading?
3. How should the extensive reading be implemented together with the intensive reading?

## **Literature Review**

There are two main approaches used in teaching and learning Reading: IR and ER. Even though the distinction between the two approaches seem to be dichotomous, it is still considered useful (Bamford, 1997). Each approach will be discussed further in terms of their characteristics, strength and weakness.

### **Intensive Reading (IR)**

The most common practice in a Reading classroom is reading and discussing a particular passage in detail. The students are to identify the main idea of the text, find the details about the text, understand the text structure and scrutinize the meaning of the words in context as well as guess the unknown vocabulary, to find the referents, etc. This is line with what Bamford (1997); Nation (2009) and Renandya & Jacobs (2002) define intensive reading as reading carefully. Teachers mostly focus on all the skills and strategies required to understand a text. They will give a close guidance in discussing the text to ensure the students accurately comprehend the text. This approach directly helps learners to develop their reading skills and comprehension. Therefore, EAP programs mostly adopt IR as the main approach in the program so that the learners are ready to deal with all academic texts for university study.

Even though it is important and necessary, intensive reading approach has its own shortcomings. According to Nation (2009) there are at least five reasons that may become the downsides of this approach. First, the texts used in intensive reading are usually not authentic since they are made for specific reading skills. Second, the focus of this type of reading is form

and comprehension. Third, in terms of length the texts are short but often difficult. Fourth, students cannot read fast because they have to pay attention to accurate comprehension. Fifth, since comprehension is important in this type of reading, students will be evaluated as good readers or bad readers.

**Extensive Reading (ER)** If IR positioned at one end, then ER can be put on the other end. If IR is most often considered as careful reading of limited texts, then ER is more of fast reading of a lot of texts (Renandya, 2007). Slightly adapting from Day and Bamford (2002) Nation & Waring (2013) come up with the following principles according to the order of importance. First of all the level of the reading texts is easy. Second, the focus is the quantity that is to read as much as possible. Third, the reading activity is done individually and often silently. Fourth, the readers get the reward from the reading itself. Fifth, it focuses on meaning as well as fluency. Sixth, learners should read fast. Seventh, there must be a wide range of topics available. Eighth, learners are free to choose what to read. Ninth, learners read for pleasure, information and general understanding. Tenth, teachers orient and guide the learners. The last one, teachers become the role model for their students.

Bamford (1997); Waring & MacLean (2015) identify four components which are most often found in ER:

- Fluent comprehension
- High reading speed
- Reading large amounts of text
- Focus on meaning of text

Bamford and Day (1997) state that ER also helps learners to develop "a taste for foreign language reading" because they are exposed to a large number of foreign language texts. In their recent research, Chang and Renandya (2017) found out that the Asian teachers perceive positively the implementation of ER in order to improve their students' language competence as a whole.

Besides its benefit, Nation (2009) also identifies some disadvantages in ER; among them are:

- Learners do not feel that they learn the language; there is no explicit learning.
- Since the reading material is easy, they may think it is not challenging enough and may be boring.
- They do not see the short term result such as reading skills that can be measured by scores.

Furthermore, due to the limitation of time and curriculum, sometimes it is difficult to implement ER at university level (Macalister, 2007).

## Methodology

This study employed quantitative and qualitative methods. The data was collected from the students' reading logs with summaries and the questionnaires as well as the interviews. The reading logs and summaries were used to monitor the students' activity on their extensive reading assignments weekly for ten weeks: thirty minutes/day for five days/week. The resources for the ER were taken from the free Mid Frequency graded readers in <https://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation#free-graded-readers> and various stories and news from <http://www.manythings.org/voa/daily/>. They were free to choose which one to read as long as it is not too difficult for them

After ten weeks the questionnaires were distributed to the students to elicit their perception on the implementation of ER along with IR in the Academic Reading course. The interviews were conducted to probe more information which served as confirmation as well as elaboration of the collected data.

The questionnaire consists of ten questions. The questionnaire used the combination of Likert scale, close and open-ended questions. Before distributing the questionnaire, they were shown to three of the writer's colleagues for face validity. Afterwards the questionnaire was revised according to their input. This study used descriptive statistic to analyze and interpret the data.

The subjects of this research were twenty students from the Academic Reading class of an EAP in the even semester 2018. The students

consisted of nine Chinese, seven Nepalese, three Indians, and one Kenyan. They took the EAP program to prepare their undergraduate study conducted in English.

## Results and Discussion

The results from the questionnaires are put in tables and analyzed accordingly using descriptive statistic. The interview also helped to confirm the accuracy of the subjects' responses.

*Table 1 Do you like doing the extensive reading?*

1	0%
2	5%
3	15%
4	60%
5	20%
Total	100%
1=I don't like it	5=I like it very much

Table1 shows that the majority of the students enjoyed doing ER; the questionnaires and the interview confirmed that ER helped them focus on meaning and the main idea of the reading material. At the same time it helped them establish reading habit. At first they read slowly, but as they read more, they established a faster speed. Only a few subjects did not like ER because they did not enjoy reading activity in general or they only enjoyed reading in their own native language.

*Table 2 Do you like the stories or articles that you read?*

Yes	No	Not sure
85%	0%	15%
		Total 100%

Table 2 indicates that the majority liked the stories and articles since they were fun to read and the news helped updating with what was happening around the world. Only a few did not find all of the reading materials interesting. They just read them because they had to.

*Table 3 Does the extensive reading helps to improve your reading skills?*

1	0%
2	5%
3	35%
4	45%
5	15%
Total	100%

1=not helpful                      5=very helpful

Table 3 shows that ER helped the students improve their reading skills. Some said they learned how to focus on finding the main idea of the text since they had to write a summary afterward. Some acknowledged that they gained more vocabulary knowledge, for example, how familiar vocabularies used in different contexts could have a different meaning. This will give the opportunity for learners to have repeated encounter with the words they have learned in IR (Senoo and Yonemoto, 2014). However, some of them were not sure of the role of ER in improving their reading skills. The interview revealed that in ER there was no explicit learning of specific reading skills aside from the required summary. Hence, they could not specifically tell what reading ability they had learned from ER. Probably this is what Nation (2015) found out that the absence of direct instruction in ER may become the main reason why some teachers are not eager to include ER in their program.

*Table 4 Is thirty minutes of extensive reading for five days per week enough?*

1	5%
2	5%
3	85%
4	0%
5	5%
Total	100%

1=too much                                      5=too little

The question in table 4 actually asked about the time allocation of ER that they already had in this study which was 30 minutes/ reading time. The result indicates that most of them still thought that 30 minutes is the ideal amount of time for ER. Those who did not like reading naturally wanted a shorter time, whereas those who loved reading wanted more time.

*Table 5 How many times per week should you do the extensive reading?*

1-2	5%
3-4	60%
5-6	35%
7	0%
Total	100%

Table 5 shows that more than half of the students prefer doing ER 3-4 times a week and the other one third agreed to do it 5-6 times a week. Only one subject wanted it 1-2 times since she did not really like reading.

*Table 6 How much time should you spend for each extensive reading?*

15 minutes	5%
30 minutes	85%
45 minutes	5%
60 minutes	0%
90 minutes	5%
Total	100%

Table 6 confirms the answer in table 4. In the interview the students said that 30 minutes was still manageable considering they still had assignments, homework, reading and conversation groups and other dorm activities after class.

*Table 7 Is writing a summary after finishing a story/article necessary?*

Table 7 indicates that the students found it necessary to write a summary after ER. The interview revealed that writing a summary gave them a purpose in reading; it required them to understand, remember, and reflect what they read. This practice also helped them improve reading and writing skills.

*Table 8 Must the extensive reading be made mandatory?*

Table 8 shows a dividing opinion; almost half preferred ER to be mandatory and the other half were not sure. The interview, however, revealed that those who were not sure were concerned about managing their time with the assignment and homework and other activities after class. Whereas the other half said it should be made mandatory, or else all students would not do it. Only a few of them gave a definite No; according to them ER was quite burdensome so they did not want to do it.

*Table 9 If it is not mandatory, will you still do it?*

Table 9 indicates a similar result to the previous table. It can be concluded that the students

IR	ER	Both Total
55%	10%	35%
		100%

Table 10 shows only half stated that IR helped them more in improving their reading skills and one third said both were helpful. However, in the interview some of the subjects changed their answer and it could be concluded that most of them agreed that IR played a bigger role in improving their reading skills. The main reason is that IR helped them learn reading skills since the instruction is more explicit and all the exercises after reading texts help them sharpen their reading skills. As for ER they had to do the reading by themselves without explicit guidance. However in ER they can read the texts for enjoyment and general knowledge.

## Conclusion

Based on the result of the study it can be concluded that the students have positive attitudes toward both ER and IR. Even though ER is additional to their IR in class, most of them enjoyed ER. Most of them admitted that ER helped them improve their reading skill, especially understanding the main ideas since they have to summarize their reading. ER also helped them to read faster, focus more on

would only do ER if it is mandatory. This confirmed their response in the interview that additional reading after class was quite

Yes	No	Not Total	sure
40%	20%	40%	
		100%	

burdening for them even though they knew that ER was good for them. Only those few motivated students would be willing to do it because they wanted to.

Yes	No	Not Total	sure
15%	5%	80%	
		100%	

*Table 10 Which one is more effective to improve your reading skills?*

meaning and learn more vocabulary in their actual use. However, they did not want ER to burden them since they were already overwhelmed with all the assignment, homework, as well as other activities after class. As ER is considered to be beneficial for the students to enhance their reading skills as well as to establish a good reading habit, ER should be implemented to complement IR as long as the frequency and amount of time assigned for ER do not burden the students too much so that they can still benefit from it and enjoy it at the same time.

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