

## THE ROLE OF EXTENSIVE READING IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' READING SKILL

Sha Sha Naqia

Universitas Negeri Malang  
Shanaqeeyah@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to share ideas about the role of extensive reading in helping EFL students develop their reading skill and integrating the extensive reading program with task-based learning. Extensive reading is an approach to second language reading which gives students chances to read longer and more pieces of reading texts, which they choose and read at their own speed and ability level. The benefits of using extensive reading is as a supportive material to the students' reading competence such as developing reading habits and they get prepared for further reading. Comprehensible input from extensive reading followed by productive output is effective in facilitating language development. Moreover, extensive reading also helps the students to develop their academic skills by integrating task-based learning in the program.

**Keywords:** *extensive reading, reading skill*

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### INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most powerful tools in language education (Krashen, 2004). Reading can be defined as recognizing the words, their spelling, and its relation to other words in a sentence. It is a process of extracting and constructing meaning through a given material in written form (Auckerman, 2013). Students need to master reading in order to communicate and receive information. The information they need is usually in a written material like books, newspapers, magazines, or even journal articles. To be able to get good understanding of the materials above, the students need to read it well and in effective way. Effective reading means reading accurately and understands as much as needed in order to achieve the purpose.

Reading in foreign language learning context is described to have a central role through learning process of the target language. In Indonesian curriculum, reading also becomes the main focus of the language teaching and learning. Unfortunately, reading in a foreign language is not easy for learners. According to Grabe and Stoller (2011), EFL learners need to be continually exposed to plentiful comprehensive input in the target language in order to develop their reading ability.

To support the practice of exposing learner to the target language's reading material, the teacher need to find an appropriate technique to encourage students' interest and to build their self confidence in reading, as well as expose them with the suitable reading material. One technique that can be applied in the reading class is using extensive reading.

This paper aims to share ideas and information about the role of extensive reading in helping the students of EFL to develop their reading skill. This would be beneficial for English instructor, teacher, and practitioner to promote students' reading skill through extensive reading and give examples about extensive reading material.

### EXTENSIVE READING

According to British Council, extensive reading is an approach to second language reading which gives students chances to read longer pieces of reading, which they choose and which they can read at their own ability level. In line with the previous statement, Bambord and Richard (2004) stated that extensive reading is reading large quantities of specially designed materials

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rapidly for general comprehension with special focus on meaning in the target language. The given materials in extensive reading are to provide the opportunity for the students to fairly understand it without any assistance from an outer source. In a Second Language Learning environment; students should be exposed to large quantities of target language input, which is succeeded through extensive reading the most (Aliponga, 2013).

In extensive reading, the learners take the opportunity to read at their own pace and in their own time limits, so that they can adapt their reading speed and gain the ability to read faster in their further readings (Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007). Dawson (1992) cited in Schmidt (2000) stated that extensive reading as a means of facilitating acquisition and learners select books from variety of genres and language levels and read them for interest and enjoyment, with minimal post-reading. Minimal post-reading here does not mean tasks which are sometimes done by the students. The post-reading activities are required at all times, but the teacher should keep to the minimum. For example, the students are asked to make brief summary and comment on the short story they have read with no grammar correction or academic feedback from the teacher.

According to Brown (2001), Extensive Reading activity has advantages. First, it makes the students read better. Second, it as a key for the students in gaining reading ability, linguistic competence, vocabulary, spelling, and writing. By stimulating reading for enjoyment or reading where all concepts, names, dates, and other details, need not be retained, students gain an appreciation for effective and cognitive window of reading. Extensive reading can sometimes help learners get away from their tendency to overanalyze or look up words they do not know, and read for understanding.

Choosing to read based on personal taste, which is called free voluntary reading, is a way to achieve second language proficiency. Moreover, the book the reader is interested in facilitates readers' concentration on the book and enables them to take advantage of background information that facilitates comprehension (Cho and Krashen, 1994). Krashen (2003) believes in the power of reading for the development of first, second or foreign language competence. He displays some case studies to support his claim of the power of recreational reading for progress. Extensive reading leads learners to acquire the language if they are sufficiently exposed to the language and if they have the materials that are interesting for them. Krashen (2004) brings in the term "narrow reading" for the extensive reading the learners do on the areas of their own interest. Reading can broaden learners' language competence by providing automaticity of recognizing and decoding words and written symbols of a printed message (Grabe, 1991). Moreover, it can increase the learners' exposure to the language. However, the quality of exposure to language is very important to their motivation to acquire new forms from the input. This exposure to language is more likely to reduce the gap between L1 and L2.

Extensive reading is important in consolidation of previously learned knowledge as they support new language forms by repeating adequately (Wodinsky & Nation, 1988). In addition, since background knowledge is activated during reading process, it facilitates the development of prediction skills.

There are some characteristics of extensive reading program proposed by Day and Bamford (1998). First, the amount of material to read and time given to the students must be appropriate. Second, reading speed is directly related to the students' proficiency level. Third, the teacher can give definite target to the students. Next, for the evaluation, there are two kinds of evaluation needed which are individual assessment that would assess the students' progress during the program and pre-determined target in an evaluation. The teacher also needed to monitor the students' progress and give the students opportunity to read outside school environment. It is

important to determine the right level of book based on the students' proficiency level (graded readers). Last, the students should reduce the use of dictionary (to prevent them for easily getting bored and frustrated).

### **Extensive Reading and Second Language Acquisition**

When EFL students read extensively, they become fluent readers. Studies also showed that through extensive reading, EFL students increase their vocabulary and become better writers. In addition, students who read a lot develop positive attitudes towards reading and increased motivation to study English.

There are some factors that can affect L2 learners' language acquisition. The first one is incidental vocabulary acquisition. The second one is helping the students' previous formal study of grammar (help them making inferences about word meaning). The third one is the frequency of learner exposure to new words through reading (Chio, 2009).

In addition, Pulido (2009) stated that greater reading skills and familiarity with a passage topic independently led to more successful lexical inference during reading. Increased L2 reading ability and topic familiarity also independently led to greater receptive but not productive retention of meaning. Pulido's findings support two main pedagogical implications. Reading proficiency plays in learner processing and retention of lexical input may suggest a need for classroom instruction of reading skills. The positive effect of topic familiarity on learner processing of reading materials also helps to direct teacher attention to the selection of suitable readers with topics relevant to students' daily life and culture.

The good impact of extensive reading in L2 students' grammars are it stimulates students' interest in reading materials and increased aural input and oral opportunities for students. These results speak in favor of the incorporation of interactive follow-up activities into reading programs to enhance the effects of reading on L2 form acquisition (Rodrigo, Krashen & Gribbons, 2004).

### **Task-Based Extensive Reading**

There are so many things teacher can do with extensive reading. During extensive reading, the teacher can give the students some activities related to their extensive reading material. Both comprehensible input and productive output are essential for L2 development, and tasks provide full opportunities for both input and output requirements. Learners receive comprehensible input from the reading materials (e.g. graded readers), engage in meaningful tasks such as opinion exchange or decision-making tasks, and produce written reports or give oral presentations to the whole class.

It is argued that extensive reading, which is done silently by individuals, fails to provide a clear and direct purpose for reading (Green, 2005). This problem can be solved when extensive reading is incorporated in a task-based approach proposed by Chen (2018) because the purpose of reading the material is to assist the completion of tasks.

The effect of extensive reading can be optimized if more follow-up activities are offered to engage students in using language to express their personal viewpoint on the reading. It is suggested that extensive reading in a task-based approach is good for learners since it not only facilitates the development of specific reading skills and critical thinking skills but also promotes learning through interaction.

In task-based extensive reading, after the students reading their self-selected reading material, the teacher can give them some activity that can improve the students' language skills. The table below is the Task-Based extensive reading program proposed by Chen (2018).

**Table 1** Task-Based Extensive Reading Activity

Task type	Pre-task	Interactive tasks
<i>Week 4 (Book 1)</i> Making predictions (reasoning-gap task)	Students read the teacher selected book and prepared answers to the questions (e.g. What do you think will happen to the main character during the next ten years?)	Students predicted what would happen to the main character. In groups of four, they shared their ideas and checked if their predictions were logical. The teacher asked some groups to present their predictions to the class.
<i>Week 7 (Book 2)</i> Oral interview (information-gap task)	Students read self-selected books and prepared to answer the questions as if they were the main characters in the stories (e.g. What happened to you? How did you feel?)	Students in groups of four held an oral interview. One student acted as the main character, and the rest of group members acted as interviewers trying to find out what happened in the story. The teacher invited students to tell the class about the stories that sounded interesting.
<i>Week 10 (Book 3)</i> A different ending (opinion-exchange task)	Students read self-selected books and created endings for the stories.	Students in groups of four first summarized the stories and then read the stories with new endings to the group. Students worked with the group to polish and refine their endings.
<i>Week 13 (Book 4)</i> A letter to one character (information-gap task)	Students read self-selected books and prepared to narrate the story.	In pairs, each partner narrated the plot from the point of view of a character. When both partners finished, each one wrote questions or comments to the other partner's character in the form of a letter. Then partners exchanged letters and responded to the questions in letter form.
<i>Week 16 (Book 5)</i> Giving advice to one character (decision-making task)	Students read self-selected books and prepared to give advice to one character in the story.	In pairs, each partner summarized the story and narrated the problem the character faced in the story. Both partners gave advice to the character. Then students chose the best piece of advice through negotiation and discussion.

### Types of Extensive Reading Material

There are some types of extensive reading that are suitable for different level of education. For example, the reading materials that would be suitable for Junior High School students are comic strip and Fable that contains less than 200 words. While for Senior High School students, Fictional short stories and Fairy tale that contains about 500 words would be suitable for them. And the last one, for Undergraduate students, some reading materials that would be proper is Classic short stories, Abridge novel, Modern novel and Classic novel based on their proficiency.

### The Benefit of Extensive Reading

According to Hedgcock & Ferris (2009) there are some benefits of using extensive reading, such as, it helps to develop automaticity and thus students' production gets better, It can improve students' comprehension skill, it contributes to background knowledge, it helps build up linguistic

knowledge, and it promotes students' confidence and motivation and makes the learning process quicker and easier. Day and Bamford (1998) also stated that through extensive reading, the students develop reading habits and they get prepared for further reading, moreover, it helps them develop some academic skills.

Al-Homoud & Schmitt (2009) concluded that extensive reading has some valuable consequences. Firstly, it improves reading comprehension. Reading a text quickly and comprehending it without extra effort requires an important background and the students who read the given material seemed to understand much more easily. It also helps improve reading speed. As the students deal with the material, they develop their skills to read with a better speed. Moreover, it facilitates enriching vocabulary knowledge. As the students see the words in meaningful context, they learn much easier than when they see the single words exempt from any context. Furthermore, the students develop positive attitudes towards second language learning. It is also reported there are certainly some situations in which students did not develop positive attitudes towards reading under some circumstances. But in general, it is agreed upon that reading extensively provides improvement in attitudes towards further reading (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009).

## CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion, through extensive reading program, there are some role played b he program. First, students became aware of collocations which are the natural use of word combinations. Second, students also became conscious of other meanings of the word and different types of sentence construction. Third, extensive reading create new atmosphere of reading in which the students were helped, facilitated, and activated to use beneficial strategies and techniques in comprehending the text. And the last one, extensive reading program helps the students acquire an ability to be flexible and not to overgeneralize every rule because the extensive reading materials give them the opportunity to see many points out of the rule that they previously learned.

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