



## Extensive Reading Accelerates Language Learning

Research Paper—English

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Learning is productive when students knuckle down to comprehend the written material and perform tasks that would ameliorate their learning possibilities, without the superfluous involvement of the teacher. The most undesirable consequence in teaching-learning programme is: firstly too much interference of the instructor which would result in the generation of soporific attitude among learners, secondly discursive teaching without being certain about the specific objective that could be aimed at to achieve through teaching a particular teaching item. When the students are orientated towards reading, they can exploit a large number of opportunities to respond appropriately to what they encounter through reading. This would alleviate the burden of the teacher also. Students have to struggle to understand things themselves to elevate their skills and innate standards. Hence it is advisable to introduce extensive reading programmes in education institutions to witness language learning in sufficient amount.

**REASONS FOR IMPLEMENTING ER PROGRAMME**—The literal meaning of extensive reading is to read widely. It is associated with the aim of getting the overall idea of the reading material and its goal is to create fluency and enjoyment in learning process. To meet these challenges of the text the learner needs to: “acquire critical mass of words both for understanding and producing the language, remember words over time, be able to recall them readily. develop strategies to cope with gaps, coping with unknown words, or unfamiliar uses of known words. have to take responsibility themselves for vocabulary expansion” (Thornbury, 2002, p31) Readers who perform this activity are more concerned with the general meaning of the text than the meaning of

individual words or sentences, because learners who practice extensive reading will relieve themselves of the laborious task of decoding every word and start working with ideas. They will make the most effective use of background information of the topic to fill in non-comprehended parts of the texts. The necessity for the implementation of extensive reading in learning centers is its abundance in the possession of advantages to learners where the motive or objective of teaching a language is to upgrade their knowledge. Looking at the intensity of syllabus and monotonous examination pattern, one would be moderate in contradicting the statement that stipulates any demand for implementing extensive reading process in education institutions as a burdensome and superfluous activity. But there are several reasons to believe that learners can develop their knowledge of language through extensive reading. It enhances the knowledge of vocabulary. Teaching vocabulary through direct instruction is tedious and traditional and often eats into the enthusiasm of students. It cannot grant same feeling of learning as knowing by themselves.

Students should be given story books which are in a very simple language and later they should be encouraged to narrate those stories in their own language. They struggle to recall the vocabulary and some sentences they have read in the stories and do the task though in impaired language. Krashen (1982)<sup>4</sup> argues that extensive reading will lead to language acquisition in certain conditions like exposure to language, interesting material and a relaxed and tension-free learning environment. Continuity of this kind of recipe in teaching to learn programme would be very useful to students. Without knowing why they are using a particular structure, students begin to use correct structures,

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and this will eventually help them obtain fluency. The language benefits of extensive reading cannot be in any way denied for several reasons such as:

- Learners feel relieved of inflexible classroom atmosphere and enjoy liberty to read at their own level of proficiency
- It allows learners to read the text of their own choice and interest.
- It provides an opportunity for learning outside the classroom without being dependent on teacher.
- It can provide comprehensible input.
- It will help with speaking and control over syntax. (Elley; 1991)<sup>2</sup>

The benefits of extensive reading according to Day&Bamford are :

- Students read as much as possible.
- A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available so as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways.
- Students read what they want to read.
- The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding.
- Reading speed is usually faster.
- Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of reading vocabulary and grammar.
- The teacher is a role model of a reader for students.
- Reading is individual and silent. Day and Bamford (1998, pp. 6-8)<sup>3</sup>

**Writing Proficiency through Extensive Reading**—Extensive reading improves writing skill. According to the review of Stotsky (1983) and Krashen (1984) it was proved that students who had good exposure to reading had shown excellence in their writing skill. It is input-based, and acquisition-oriented. Hence, it is an effective means of fostering improvement in students' writing. The acquisition of language gains momentum gradually through extensive reading. Initially the learners are frightened by the vocabulary, grammar and implied meaning of sentences in the text and this is identified through their adherence to light and easy reading, which, through consistent reading vanishes whereby the learners begin to concentrate on the meaning of the text than on the individual components of language. Incontestable it is that students feel certain amount of anxiety when they are asked to read the text themselves, because they have doubts manifold mainly regarding the pronunciation,

vocabulary. Their diffidence in themselves make them tardy and not allow them to show any alacrity to reading any material. Elley, having experimented with children between six and twelve years of age, concluded that children who were provided with large quantities of reading material showed rapid language development compared with learners in regular language programme. There was a 'spread of effect from reading competence to other language skills—writing, speaking and control over syntax.' (1999:404). The potential rate of learners is varied. It may be at different stages between the lowest and the highest. Whatever be its rate, it is important to learners to acquire new forms from the input they receive through language exposure.

Reading introduces students to vocabulary, and the writer through presenting different thoughts not only proves how beautifully language can be expressed but also imparts insight to analyze, predict and conclude situations. Whether or not students possess the ability to write can be evaluated when they are given writing task like letter-writing, story-writing, precis-writing or any essay-writing. Students who read extensively show better performance in written work than other students do. Stotsky (1984) reviewed a number of L<sub>2</sub> studies that appear to show the positive effect of reading on subjects writing skills, indicating that students who are prolific readers in their pre-college years become better writers when they enter college. This means extensive reading fosters improvement in students writing.

**The Benefits of Extensive Reading Motivation**—The most important thing in extensive reading is to provide selected reading material to students that would satisfy their needs, tastes and interests. This would of course energize and motivate them to read books. This attempt of inculcating interest in students to reading requires a library of various books in educational institutions which is in any way expensive but nonetheless very useful in advancing reading habits. Bell & Campbell (1996, 1997) presented various ways of motivating the learners to read through extensive reading by regular use of libraries

**Building Confidence**—For academic purpose students need training in study skills for reading longer texts. In the classrooms there is main focus on the exploitation of textbooks. For presenting lexical or grammatical points or for providing students with practice in various skills Kembo (1993) stipulates that extensive reading develops confidence and ability in facing the longer texts.

**The Role of vocabulary in Extensive Reading**—Familiarity with vocabulary is an indispensable factor in comprehending the text. Hence, the vocabulary load of the text makes reading exercise an onerous activity and quite often learners are locked into the cell of apprehension when they are frequently interrupted by unfamiliar words and therefore develop antipathy to reading, Laufer's (1989) research suggests that learners need to be familiar with at least 95% of running words in a text if they want to comprehend and thus perhaps learn from the text. In spite of the text difficulty there is no reason to doubt the finding that learners incidentally gain some amount of vocabulary from each reading. This acquisition of vocabulary knowledge will be, in one way guessing the meaning of a word from the context and another way encountering the same word that is previously met. It leads to vocabulary growth and will alleviate any complexity in moderate understanding of the text. Vocabulary learning through extensive reading is very vague. Frequent meetings with the same word possibly improve retention, and the reader is able to store it in his/her memory for a long period. Hence, providing repeated opportunities to learners to meet the same words should be the main-stay of extensive reading programme. 10-30 meetings of a word will establish awareness of spelling and sound of a word. A word has different functions to perform in a sentence; such as revealing the time, degree, affirmative or negative sense, implied or literal meaning, its formal and informal use, the semantic and grammatical relationships between words and maximum number of meetings provide ground to know the gamut of the word. Now let's look at the situations where present perfect tense is used:

**Finished event that has connection with the present**—He has brought text book. (the book is with him now)

**To announce news**—The prime minister has met the president of America at the New York Air Port

**Used with time words**—Ever, never, before, yet, lately, recently, already,

**Used with repeated actions up to now**—I have met him ten times since this morning.

**Used with actions that have continued up to now**—Ten years I have lived with this face.

Present perfect tense is used for several purposes. It is used in active voice, passive voice, direct speech, indirect speech, affirmative, negative sentences. Learners need time to go through or learn all these methodically. They should meet these patterns thousands of times. Guides or study notes are not concerned with deepening the knowledge of students. So besides teaching the language features, it is necessary to encourage them and expose them and involve them in reading and enjoying books of their liking which would result in unconscious learning. It is several years after learners have been introduced to language that they finally feel confident to use them correctly.

Nation (2001) Waring and Takaki (2003) suggest that our brains do not learn things all in one go, and we are destined to forget things we learn and we tend to pick up complex things like language in small incremental pieces rather than as whole chunks of language. Besides intricacies such as complexity of vocabulary, grammar and length of text, the amount of interest determines the readers' alacrity to read.

**Graded Reading Component in Extensive Reading**—Language learning serves two purposes. Firstly, it is learnt to use it, secondly, to study about it. In a broad sense a language means to use it skillfully in communicative events which further involve fluent listening and speaking of it without being caught ignominious to recognize language features. Study about language delineates its essential components like sound system, vocabulary, grammar and contemplates on how these components work together in shaping the

language. Language pedagogues are keen about these components and provide sufficient exercises in classroom to ensure confidence in learners which are later tested, will be carefully evaluated and finally judged whether or not they will promise learners authority over the target language but how deep these language items are discussed and what is the level of frequency where these items are elucidated are wise questions would make one thoughtful. For many students who are not advanced, language barrier slackens the speed of reading. They think of the activity too painful and a marathon. That is why the texts should be simplified, their complexity should be reduced and simple vocabulary should be used. The reading material should be within the linguistic ability of students.

**Steps Taken to Make Extensive Reading Effective Interaction between Teacher and Students**—There should be regular conferences between teachers and readers to discuss what they have read that week. The teacher's giving a leeway to students will produce striking effect of learning on their part and it will make them express their feelings arguing against contradictions

**Discouraging the use of dictionary**—Frequent consultation with dictionary prevents the learners from enjoying the essence of message of the text. It puts too much stress on the minds of students and hinders them from learning language.

**Freedom from Evaluation**—Students should be allowed to do extensive reading at home without any obligation imposed by teacher. Extensive

programmes should be without the pressures of testing or marks.

**Solutions to Implement ER Programme**—When the management is not in a position to invest money to provide a library with a number of books, the teachers should collectively donate some money to the library. During the time of parents meeting, if the problem is discussed, some parents may respond. Teachers should take every care that the reading material supplied to students should contain familiar vocabulary. Students enjoy reading as they easily understand the text. Providing interesting material to students is most important in extensive reading programme. A feeling that they are compelled to read destroys the interest of students. They move their eyes along the lines without actually trying to know what exactly is conveyed in the text. According to Ray Williams (1986) 'In the absence of interesting text, very little is possible.' Pre-reading discussion, pair, group activities show optimistic results in extensive reading programme

**CONCLUSION**—Extensive reading programmes will provide very effective platforms for promoting reading improvement. It cannot be denied that sufficient amount of time should be invested to operate this activity but its implementation will enhance the abilities in students and this will aid them to derive joy from reading in the later part of their life. Hence, the educational institutions should pay attention on this activity and provide opportunities to students for their participation. It would be ideal if Extensive Reading is included in the curriculum.

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