Extensive Reading: What, Why, and How?[*)]

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Abstract: The best way to improve our knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it (Nuttal, 1982). Current literature points to the importance and benefits of extensive reading. Extensive reading provides contextualized clues for better reading comprehension (Krashen, 1982), and substantial linguistic input (Bell, 1998) needed for language development. Several studies have found a correlation between extensive reading and specific linguistic skills including breadth of reading choices, improved writing skills, ease in oral communication, and improvement in other aspects of language. This paper briefly tries to describe the nature of extensive reading, the reasons why extensive reading is important, and how is the best practice of extensive reading in EFL classroom.

Introduction

Whatever our views on the position of English in today's world, it is impossible to ignore its importance as means of communication. English makes the world go round. It is a general belief that students need to receive extensive input to develop their language proficiency. The language input EFL students receive is mostly from the classroom.

Extensive reading practice has grown in popularity in recent years following decades of research detailing their powerful effects on language acquisition, particularly in an EFL environment. Thus, the present work will shed light on one of the most exiting linguistic skills, namely extensive reading which is judged to be the most difficult skill to teach, for it involves so many different operations such as : mechanical eye movement, vocabulary, grammar and intellectual comprehension. We find it then necessary to identify extensive reading definitions and the major parameters for material selection as far as this fruitful skill is concerned. The way in

which an extensive reading lesson is prepared and taught will also be emphasized in this paper. Then, a major attention will be attributed to the close relationship between extensive reading and vocabulary knowledge. Thus vocabulary definition and the way each of vocabulary knowledge, automaticity as well as reading fluency are easily developed through the power of reading extensively is also included within this paper. Focus will also be put on the importance of promoting extensive reading (both inside and outside the EFL reading classroom) as a crucial tool for vocabulary building and instruction for university learners especially first-year students.

What is extensive reading?

To acquire a language, four skills are needed: listening, speaking, reading and writing, ordered in the way they are acquired and taught. Reading is one of the most important skills in language and, further, a key to research as it is widely recognized today. Before discussing more on extensive reading, the paper firstly is going to explore what reading is.

Defining reading is not an easy task since it involves the interaction of various components and aspects used in different ways, by different readers. Reading is part of our daily life. We read for information and survival as we read for study and pleasure, and to read is to grasp language patterns from their written presentation, i.e. recognizing and understanding written language in the form of graphic signs and its transformation in meaningful speech.

Reading as a skill is a complex process involving the interaction of various cognitive, metacognitive, linguistic and sociolinguistic elements. Accordingly, several researchers recognize the complex nature of reading. In this respect Dubin states that : "Reading is a multifaceted, complex skill made up of a number of psychological, physical and social elements. Just as there are many aspects to effective mature reading" (Dubin, 1982 : 125). Therefore, reading is not an individual act dissociated from other facts, but it involves the interaction of the reader's general information, linguistic competence, visual and mental means, as well as socio-cultural references. Goodman claims that : "Reading is a long distance discussion between a

reader and an author… there is an essential interaction between language and thought in reading… the writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought".[2] Widdowson shares the same opinion with Goodman and defines the Reading act as : "…not a reaction to a text, but an interaction between writer and reader mediated through the text."[3]

Clearly, reading is the most important activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity, but as a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language and its related aspects such as culture, civilization, and history. Furthermore, it is widely agreed that reading is a skill which must be learnt because of its importance as a communicative and as a learning tool. For this purpose, learners generally go through two main types in their reading: intensive reading and extensive reading.

Before discussing what extensive reading is, it will precede to discuss the nature of intensive reading. There is a difference between 'learning to read' and 'reading to learn'. Both of these are valid forms of reading but they have different aims. When students 'read to learn' (Intensive Reading) they are reading a text to learn something about the language itself – maybe a new word, some grammar and so on. We could call it 'study reading'. This is the typical reading many students do in their textbooks. The passages are short and often have a lot of language the students don't know. There are typically pre- and post-reading activities and comprehension questions as well. The aim of this reading is to help teach the language or a reading skill such as guessing the topic of an article from its title, or to give examples of say, the past tense which the students will then study intensively.[4]

Intensive reading refers to the kind of work done in the reading class under the teacher's supervision. It is also the kind of careful work a pupil may do when studying for an exam. Intensive reading tends to be more concentrated, less relaxed,

[2] K. Goodman. *'The reading process'. In Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*. Carrell, Devine and Eskey (eds). (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 12

[3] H. G. Widdowson. *Exploration in Applied Linguistics*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) 174

[4] Extensive Reading Foundation. *Guide to Extensive Reading*. Retrieved: http://www.erfoundation.org/. (Extensive Reading Foundation. 2011), 2

and often dedicated not so much to pleasure as to the achievement of a study goal. It is also related to further progress in language learning, and designed to enable learners to develop specific receptive skills and strategies. Thus, "the intensive reading lesson is intended primarily to train students in reading strategies."[5]

Intensive reading involves reading a text in details under the teacher's guidance, to arrive at a profound understanding, i.e. to take a text, study it line by line, referring at every moment to our dictionary and our grammar, comparing, analyzing, translating, and retaining every expression that it contains. Consequently, teachers need to find some accommodation between their desire to have pupils develop particular reading skills (such as the ability to understand the general message without understanding every detail) and their natural urge to understand the meaning of every single word.

Thus, teachers must encourage pupils to read for general comprehension without understanding every word on a first or a second read through. But, then, depending on what else is going to be done, they can give them a chance to ask questions about individual words. That is way, both parts in the teaching/learning transaction have their needs met. In addition, lessons should be planned so that intensive reading is alternated with a variety of reading related activities and skills such as developing strategies of expectations and guessing meaning from context, etc.

On the other hand, the major objective of intensive reading is developing the ability to decode messages by drawing on syntactic and lexical clues, and the emphasis, as in all reading, is on skills for recognition rather than for production of language features. However, to improve the love for reading acquired in intensive reading, pupils need to read extensively.

Extensive reading, on the other hand, means reading some materials for pleasure outside the classroom. When students 'learn to read' (Extensive Reading), they are practicing the skill of reading by reading for information – reading a story book for example with the aim of enjoying the reading without consciously knowing

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[5] C. Nuttall. *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982), 23

they are learning. The aim is to build reading fluency - not necessarily to learn new things (although they may learn some), and to deepen their knowledge of already met language items and to get a better sense of how these fit together communicatively. This allows them to process language faster and improves comprehension and enjoyment. Students can also 'learn to read' by building their set of reading skills and strategies and by doing speed reading activities designed to improve comprehension speed and overall fluency.[6]

There are also some researchers like Krashen, Hill and Holden who give different term to extensive reading as "free voluntary reading". These researchers claim that students who read for pleasure are better readers and have more advanced vocabulary since "free voluntary reading" is comprehensible input in a low anxiety situation, and students never feel pressured while reading outside the classroom.[7]

It has also been stated by Krashen as indicated by Hill and Holden that "free voluntary reading" is the major source of reading ability, vocabulary, and grammar competence. To follow, he also emphasizes that "free voluntary reading" may be a powerful way of improving second language acquisition. Krashen also draws attention to the importance of "free voluntary reading" stating that there would be some programs both in and out of the school such as In-school free voluntary reading, which students are encouraged to read whatever they want, but no book report, or teacher follow up, and Out-of-school reading programs, which students read for pleasure in "print-rich environments" and they report what they have read to the teacher.[8] Krashen concluded that when students participated in these programs for a certain time, they make better progress in reading comprehension and vocabulary development than students who take only "traditional" instruction which means only following their course books and no more. These researchers draw attention to the extensive reading and explain that the aim of extensive reading is to give learners the opportunity to practice skills by reading long texts and developing the ability to read

[6] Extensive Reading Foundation. *Guide to Extensive Reading*, 2
[7] D. Hill and S. Holden. (Eds). *Language Teaching*. (1988 Milan Conference Organized: The British Council, 1995)
[8] Ibid. 91

quickly in a foreign language. The main goal is to read materials fluently for pleasure or information outside the classroom.

Hedge emphasizes the importance of extensive reading, stating that this kind of individual and self-directed process makes students independent in learning, which is an important factor in success. According to her, if students are prepared for reading and given the opportunity to interact with a text, they may learn to read for general meaning without frequent stops to look words up in a dictionary.[9] Hedge also states that by reading at their own pace, they can develop the ability to deduce the meanings of unknown words and phrases from clues in the context.[10] It may be concluded that students who spend some time reading for pleasure outside the classroom may increase both their comprehending the context and improving their vocabulary, and students can only learn by being actively involved in language.

Most Extensive Reading courses have students choose their own book at or about their own fluent reading level. This means all students are reading something different, and in their own 'comfort zone'. We might call this individualized reading, or self-selected reading and this is sometimes called Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) or Drop Everything and Read (DEAR). Students select their books from the library (often with guidance from the teacher to ensure they are reading at the right level and at an appropriate speed) and either read it in a silent reading time in class, or take it home to read.

Some courses have students read the same book either together in class or as homework, often chapter by chapter over several lessons. In this type of Extensive Reading, typically the teacher prepares the students for the reading with pre-reading activities such as predicting the content or maybe teaching a few key words. The reading is often followed by comprehension questions, discussion and maybe some language work or other activities.

The reading can be considered 'extensive' only when the students are reading quickly, with high levels of comprehension and without needing a dictionary. If the

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[9] T. Hedge. *Using Readers in Language Teaching*. (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1985), 77
[10] Ibid. 77

reading is too slow it probably means the students need to use their dictionaries often, and so this type of reading isn't considered 'extensive'.[11]

Extensive reading is therefore, the best possible way for learners to develop automaticity that is the automatic recognition of words when they see them. It is, by far, the best way to improve their English when reading. Grade discusses some of the benefits of extensive reading and notes that "Longer concentrated periods of silent reading build vocabulary and structural awareness, develop automaticity, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence and motivation".

These two forms of reading are complementary. Intensive Reading introduces new language items to the students, while Extensive Reading helps the students practice and get a deeper knowledge of them. The former can be compared with doing driving lessons at a school, the latter with actually driving on the road. Both are necessary. Extensive Reading is usually done with graded readers.

Table 1.1. might illustrates the distinction or characteristic of each approach.[12]

Intensive Reading		Extensive Reading
Analysis of the Language	**Linguistic focus**	Fluency, skill forming
Usually difficult	**Difficulty**	Very easy
Little	**Amount**	A book a week
Teacher selects	**Selection**	Learner selects
All learners study the same material	**What material**	All learners read different things (something interesting to them)
In class	**Where**	Mostly at home
Checked by specific Questions	**Comprehension**	Checked by reports / summaries

Why is extensive reading so important?

Extensive reading is a topic that has been widely discussed over last decades and its benefits have been generally approved by many researches. Bamford and

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[11] Extensive Reading Foundation. *Guide to Extensive Reading,* 3
[12] R. Waring. Getting an Extensive Reading Program Going. *Language Magazine.* December 2003. Retrieved: 7 May 2007 from <www1.harenet.ne.jp/ ~waring/ papers/ papers.html>

Richard state that students who read more will not only become better and more confident readers, but they will also improve their reading, writing, listening and speaking abilities and their vocabularies will get richer.[13] They praise the motivation aspect of Extensive reading, seeing its primal benefit in developing positive attitudes toward the foreign language and increased motivation to study this language.[14]

There are many reasons why Extensive Reading is good for language development. Extensive Reading:

1. allows students to meet the language in its natural context and see how it works in extended discourse beyond the language met in textbooks

2. builds vocabulary. When students read a lot, they meet thousands of words and lexical (word) patterns time and time again which helps them master them and predict what vocabulary and grammar may come next.

3. helps students to build reading speed and reading fluency which allows them to process the language more automatically leaving space in memory for other things.

4. builds confidence, motivation, enjoyment and a love of reading which makes students more effective language users. It also helps lower any anxieties about language learning the students may have.

5. allows students to read or listen to a lot of English at or about their own ability level so they can develop good reading and listening habits

6. helps students get a sense of how grammatical patterns work in context. Textbooks and other study materials introduce language patterns but typically they don't appear often enough in a variety of contexts to facilitate a deep understanding of how the patterns work.[15]

Vocabulary acquisition from extensive reading

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[13] J. Bamford and Richard R. Day. *Extensive Reading: Activities for Teaching Language*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2004)
[14] Ibid.
[15] Extensive Reading Foundation. *Guide to Extensive Reading*, 1

Based on its definition, extensive reading exposes learners to "large quantities of material within their linguistic competence"[16], which is, at the same time, pleasurable. There are several reasons why it is so attractive to develop language knowledge (and more specifically vocabulary) through extensive reading. To mention a few, it is considered a "pedagogically efficient"[17] approach, as two activities – vocabulary acquisition and reading – occur at the same time. This approach facilitates learner autonomy, can be very pleasant and motivating, provides learners with the opportunity to meet words in their context of use[18], increases sight vocabulary[19], and could theoretically result in substantial vocabulary learning, which seems difficult to achieve with explicit teaching during the relatively short period of time that L2 learners spend in the language classroom. In fact, Nation argues that "the use of reading and other input sources may be the only practical options for out of class language development for some learners,"[20] especially in EFL contexts. Considering the above, it seems that extensive reading should be an indispensable dimension of vocabulary teaching.

In the field of extensive reading, two studies by Nation and Wang, 1999, and Wodinsky and Nation, 1988, investigated the potential contribution of graded readers to vocabulary learning by examining word frequency. They concluded that graded readers can be an important source of vocabulary learning for second language learners if used appropriately. Although useful, these are corpus-based studies that, as their writers suggest, should be followed by research in order to test whether this learning actually takes place.[21]

There are a number of L2 extensive reading studies that have found gains in vocabulary using either direct or indirect measures of vocabulary. However, the

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[16] W. Grabe & F. Stoller. *Teaching and researching reading.* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2002), 259

[17] T. Huckin & J. Coady. Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition in a Second Language. (*Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, vol. 21, 1999), 182.

[18] S. Thornbury. *How to teach vocabulary.* (London: Longman, 2002)

[19] J. Coady. L2 Vocabulary Acquisition through Extensive Reading. In J. Coady & T. Huckin (Eds.), *Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[20] I. S. P. Nation. *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 155

[21] M. Pigada and N. Schmitt. Vocabulary Acquisition from Extensive Reading: A Case Study. (*Reading in a Foreign Language.* Vol.18, No. 1, April 2006 ISSN 1539-0578), 4-5

indirect measures employed and the conditions under which these studies were implemented make us cautious when evaluating the findings. For instance, some of the participants were living in the L2 environment, while others used a dictionary for parts of the reading[22]. Both factors make it difficult to attribute any learning solely to the reading involved in the studies.

Grabe and Stoller report some interesting conclusions that further complicate the issue of incidental vocabulary acquisition and reveal the relative learning difficulties of different words; it seems that "some words needed to be looked up only once while others required multiple exposures and multiple dictionary consultations"[23]. Based on that, they argue "each learner seems to encounter some sets of words that just will not be remembered".[24]

Finally, in a recent study of extensive reading that took place in an authentic extensive reading environment, participants appeared to have learned "well over half of the unfamiliar" words they encountered in the simplified readers (although there might have been "a role for other sources of exposure in learning" for some of these words).[25] This seems a very encouraging result; we should take into consideration, however, that the procedure involved a self-rating test, and that as Horst acknowledges, the pre- and post-tests were not the same.[26]

To sum up, the literature provides good evidence that vocabulary is learned incidentally from reading, at least to some extent, but there are still large gaps in our knowledge of this learning in an authentic extensive reading context. For example, we do not know much about whether types of word knowledge other than meaning are amenable to incidental learning, how extensive reading enhances knowledge of words which are already partially known, how this learning may be linked with how

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[22] K-S. Cho & S. Krashen. Acquisition of vocabulary from the Sweet Valley Kids series: Adult ESL acquisition. (*Journal of Reading*, vol.37. 1994), 662-667.
[23] W. Grabe & F. Stoller. Reading and Vocabulary Development in a Second Language: A Case Study. In J. Coady & T. Huckin (Eds.), *Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition* (pp. 98-122). (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 112
[24] Ibid. 115
[25] M. Horst. Learning L2 Vocabulary through Extensive Reading: A Measurement Study. (*The Canadian Modern Language Review*, vol.61, 2005), 374.
[26] Ibid. 374

often a word occurs in the texts, and to what extent the incidental learning demonstrated in EFL environments also occurs when the target language is not English.

What are the principles of Extensive Reading?

There are ten characteristics or principles of extensive reading as an approach or a language teaching/learning procedure, which have been identified as key factors in successful extensive reading programs.[27]

(1) *Students read as much as possible,* perhaps in and definitely out of the classroom.

Day and Bamford emphasize that the amount of time students actually spend on reading is the most critical element in learning to read. Hence, to achieve the benefits of extensive reading and to establish a reading habit, the minimum amount of reading is a book a week, which is 'a realistic target for learners of all proficiency levels, as books written for beginners and low intermediate learners are very short'.[28]

(2) A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available so as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways.

It is recommended that to encourage a desire to read, the texts should be varied and based on the purposes for which the students want to read, e.g., books, magazines, newspapers, fiction, non-fiction, texts that inform, texts that entertain, general, specialized, light, and serious.[29]. To find what the students are interested in reading, "Ask them what they like reading in their own language, peer over their shoulders in the library, ask the school librarians…". Varied reading material encourages both reading and a flexible approach to reading -- students read for different reasons and in different ways e.g., skimming, scanning, more careful reading.

[27] J. Bamford and R. R. Day. Extensive reading: What is it? Why bother? (*The Language Teacher*, vol.21, 1997), 6-8.
[28] R. R. Day and J. Bamford. *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom, 4th ed.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3
[29] Ibid.

(3) Students select what they want to read and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them.

Self-selection of reading material is the key to extensive reading. Students can select texts as they do in their own language, that is, they can choose texts they expect to understand, to enjoy, or to learn from. They are free to stop reading material that is boring, too easy, or too difficult[30].

(4) The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding. These purposes are determined by the nature of the material and the interests of the students.

In an extensive reading approach, learners are encouraged to read for the same kinds of reasons and in the same ways as the general population of first language readers. This sets extensive reading apart from usual classroom practice, and reading for academic purposes. The one hundred percent comprehension or any particular objective level comprehension is not a goal. In terms of reading outcome, the focus shifts away from comprehension achieved or knowledge gained and towards the reader's personal experience[31].

(5) Reading is its own reward.

Bamford and Day recommend that there are few or no follow-up exercises to be completed after reading.[32] This view, later, is adjusted by Hitosugi and Day that although the goal is for students to experience reading and so they are not required to show their understanding by answering comprehension questions, the teachers may need to ask the students to engage in follow-up activities after reading for these reasons:[33]

   a) to discover what the student understood and experienced from reading;

   b) to keep track of what students read;

   c) to monitor the students' attitude toward reading; and

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[30] C. I. Hitosugi and R. Day. (2004). Extensive Reading in Japanese. Reading in a Foreign Language (On-line, 16 (1), 2004), 20-39. Available at: http://www.NetLibrary.com

[31] Day, R.R., & J. Bamford. *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom (4th ed.).* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

[32] J. Bamford and R. R. Day. Extensive reading: 6-8.

[33] C. I. Hitosugi and R. Day. (2004). Extensive Reading in Japanese.

d) to link reading with other aspect of the curriculum

(6) Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up words makes fluent reading difficult.

Day and Bamford recommend that texts must be well within the learners reading competence in the foreign language.[34] For beginning readers, more than one or two unknown words per page might make the text too difficult for overall understanding. For intermediate learners, there should be no more than five difficult words per page. Hu and Nation suggest that learners must know at least 98% of the words in a fiction text for assisted understanding.[35] They refer to Fry's observation that beginner readers do better with easier materials.[36]

(7) Reading is individual and silent.

Students read at their own pace. Most ER is done outside class, as homework, in the students' own time, when and where the student chooses[37].

(8) Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.

Students can read faster because the materials are easy and understandable. They move from word-by-word decoding to fluent reading. They are advised against using dictionaries as it interrupts the reading process, making fluent reading impossible. If they encounter unknown words, they should ignore them or guess their meanings[38]. Nuttall notes that speed, enjoyment and comprehension are closely linked with one another.[39] She described the vicious circle of the weak reader as follows: "Reads slowly; Doesn't enjoy reading; Doesn't read much; Doesn't understand; Reads slowly…". Extensive reading can help readers "enter instead the

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[34] Day, R.R., & J. Bamford. *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*
[35] M. Hu & P. Nation. Unknown Vocabulary Density and Reading Comprehension. (*Reading in a Foreign Language*, vol. 13, 2000), 403-430.
[36] E. Fry. Ten Best Ideas for Reading Teachers. In E. Fry (Ed.), *Ten Best Ideas for Reading Teachers* (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley, 1991), 8
[37] C. I. Hitosugi and R. Day. (2004). Extensive Reading in Japanese.
[38] Day, R.R., & J. Bamford. *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*
[39] C. Nuttall. *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language (2nd ed.).* (Oxford: Heinemann English Language Teaching, 1996), 128

cycle of growth … The virtuous circle of the good reader: Reads faster; Reads more; Understands better; Enjoys reading; Reads faster…"[40]

(9) *Teachers orient students the goals of extensive reading,* explain the methodology, *keep track* of what students read, and *guide* students in getting the most out of the program.

Given that students may not be accustomed to the freedom of making choices at school, they need to be introduced to the practice of extensive reading. The teacher could begin by explaining the benefits of extensive reading -- that is it helps them gain in vocabulary knowledge, reading, writing and oral fluency. The choice of easy materials, self-selection and reading for overall understanding should be discussed. Teachers may point out that there are no tests or comprehension questions.

Nevertheless, in order to guide students during the course to ensure they get the most out of extensive reading experience, teachers need to keep track of what and how much their students read, and the students' reaction of what was read. Teachers also encourage them to read the books they previously found too difficult to read.

(10) The teacher is a role model of reader for students.

The teacher's role is an active member of the classroom reading community, demonstrating what it means to be a reader and the rewards of being a reader. If the teacher reads the same material that the students read, and talks to them about it, this gives the students a model of what it is to be a reader and also makes it possible for the teacher to recommend reading material to individual students[41].

How to evaluate and monitor extensive reading?

Teachers often feel they should check students' understanding of their reading directly through tests and quizzes or even just to assess whether the reading has been done. In Extensive Reading, as long as students are reading a book at their level, there is then no need to test their comprehension. This is because part of the decision about which book to read involved making sure they could understand most of the book

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[40] Ibid. 172
[41] C. I. Hitosugi and R. Day. (2004). Extensive Reading in Japanese.

before reading it. Extensive Reading is not about testing. It is about helping students to build their reading speed and fluency, and become more confident readers in English. These things are not always testable directly. However, many institutions insist on formal assessment of the reading and so this section presents some ideas for assessment. That is why, the following activities can be used to evaluate extensive reading activity.[42]

1. Book reports, summaries, presentations and posters

Students can write or present oral book reports and summaries or make posters and presentations that summarize the content of the book. They could also comment on the characters in the book, the plot, or their reactions to it. Lower ability students might do sentence completion activities such as 'my favorite character was … because …', or 'I (didn't) like this book because …', or write their reactions in their first language.

2. Giving grades

You can grade the students by the number of pages or words they have read; how many reading levels they go up, the quality of their written or oral book summaries, their participation in follow-up ER activities, and so on.

3. Measuring reading speed

At the beginning of the course, ask them to read a book at their level for three minutes. Then count the number of words they read and divide that by three to get the number of words per minute. Repeat this in the middle and at the end of the course or even every week if you wish. They may wish to make a chart to record their progress.

4. Informal monitoring

A silent reading time each week gives the teacher a chance to watch students as they read silently.

- Do they look like they understand? Or look bored or disinterested?
- Do they smile when they read funny parts of the story, or look a little apprehensive in exciting moments?

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[42] Extensive Reading Foundation. *Guide to Extensive Reading*.

- Are they sitting in a way to enjoy the book, or trying to hide that they are sleeping?
- Do they turn pages often? Do they seem to be reading slowly (say, by moving their finger along the page)?
- Do they have to re-read parts of their books? Do they use their dictionary a lot?

5. Informal oral comprehension checks while, or after, reading a book

These questions can help you know if the student has understood their reading, or finished it.

- Can they re-tell the story with little trouble? They may need to do this in their first language.
- Can they react to the story freely by saying what they liked or disliked?
- Find key lines from the story and test them on who said them, or places they visited.
- Ask 'What is it about?' 'Who are the main characters?' 'What's happening on this page?'
- Ask how it ended. Was it a sad or happy ending? Why? What genre is this book?
- Do they look at the book as they are answering your questions as if looking for something to say?

Conclusion

Learning to read a new language is not an easy task, but it does not necessarily mean that one cannot find enjoyment in the process. If learners are given the opportunity to read extensively for pleasure and develop a passion for reading, they can become more eager to learn the necessary reading skills and vocabulary they need in order to enjoy what they read. In addition, extensive reading also gives learners more control over and confidence in their own learning. In light of research that shows the benefits of extensive reading, it is worth incorporating extensive reading into the reading curriculum.

Overall, extensive reading activities encourage students to read for pleasure both inside and outside the classroom, to read for meaning, and to engage in sustained silent reading. Such activities could lead to reading independence and autonomy. More crucially, extensive reading can empower students to be fluent readers who draw connections between reading and their own lives and, in the process, make new information a part of their own knowledge or schemata.

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