

EXTENSIVE READING FOR INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

One recommended way to promote interest in foreign language reading is through Extensive Reading. This paper aims at revisiting Extensive Reading along with its pertaining principles. In addition, it proposes an alternative framework to implement Extensive Reading with Indonesian EFL university students. It will specifically cast some light on how to implement supervised (or instructed) Extensive Reading. This kind of reading has gained popularity over the years, ever since it was introduced to the realm of foreign language learning. It has been shown to bring a lot of benefits for L2 learners in many respects, and, consequently, it has been implemented in a variety of contexts. However, the implementation of Extensive Reading has sometimes been criticized for not observing the outlined principles, for instance, in the issues of the absence of pleasure in its undertaking and the inclusion of inappropriate post-reading activities.

Keywords: Extensive Reading, alternative framework, university student

Introduction

The ineluctability of foreign language reading is obvious whenever one is learning a foreign language. Reading is important since it is a way to learn (Clarity, 2007). Channuan and Wasanasomsithi (2013) state that reading is a skill which is vital as it is demanded for successful use of the language as well as for the pursuit of higher education and future career. Susser and Robb (1990) add that reading is the most emphasized skill in traditional FL teaching and has become the mainstay of EFL instruction in many countries. Due to the minimum language exposure that foreign language learners have, Extensive Reading is believed to be powerful to promote interest in foreign language reading. Stoller (2015, p. 152) avows that “the best way to help students learn to read and improve their reading skills is through reading itself.” Besides, she opines that giving students freedom to choose what they read will empower them and will result in more engagement in reading. This paper aims at revisiting the concepts and principles pertaining to Extensive Reading. On top of that, it attempts to propose how supervised ER program, which places Extensive Reading as the main activity, can be implemented in Indonesian EFL university context.

Theory

Extensive Reading

Extensive Reading was firstly introduced to foreign language teaching by Harold Palmer (Kelly, 1969 as cited in Day, 2015), who views Extensive Reading as reading activities that students do for enjoyment and information. Stoller (2015, p. 154) defines Extensive Reading as “an approach to the teaching and learning of reading in which learners read large quantities of reading materials, in and out of class, that are easily understood, interesting, and enjoyable.” Grabe and Stoller (in Waring & McLean, 2015) also concur with the definition. Extensive Reading is aimed at encouraging learners to read extensively material which interests them as well as to develop cognitive and met cognitive skills for reading comprehension improvement (Channuan & Wasanasomsithi, 2013). Besides, Renandya (in Brown, 2012, p. 11) avers that Extensive Reading creates “an environment that nurtures a lifelong reading habit.”

Extensive Reading serves as an excellent means of supplying rich target language input, particularly in EFL setting. It deals with reading a lot of self-selected texts which are easy as well as interesting and doing few or no exercise afterwards. It becomes a strategy to promote interest in foreign language reading (Yulia, 2011). Its goal is to promote fluency and enjoyment in the process of reading (Clarity, 2007) as confirmed by Day (2013, pp. 10-11) saying “They read for information and enjoyment, with the primary goal of achieving a general, overall meaning of the reading material.” Moreover, Warring (2011) augments, Extensive Reading is done to promote reading speed, general comprehension and reading skill. What should happen in such an activity, he argues further, is READ, which means “Read quickly and . . . Enjoyably with . . . Adequate comprehension so they . . . Don’t need a dictionary” (Waring, 2011, p. 3). Since reading gain should be without pain as Day and Bamford suggest (in Day, 2013), whenever students find reading materials which are not interesting or too difficult, they are encouraged to stop and find another. The underlying reason is that ER tasks should minimize the frequent stopping and restarting that occur whenever students consult dictionaries while working on the task (Stoller, 2015). Nonetheless, they are encouraged to make their reading comfort zone bigger overtime; that is, to extend the range of materials that they can read easily and confidently (Day, 2013).

Extensive Reading may be practiced in one of these three forms depending on students’ needs and institutional constraints (Bamford & Day, 1997; Day, 2015). First is supervised (or instructed) Extensive Reading. It places Extensive Reading as the main focus of a reading course which is combined with a variety of follow-up activities. Second is blended Extensive and Intensive Reading. It employs Extensive Reading as an addition to an ongoing reading course whereby students read books that they select for homework. Third is independent (= non-instructed) Extensive Reading. In this type, Extensive Reading serves as an extracurricular activity with the teacher guides and encourages students whose fond of reading has been developed and who meet regularly to discuss what they read. Based on Jeon and Day’s (2016) study, effective ER programs take place when Extensive Reading is incorporated as part of the curriculum compared to other types of Extensive Reading and when it is held in EFL settings. Moreover, they unveil that

the effects of Extensive Reading are bigger in adults compared to children or adolescent groups. Adults are deemed to be cognitively more able to start reading extensively due to their experience, background knowledge and vocabulary. Moreover, low effects on adolescent may originate in the test-centered curriculum in the schools and in their low interest in Extensive Reading since it provides no direct impact on their grades (Jeon & Day, 2016).

Extensive Reading has brought plenty of benefits for L2 learners. Bell (1998) claims that Extensive Reading provides comprehensible input which facilitates acquisition, enhances general language competence, improves vocabulary knowledge and promotes motivation to read. Additionally, Extensive Reading deepens grammar knowledge as readers are confronted with the use of language in context. A number of research has demonstrated the value of Extensive Reading in improving reading fluency (Beglar, Hunt, & Kite, 2012), reading level (Mermelstein, 2014), reading rate gains (Beglar & Hunt, 2014), reading comprehension (Edy, 2014) and writing ability (Mermelstein, 2015). Moreover, it promotes positive attitude toward foreign language reading (Yamashita, 2013; Ro & Chen, 2014; Tien, 2015), increases motivation (Chien & Yu, 2015; De Burgh-Hirabe & Feryok, 2013), reduces anxiety (Ro, 2013) and fosters autonomy which leads to learning success (Channuan & Wasanasomsithi, 2013; Dickinson, 1995; Mede, İnceçay, & İnceçay, 2013). Furthermore, it also builds new vocabulary knowledge and expands students' understanding of words they previously learn (Stoeckel, Reagan & Hann, 2012; Waring, 2011).

Despite the attested benefits which Extensive Reading has on language proficiency, some teachers or schools show little commitment to incorporate Extensive Reading and thus make Extensive Reading not widely practiced in either ESL or EFL setting (Jeon & Day, 2016). The reasons, according to Stoller (2015), stem among others from the need for plentiful reading resources, teachers' resistance to change their way of teaching reading, the misunderstanding which views silent reading as no teaching or no learning happening, and instructional time constraints. For these reasons, it is vital that teachers, administrators, and policy makers be informed and educated of the benefits of Extensive Reading over traditional teaching (Jeon & Day, 2015 & 2016). Only by convincing them will ER approach be possibly encouraged and adopted in school settings.

Principles of Extensive Reading

According to Macalister (2015), Extensive Reading is in fact an easy concept, but it is oftentimes misunderstood by many teachers and researchers and it results in some confusion about the pertinent literature. Alternatively, he avows, it has been over-complicated. It is true that there is no a one-fits-all approach to Extensive Reading practice. Extensive Reading should be better understood as a continuum, ranging from *pure ER* in which all the principles are observed to *fringe ER* in which Extensive Reading is name only (Day, 2015). Notwithstanding the differences, they share three elements, namely quantity, ease, and choice, which usually exist in some form in any programs (Brown, 2012). In this section, the principles of Extensive Reading will be revisited to find out which principles are obligatory for any ER programs to be successful.

Day and Bamford (1998, 2002 as cited in Day, 2015) outline top ten principles for implementing Extensive Reading. They are: (1) The reading material is easy, (2) A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available, (3) Learners choose what they want to read, (4) Learners read as much as possible, (5) The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding, (6) Reading is its own reward, (7) Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower, (8) Reading is individual and silent, (9) Teachers orient and guide their students, and (10) The teacher is a role model of a reader. The principles, Waring & McLean emphasize (2015), should not be seen as rigid prescription but rather as mere characteristics of successful Extensive Reading programs. Macalister (2015: 123) has the same opinion in that he views the top ten principles as the guidelines rather than commandments. Researchers and teachers have varied views about how Extensive Reading should be run; thus, it would be critical that there are general characteristics that every researcher agrees upon as to what constitutes Extensive Reading and what does not.

Waring and McLean (2015) spell out the essential core attributes and variable dimensions of Extensive Reading. According to them (2015, p. 164), the essential core attributes of ER should address “fast, fluent comprehension sustained over extended periods with minimal distractions.” They assert further that the focal element to decide whether reading extensively is done is by looking at the way the text is processed and not on the product. Waring and McLean (2015, p. 162) argue that

...the central concern for most researchers when deciding whether their subjects are ‘reading extensively’ is whether they are fluently comprehending the meanings and ideas in the text, or not. In a broad sense whether the subjects are reading extensively or not, is a matter of how text is processed, i.e. smoothly and with high, fluent comprehension. By contrast, the products of the research – e.g. what is learnt, how much reading is done – serve as the independent variables.

Put it another way, reading pains should be minimal; otherwise, the activity stops being Extensive Reading because the focus is more on the language forms rather than ideas and meaning in it. As for the variable dimensions of Extensive Reading, they are influenced by pedagogical aims, research questions, and given practicality within the setting. They among others include “amount of time spent reading, what is read, where it is read, whether the reading is required, and who selects the texts” (Waring & Mclean, 2015, p. 164).

Based on these ten principles, Macalister (2015, p. 122) tries to categorize them into four broad categories, namely the nature of reading, the nature of reading material, what the teachers do and what the learners do. The first category includes principles (5), (6), (7) and (8). The second category comprises principles (1) and (2). The third category contains principles (9) and (10). Meanwhile, the last category consists of principles (3) and (4).

Macalister (2015, p. 126) proposes a different idea. Considering the nature of reading, the nature of reading material, what the teachers do and what the learners do, he argues that the top ten principles can be reduced to seven, which are compulsory for Extensive Reading to occur. As these are obligatory, he claims,

they are closer to commandments. By this he refers to principles (1), (4), (5), (7), (8), (9) and (10). He also extends one of the seven principles as being “Learners read as much as possible in a regularly scheduled, time-limited period” (2015, p. 127). The activity may be carried out in the classroom, as an easier way, or as an out-of-class activity through negotiation with the students, as long as reading activity becomes the daily routine.

In contrast, Jeon and Day (2015, p. 302) state that the key principles to any ER programs aiming at improving L2 reading proficiency are only five. They are: (1) The reading material is easy, (2) Learners choose what they want to read, (3) Learners read as much as possible, (4) Reading is individual and silent, and (5) Teachers orient and guide their students. They argue that ER programs that use the five core principles can work successfully in both n EFL and ESL settings.

Theory Application

Setting Up an Extensive Reading Program

Extensive Reading should be included in any curriculum designed to foster L2 reading in order that it may yield the expected learning outcomes (Anderson, 2014; Waring, 2011). To set up an ER program, there are some aspects to consider (Day, 2013, pp. 11-17). Such consideration will guarantee that the program is managed in an effective and positive ways in order to be fruitful (Clarity, 2007).

Once the preparation is done, teachers can start introducing and advertising the ER program to students. They should provide necessary guidance as the Extensive Reading is done. Also, they need to inform students about the benefits of Extensive Reading so as to spark motivation on them.

As for the materials for Extensive Reading, many practitioners advocate the use of graded readers. However, Susser and Robb (1990) declare that graded readers are not the only possibilities. They may take the form of any texts in the target language that is within the proficiency level of the students. Varied collections comprising graded materials, children's literature, literature for young readers, popular writings, materials written for first-language readers and online texts are recommended. The cost of setting up a library, which is expensive, can be greatly reduced if teachers replace paper books with digital books. Moreover, research has demonstrated higher effect on the use of web-based stories than paper books (Jeon & Day, 2016). Concerning the genre, Anderson (2014, p. 7) claims that reading programs should employ a balanced approach whereby students should be exposed to both narrative and expository texts depending on the students' proficiency level. The reason is that the two genres have different vocabulary in spite of the same theme.

Teachers may determine the target of Extensive Reading that students should achieve, which can be expressed in books, pages, chapters, or amount of time. The amount of reading to do should be flexible to fit the students' reading ability and schedules. There is no rule determining the amount of reading to be done extensively, but Light (1970) as cited in Susser and Robb (1990) recommends a rule of thumb that the length of the tasks should be sufficient that the students and the teacher will not be tempted to talk them through in class. To give a concrete

clue, research suggests that minimum one book per week at the students' own level is sufficient (Day, 2003; Stoeckel, Reagan & Hann, 2012; Waring, 2011).

Credit can also be given to students to enhance motivation to do the reading. It can later be integrated with the assessment and grading issues that teachers should do. As for where to read, mostly the reading will be done out of class; however, class time may be used to show students the importance of reading. Outside reading should be given more priority to give students longer periods of time to read longer texts (Anderson, 2014).

Furthermore, monitoring of the reading activities should also be done to confirm that students are reading and that they are not struggling with the materials. Sometimes students will need help in finding their comfort level and will need advice about finding suitable material. Therefore, Waring (2011) suggests, it is important to hold a silent reading time whereby they are reading their book in class. During this time, the teacher should go around the class monitoring that the students are reading at the right level. Teachers can individually talk to each of them asking if their book is easy and if they understand it. If they are not enjoying the book, or it is too difficult, they should stop and read something else.

Susser and Robb (1990) pinpoint that in ER programs teachers should encourage and assist students with their reading. This can be done by conferences during or after class time, and by checking and commenting on written summaries that students do of their reading. Jeon and Day (2015) maintain that the role of teachers in ER programs will differ to varying degrees depending on the age of the participants. Whenever it is done with adults, the teachers can play a role as a facilitator or a role model since adults can read independently without much assistance. With younger learners, teachers should be more dominant in providing scaffolding. Whichever the case, they view that the success of ER programs relies to a large extent on skillful and enthusiastic teachers who employ the five core principles as outlined in the previous section. Furthermore, in spite of teacher's effort, the success of ER programs depends also on the systematic support provided by the school and government, for instance, in providing diverse books through school libraries.

To maintain interest, previous research (Haider & Akhter, 2012) suggests various interesting post-reading activities be employed. e.g. writing a book report, making presentation on a selected book, keeping a diary on a given book, discussing the books with classmates, or copying interesting, new words and expressions into a notebook after reading a story. Yet, comprehension question and summary writing should be avoided. Waring (2011) adds such activities as writing (or giving an oral) short report on each book, making posters, drawing a picture of a scene, talking about the characters and the plot, and writing reaction reports. Students may also form reading groups in which they can do such activities as selecting book together and discussing various aspects of the contents of the book (Jacobs & Renandya, 2015). Peer interaction, according to Jacobs & Renandya (2015, pp. 108-109), may have some benefits for students, namely: (a) They can motivate each other to read more, (b) They can offer each other suggestions of what to read or not read, (c) They can help each other understand

what they are reading, and (d) Discussing with peers can enhance student enjoyment of reading and can push them to think more deeply about what they read.

In addition to allowing students to collaborate with peers, post-reading activities are supposed to stimulate or trigger creative response or critical thoughts (Fenton-Smith, 2008). They should be varied enough to ascertain that students can respond to them in different ways throughout the program and hence will make them regard the tasks as a thought-provoking extension of the reading process. Jacobs and Renandya (2015, pp. 106-108) suggest plenty of follow-up activities in Extensive Reading programs which can make Extensive Reading even more student-centered. To name a few, they are oral or written review of the book in which they convince others to read (or not to read) it, telling the most interesting/exciting part of the book, designing poster to advertise the book, and many more.

One last issue in setting an ER program is assessment and grading. Following Krashen's Input Hypothesis, many people often discourage the assessment of Extensive Reading because they believe it may produce negative effects on students' attitude toward reading (Stoeckel, Reagan & Hann, 2012). Nonetheless, teachers are required by the educational institutions to assess each course. On top of that, teachers may need to know whether students really do the reading and what they obtain from it.

With regard to this, there has been some tension existing between autonomy and institutional education in assessment. Brown (2012) recommends that ER program be implemented without testing. Giving them a test, according to Waring (2011, p. 10), will make them think that "*all* reading must and will be tested, which goes against the spirit of Extensive Reading, which is to help learners to read for themselves without pressure so that they can build a life-long love of reading in English." On the other hand, assessment is required. To resolve this, Fenton-Smith (2008, p. 905) shares a trick by striking "a balance between making students accountable and making students comfortable."

One of the ER principles states that reading should be its own reward whereby freedom and independence are nurtured. It means to say that Extensive Reading emphasizes the intrinsic reward of reading instead of extrinsic reward materialized in the form of grade. However, most educational institutions always demand grades as evidence of accountability. Thus, it makes assessment a challenging task. In the case of assessment and grading demand, teachers should strive in such a way for method of assessment which is simple, maintains the focus on reading, and does not yield negative backwash.

Some standard unit of amount which has been discussed earlier may serve as the basis for students to measure their own progress, and for teachers to compare students and to assign grades. Additionally, Stoeckel, Reagan and Hann (2012, p. 189) recommend short quizzes as a means of assessing students because their research findings have lent support that ER quizzes have no impact on reading attitude. Short quizzes are preferred because they are "quicker (allowing more time for reading), require actual reading of the material, and cannot be plagiarized" (Stoeckel, Reagan & Hann, 2012, p. 154). It may last 2-3 minutes

and should not be in-depth forms. Besides, the use of quizzes may become external motivation to make students read as well as to verify that they are reading.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that ER programs do not provide instant benefits (Jeon & Day, 2016). It takes time for the benefits to emerge. The best way to maintain students' motivation over time is by making Extensive Reading part of the curriculum (Jeon & Day, 2015 & 2016; Waring, 2011) because this scheme enables students to do the reading during classroom hours and extend it outside the classroom.

An Alternative Framework to Implement Extensive Reading

Extensive Reading has been implemented in diverse language learning contexts. Many of those programs incorporate ER as addition to an ongoing reading course, i.e. blended Extensive and Intensive Reading. Alternatively, it is placed as an extracurricular activity, or termed independent (= non-instructed) Extensive Reading. Yet, very rarely does it stand as supervised (or instructed) Extensive Reading whereby it becomes the main focus of a reading course. On top of that, there are criticisms on ER implementation as some programs do not follow best practices. Haider and Akhter (2012), for instance, find that the implementation is still shadowed with worries about passing exam. Many aspects of the implementation of Extensive Reading do not conform to the ER principles. Besides, there is a pressing need to include interesting and appropriate post-reading activities. Likewise, Waring (2011) claim that many ER programs have faltered because of lack of interest and enthusiasm for ER, inadequate planning, poor execution, and insufficient resources.

For these reasons, the writer will elucidate her idea about how to implement Extensive Reading as the main focus of a reading course in Indonesian university context. The scheme of incorporating ER into part of the curriculum is put forward because it is rarely applied in Indonesian context, meanwhile previous research has shown that this form of ER is the most effective and that the effects of ER are bigger in adults (Jeon & Day, 2015). Moreover, university level is deemed appropriate as a platform to apply this scheme. It is not constrained by test-centered curriculum as rigidly as primary or secondary schools are. The discussion will be presented following Richards and Rodgers' (1982) definition of *procedure* (in Susser & Robb, 1990, p. 165). They are (a) resources in terms of time, space, and equipment; (b) techniques and tactics used by teachers; and (c) exercises and practice activities.

a. Resources: Time, Space, Equipment

The course is designed for 2x50 minutes class meeting per week. Before embarking on the program, teachers should explain what the program will be like so that the students know what is expected of them. Besides, they need to be informed about the benefits that Extensive Reading has in order to make them motivated.

The materials needed throughout the course are reading materials which the students should select on their own based on their interest and proficiency level. The students may find the materials from the university library, bookshops, any other libraries which are accessible, or else they can find them online. Thus, there

is no need to worry about unavailability of reading resources. In the case of unavailable library or internet connection, teachers may provide book-swap scheme with the class or using used books. To follow what literature has suggested, the genre types to be covered throughout the course are narrative and expository texts. They may choose graded materials, children's literature, high interest-low vocabulary books, literature for young readers, or popular writings. As for the place to read, mostly the reading activity will be done out of class. Students will be allotted more time to read longer texts. Class time will be spent on individual reading, monitoring and doing varied post-reading activities.

Teacher should determine the target to be achieved for one semester by considering the existing number of meetings in that semester. This can be expressed in books, pages, chapters, or amount of time. On top of that, teacher may also create credit system to foster students' external motivation.

b. Techniques and Tactics Used by the Teachers

Teachers need to ascertain that the minimum of five core principles of ER exist in the program. The more principles to include, the better. As teachers play a central role in the success of Extensive Reading, they should show high motivation and enthusiasm. Stoller (2015) claims that instructional setting nowadays holds scaffold sustained reading (ScSR); thus, teachers play the role as guide or facilitator rather than as model reader. What teachers should do is monitoring students' engagement, text selection, and text comprehension. During in-class Extensive Reading, the teachers circulate and interact quietly with individual students to monitor whether the students are on task and that they have chosen books of appropriate level. If felt necessary, teachers may provide help for students in finding suitable material at their comfort level. As the program is intended for adult learners, teachers' role is less domineering.

Concerning assessment and grading issues, teachers may employ authentic assessment. The focus of such assessment is more on the process rather than the product. Scoring rubrics as the tool may be used to record and provide score for students. Besides, teachers may also use portfolios to keep track of students' work. The credit given as incentive based on the predetermined target may be taken into consideration in deciding students' final mark. If deemed necessary, teachers may also administer short quizzes.

c. Exercises and Practice Activities

The comprehensive ER project will be divided into in-class activities and out-of-class activity. After giving the orientation on the first day of semester, the next meeting students should come to class bringing 3-4 books, be they digital or paper books, which suit their interest. The class time will be used for reading one selected book. The rest is for alternative readings, whenever the selected book turns out to be not interesting or too difficult. While the students are reading, the teacher will monitor to ensure students have found an appropriate book. The reading process will be continued out-of-class at the students' own schedule. In the initial step of ER implementation, the time allotted for reading may be two weeks. After the students have adjusted, it can be reduced to one week, as research suggests.

After the ER task is finished, the following class meeting is used for doing post-reading activities. Such activities are beneficial for the sake of assessment and sustaining students' interest. The activities selected should be varied and interesting so that students will be challenged and not become bored. Ideally, the post-reading activities are done every other week, after one-week reading. Yet, this can be adapted to suit the class dynamics. Table 1 presents the summary of the framework.

Table 1. The Proposed Framework for ER Implementation

One Program		
ER Process	In-class	• Individual Reading • Monitoring
	Out-of-class (ideally 1 week)	Individual Reading
Post-reading Activities	In-class	Various interesting activities

Teachers may select activities from the following possible alternatives: making oral or written review of the book, making presentation on a selected book, keeping a diary on a given book and discussing with classmates at regular intervals, and copying interesting, new words, for example. Other instances include designing posters to advertise the book, drawing a picture of a scene, telling about the character(s) one likes best and why, writing reaction reports, discussing the books with class, writing personal reflection, and telling the most interesting/exciting part of the book. There are many more activities which teachers can creatively employ.

Conclusion

Realizing the importance of reading in foreign language learning, it is high time to integrate Extensive Reading into L2 curriculum as suggested by Anderson (2014) and Tien (2015). Taking account of the literature review and previous research findings, this paper attempts to spell out an alternative framework to implement ER as part of the curriculum in Indonesian university context, whereby it stands as the main activity. It should be noted that the key element of successful ER program is motivation and that the indicator of success may be derived from the high enjoyment that students feel from reading. Besides, to facilitate its execution, teachers and students need to redefine their roles. The paper has expectantly given useful insights into alternative implementation of ER in Indonesian university context. To maintain the program, perseverance is called for since Extensive Reading produces no immediate benefits.

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