
Extensive Reading in an Intensive Curriculum

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Abstract

Extensive Reading (ER) approach has been examined to support and enhance reading competence and learners' autonomy. This project was targeted to merge an extensive reading (ER) program within a compulsory intensive reading (IR) curriculum for an English for academic purposes (EAP) course in Hatinh University, Vietnam. The author applied anonymous student feedback, reading portfolio and questionnaires during the project to figure out the pros of ER program with suitable ER principles on the development of language learning and academic skills for students. Success of this ER program relied on maintaining the goals of the EAP program, applying the 10 principles for teaching extensive reading while obeying the five implementation criteria that were established with the EAP program. The program showed its effectiveness by increasing students' rate of reading and broadening learners' vocabulary knowledge as well. Additionally, the ER program promoted autonomous learning through student self-awareness of learning strengths, weaknesses.

Keywords: Extensive Reading, Intensive Reading, English for Academic Purposes, Reading Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

To improve reading skill for language learners, teachers would suggest reading and practicing more. Indeed, the extensive reading approach is widely accepted to benefit learners in various ways. However, it is not universally used in ESL curriculum, particularly in EAP programs. The goal of this study is to examine the importance of comprehensive and intensive reading techniques in EAPs, as well as the role of reading practice in EAPs. The findings are then used to create and implement an ER program into an existing EAP in order to satisfy the needs of the students, teachers, and the EAP program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English for Academic Purposes is focused with English communication skills that are required in formal education systems for study purposes (Jordan, 1997, p. 1). Students in an EAP will improve their language skills as well as their study abilities in order to prepare for higher education. In an academic setting, reading techniques are focused on one aspect: pupils read for a specific reason. These goals can range from gathering information to comprehending concepts or theories. Students will be concerned about the text's content as well as the language in which it is communicated when reading. Both demand some level of comprehension, which necessitates the use of a variety of reading tactics and skills (Jordan, 1997, p.143). As a result, the focus of EAP reading classes has shifted. Prediction, skimming, scanning, differentiating fact from non-fact information, forming conclusions, and deducing the meaning of unknown words are all common examples.

Intensive reading entails reading brief, typically challenging materials under the supervision of the teacher. The purpose is to assist students in extracting meaning from texts, developing reading techniques and abilities, and expanding their vocabulary and grammar knowledge (Renandya and Jacobs, 2002). Academic books are used in an EAP environment because they feature more challenging and complicated content, grammar, and vocabulary. Students frequently require slow, close, and repeated readings in order to fully absorb the text.

An academic reading course, according to Brandt (2009, p. 30), provides effective reading tactics, vocabulary development tasks, and organization to help pupils read more quickly.

Extensive reading, on the other hand, "usually entails rapid reading of huge amounts of material or longer reads (e.g., full novels) for broad understanding, with a focus on the meaning of what is being read rather than the language" (Renandya and Jacobs, 2002). The goal of extensive reading is for students to read a significant number of books and other texts in an environment that encourages them to continue reading throughout their lives. Julian Bamford and Richard Day (2004) proposed the following ten principles for teaching extended reading as a tool for professional growth, which are widely considered as the most crucial ingredients for a successful ER program:

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. Reading speed is usually faster than slower.
6. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
7. Reading is individual and silent.

8. Reading is its own reward.
9. The teacher orients and guides the students.
10. The teacher is a role model of a reader.

According to Renandya and Jacobs (2002), ER offers various benefits to a language learner, including enhancing language learning in such areas as spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and text structure; increasing knowledge of the world, improving reading and writing skills, nurturing enjoyment of reading with positive attitude towards reading; developing a reading habit.

Extensive and intensive reading approaches focus on distinct parts of reading, yet both are clearly beneficial to learners' reading abilities and comprehension development. To optimize student benefits, both strategies should be used in tandem. Both extensive and rigorous reading can be good for accomplishing reading goals at the high school (Erfanpur, 2013) and university levels, according to Paran (2003).

Learners can achieve specific academic reading abilities associated with reading in an EAP while developing a good attitude toward reading by integrating both techniques. Yamashita's study of English language learners' reading attitudes found that intensive reading causes more anxiety and extensive reading causes more comfort. As a result, combining ER and IR may result in increases in skills from both techniques as well as the development of a positive attitude toward reading.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection

This project intends to develop and integrate a stand-alone, complementary ER program into Hatinh University's intensive reading course (IRC) for second-year students. The university EAP program, which combines reading and writing skills, lasts 12 weeks and is held once a week within 150 minutes. Using reading text from an EAP textbook, the IRC emphasized intensive reading to enhance academic reading skills.

There are 12 students major in English and English teaching involved. The reading proficiency of the students ranges from low intermediate to intermediate.

The project's theoretical foundation is Bamford and Day's ten principles for teaching emergency response. The expected impact on the current reading curriculum and teacher preparation time, as well as how much classroom time should be dedicated to ER activities, were also reviewed. Besides, the following general parameters were established after considering each of the stakeholders – the student (maximize learner benefit), the teacher (minimize change of current duties and preparation), and the institution (optimize the balance of extensive and intensive reading activities in class and at home):

1) Students need to consistently do extensive reading throughout the entire 12-week courses, especially at home.

2) Students should develop a comfort and amiability for reading easy, yet large amounts of text.

3) The amount of time spent on ER in the classroom (which includes in-class reading and activities) should be kept to a bare minimum – no more than 25% of the current weekly RLS time of 400 minutes. As the course advances, the amount of time spent in class for ER should decrease, with the expectation that the amount of time spent reading at home would rise.

4) It was decided that a library of graded readers would be established and enlarged each semester to ensure that students had access to ER reading materials.

5) A thorough reading manual for instructors would be prepared to provide recommendations on the principles and benefits of ER, as well as a list of ER exercises.

Data analysis

The study applied the questionnaires designed by Peel (2015) to request student's responses on their reading habit. Students completed a pre-questionnaire (see Appendix A) adopted from Peel (2015) about their reading habits and experiences at the start of the course, as well as a post-questionnaire at the conclusion of the course (see Appendix D). Additionally, students completed a reading log (see Appendix B) at the end of each week. These feedback forms help to record students' attitudes and expectations about reading, as well as changes during the course. Next, the reading logs served as input to the ER program on the appropriateness and likeability of reading texts. Furthermore, the reading logs provided a record on the quantity and rate of reading, which is also an indicator of student progress.

In addition to student feedback, the teacher of the course was also expected to maintain notes and a reading log (see Appendix C) of the class. The teacher's notes and feedback on teacher-selected text and reading activities will serve as a valuable planning resource for teachers of subsequent ER courses.

The purpose of this extensive reading program was that learners would engage in voluminous reading in an environment that nurtured reading for pleasure. In turn, this would lead to gains in reading skills that would support the EAP's goal of providing academic skills.

Teacher feedback

The teacher of this course maintained a record of notes and comments throughout the ER program. At the start of the session, it was noted that the initial discussion and questionnaire provided valuable insight about the students' prior reading histories and apprehensions. This was done by asking students to test the "5- finger rule" on all ER texts and by implementing post-

reading activities that periodically asked students to record unknown words on a page.

Table 1: Reading rate and in-class reading time

<u>Text</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Reading rate</u> <u>(words/day)</u>	<u>In-class reading</u>
Hannah first day of school	444	2 days	222	1 session – 20 minutes
Buddism	548	2 days	274	2 sessions – 20 minutes
The haunted lake	2000	7 days	286	2 sessions – 30 minutes
Drawing on walls	5000	13 days	384	2 sessions – 20 minutes each
Dracula	8000	12 days	667	4 sessions – 20 minutes each
The fabled life of Aesop	7000	10 days	700	3 sessions – 15 minutes each
Robinson Crusoe	9,000	7 days	1286	1 session – 15 minutes

As shown in Table 1, the teacher followed the implementation criterion of increasing the reading volume and rate while decreasing ER class time. The reading rate achieved by students climbed up significantly from 222 words per day to 1286 words per day at the end of the implementing process.

Besides, the criterion of reading text selection stated that the reading texts (see Table 1) would progressively move from teacher-selected to student-selected. The teacher of the course for this project decided to begin with shorter stories of considerable ease so that students would not feel overwhelmed by the length or difficulty of the reading texts. The student reading logs indicated that the short stories were easy to read and had moderate to high popularity. Students reported that the books were fairly easy and very enjoyable to read. Post-reading monitoring activities also indicated that the “5-finger rule” was being met for all students signifying the texts were appropriate for the students for extensive reading. For the final reading text of the course students selected one of three books. Students applied the “5-finger rule” to each book then chose a book based on their preference.

Volume of reading

In order to prepare students for the voluminous reading they will encounter at the university level, one of the criteria for this ER program was to progressively increase the volume of student reading from short stories to entire books. As shown in Table 1, students demonstrated the ability to not only increase their volume of reading, but also increase their rate of reading. For the first two weeks of the course, the teacher assigned one or two pages to read for homework. Post-reading activities indicated that students had completed their reading homework and were able to understand, summarize, and share their ideas and opinions about the text.

Allotment of classroom time for ER activities

In order to ensure that class time was proportionally distributed to cover all curriculum items for the course, a criterion was established to not use more

than 25% of the weekly classroom time for ER activities. Thus, per week, it was targeted that at most, 30-35 minutes of the 150-minute course would be used toward the ER program.

Student feedback

Throughout the course students were given opportunities to give feedback on their experiences with the ER program via a pre-questionnaire (see Appendix A), reading logs (see Appendix B), a post-questionnaire (see Appendix D), and class discussions with the teacher. The purpose of the pre-questionnaire was to gain insight on student attitude, preference, and practice of reading in English.

The post-questionnaire served to monitor any changes in attitude toward reading in English and to gain insight on student experiences and benefits as a result of the program.

Table 3: Number of start-of-session student responses for each rating about reading in L1 and L2

Rating	# of responses	# of responses
1 = I don't like it	How much do you like to read in your 1st language?	How much do you like to read in English?
5 = I like it a lot		
1	0	2
2	1	2
3	2	7
4	5	1
5	4	0

According to table 3, most of the students show preferences for reading in their native language with 9 out of 12 chose rate 4 and 5. Meanwhile, only 1 student enjoyed reading in English at rate 4. Obviously, students chose a much lower rate for English comparing to their mother tongue that indicating an overall decrease in likeability for reading in L2 than L1.

Table 4: Student responses to question 2 on the questionnaire

Q2: How much do you like to read in English? (rate from 1 = I hate it to 5 = I love it)

Rating	# of responses for each rating at the start of the session	# of responses for each rating at the end of the session	Change
1	2	1	-1
2	2	1	-1
3	7	5	-2
4	1	3	+2
5	0	2	+2

Data shown in Table 4 proved that during the process, students indicated an overall increase of likeability of reading in English at the end of the course as compared to the beginning. It is clearly seen that students show a positive attitude to their reading habit.

In the appendix A, when asked about the difficulty of reading in English, more than half of the students share vocabulary is their biggest obstacle, and that they do not know how to choose suitable books that are relevant to their level. This reason one more time encouraged teacher to give a list of leveled-books for them to ensure a better extensive reading process.

In the post-questionnaire, students are asked if they thought the ER program helped their reading skills. All students stated that their reading skills are generally improved. One of them claimed “Yes, this change in class has helped me make more progress, now I am always eager to read in English, as long as the book is at my level.” Many said that, “I have read more books than before, and I know many useful and free reading source.” Others response their improvement in reading rate and the bigger amount of vocabulary they have learned during the course. They also state that they find reading in English more interesting and easier than before. These positive responses prove that the ER program has directly supported the goals of an EAP program particularly and developed reading skills in general.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This ER program maintained the EAP program's goal of providing language and academic skill development and practice. Students improved their reading skills by raising their rate of reading, increasing their amount of reading, and displaying the ability to summarize and identify important concepts. Additionally, vocabulary knowledge was also improved. In the same way, the ER program fostered independent learning by encouraging students to be aware of their own learning strengths and weaknesses, as well as keeping track of their progress during the course. Finally, students' attitudes toward reading, as well as their comfort and confidence in doing so, have increased. Therefore, students were able to improve in both the language and academic areas as a consequence of the skills supplied by the ER program.

The "10 Principles for Teaching Extensive Reading" by Bamford and Day served as the cornerstone for this ER program's design. Almost all of the books chosen by the teacher were well welcomed by the students. The novels chosen ranged in genre and length, and they were chosen to help students develop their reading preferences. Second, most of the reading assignments were followed by post-reading tasks.

Besides, in order to meet the course curriculum, the notion that students should read as much as possible was amended. The amount of time spent in the classroom on ER was limited to allow time for other content of the main curriculum. Even if the amount of time allotted in class for ER activities decreased over time, the daily practice of ER or ER activities – both in class and at home – helped students create a healthy reading habit. These requirements aim to relevant to the 10 principles for ER that results in many of the other principles naturally followed and applied. Thus, the

implementation of ER could improve the quality and success of the ER program.

To address the needs of the EAP program and the ER program, the five agreed-upon implementation criteria were developed. This separate ER program, from the standpoint of the EAP program, needed to improve student learning even more, but it had to be executed in a way that minimized coverage of current curriculum material and teacher preparation. As a result, implementation criteria 3, 4, and 5 set a limit on the amount of time in the classroom that may be spent on ER activities, which was gradually lowered as the course continued. In other words, students were so enthusiastic about the ER program and the readings, texts, and activities that they were able to move their ER time outside of the classroom, allowing the instructor to devote more classroom time to other subjects. The ER program was adopted into the reading curriculum once each of the five requirements was met satisfactorily.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the fact that this ER program was successfully implemented and accepted by the EAP program, numerous suggestions are offered here for future consideration in order to improve the ER program. The utilization of easy and fascinating reading books was a major aspect in the ER program's success. As a result, it is strongly advised that a course reading log be constructed and updated on a regular basis to keep track of all ER texts used in each class for each semester, as well as feedback from the teacher and students on the ease of reading and popularity of the texts.

Another idea for improving the ER experience is to give students more control over the selection of reading materials. There should be a pool of short stories which is both recommended by students and teachers. Thanks to this, students will have more opportunity to work together and discuss or report their individual reading experiences and perspectives. Students' own selection of texts also allows themselves to vary reading skills to be partnered with appropriate materials.

Finally, a better utilization of classroom time for ER activities is a factor for improving this ER program. According to the teacher, one of the great aspects of this ER program was the flexibility of the ER timetable (see Figure 1). It is suggested that the decrease in classroom time for ER exercises be done earlier in the course, maybe as early as week three, provided that students have proved their ability to bear the continued demand. In this way, they will continue to benefit from the ER program while spending more time in class on the main curriculum.

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Appendix A

Pre - Questionnaire about Reading

1. How much do you like reading in your first language?
(I don't like it) 1 2 3 4 5 (I like it a lot)

2. How much do you like reading in English?
(I don't like it) 1 2 3 4 5 (I like it a lot)

3. How much time do you spend each week reading for fun in your first language?

4. How much time do you spend each week reading for fun in English?

5. What difficulties do you have with reading in English?

6. In your opinion, what makes a story or a book good?

7. What kinds of books do you enjoy?

Appendix B

Student Reading Log

Name of book/story	Pages	Reading Time (hours:minutes)	Level of reading					Rating				
			1=very easy to read 5=very hard to read					1= hated it 5= loved it				
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Extensive Reading Log

Teacher: Session: Level:

Name of book/story	Difficulty 1=very easy 5=very hard	Popularity 1=very popular 5=very unpopular	Notes

Appendix D

Post - Questionnaire about Reading

1.How much do you like reading in English?

(I don't like it) 1 2 3 4 5 (I like it a lot)

2.What is your opinion about the number of stories you read this session and the number of pages you read? (Do you want more or less stories? Do you prefer short or long stories?)

3.What reading activities did you like and not like?

4.Do you prefer to read in class, read at home, or both? Why?

5.Do you think this reading program helped your reading skills? Why or why not?