

EXTENSIVE READING CLASS: APPROACH AND READING MATERIALS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses about extensive reading material for students in university level, the benefits of Extensive Reading for students, and Extensive Reading approach. It considers the benefits extensive reading can bring to English language learners and teachers. In classroom, students read long texts or large quantities for general understanding, with the intention of enjoying the texts. In selecting reading material, teacher should pay attention to reading material, students' choice, reading out of class, silent reading, language level, use of dictionaries, and teacher as a model. Students are allowed to choose the books or article they read depending on their interests in class. In this way students are encouraged to read for pleasure and should become better readers. It will also increase students' reading fluency, motivation and vocabulary.

Key words: extensive reading, benefit, approach, reading material, vocabulary

INTRODUCTION

Extensive Reading is one of beneficial subject for students in university level. It helps students to be a better reader because it provide them to read a lot and often to get an general understanding and information. Extensive Reading is often referred to but it is worth checking on what it actually involves. Richard Day has provided a list of key characteristics of Extensive Reading (Day 2002). This is complemented by Philip Prowse (2002). Maley (2008) deals with Extensive Reading comprehensively. The following is a digest of the two lists of factors or principles for successful Extensive Reading:

- Students read a lot and read often.
- There is a wide variety of text types and topics to choose from.
- The texts are not just interesting: they are engaging/ compelling.
- Students choose what to read.
- Reading purposes focus on: pleasure, information and general understanding.
- Reading is its own reward.
- There are no tests, no exercises, no questions and no dictionaries.
- Materials are within the language competence of the students.
- Reading is individual, and silent
- Speed is faster, not deliberate and slow.
- The teacher explains the goals and procedures clearly, then monitors and guides the students.
- The teacher is a role model... a reader, who participates along with the students.

From points above, Extensive Reading deals with reading as a pleasure. Students need to be enjoyable when they read. Students are allowed to choose the books they read depending on their interests, and there is not always a follow-up discussion or work in class. Students just focus on how to get information and general information. Extensive reading is an easy subject to be taught for teacher. Extensive reading helps teachers to be better informed, both about their profession and about the world. This makes them more interesting to be around – and students generally like their teachers to be interesting people. It also helps teachers to keep their own use of English fresh.

BENEFITS OF EXTENSIVE READING

ER offers Comprehensible Input.

Reading is the most readily available form of comprehensible input, especially in places where there is hardly any contact with the target language. If carefully chosen to suit learners' level, it offers them repeated encounters with language items they have already met. This helps them to consolidate what they already know and to extend it. There is no way any learner will meet new language enough times to learn it in the limited number of hours in class. The only reliable way to learn a language is through massive and repeated exposure to it in context: precisely what ER provides.

ER enhances general language competence.

In ways we so far do not fully understand, the benefits of ER extend beyond reading. There is 'a spread of effect from reading competence to other language skills ~ writing, speaking and control over syntax.' (Elley 1991) The same phenomenon is noted by Day and Bamford (1998: 32-39) but they even note evidence of improvements in the spoken language. So reading copiously seems to benefit all language skills, not just reading.

ER helps develop general, world knowledge.

Many, if not most, students have a rather limited experience and knowledge of the world they inhabit both cognitively and affectively. ER opens windows on the world seen through different eyes. This educational function of ER cannot be emphasised enough.

ER extends, consolidates and sustains vocabulary growth.

Vocabulary is not learned by a single exposure. ER allows for multiple encounters with words and phrases in context thus making possible the progressive accretion of meanings to them. By presenting items in context, it also makes the deduction of meaning of unknown items easier. There have been many studies of vocabulary acquisition from ER (Day et al 1991, Nation and Wang 1999, Pigada and Schmitt, 2006). Michael Hoey's theory of 'lexical priming' (Hoey 1991, 2005) also gives powerful support to the effect of multiple exposure to language items in context.

ER helps improve writing.

There is a well-established link between reading and writing. Basically, the more we read, the better we write. Exactly how this happens is still not understood (Kroll 2003) but the fact that it happens is well-documented (Hafiz and Tudor 1989) Commonsense would indicate that as we meet more language, more often, through reading, our language acquisition mechanism is primed to produce it in writing or speech when it is needed. (Hoey 2005).

ER creates and sustains motivation to read more.

The virtuous circle - success leading to success - ensures that, as we read successfully in the foreign language, so we are encouraged to read more. The effect on self-esteem and motivation of reading one's first book in the foreign language is undeniable. It is what Krashen calls a 'home run' book : 'my first'! This relates back to the point at the beginning of the need to find 'compelling', not merely interesting, reading material. It is this that fuels the compulsion to read the next Harry Potter. It also explains the relatively new trend in graded readers toward original and more compelling subject matter. (Moses)

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EXTENSIVE READING APPROACH

Extensive Reading Approach involves students reading long texts or large quantities for general understanding, with the intention of enjoying the texts. It includes reading material, students choice, reading out of class, silent reading, language level, use of dictionaries, and teacher as a model.

English teacher should consider in reading material. Reading for pleasure requires a large selection of books be available for students to choose from at their level. Here, teachers can make good use of graded readers (books which have been written specifically for EFL/ESL students or which have been adapted from authentic texts). Setting up a class library is a good way to provide material for students, and because the books are kept in the actual classroom, there is a greater chance that they will be borrowed, and teachers also have more opportunities to refer to them during class.

Student choice is the second characteristics in extensive reading approach. Students choose what they want to read based on their interests. If a student finds a book is too difficult or they don't enjoy it, they can change it for another one. Next, reading for pleasure and information. Often students are put off reading when it is tied to class assignments. In an extensive reading program, the students are reading principally for the content of the texts. Teachers can ask students about the books they are reading informally, and encourage occasional mini-presentations of the books or book reviews, but these should not seem like obligations to the students.

Extensive reading out of class and silent reading in class are also important in this approach. Teachers can do a lot to help students pursue extensive reading outside of the classroom. Having a classroom library and regularly encouraging students to borrow books to take home are some things which can help. If books are shelved in the classroom, students can also be given class time to browse and select books. In silent reading in class, extensive reading should not be incompatible with classroom practice and methodology. There are teachers who set aside a regular fifteen-minute period of silent reading in class. This silent reading has been said to help structural awareness develop, build vocabulary, and to promote confidence in the language.

Language level in this approach means that vocabulary and grammar in reading material. The vocabulary and grammar of the books that students read should not pose a difficulty. The objective of an extensive reading program is to encourage reading fluency, so students should not be stopping frequently because they do not understand a passage. However, the books should not be too easy as this may well demotivate students, who feel they are getting nothing out of the books.

Use of dictionaries in reading becomes a chore if students think they have to stop and look up every word they do not understand in a dictionary. For this reason, dictionaries should be avoided. Instead of interrupting their flow, students should be encouraged to jot down the words they come across in a vocabulary notebook, and they can look them up after they have finished reading.

The last characteristic is the teacher as role model. If the teacher is also seen to be a reader by the students, then they will be encouraged to read. The teacher can talk in class about books that she or he has been reading, and if they are knowledgeable about the books in the class library, having read them, then they can make genuine recommendations to students about what to read. The teacher can also read aloud to students, as a way of introducing students to different genres or individual books.

EXTENSIVE READING MATERIALS

Reading materials as sources of learning are classified by some experts. Finch and McGough (1982: 199) state that learning materials are classified into (1) printed matter e.g., manuals, textbooks, workbooks, modules, (2) audiovisual e.g., pictures, filmstrips, videotapes, and (3) manipulative e.g., models, mockups, trainers, simulators. It can be concluded that learning materials as the learning source can be in form of printed materials. Printed materials are not only textbook that as usually used by English but also it can be in form of modules.

English teachers usually use printed materials. Some teachers have assumption that printed reading materials are the easiest materials to be used. Smaldino (2007: 222) supports this assumption. He argues some advantages of printed materials. They are availability,

flexibility, portability, user friendly, economical. Availability means printed reading materials are readily available on a variety of topics and in many different formats. Flexibility refers to they are adaptable to many purposes and may be used in any environment. Portability means they are easily carried from place to place and do not require any equipment or electricity. Then, user friendly refers to properly designed printed materials are easy to use, not requiring special effort to navigate through them. Last, economical means printed materials are relatively inexpensive to produce and can be reused.

The reading materials should be exposure the students. Good materials do not teach, but good materials encourage students to learn. Good reading materials contain interesting topic, give students capacity to think and give students opportunity to use their existing knowledge and skills.

CONCLUSION

One of the key factors to the success (or not) of an extensive reading program is motivation. Capturing student interest is the key. If the materials available are interesting to the students, then they will be far more likely to want to read them. These materials should also be at a level appropriate to their reading ability. As mentioned earlier, the texts should not be too difficult so students experience the frustration of not being able to understand the materials.

The teacher encourages and assists the students with their reading, which the students undertake during and /or after class. Occasional summaries (oral or written) can help with this as they show both that the students are reading and also that they understand what their materials are about. The activities can also help students improve their writing or speaking ability.

Some of the benefits of Extensive Reading that include gains in reading and writing proficiency, oral skills and vocabulary, an increase in motivation and positive affect. Setting up an extensive reading program should not only lead your students to improve their reading proficiency and other language skills, but will hopefully enable them to take pleasure in reading for its own sake.

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