

# Analysing The Process Of The Intensive – Extensive Reading Method In A Literature Classroom Setting And ESL Classroom Setting

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**Abstract:** *This article focuses on the use of the intensive reading method in the literature classroom setting, and comparing the method used to the reading process that takes place in the ESL classroom setting. This article also investigates all possible reading processes or steps, and evaluate what steps in the intensive reading method is crucial for students to focus on the reading activity attentively while being able to develop their vocabulary to be better users of the English language. Subsequently, this article also justifies the idea of integrating the intensive reading to the extensive reading to conduct more effective reading lessons that have been observed in many literature classrooms. It is prominent that most literature subjects use the intensive reading method to conduct their reading activities, thus enabling their students to have a better approach towards using the language in other possible ways such as descriptive writing. Therefore, knowing what takes place in the literature classroom and how the process of reading activities are at work is essential for educators and learners in the ESL classroom to conduct and participate in the reading more effectively.*

**Keywords:** *Intensive reading, extensive reading*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Theories of reading as a key language skill have experienced a shift from the traditional view that it is a passive activity to make sense of written symbols by the reader and deriving the meaning that resides in the text; to an intriguing view that involves active participation of the reader's thinking ability, taking into account his existing knowledge or schemata about the subject matter of the text, selecting information that he needs and rejecting others within a complex mental process (Vaezi, 2009).

Reading was further theorised based on the types of processes involved: bottom-up, language based process; or top-down, knowledge based process (Vaezi, 2009), which the theorists later arrived at a consensus that both these processes are essential and utilised simultaneously to comprehend the texts that are read leading to the emergence of the metacognitive theory of reading (Hersch & Andrews, 2012).

## 2. READING PROCESS IN THE ESL CLASSROOM SETTING

In an ESL context, teaching the reading skills may be done in isolation, in parts, beginning with the language based approach, when the pedagogue utilises non authentic, doctored materials for the sole purpose of training the learners to acquire the basic reading skills. However, teaching a skill in isolation only serves to help the learners improve their reading skills in a mechanical (meaningless) way rather than acquiring the language as well as the content of the materials being read. In so doing, the learners will display improvement in reading skills which are transferable from one language to another instead of acquiring the vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar of the target language which in this case is the English Language. This is true as Burt, Peyton, & Duzer (2005) claim that texts are expected to meet the requirements of proficient readers in the form of common lexicon and grammar so as to enable them to understand what they read. One good way of training ESL learners to master the reading skills, simultaneously acquire the language and content of the materials being used in class, to guide them to look to further than the usual practice of intensive reading, is through the use of literary texts or placing equal emphasis on language and knowledge acquisition within a literature class.

Moorman & Ram (1996) assert that although a myriad of studies that have been conducted on the teaching of reading, there are no existing theories that accurately and sufficiently describe and explain how people accomplish the task of reading a text to completion. According to a theory posited by Graesser, Wiemer-Hastings, & Wiemer-Hastings (2001), the six basic knowledge sources involved with reading comprehension are “linguistic, rhetoric, causal, intentional, spatial, roles and personalities, and objects”. This theory, however, poses a challenge in its implementation for the lack of a clear frame-work as Graesser and his fellow researchers did not provide a relatable flow of teaching reading in an actual or real classroom setting.

Based on a study conducted by Gabb (2000), it is observed that despite having the skills to identify language at its morpheme level, they face a great challenge in using the basic units of language to build upon required knowledge and skills into fluency. Gabb (2000) identified several “barriers” which include insufficient vocabulary and lack of background knowledge, or also known as schematic knowledge that may be the biggest problems for learners to fully comprehend a text while reading. This indicates a crucial requirement for readers to learn new vocabulary from time to time and have background knowledge in using it to be more fluent in the target language. A long standing research done by (Orasanu, 2006, 1986) confirms that the knowledge a reader brings into the process of reading a text is an important determinant in the manner of which the text will be comprehended, learned and remembered. Likewise, listening could also enhance readers’ vocabulary comprehension as readers at the early stages expand their vocabulary through phonics, which is learning words through sounds of letters and this will aid them in increasing their reading proficiency of English texts. While we have very recent researches now, Orasanu’s (1986) study mainly focused and argued that it is important for a reader to possess the ability to identify words as this skill forms the basis for the effective acquisition of reading skills as a whole. Unlike other studies which only focused on reading strategies or problems, this study proved that the biggest challenge elementary level learners faced is the development of instant word recognition skills that proficient readers are known to use including a variety of symbolic data to “recognize word units, such as individual letters, letter

clusters or grapheme, morphemes, word stems, and word patterns” (Orasanu, 1986). He further clarified that these difficulties could be minimised if readers start reading by recognising phonemes or sounds of letters, which help these readers to handle the phoneme-grapheme irregularities with ease. These irregularities can be described as a misperception of sound and spelling that we find in English. For example, the word spelled as ‘*present*’ can be defined in four categories; existence in a place, a gift, current situation, or to perform. Therefore, recognising the word in its context aids in enhancing the reader’s ability to understand the word in a shorter duration. Besides, readers should also start using books which emphasis on repetitive use of words because these books are equally useful for learners to monitor their word use on similar text. Alqahtani (2015), however, emphasized that presenting or using various vocabularies in similar context is a desideratum as it demonstrates vocabulary mastery by learners, which is a vital skill for reading.

ESL and EFL learners learn to read at a faster pace as it enables them to group words in manageable, decipherable chunks which is in itself a sign of fluency in reading. Chunking does not only help the learners develop reading at a quicker pace, it also provides them the confidence in reading with better understanding. Learners become readers with broader knowledge encompassing a variety of subject matter which does not only contribute to the mastery of the language but also their knowledge of the content. In addition, they create the opportunities for themselves to recognize and comprehend how content is presented in various genres such as recounts, expositions, and narratives. The ability to read more and extensively contribute to the development of higher confidence and motivation among the learners and this in turn enhances the students’ positive attitudes towards reading. Most of all the confidence and motivation lead them to develop on their own accord the various other language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing. They become even more confident with their ability to listen, speak, and write in the target language which is the ultimate aim of a learner in acquiring the various language skills. Finally, there is a good chance that with time students can develop a healthy reading habit” (Jacobs & Renandya, 2015).

Day & Anderson (2006) defined reading as an active and smooth process that involves the connection between both the reader and the reading material or text in order to construct the meaning of what has been read. This implies that a two-way link is needed for a mutual understanding to be made about what has been read. The reader needs to have proper background knowledge about what is being read and similarly, Goodman (1967) defined reading as a receptive language process which is described as a psycholinguistic guessing game. He described reading as a skill that enables the reader to understand a message by recognizing the written words or written symbols. He also postulated that to grasp the meaning of text, the teaching of pronunciation is crucial. In contrast to other studies where the focus is on teaching reading, Goodman (1967) focused on the recognition of words through pronunciation, deeming it an imperative aspect that permits the reader to recognise the words better and use it. In the absence of the ability to pronounce words with efficiency, readers will not recognise words, thus leading to a failure to utilize them. The ability to pronounce words from the text indirectly allows them to grasp the information more effectively.

### **3. READING PROCESS IN THE LITERATURE CLASSROOM SETTING**

Studying literary texts in a pre-university Literature class offers the learners the opportunity to witness the play of “unmodified” language in a classroom (Agnew, Dorn, & Eden, 2004). Raw, unmodified language in its authentic use within a specified topic presents the learners with the real challenges of learning a language. The difficult or unknown words,

for instance, pose a challenge to their understanding while the arbitrary use of grammar rules and sentence structure provide them with samples of language use in real life. English Language learning, traditionally, emphasized on learning of new vocab and mastering grammar rules while sentence level meaning was stressed upon rather than the global meaning of a text. Hence, intensive reading was anything but textual and contextual, rather a collection of exercises that lead to the acquisition of other skills or a process of further acquisition of language in isolation. Reading texts, in other words, are sources of language exercises, rather than reading exercises” (Cohen, Alderson, & Urquhart, 2006). However, with the development of the society and the requirement of modern English teaching and learning, the general understanding of texts is becoming more important in the process of English teaching.

Conway (2013) reviewed the literature on the two different reading methodologies and found that Universities located in Japan have historically leaned towards an intensive reading approach for their compulsory English reading courses which includes literature subjects. He further observed that in an intensive reading course, not only do teachers usually attend to issues of grammar, vocabulary, text organization and meaning that arise from the readings in the textbooks that students typically work on, but reading skills such as inferencing and guessing the meaning of words from context may also be addressed. As the term suggests, this method demonstrates a very intense and thorough cultivation of one’s language skills. Conway (2013) added that in certain cases, translation was also a method of assessing comprehension where the students translate sentences or entire paragraphs into Japanese. This establishes the rigor in which this method is conducted, with challenging activities for students. He further asserted that teacher-controlled approach, where the instructions as well as the decisions on what is to be read and how it was to be read, which aspects of it were to be focused on and discussed, were all determined by the teacher. Depending on the teacher, much of the explanation for these points may be done in a group where the teachers becomes a facilitator to help students understand meaning of the words as in the text. Students are certainly encouraged to ask questions, but in the absence of such curiosity from students, it is the teacher who sets the pace and chooses which aspects of the text are to receive close scrutiny.

Intensive reading is based on short texts while literary texts may be lengthy even if the text selected is a short story. The challenges in a literature class is often related to recognition of new words or unknown words and students could simply resolve this problem by reading and understanding the word as it has been used in the context to get the meaning of the word. If they fail, they can rely on their teacher to assist them with it. In this situation, the learning is a semi teacher/learner centered one where the learners manage their difficulties on their own and turn to the teacher for help when they fail to manage on their own. Miftah (2015) terms this strategy (IERS) as a strategy in teaching reading combining some characteristics of intensive and extensive reading activities as well. Its procedure is adapted from Directed Reading Activity (DRA) which is done through some steps—motivating and developing background knowledge, leading to directed reading activities, guiding to skill building activities, providing follow-up activities, and activating enrichment activities. In some contexts, reading literary works in a second or foreign language is perceived as the most effective way in learning the culture of target language community.

In respect to Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, present-day researchers have found renewed interest in extensive reading. This is proven by the various trends adopted by ELT institutions. Students are now urged to read independently by utilizing their resources (Hedge, 2000). Moreover, there has been a growing interest in researching the value of extensive reading. Hafiz & Tudor (1990) conducted a three-month extensive reading program as an extra activity. The subjects in their study were Pakistani English language learners in a

UK school, and their parents were manual labourers with limited formal education. The results exhibited a positive effect in their performance, more specifically in their writing skills. They posited that the subjects' progress in writing can be attributed to a combination of being exposed to a range of lexical, syntactic, and textual features in the reading materials as well as the nature of "the pleasure-oriented extensive reading" (Hafiz & Tudor, 1990).

Hedge (2000) subscribed to the notion that extensive reading varies according to students' motivation and school resources. A well-motivated and skilled teacher would ideally have the proclivity to select appropriate handouts or activity books for the students. The Reading Teacher journal, for example, publishes over 300 books that have been suitably reviewed and recommended by teachers as effective materials to teach literature reading to children and adolescents. These recommended books would be considered appropriate activity books for students to learn from as they are endorsed as effective resources to be adopted by schools.

Hedge (2000) also suggested that since extensive reading helps in developing one's reading ability as seen in the literature classroom, it should also be incorporated into EFL and ESL programs with the stipulation that the selected materials are authentic. Teachers with EFL and ESL learners at low levels can use either "pedagogic" or "adapted" texts. Moreover, extensive reading helps learners to be more self-sufficient by reading either in class or at home in the practice of sustained silent reading (SSR). Carrell (1983) argued that SSR activity can be beneficial for learners to be self-directed agents in their quest for meaning provided that the SSR program is tailored using student-selected texts. Student-selected texts would allow the students to be more interested in what they are reading and endow the students with the choice of selecting their texts on the basis of their preference in content, level of difficulty, and length.

Hedge (2000), however, questioned whether Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis "facilitates intake" in learners as it is hard to discern how any learner will effectively use the input available. However, it can be viewed as an activity that enables input because extensive reading grants learners the exposure to the English language, especially when the class time is limited. Hedge (2000) specified the advantages of extensive reading in that not only are learners able to build their language competence, but they also are able to progress in their reading ability, become more self-sufficient in their studies, acquire cultural knowledge, as well as develop confidence and motivation to continue learning. In providing students the opportunity to choose what they read, they have more control over the level of the reading and hopefully are able to find materials they are motivated to read.

A feature of extensive reading is that the reader has more autonomy than in the teacher-centered intensive reading approach, in which the reader is responsible to oversee their own progress and be self-motivated to become a life-long L2 learner. Studies conducted on L2 learning have consistently encouraged extensive reading as a means towards effective, self-directed acquisition of vocabulary (Krashen, 1994). These researches claim that extensive reading enhances reading comprehension, increases reading speed, provides a greater understanding of L2 grammar conventions, improves L2 writing, and higher levels of reading motivation.

Toyota National College of Technology was able to increase their students' average score for the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) through the usage of extensive reading strategies. TOEIC is an English language test designed specifically to measure the everyday English skills of people working in an international environment. The college successfully improved the TOEIC score from 370 to over 500 by implementing an extensive reading program to "reluctant readers" (Nishizawa, Yoshioka, & Fukada, 2010). Therefore, it has been proved that the extensive reading approach does warrant some merit as a teaching technique in the teaching of reading. Extensive reading programs gained

popularity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century classrooms as a result of various studies conducted on literacy. This, however, took a different turn when experts at reading skills attempted to define a place for extensive reading. There were concerns on the use of extensive reading in Literature. The focus on extensive reading as a means towards vocabulary acquisition was not a feature in the amount of time spent in extensive reading. Hinkel (2006) expressed the renewed interest in direct teaching of vocabulary was a result of the various researchers' view that direct teaching of vocabulary is more effective and efficient. This view is reinforced by Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) specialist Cobb & Cobb (2008), who emphasized that the development of an adequate L2 reading lexicon through merely reading is highly unlikely, as a sizeable amount of research suggests otherwise.

Extensive reading certainly enables learners to cultivate independence and confidence in reading as observed in literature classes (Day, Bamford, Renandya, Jacobs, & Yu, 1998). Learners stand a better chance of enhancing their reading fluency and speed, which leads them to become better readers. Extensive reading helps learners to develop a good writing style, acquire sufficient knowledge of word and structure and grow into good spellers (Krashen, 1993). It has been argued that learners do not acquire sufficient proficiency solely through extensive reading (Mart, 2015); a perfect mastery of the target language cannot be achieved without detailed comprehension.

#### **4. INTEGRATING THE INTENSIVE - EXTENSIVE READING METHOD IN CLASSROOMS**

The ultimate aim of combining both intensive and extensive reading skills should be to bridge the gap between the two skills as independent of each other and that they can stand on their own, to being mutually complementary. For ESL/EFL learners, reading skill that are acquired in classroom should extend beyond the formal teaching-learning setting. From reading short texts in parts, the learners will be reading lengthy texts, a rich source of language and content with the ultimate goal of obtaining understanding and pleasure. (Day, Bamford, Renandya, Jacobs, & Yu, 1998). The reading activity has no tasks to fulfill at the end, the text is selected by the student and is read without the teacher's assistance. It will take the learner through Free Voluntary Reading approaches that share the common idea of independent, voluntary reading. Other examples of FVR are Sustained Silent Reading or Self-Selected Reading (Krashen, 2004). The benefits of combining both the reading approaches are limitless as seen in numerous literature classrooms. Day, Bamford, Renandya, Jacobs, & Yu (1998) concluded that there is a great deal of benefits to be reaped through reading extensively in a foreign language. The more reading is done, the more confident the readers become and this in turn leads them to be better writers with richer vocabulary, and their other language skills experience a marked improvement. In addition, they develop positive attitudes toward and increased motivation to study the new language. Richardson (2010), on the other hand, stated that "reading extensively, when done consistently over a long period of time, leads to better reading comprehension as well as improved abilities in several other language areas" (p. 328) cited in Renandya. This view conforms with Carrell and Carson's (1997) definition provides a good starting point where the three elements above are included: "extensive reading ... generally involves rapid reading of large quantities of material or longer readings (e.g., whole books) for general understanding, with the focus generally on the meaning of what is being read than on the language" (pp. 49-50). Renandya (2016) further summarises the various benefits of teaching intensive reading with the purpose of helping learners develop extensive reading habits. Through Intensive reading that leads to extensive reading activities, learners are helped to enhance vocabulary development- multiple

meaningful encounters over time with words and word patterns. Over that time, their vocabulary size tends to increase and they can also develop a deeper understanding of the words. Words learned in this way can be incorporated into students' speech and writing (Renandya, 2016). Extensive reading helps develop a better sense of how grammatical patterns are used to communicate meaningful messages which may enable them to use this grammar for real communication (Ellis, 2005).

Since the Communicative approach to teaching and learning English has been a significant development in recent years (Rahman, M. H. (2007), the use of the communicative approach in teaching and learning English, especially, in EFL and ESL situations is observable in the teaching of reading skills. In contexts where materials and content are scarce, reading is often found to be a good way to enhance a second language learner's proficiency. Extensive reading entails learners reading as much as possible, for the purpose of pleasure or information rather than learning particular language features, and is usually self-selected. While this is true, in ESL/EFL contexts, the teaching of intensive reading precedes the acquisition of extensive reading skills. The teaching and learning activities take a linear movement in that, structured, and instructed reading activities in the form of intensive reading, which focus of parts of the text rather than then whole occur first. This is then developed into a combination of intensive and extensive reading, from focusing on the parts to the whole, from skills to vocabulary, grammar rules and structure to the content of the texts beings read. Reading as a communicative skill then moves from controlled to free with the skills learnt in the controlled classroom environment is utilised to further develop and reinforce in the learners free reading moments. Bamford (2004) cited in Renandya ( 2016) bridges the two types of reading; intensive and extensive as the two sides to the same coin, where intensive reading is associated with teaching of reading in terms of its component skills, understanding the parts of the text while extensive reading deals with reading larger text to obtain overall meaning emphasizing on fluency and confidence.

Nation (2009) terms the intensive reading as a comprehension lesson in which an in depth study of a text that begins with deriving the meaning of the parts, from paragraph to paragraph with the ultimate in depth textual analysis is reached where the teacher achieves the maximum possible response to the *total* meaning of a piece of prose (Nation, 2009). In other words, intensive reading takes the learner from macro to micro level reading, from global meaning to sentence level meaning. This view corresponds with Nuttall (2004)'s, description of intensive reading "as the practice of particular reading skills and the close linguistic study of text. Extensive reading, on the other hand, is defined as reading a large quantity of text, where reading confidence and reading fluency are prioritised. This twin categorization of reading into two basic types can be found in many teacher resource books for the teaching of English as a foreign language."

## 5. CONCLUSION

Reading, a receptive skill, has long been regarded as a prerequisite for foreign language acquisition since it functions as an essential source of input for other skills to develop (Ngan, 2018). The teaching of the skill as a whole has evolved from traditional approaches to reading that disregarded the other benefits of reading to the development of the ESL/EFL learners' language to acknowledging and helping to enhance the learners' second or foreign language learning experience. Bridging the gap between the two types of reading; intensive and extensive reading by selecting materials that lend themselves to the total exploitation of their content and language, would benefit the acquisition of lifelong reading habit.

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