



# Integrating Extensive Reading into an EFL Class in an Economics Major

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**Abstract** In many universities worldwide, students are studying in majors other than English but must also take English as a foreign language classes. In many cases, this creates a dynamic for those students that is very different from the situation that matriculated English language students face when studying the language. In this paper, I will argue the need for and benefits of integrating extensive reading into a program designed for non-English major students, in particular for those students who are studying in an economics program.

**Key words** reading, extensive reading, English as a foreign language  
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In recent years, the importance of learning English for non-native English-speaking students has become more evident. In a globalized world, students must attain a certain level of English that will allow them to converse with and correspond with others from around the world and the language that has become most prevalent in these types of business, medical, technological fields of study has been English. So, regardless of students' desire to learn English or their major, it has become an integral part to most university curricula. Extensive reading is one technique by which learners can study at their own level and engage in reading that they have selected, thereby capitalizing on intrinsic motivation to read and learn more.

## Overview of Extensive Reading

*Extensive reading* signifies reading large quantities of text to develop sound reading habits, to develop knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to instill a liking for reading. According to Day and Bamford (1998), the method of extensive reading can be attributed to the work of Harold Palmer, who described extensive reading as reading a large quantity with a definite focus on the meaning of the text. That is, extensive reading is based on a practical function, reading to gain knowledge and/or for entertainment, not to study how to use language. Day and Bamford (2002, pp. 137–140) developed a list of 10 principles of extensive reading (see Appendix A for the Japanese version and Appendix B for the English version). These principles include:

1. Learners read in and out of class as much as possible.
2. Learners choose their own books based on their own purpose and objectives from a large variety of topics and genres.
3. Learners are allowed to choose the books that they want to read and are able to stop in the middle of reading, if they find the book to be uninteresting.
4. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
5. Reading, alone, is its own reward, so no reading comprehension questions

- or homework should be assigned after reading.
6. Learners should read at a level at which they can understand the basic gist of the material without using a dictionary.
  7. Learners should be given the opportunity to read quietly when, where, and at whatever pace they want.
  8. Reading should be relatively fast.
  9. In order to improve the benefits of extensive reading for students, teachers should explain the basics of extensive reading to the students and monitor their reading.
  10. The teacher should act as a role-model, reading in class along with the students.

The theoretical foundation for this type of technique is in Krashen's often debated and criticized, Theory of Second Language Acquisition (Krashen, 1985). One of the basic tenets of Krashen's theory, the Input hypothesis, states that learners learn a second language when they are given exposure to it in a comprehensible way, i.e., comprehensible input. Because not all students will be at the same level of linguistic competence at any given time, Krashen feels that students should be given freedom to explore at their own pace, with little guidance and structure from the instructor and the syllabus. According to his hypothesis, students are required to focus on meaning rather than grammar/syntax when attempting to read. As they learn the practical function of language rather than language learning, itself, they engage in incidental learning. He postulates that "comprehensible input is the essential environmental ingredient" that learners need to acquire language (Krashen, 1989, p. 440).

However, he also believes that factors exist that can undermine learning, even with appropriate amounts of comprehensible input and exposure to the language. A main component of his theory of second language acquisition is his Affective Filter hypothesis. He claims that acquiring language is the product of students' fostering a limited sense of anxiety. Conditions that enhance an easy and non-threatening learning ambience are considered most likely to achieve positive benefits in the language acquisition. A short review of the prescribed extensive reading principles

Table 1. *Results of Relevant Extensive Reading Studies*

Study	N-size	Population	Results
Vocabulary			
Cho & Krashen, 1994	4	ESL; adults; USA	Gains
Horst, 2005	21	ESL; adults; Canada	Gains
Pitts, White, & Krashen, 1989	51	ESL; adults; USA	Gains
Writing			
Hafiz & Tudor, 1990	25	EFL; high school; Pakistan	Gains
Janopoulos, 1986	79	ESL; university; USA	Gains
Tsang, 1996	48	EFL; junior and high schools; Hong Kong	Gains
Reading comprehension			
Masuhara et al., 1996	46	EFL; college; Japan	Gains
Reading comprehension and reading speed			
Bell, 2001	14	EFL; college; Yemen	Gains
Robb & Susser, 1989	62	EFL; university; Japan	Gains
Sheu, 2003	65	EFL; junior high school; Taiwan	Gains
Taguchi et al., 2004	10	EFL; university; Japan	No gains
Reading comprehension, writing, and speed			
Lai, 1993	266	EFL; junior high, Hong Kong	Gains
Reading comprehension, writing, and attitude			
Mason & Krashen, 1997	20, 71, 76 (3 studies)	EFL; university; Japan	Gains
Affect			
Ashraf & Ahmad, 2003	80	EFL; junior high, Malaysia	Gains
Takase, 2003	220	EFL; high school; Japan	Gains
Reading and affect			
Elley, 1991	114	EFL; elementary, Singapore	Gains
Elley & Mangubhai, 1981	614	EFL; elementary school, Fiji	Gains
Reading strategies and affect			
Nishino, 2007	2	EFL; high school; Japan	Gains

(Day & Bamford, 1998) indicates the similar themes that exist between extensive reading and Krashen's hypotheses.

One of the first major ER studies (Elley & Mangubhai, 1981) shows that in a book flood in Fiji primary schools, where over six hundred young students (aged 10–12 years old) were broken into three main groups; the shared book group, the silent reading group, and the control group, the students in the shared book and silent reading groups made significantly more improvement in English reading and writing proficiency than their control group counterparts. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that the shared book and silent reading groups were able

to make approximately 15 months improvement in just 8 months.

In another study (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989) conducted with learners in an EFL setting in Pakistan, research was equally astounding. Students in the experimental group, who upon pretesting, obtained scores consistently lower on both reading and writing tests than the members of their two corresponding control groups, were found upon post-testing to have surpassed their control group counterparts, obtaining consistently higher scores on both sets of tests. In addition, the experimental groups made significant gains in vocabulary knowledge acquisition.

Another significant advantage to using extensive reading in the classroom is the motivational effects that have been shown to occur due to the technique. In a recent study (Burrows, 2012), learners who participated in extensive reading for a whole year exhibited higher levels of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a theory developed by Anthony Bandura (1977) that claims that those students who feel that they are more likely to succeed in their pedagogical task will succeed. And once they succeed, this success will 1) compel the learners to search out further opportunities to perform this task, 2) expend more energy and spend more time on this task, and 3) overcome the inevitable obstacles that lie before the learner when they are undertaking a learning challenge. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment. This confidence has a true connection with motivation and is another advantage of using extensive reading in the classroom.

## **Combining Extensive and Intensive Reading Practices in Class**

The benefits of extensive reading have been clearly shown in the section above, but in order for students to capitalize on the advantages of extensive reading, it needs to be coupled with intensive reading practices in class. Extensive reading has been shown to support reading fluency, writing competency, motivation and vocabulary development (e.g., Nishino, 2007; Takase, 2003). Intensive reading

builds on the benefits of extensive reading and highlights the finer points of language development. For example, students will engage in focused attention to target vocabulary, explicit instruction in grammar and syntax in a reading passage, and practice with pronunciation and learning phonetic properties of English phonemes. Intensive reading is not a careful, single reading, but is a method based on a variety of techniques like scanning, the surveying techniques of planning your purpose, and others. These procedures cover the method for very effective reading for detailed comprehension and long retention. With this combination, the students will be receiving a well-rounded training in the mechanics of reading in English.

In addition, there are several books among the graded readers series that focus on business or economics topics. Allowing students to choose their own books but also keeping a close check on what the students read, the teacher can guide the students to better language and content knowledge acquisition. There are books among the graded readers that talk specifically about certain companies, products, etc. that would be particularly useful for economics students. By giving students a general choice but limiting the selection to the mostly business or economy-related texts, the teacher can help learners improve their reading ability all the while helping them learn more about the content in their major.

Further support for the use of both extensive reading and intensive reading in the economics, EFL classroom is that it follows the points of Paul Nation's Four strands. These four strands consist of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency activities.

1) Meaning-focused input: reading and listening skills. Learners must be familiar with most of the language they are reading (95%–98%). They should also be genuinely interested in the texts that they are reading. This is accomplished by letting the learners choose their own texts. The last criteria for this strand is that there should be large quantities of it. That would be accomplished by allowing the readers to read vast amounts, i.e., over 150,000 words per year.

2) Meaning-focused output: speaking and writing skills. Learners must practice

speaking and writing in many different ways and in different situations. They should be allowed to practice outputting by using their own words, not words that they have just learned. Nation supports his meaning-focused input and output with his own Input Hypothesis (1998) and Swain's (2005) Output Hypothesis.

- 3) Language-focused learning is a deliberate learning of language features, such as grammar, syntax, pronunciation, vocabulary. These activities should also be very familiar to the learners with an additional focus placed on target highlights. There should also be time for the learners to more deeply process the language and the underlying structure of the language. There should also be spaced repetition. Examples of language focused learning would be memorizing dialogs and using dictionaries to search and learn more about certain vocabulary.
- 4) Fluency development focuses on utilizing familiar language rapidly and automatically for all language skills. Fluency development must include activities where the learners are familiar with the content and structures of the language. There should also be a focus on conveying/understanding meaning, have a sense of urgency (faster processing), and large quantities of practice. Some useful examples of fluency development activities might be 4/3/2 repetitious speaking activities, timed writing exercises, listening to TV presenters who speak very quickly, and timed reading practice.

Extensive reading is conducted at a level that is usually slightly below the current proficiency level of the students, therefore the input that the learners are gaining through extensive reading could be considered comprehensible input and meet the criteria for Nations' meaning-focused input. The language focused learning strand is achieved by doing intensive reading in the classroom. This strand represents strict attention to grammar, pronunciation, particular vocabulary, etc. and this would satisfy that criteria. Finally, the fluency phase of the four strands is accomplished through extensive reading. Reading fluency is defined as the ability to read quickly and accurately with few interruptions to processing. Burrows

(2012) found that extensive reading on average, 150,000 words per year would result in improved reading speeds and accuracy of reading.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have laid out the basic need and groundwork for integrating extensive reading into an EFL class for economics major students in non-English speaking countries. The benefits are many and the implementation of the program would be practical for those involved.

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APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR EXTENSIVE READING (JAPANESE VERSION)

多読アプローチの10原則

(adapted from Day & Bamford, 2002, pp. 137-140)

多読って何ですか？

1. 授業内や授業外でできるだけたくさん読むこと（1年間に10～20万語以上）。
2. 様々な種類の読み物の中から、目的、用途に合うものを選ぶ。
3. 自分が読みたいものを選び、面白くなかったら途中でやめて良い。
4. 読書の目的は、楽しみのため・情報を得るため、などである（英語の勉強のためではない）。
5. 読むこと自体が役に立つ（読む力を伸ばす）ため、読書後の練習問題や課題は行なわない。
6. 辞書を引かないで全体の内容がわかる程度の易しい英語を読むこと（知らない単語が全体の5%以下）
7. 書は各自が静かに自分のペースで行なう。
8. 読むスピードは比較的速い（1分間に100語以上）。
9. 教師は読書の効果が上がるように、多読の方法を説明し、読書状況を観察しながら学生をサポートする。
10. 教師自身が読書を行ない、学生の手本となる。

## APPENDIX B

### GUIDELINES FOR EXTENSIVE READING (ENGLISH VERSION)

(adapted from Day & Bamford, 2002, pp. 137–140)

#### What is extensive reading ?

1. Learners read in and out of class as much as possible. (on avg.100,000 to 200,000 words per year)
2. Learners choose their own books based on their own purpose and objectives from a large variety of topics and genres.
3. Learners are allowed to choose the books that they want to read and are able to stop in the middle of reading, if they find the book to be uninteresting.
4. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding (not just for learning English).
5. Reading, alone, is its own reward, so no reading comprehension questions or homework should be assigned after reading.
6. Learners should read at a level that they can understand the basic gist of the material without using a dictionary (unknown words should include less than 5% of the text).
7. Learners should be given the opportunity to read quietly when, where, and at whatever pace they want.
8. Reading should be relatively fast (at least 100 words per minute).
9. In order to improve the benefits of extensive reading for students, teachers should explain the basics of extensive reading to the students and monitor their reading.
10. The teacher should act as a role model, reading in class along with the students.