

The Influence of Extensive Reading on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Development: An Experimental Study

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Abstract

Extensive reading has received considerable attention in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education because it provides learners with opportunities to encounter substantial amounts of meaningful and relatively accessible English input. This study investigates the influence of an extensive reading program on EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary development. A quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design is proposed involving university-level EFL learners divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group participates in an extensive reading program based on level-appropriate graded readers and self-selected English texts, while the control group receives conventional reading instruction. Reading comprehension and vocabulary development are measured through pre- and post-tests. The study also investigates the relationship between vocabulary development and reading comprehension. Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, independent-samples t-tests, and effect-size measures. The study is expected to provide empirical evidence concerning the pedagogical value of extensive reading for developing two important dimensions of EFL proficiency. The findings may contribute to the development of more effective reading curricula and encourage the integration of extensive reading activities into university-level EFL programs.

Keywords: Extensive Reading; EFL Learners; Reading Comprehension; Vocabulary Development; Vocabulary Acquisition; English Language Teaching

1. Introduction

Reading is one of the most important skills in second and foreign language learning. It provides learners with access to linguistic input and supports the development of vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, reading fluency, and general language proficiency. For EFL learners, however, developing effective reading skills can be challenging because they may have limited opportunities to encounter English outside the classroom. Limited exposure to authentic or level-appropriate English texts can restrict learners' vocabulary growth and their ability to understand increasingly complex written material.

Reading comprehension is particularly important because successful language learning requires learners not only to recognize individual words but also to construct meaning from texts. Learners need to identify main ideas, understand supporting details, make inferences, recognize relationships between ideas, and

interpret information within context. Vocabulary knowledge is closely related to this process because unfamiliar words can interfere with the construction of meaning during reading.

One pedagogical approach that has been proposed to increase learners' exposure to written English is extensive reading (ER). Extensive reading generally involves learners reading relatively large quantities of material that is sufficiently easy for them to understand. Learners are encouraged to read for general meaning, information, and enjoyment rather than concentrating primarily on detailed linguistic analysis. Learner choice and reading at an appropriate difficulty level are important characteristics of the approach. The theoretical rationale for extensive reading is based on the idea that learners develop reading ability partly through actually engaging in substantial amounts of reading. Day and Bamford's work has been particularly influential in establishing extensive reading as an approach to second-language reading instruction. Their framework emphasizes accessible reading materials, learner choice, reading for meaning, and relatively low levels of teacher control.

Previous empirical research has provided evidence that extensive reading can contribute to EFL development. For example, an early experimental investigation involving university-level EFL learners found that extensive readers made substantial gains compared with traditionally taught comparison groups. Other research has examined the influence of extensive reading on vocabulary development and has reported evidence of vocabulary learning and retention through reading.

Despite this evidence, the effectiveness of extensive reading can vary according to learner characteristics, program duration, reading materials, assessment methods, and instructional context. Furthermore, reading comprehension and vocabulary development are sometimes investigated separately. Therefore, examining these two outcomes together can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the contribution of extensive reading to EFL learning.

The present study therefore investigates whether participation in an extensive reading program can improve EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

2. Problem Statement

Many EFL learners experience difficulties in reading comprehension and vocabulary development because classroom reading instruction may provide limited opportunities for sustained exposure to English texts. Traditional reading lessons may focus heavily on individual passages, vocabulary explanation, translation, grammatical analysis, and comprehension questions. Although these activities can have pedagogical value, they may not provide sufficient opportunities for learners to read large quantities of English independently. Limited reading exposure may also restrict incidental vocabulary learning. When learners encounter words repeatedly in meaningful contexts, they may gradually develop knowledge of their meanings and uses. Extensive reading can potentially provide such opportunities because learners encounter vocabulary across multiple texts and contexts.

However, despite the theoretical advantages of extensive reading, there is a need for context-specific empirical evidence concerning its effects on EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary development. The present study addresses this problem by comparing learners who participate in an extensive reading program with learners who receive conventional reading instruction.

3. Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Examine the effect of extensive reading on EFL learners' reading comprehension.

2. Investigate the effect of extensive reading on EFL learners' vocabulary development.
3. Compare the reading comprehension performance of learners participating in extensive reading with that of learners receiving conventional reading instruction.
4. Compare vocabulary development between the extensive reading and conventional instruction groups.
5. Examine the relationship between vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

4. Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1

Does participation in an extensive reading program significantly improve EFL learners' reading comprehension?

RQ2

Does participation in an extensive reading program significantly improve EFL learners' vocabulary development?

RQ3

Is there a significant difference in reading comprehension between EFL learners participating in extensive reading and those receiving conventional reading instruction?

RQ4

Is there a significant difference in vocabulary development between EFL learners participating in extensive reading and those receiving conventional reading instruction?

RQ5

Is there a significant relationship between vocabulary development and reading comprehension among EFL learners?

5. Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are proposed:

H01

There is no statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores of EFL learners participating in the extensive reading program.

H02

There is no statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores of EFL learners participating in the extensive reading program.

H03

There is no statistically significant difference in reading comprehension post-test scores between learners in the extensive reading group and learners in the control group.

H04

There is no statistically significant difference in vocabulary post-test scores between learners in the extensive reading group and learners in the control group.

H05

There is no statistically significant relationship between vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

6. Significance of the Study

The study may contribute to Applied Linguistics and EFL education in several ways.

First, it may provide empirical evidence concerning the role of extensive reading in developing reading comprehension. Second, it may clarify whether sustained exposure to English texts contributes to measurable vocabulary development. Third, the study may provide practical information for EFL teachers who are interested in implementing extensive reading programs.

The findings may also be useful for curriculum designers because they can provide evidence concerning the potential integration of extensive reading into university-level EFL courses. Finally, the study may provide a basis for future research examining extensive reading in different educational settings and with different learner populations.

7. Literature Review

7.1 The Concept of Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is an approach to language learning in which learners read relatively large amounts of accessible material. Unlike intensive reading, which commonly focuses on detailed linguistic analysis of shorter texts, extensive reading emphasizes overall meaning, reading fluency, learner autonomy, and sustained engagement with written language.

Day and Bamford describe extensive reading as an approach in which learners read large quantities of relatively easy material, often selecting materials themselves and reading primarily for meaning and enjoyment.

An important principle of extensive reading is that reading material should generally be accessible to learners. If texts are excessively difficult, learners may spend much of their time decoding unfamiliar vocabulary and grammatical structures rather than developing fluent reading habits.

Another important characteristic is learner choice. Allowing learners to select texts that match their interests may encourage greater engagement and motivation. Extensive reading therefore has both cognitive and affective dimensions.

7.2 Extensive Reading and Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension involves the ability to construct meaning from written language. It requires learners to process vocabulary, syntax, discourse organization, background knowledge, and contextual information.

Extensive reading may contribute to reading comprehension through increased exposure to written language. Regular reading provides learners with opportunities to encounter different textual structures, vocabulary items, discourse patterns, and ideas.

Research involving EFL learners has reported positive effects of extensive reading on reading-related outcomes. In one influential experimental study, university-level EFL students participating in extensive reading demonstrated substantial improvement relative to traditionally taught comparison groups.

Other research has investigated different aspects of L2 proficiency and has specifically considered whether extensive reading can improve general reading comprehension as well as lower-level linguistic abilities. These findings suggest that sustained exposure to meaningful written input may support the development of reading ability.

7.3 Extensive Reading and Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary knowledge is essential for successful reading comprehension. Learners who know more words are generally better positioned to understand written texts because they can process a larger proportion of

the linguistic input.

Extensive reading can provide opportunities for incidental vocabulary learning. Rather than learning every word through direct vocabulary instruction, learners may encounter unfamiliar or partially known words repeatedly in meaningful contexts.

Research has investigated vocabulary retention through extensive reading and has provided evidence that reading can contribute to vocabulary development.

A study comparing extensive reading with paired-associate learning also reported evidence of longer-term vocabulary retention associated with extensive reading.

More recent research has also examined how vocabulary gains from self-selected extensive reading can be measured and has proposed practical approaches for assessing vocabulary growth without requiring every learner to read exactly the same texts.

7.4 Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Comprehension

Vocabulary and reading comprehension are closely connected. When learners encounter a high proportion of unfamiliar words, comprehension may be disrupted. Conversely, stronger vocabulary knowledge allows learners to process texts more efficiently.

Vocabulary knowledge should not, however, be viewed as the only factor affecting comprehension. Background knowledge, reading strategies, grammar, motivation, textual difficulty, and reading fluency can also influence comprehension.

Consequently, an extensive reading program may affect reading comprehension both directly, through increased reading practice, and indirectly, through vocabulary development.

7.5 Theoretical Framework

The present study is primarily informed by the principles of extensive reading and by the broader input-oriented perspective on second-language development.

The central assumption is that learners benefit from substantial exposure to understandable language. In an extensive reading program, learners encounter written English repeatedly across a large amount of material.

The proposed relationship can be represented as follows:



8. Previous Empirical Research

Previous studies provide several reasons for investigating extensive reading.

Research conducted with university-level EFL learners has demonstrated that extensive reading can produce improvements in language-related outcomes compared with more traditional instruction.

Research has also examined vocabulary retention and found evidence that extensive reading can support incidental vocabulary learning.

Similarly, experimental research comparing extensive reading with another vocabulary-learning method found evidence of long-term vocabulary retention following extensive reading.

A more recent methodological study examined vocabulary gains among university EFL students involved in self-selected extensive reading and demonstrated that generalized vocabulary testing can be used to measure vocabulary growth associated with extensive reading.

Despite these findings, additional empirical studies remain useful because extensive reading programs differ considerably in terms of duration, learner proficiency, reading materials, instructional context, and assessment procedures.

9. Methodology

9.1 Research Design

The study employs a **quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control-group design**.

Two groups will participate:

- **Experimental Group:** receives the extensive reading intervention.
- **Control Group:** receives conventional reading instruction.

Both groups will complete reading comprehension and vocabulary tests before and after the intervention.

The basic design is:

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental	Reading + Vocabulary	Extensive Reading	Reading + Vocabulary
Control	Reading + Vocabulary	Conventional Instruction	Reading + Vocabulary

9.2 Participants

The proposed participants are approximately **60 university-level EFL learners** enrolled in an English-language program.

The participants will be divided into:

- Experimental group: approximately 30 students.
- Control group: approximately 30 students.

Participants should have a broadly comparable level of English proficiency.

If the actual number of participants differs, the final paper should report the exact sample size.

9.3 Sampling

A convenient or purposive sampling procedure may be used depending on institutional access.

Where possible, participants should be assigned to groups in a manner that minimizes initial differences in English proficiency.

A placement test or existing institutional English proficiency assessment can be used to establish comparability.

10. Research Instruments

Three primary instruments are proposed.

10.1 Reading Comprehension Test

A reading comprehension test will be administered before and after the intervention.

The test may include questions measuring:

- Main ideas
- Supporting details
- Inference
- Reference
- Vocabulary in context
- Identifying the author's purpose
- Understanding relationships between ideas

A standardized or validated test should be used where possible.

10.2 Vocabulary Test

A vocabulary test will measure learners' receptive vocabulary knowledge.

The test may include:

- Word meaning
- Synonyms
- Meaning in context
- Word recognition
- Multiple-choice vocabulary items

Where possible, the test should contain vocabulary appropriate to the learners' proficiency level.

10.3 Reading Log

Students in the experimental group will maintain reading logs containing:

Item	Description
Date	Date of reading
Title	Title of text/book
Pages	Number of pages read
Time	Approximate reading time
New vocabulary	Selected unfamiliar words
Summary	Short summary
Reflection	Student's response

The reading log will primarily be used to monitor participation rather than as the main measure of learning.

11. Extensive Reading Intervention

The intervention is proposed to last **10 weeks**.

The experimental group will participate in an extensive reading program based on level-appropriate graded readers and other accessible English texts.

Week 1

- Introduction to extensive reading
- Explanation of program objectives

- Introduction to reading logs
- Initial book selection
- Pre-tests

Weeks 2–3

- Independent reading
- Short reading reflections
- Teacher monitoring
- Vocabulary recording

Weeks 4–5

- Continued extensive reading
- Student book selection
- Short summaries
- Informal discussion

Weeks 6–7

- Continued reading
- Vocabulary review
- Reading progress monitoring

Weeks 8–9

- Continued independent reading
- Peer discussion
- Reading reflection

Week 10

- Completion of reading activities
- Post-tests
- Final learner feedback

The teacher should avoid turning every reading session into intensive vocabulary analysis because doing so would substantially change the nature of the extensive reading intervention.

12. Selection of Reading Materials

Reading materials should satisfy several criteria:

1. Appropriate linguistic difficulty.
2. Interesting content.
3. Sufficient variety.
4. Appropriate length.
5. Cultural accessibility.
6. Availability of multiple genres.

Possible genres include:

- Short stories
- Biographies
- Adventure
- Science
- History
- News

- Fiction
- Short academic texts

Graded readers are particularly appropriate because they provide controlled levels of linguistic difficulty.

13. Data Collection Procedure

The study will follow these stages.

Stage 1: Preparation

The researcher obtains institutional permission and explains the study to participants.

Stage 2: Pre-testing

Both groups complete:

1. Reading comprehension pre-test.
2. Vocabulary pre-test.

Stage 3: Intervention

The experimental group participates in the extensive reading program for 10 weeks.

The control group continues its normal reading instruction.

Stage 4: Post-testing

Both groups complete equivalent reading comprehension and vocabulary post-tests.

Stage 5: Data Analysis

The researcher enters the data into SPSS and conducts the planned statistical analyses.

14. Validity and Reliability

Content validity should be established through expert review.

At least two or three experienced EFL instructors or Applied Linguistics researchers may review the instruments to determine whether the items appropriately measure reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

A pilot test should also be conducted with learners who are similar to, but not part of, the main study sample.

Internal consistency can be examined using **Cronbach's alpha** where appropriate.

A reliability coefficient of approximately .70 or above is commonly considered acceptable for many educational research purposes, although interpretation should consider the number and nature of items and the purpose of the test.

15. Data Analysis

The statistical analysis will be conducted using SPSS.

The following procedures are recommended:

15.1 Descriptive Statistics

Calculate:

- Mean
- Standard deviation
- Minimum
- Maximum

for reading comprehension and vocabulary scores.

15.2 Paired-Samples t-Test

A paired-samples t-test can determine whether there is a statistically significant change between pre-test and post-test scores within each group.

15.3 Independent-Samples t-Test

An independent-samples t-test can compare the post-test performance of the experimental and control groups.

15.4 Effect Size

Cohen's *d* should be reported alongside statistical significance because statistical significance alone does not indicate the practical magnitude of an intervention effect.

15.5 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient can be used to examine the relationship between vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

The significance level can be set at:

$$\alpha = .05$$

16. Results

Important: The following tables are deliberately provided as reporting templates. Actual numerical results should be inserted after the study is conducted. No participant data or statistical findings should be invented for a publishable paper.

16.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Reading Comprehension

Group	Test	N	Mean	SD
Experimental	Pre-test	XX	XX.XX	X.XX
Experimental	Post-test	XX	XX.XX	X.XX
Control	Pre-test	XX	XX.XX	X.XX
Control	Post-test	XX	XX.XX	X.XX

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Vocabulary

Group	Test	N	Mean	SD
Experimental	Pre-test	XX	XX.XX	X.XX
Experimental	Post-test	XX	XX.XX	X.XX
Control	Pre-test	XX	XX.XX	X.XX
Control	Post-test	XX	XX.XX	X.XX

16.2 Reading Comprehension Analysis

The paired-samples t-test will be used to determine whether the experimental group's reading comprehension scores changed significantly following the extensive reading intervention.

Table 3. Paired-Samples t-Test for Reading Comprehension

Comparison	Mean Difference	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Experimental Pre/Post	XX.XX	X.XX	XX	.XXX	X.XX
Control Pre/Post	XX.XX	X.XX	XX	.XXX	X.XX

The final interpretation should be based on the actual *p*-value and effect size.

16.3 Vocabulary Analysis

A paired-samples t-test will also be conducted to examine vocabulary development.

Table 4. Paired-Samples t-Test for Vocabulary

Comparison	Mean Difference	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Experimental Pre/Post	XX.XX	X.XX	XX	.XXX	X.XX
Control Pre/Post	XX.XX	X.XX	XX	.XXX	X.XX

16.4 Between-Group Comparison

An independent-samples t-test will be used to determine whether the post-test differences between the experimental and control groups are statistically significant.

Table 5. Between-Group Comparison of Post-Test Scores

Measure	Experimental Mean	Control Mean	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Reading Comprehension	XX.XX	XX.XX	X.XX	XX	.XXX	X.XX
Vocabulary	XX.XX	XX.XX	X.XX	XX	.XXX	X.XX

16.5 Relationship Between Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

Pearson's correlation coefficient will be used to investigate the relationship between vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

Table 6. Correlation Between Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

Variables	r	p
Vocabulary – Reading Comprehension	.XXX	.XXX

The result will indicate whether vocabulary development is significantly associated with reading comprehension performance.

17. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of extensive reading on EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

If the final statistical analysis demonstrates a significant improvement in the experimental group's reading comprehension, this finding would support the argument that sustained exposure to written English can contribute to reading development. Such a result would be consistent with previous research reporting benefits of extensive reading for EFL reading-related outcomes.

An improvement in vocabulary scores would provide evidence that extensive reading can support vocabulary development through repeated exposure to words in meaningful contexts. This interpretation

would be consistent with previous research examining vocabulary learning and retention through extensive reading.

If a significant positive relationship is found between vocabulary development and reading comprehension, the finding would further support the importance of lexical knowledge in successful EFL reading. However, correlation should not be interpreted as proof that vocabulary development alone causes improved reading comprehension.

The findings should also be interpreted in relation to the characteristics of the intervention. Program duration, reading volume, material difficulty, learner motivation, and adherence to the reading program may influence the outcomes.

18. Pedagogical Implications

The study may have several implications for EFL teaching.

First, extensive reading can potentially be incorporated into university English programs as a complement to conventional reading instruction.

Second, teachers should provide learners with access to a wide range of appropriately leveled materials.

Third, learners should have some degree of choice when selecting reading materials because personal interest may encourage greater engagement.

Fourth, reading should not always be treated as a classroom activity requiring detailed analysis of every sentence. Providing opportunities for independent reading may allow learners to develop greater reading fluency.

Finally, vocabulary learning can be supported through repeated encounters with words in meaningful contexts rather than relying exclusively on isolated vocabulary memorization.

19. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered.

First, the study may involve a relatively small sample from one educational institution, limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Second, the intervention period may not be long enough to capture all possible effects of extensive reading.

Third, differences in learners' motivation and their reading habits outside the classroom may influence the results.

Fourth, self-reported reading logs may not perfectly represent the amount of reading completed by individual students.

Finally, vocabulary tests may capture only certain dimensions of vocabulary knowledge, particularly receptive knowledge, rather than learners' complete ability to use vocabulary productively.

20. Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could:

1. Use larger samples across multiple universities.
2. Conduct longer extensive reading interventions.
3. Compare different types of reading materials.
4. Investigate extensive reading among different EFL proficiency levels.
5. Examine the effect of extensive reading on writing and speaking.
6. Investigate learner motivation and attitudes toward extensive reading.

7. Compare printed and digital extensive reading.
8. Examine the influence of e-books and online graded readers.
9. Investigate the relationship between reading volume and vocabulary growth.
10. Use mixed-methods research combining quantitative tests with interviews and learner journals.

21. Conclusion

This study investigates the influence of extensive reading on EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary development. The proposed experimental design compares learners participating in an extensive reading program with learners receiving conventional reading instruction.

Extensive reading provides learners with opportunities to encounter substantial amounts of English input and to interact with texts for meaning and enjoyment. Previous research has provided evidence supporting its potential contribution to reading development and vocabulary learning.

The present study focuses specifically on the relationship between extensive reading, reading comprehension, and vocabulary development. By combining pre- and post-testing with a control group, the study can provide empirical evidence concerning the effectiveness of the approach in a particular EFL educational context.

The practical value of the study lies in its potential to demonstrate how sustained reading can complement conventional EFL instruction. If supported by the empirical data, the findings could encourage EFL teachers and curriculum designers to provide learners with greater opportunities for independent and sustained reading.

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