

# EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTENSIVE READING ACTIVITIES

Discovering the Effectiveness of Extensive Reading Activities on L2 Reading

Namhee Suk

Northern Arizona University

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### Abstract

This paper discusses how extensive reading was practiced in an English as a second language (ESL) program at Northern Arizona University. Eight extensive reading activities were selected and implemented during a 15-week period of an extensive reading program. This study examined how the selected extensive reading activities affect students' motivation to read in L2. Besides, students' and teacher's perceptions of extensive reading was explored. The findings from the study shed light on improving the PIE Reading Lab classes and other extensive reading programs in L2 settings. The results indicate that the students showed positive attitudes toward reading in L2 and reported that they benefited from the activities.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTENSIVE READING ACTIVITIES

### **Background**

In Reading Lab classes in the Program of Intensive English (PIE), extensive reading has been practiced to improve students' reading ability. Research shows that extensive reading develops reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and motivation to read because students get rich input by reading self-selected reading materials independently (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Krashen, 2004, 2011). However, few studies provide enough evidence for how extensive reading has been systematically implemented in L2 classrooms. In order to make extensive reading work effectively, it is essential to investigate what kinds of extensive reading activities work well and under what conditions, and what makes them plausible in specific settings. Therefore, this study examined whether selected extensive reading activities have an impact on students' attitudes towards reading in L2 in and out of class. In addition, the study investigated what makes the activities possible in the PIE setting by exploring a teacher's reflection on individual classes and students' perceptions of the selected extensive reading activities throughout the semester.

### **Research Questions**

1. Do the selected extensive reading activities have a positive impact on students' motivation towards reading in L2? That is, do the selected extensive reading activities improve students' attitudes towards reading in and out of class?
2. What are the teacher and students' perceptions of the selected extensive reading activities?

## EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTENSIVE READING ACTIVITIES

### **Methods**

#### **Participants**

The participants of this study were 28 Level 4 students in two Reading Lab classes in the PIE, and the researcher was the instructor of the participants in the two classes. There were 21 students from Saudi Arabia, 5 students from China, and 2 students from Kuwait aged from 18 to 28. The Reading Lab class met twice a week for an hour.

#### **Selected extensive reading activities**

There were eight activities implemented during the 15-week extensive reading program: (1) ScSR (Scaffolded Silent Reading), (2) Three-minute paper, (3) Moodlreader quiz, (4) Book reviews, (5) Book advertisement presentation, (6) Book blurbs, (7) Listen to a story and respond, and (8) Book club.

#### **Procedures of Extensive Reading**

The 60-minute Reading Lab class time was divided in the following way. First, each class started with ScSR for 15 minutes. The students read self-selected graded readers in the Reading Lab library. After ScSR, the students were asked to share or write about what they read during ScSR. The written responses, three-minute paper, from the students were collected and returned to the students with feedback and grade next class. The next 10 minutes were dedicated to another ER activity such as book blurb activity, listen to a story and respond, or book advertisement presentation in order to help the participants choose an interesting book and motivate them to read more books. The rest 20-30 minutes were used to meet the existing course objectives working on reading skills (e.g., main ideas, major and minor details, inferences, text structures, and so on) and fluency practices.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTENSIVE READING ACTIVITIES

As an out-of-class reading requirement, the participants were asked to read at least 30 minutes a day for five times a week. The participants were required and encouraged to read 100,000 words in a semester. In order to show the participants' reading outside the class, they were required to take a quiz on the website ([moodlereader.org](http://moodlereader.org)) every week. Together with taking a quiz on the website, the participants posted a book review about the book they just finished reading on the blog. The teacher helped the students accomplish this goal by encouraging them, helping them choose books, and giving them opportunities to talk about books throughout the semester.

### **Data Collection**

To examine students' motivation to read in L2 at the beginning of the semester, a motivation survey was conducted on the second week of the semester. The same motivation survey was carried out at the end of the semester to investigate the students' motivational change in reading L2. Since the main purposes of the study are (a) to explore the students' perceptions of the ER activities and reading in and out-of-class and (b) to find out any issues the students might have faced from their in and out-of-class reading, the study took a qualitative approach as a major method by interviewing the students throughout the semester. Formal interviews were conducted two times in the middle of the semester and at the end of the semester. The interview questions were designed in advance. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The teacher also took notes for each interview. The teacher's self-reflection notes after individual class over the semester also comprise of another major part of data gathering. Notes from numerous casual conversations with the participants were also gathered, and they provided insights into the participants' attitudes toward extensive reading, changes in their reading behaviors, and the difficulties they faced.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTENSIVE READING ACTIVITIES

### Results

This study explored how selected extensive reading activities affect students' motivation to read in L2. In addition, the study also examined the students' and the teacher's perceptions of extensive reading. The results of the study shed light on improving the PIE Reading Lab class and other extensive reading programs in L2 settings. The findings showed that the students' response to the selected activities was positive and that the students benefited from the activities. More than fifty percent of the students in the study gained confidence in reading and developed self-efficacy towards reading in L2. Among several reasons which support these findings, the moodle quiz contributed the most to the students' reading engagement. The majority of the students reported that they finished reading more books this semester than the previous semester because of the moodle quiz. Another reason arose from the teacher's support. The teacher's encouragement and assistance throughout the semester helped students read more books. One important finding was from success of the book club. The students in the book club developed their motivation to read in L2 and reported that benefited from the extra time to read out of the class.

### References

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