

# ESL Learners And The Effectiveness Of Extensive Reading

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## ABSTRACT

*In many parts of the world, reading has always been the skill most notably given emphasis in ESL situations. The ability to read in English as the second language is important for academic advancement and for professional and self-development. It is believed that those who read extensively in the second language will gain significantly in their reading abilities and other language skills as well as display positive attitudes towards reading in the second language. By practising extensive reading, ESL readers display improvement in their range of language uses and language knowledge. There are affective benefits as well where readers show positive attitude and motivation towards reading in English. The benefits ESL readers get from extensive reading will tremendously assist them in their reading for survival, learning and enjoyment – be it on religions, philosophy, technical or entertainment. Clearly, extensive reading is an approach worth exploring in developing fluent and competent ESL readers.*

## BACKGROUND

Over the years, many reading approaches and strategies have been developed by ESL practitioners in order to assist learners develop reading competence. Having ESL learners read in English extensively on their own, at their own level and for their own pleasure long after their formal education is over is every language teacher's aim. However, due to the many unfamiliar words that an ESL learner encounters, hampering the process of comprehension, the learner becomes less motivated. Thus the reading process and progress may come to a halt. Quite often the problem is made worse when an ESL teacher assumes that teaching reading in an ESL classroom consists merely of coming to class, reading the prepared texts, asking questions to check comprehension and doing some vocabulary exercises. As a result, learners find reading in English as a second language difficult as the focus is largely on finding main ideas and supporting details. It ignores the larger context of interests, attitudes and the motivation to read. With this approach to reading, it appears that reading is not an interesting activity. As a result, learners become reluctant to read. The aim to develop fluent and competent readers cannot be not achieved because learners do not read enough. So, what can ESL practitioners do to encourage learners to read?

Before dealing with reading approaches and strategies, especially in the second language, it is important to understand the processes involved in reading and the reasons for reading. Only then can ESL practitioners guide and direct their learners properly.

### **The reading processes**

Most ESL reading theories and instructions have been influenced by the L1 theories. According to Coady (1979), reading comprises several components. The first component is process strategies e.g. word identification. This is similar to the process described by Day & Bamford (1998) - reading starts with the exact, fast and automatic recognition of vocabulary.

The ability to accomplish automatic word recognition enables readers to read easily, effortlessly and quickly. Words that readers are able to identify are known as sight vocabulary. However, being able to identify a large number of words does not mean total understanding of the text. Nonetheless, it is necessary for good comprehension.

Another reading process that is closely related to sight vocabulary is lexical access (Day & Bamford, 1998). Lexical access is the process whereby the meaning of words is automatically recalled from the memory of “the word’s meaning and its phonological representation” (Stanovich, 1992:4). Semantic and syntactic interpretations come automatically by looking at how words are spelled, thus comprehension is achieved.

While the two earlier mentioned processes i.e. process strategies and lexical access, require speed, accuracy, automaticity and little processing capacity to achieve, comprehension of the text requires more than that. This is due to the fact that comprehension of the text is considered the high-order processes (Day & Bamford, 1998).

This leads to another key component of reading which is prior or background knowledge (Coady, 1979). Readers who have more prior knowledge about a reading passage are able to comprehend it better compared to those with less (Fauziah Hassan, 2002). Comprehension or construction of meaning will depend on the reader’s knowledge of the language, the structure of the text, knowledge of the subject of the reading and world knowledge (Day & Bamford, 1998).

However, unorganized collection of vocabulary and other prior knowledge are not sufficient to ensure total comprehension. To achieve these high-order comprehension skills, the knowledge gathered must be organized. This way it can be easily retrieved when needed in order to comprehend a given text.

The description of the cognitive interactive processes of reading applies to reading in all languages, regardless of the different writing systems (Wallace, 1992). Thus, reading in the first language and reading in the second language require similar strategies.

Having discussed the processes involved in reading, it is imperative to look at the purpose of reading. This will provide us better understanding on the connection between the reading

processes and the reasons for reading and how extensive reading can be of significant assistance in order to become fluent and competent readers.

### **Purpose of reading**

Why do we read? What is the purpose of reading?

Rivers & Temperly (1978) suggest seven main reasons for reading:

1. To get information for some specific purpose;
2. To obtain instructions on how to perform some tasks in our work or daily life (e.g. to know how to operate the micro-wave oven);
3. To act in a play, play a game or do a puzzle – in short, for pleasure purposes;
4. To keep in touch with friends by mail or to comprehend business letters;
5. To know when or where something will take place or what is available;
6. To know what is happening or has happened (as reported in newspapers, magazines, reports)
7. For enjoyment or excitement.

Wallace (1992) proposes three possible reasons for reading. His proposal is actually a compressed version of what Rivers & Temperly (1978) suggest. According to Wallace (1992), there are three reasons for reading – reading for survival, reading for learning and reading for enjoyment.

Reading for survival is reading in order to function in our environment, such as reading street signs, labels – reading to enable us to survive.

Reading for learning is reading for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. ESL practitioners often assume that this type of reading is actually reading school related materials. Reading for learning also refers to reading matters related to day-to-day activities such as the newspapers.

Reading for enjoyment or pleasure, also referred to as aesthetic reading by Rosenblatt (1978), is reading materials such as novels, magazines, the likes of which bring such enjoyment or pleasure which can be experienced over and over again.

However, second language learners, quite often, read because they have to and not because they want to. They read in the second language for business purposes, for learning and for survival. Very seldom, they read for enjoyment or pleasure. As a result, they do not continue reading in the second language after their formal education is over as their needs to read are rather restricted to limited purposes.

According to Day & Bamford (1998), this important transformation i.e. from reading because one has to, to reading because one wants to read and enjoys doing it, is possible. If second language learners can learn to read in the second language and enjoy reading in the second language, they will continue reading in the second language long after their formal education is over. Ultimately they become fluent readers in the second language. This is where extensive reading plays a significant role.

### **Extensive reading**

What is extensive reading? According to Day & Bamford (1997), extensive reading is reading large amounts of text with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the material. In other words, learners read to get the meaning of the text rather than the meaning of individual words or sentences. What extensive reading aims to achieve is to get learners to read in the second language and enjoy doing it. Once the element of enjoyment comes into the picture, learners will automatically want to read more. The more they read, the more fluent they become. Not only will they develop the love for reading, learners' general language competence will also increase (Day & Bamford, 1998).

An extensive reading programme has ten characteristics.

1. *Learners read as much as possible*, perhaps in and definitely out of the classroom. To become fluent readers, it is important for learners to read in quantity as much as possible.
2. *A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available* so as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways. This also provides the learners with the opportunity to identify what they like to read. Apart from that, learners also learn the different skills and strategies required for different types of reading.
3. *Learners select what they want to read* and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them. Having identified what they are interested in, learners can pursue reading what they like. The most important thing is to get them to enjoy reading. Once they have found what they like, they will enjoy reading it and continue reading. Thus they become fluent readers.
4. *The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding*. These purposes are determined by the nature of the material and the interests of the student. When reading, it is important that learners enjoy doing it. The element of enjoyment found in reading will encourage learners to read more. Total comprehension of the meaning of words is not central.
5. *Reading is its own reward*. There are few or no follow-up exercises after reading. This implies that the whole process of reading is a reward in itself. There should not be any follow-up comprehension exercises after learners have completed reading a text as they will only 'kill' the joy of reading. Reading then becomes a chore. Instead, learners should be encouraged to discuss, for example, the characters or events found in the text, and their reactions towards the text.

6. *Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students* in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up for meaning of words makes fluent reading difficult. It is important that when a learner chooses a text and starts reading it, he does not feel intimidated by the vocabulary or grammar. He should feel that he is in control of the text. This will encourage him to read more. According to Fauziah Hassan (2002), readability of the text should be one level lower than the learner's current level i.e.  $i - 1$ . A large percentage of the vocabulary and grammar is well within the learner's competence and can be comprehended easily.
7. *Reading is individual and silent*, at the student's own pace and outside class, done when and where the learner chooses. It is entirely up to the learner to choose the preferred text and read it whenever and wherever he wishes.
8. *Reading speed is usually faster than slower* as learners read books and materials they find easy to understand. This is because learners read materials that are easy and that they are interested in. They are not forced to read materials that they find boring or difficult. Thus, reading becomes faster.
9. *Teachers orient learners to the goals of the program, explain the methodology, keep track* of what each learner reads, and *guide* learners in getting the most out of the programme. It is important for the teacher to understand his roles in order to ensure the programme is carried out effectively and efficiently. He also needs to guide and motivate the learners to read.
10. *The teacher is a role model of a reader for learners* - an active member of the classroom reading community, demonstrating what it means to be a reader and the rewards of being a reader. The teacher needs to set an example and by doing so, he can motivate the learners to read. (Day & Bamford, 1998)

### **The role of extensive reading in developing fluent and competent second language readers**

In order to become fluent and competent readers in the second language, learners need to acquire a large amount of sight vocabulary. Sight vocabulary consists of words that readers recognize automatically in a reading passage, though they may not necessarily know the actual meaning of those words.

Learners also need a wide general vocabulary i.e. words that learners automatically recognize and able to recall the meanings. In addition, organized knowledge of the target language, the world and text types are also essential in developing fluent and competent second language readers. How can extensive reading fit in to achieve all these needs in order to develop fluent second language readers?

One of the characteristics of extensive reading is that learners read as much as possible. By doing this, they will encounter certain words repeatedly. As a result of multiple encounters,

the words get registered in the learners' sight vocabulary. Due to familiarity of the words, they will automatically recognize and recall those words without much effort when they see them in print.

Although a large sight vocabulary does not necessarily guarantee comprehension, some level of comprehension can be achieved when learners encounter a particular word used again and again in various contexts. As a result, learners know the different contexts in which a particular word can be used. This over learning of words contributes to the development of a large sight vocabulary, which is one of the key components in developing fluent and competent second language readers.

According to Nagy and Herman (1987), children who know more words understand texts better. They are able to understand and comprehend texts better than those with smaller vocabulary. Hence, there is a need for a large vocabulary in second language reading. The more vocabulary a learner has, the better he is at attempting to comprehend texts.

Grabe (1988) further asserts that a second language reader needs 'a massive receptive vocabulary' that can be accessed quickly, accurately and automatically. Due to the lack of huge receptive vocabulary, the second language reader faces difficulty in retrieving vocabulary fast, accurately and automatically. This poses a stumbling block to fluent reading.

It is a cycle whereby to become a fluent and competent reader in the second language, the reader needs to read and read. This is so that the vocabulary becomes receptive vocabulary and can be accessed automatically. But because the receptive vocabulary is low, the reader has problems understanding the text. Comprehension is impeded by the lack of vocabulary. This is where the extensive reading approach can be of great assistance in developing large general vocabulary in readers of a second language.

Learners need to read and read, and get exposed to general vocabulary and how they are used in context. By reading in quantity, readers are able to develop large general vocabulary that will help them to retrieve vocabulary fast and accurately, an important factor to fluent reading.

Comprehensibility and choice of reading materials are two important factors to look at in developing large general vocabulary of second language readers. This is because to develop large general vocabulary, a second language reader needs to read large amount of comprehensible and interesting materials. In order to ensure that a beginning second language reader achieves comprehensibility, reading materials should be kept well within the language competence of the reader (Day & Bamford, 1998). This is true especially in terms of vocabulary and grammar as they can encourage reading to take place.

To encourage reading to take place so that large general vocabulary is acquired, the second language reader should not feel intimidated by the vocabulary or grammar of the text. Thus, it is important to allow the reader to read materials that are 'i minus 1'. The readability of the text should be one level lower than the reader's current level. The reader should be able to understand at least 90% of the total number of lexical items in the reading materials without

having to stop and refer to the dictionary for meaning of words. Only then can he understand the text better. This is due to the large general vocabulary acquired through reading. In turn it encourages more reading to take place. When a second language reader wants to read extensively, he is working towards becoming a fluent and competent second language reader.

Another important factor to consider when developing general vocabulary is the availability of wide and interesting range of reading materials. Having an interesting variety of materials on a wide range of topics will ensure that the reader is exposed to varied and interesting reading materials that he can choose from. This will encourage reading to take place.

The final component necessary in order to develop fluent and competent second language readers is knowledge. Comprehension of texts largely depends on organized knowledge of the target language, the world and text types.

A second language reader, equipped with the knowledge mentioned above, i.e. prior knowledge, will be able to comprehend a text better. This is because he is able to utilize the knowledge he has already acquired to assist him in his reading. He is able to make better connections and associations with the text. To acquire the knowledge, a second language reader needs to read and read. Again, it is a cycle.

Second language readers need linguistic, world and topical knowledge to aid them to become fluent and competent readers. To achieve these is through extensive second language reading. The more he reads, the more extensive the different knowledge types he will acquire and accumulate. Once the different knowledge types are developed, it is easier for him to comprehend other reading texts.

The three components, i.e. the development of sight vocabulary, the development of general vocabulary and the development of different knowledge types are interrelated. In order to become fluent and competent second language readers, those three components can be developed through the extensive reading approach.

While it is clear that in order to become fluent second language readers, they need to,

1. develop sight vocabulary,
2. develop general vocabulary,
3. develop different knowledge types,

it is also important to maintain and improve attitude and motivation in second language reading. What role does the extensive reading approach play in maintaining and improving attitudes and motivation of second language readers?

## **Attitudes and second language reading**

Learners who possess positive attitudes towards reading in their own language are most likely to begin reading in a second language with similar attitudes. Therefore, if learners have positive reading attitudes in their own language, the possibility for them to develop similar positive reading attitudes in the second language is higher.

According to Day & Bamford (1998), learners who had successfully experienced learning to read in other languages will most probably develop encouraging attitudes towards learning to read in other languages. This is because positive experiences in reading in the other languages prepare the learners with positive mind-sets. However, previous unsuccessful attempts to read in other languages might become a hindering factor in learning to read in a new language.

Another factor that contributes to the positive attitudes towards second language reading is the way learners perceive the second language, its culture and the people. If the learners have positive attitudes towards the target language, its culture and the people, they will be motivated to read about it in the second language.

Another key factor is the second language classroom environment. Learners who have favourable feelings for and experiences with the teacher, classmates, activities, tasks, procedures and texts are likely to develop positive attitudes towards reading in the second language. This is also true if their experiences are not something they want to remember. The effect is adverse. It might become a contributing factor for learners to dislike reading in the second language. How can the extensive reading approach influence second language readers to develop a positive attitude in second language reading and consequently, become fluent and competent second language readers?

## **Extensive reading and attitude**

One of the characteristics of an extensive reading programme is that learners select what they want to read and have the freedom to stop reading the materials that fail to interest them (Day & Bamford, 1998). This flexibility in choosing what learners want to read allows them to follow their own interests in reading. Learners are not forced to read what they do not find interesting.

If through their reading, they look at the second language culture and its people in a favourable light, learners may develop positive attitudes towards them. However, if they do not find reading about the culture and people of the second language interesting enough to continue reading, they are free to stop and choose other reading materials that interest them.

Even though initially these learners may only read materials that interest them, eventually they may venture into other types of reading materials and develop positive attitudes towards second language reading.



Another characteristic of the extensive reading programme is that reading is its own reward (Day & Bamford, 1998). No form of evaluation should be administered, as learners' personal reactions are more important. They will not be judged for giving the 'wrong' answers to some comprehension questions. The reading classroom environment is encouraging and motivating. The ongoing reading experiences are already rewarding to the learners. These will develop positive attitudes towards second language reading. Learners do not read because they have to answer questions, they read because they want to.

Positive attitudes in second language reading can be developed. Learners are given the freedom to choose what to read and are not forced to read topics that fail to interest them. In addition, they are also given the freedom and choice to stop reading whenever they want to. The extensive reading approach allows learners to read materials well within their linguistic ability. Thus, learners do not feel discouraged simply because they cannot comprehend the materials they are reading. They are free to choose.

Clearly, the favourable ongoing experiences of reading are most significant in establishing positive attitudes towards second language reading. The extensive reading approach provides ample opportunities for that to happen.

### **Motivation and second language reading**

Day & Bamford (1998) identify motivation as the factor that makes people do (or not do) something. According to Lile (2002), there are two types of motivation - intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation from within a person. Learners who are intrinsically motivated to learn a second language do so because they want to learn. They find the materials interesting, challenging and rewarding. They receive satisfaction from learning it.

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to the motivation from outside a person. In other words, learners who are extrinsically motivated to learn a second language do so due to external or other factors e.g. in order to gain some social or economic reward through learning the second language. It is a functional reason for language learning (Holt, 2001).

There are several factors that contribute to the motivation to read in a second language (Day & Bamford, 1998). The first is the reading materials. It is important that the reading materials presented to second language readers are interesting. These materials must be able to attract them to read. If the learners do not find the materials interesting, they will not be motivated to read.

The linguistic level of the materials is also an important point to consider. This is because, if learners cannot understand or comprehend what they read, they will get demotivated. As a result, they will lose interest. The linguistic level of the materials should be somewhere within the learners' levels so that they will not encounter severe difficulties while reading.

It is also important to ensure that reading materials are readily available for the learners to read. When materials are readily available, they are more motivated to read because they do not have to search for the reading materials. They can simply choose what they want to read.

Another key factor is the learners' reading ability in a second language. It is important to ensure that learners read at the level suitable to their reading ability. If they read materials that are way beyond their reading capabilities, they will get frustrated, as comprehension is low. Thus, this will lower their motivation to read.

The socio-cultural environment is another element that either motivates or demotivates learners to read in a second language. Learners whose socio-cultural environment does not encourage reading in a second language will not get motivated to read. Therefore, it is important that the learners' surrounding encourages and influences them to read in a second language.

### **Extensive reading and motivation**

The extensive reading approach stresses reading materials. The reading materials must be well within the learners' linguistic competence i.e.  $i - 1$ , making them easy to read and understand. This motivates learners to continue reading.

Extensive reading also emphasizes the availability of a variety of materials on a wide range of topics for the learners to choose from. Learners are given the freedom to choose what they wish to read. Learners will identify materials they find interesting and read them. Interesting, enjoyable, easy to read and easy to understand second language reading materials motivate learners to read.

Reading ability, too, plays an important role in motivating learners to read in a second language. The extensive reading approach caters to this. Learners read materials well within their linguistic competence and reading ability in terms of vocabulary and grammar. They are in control of the reading text. They do not feel that their reading ability is inadequate to assist them in reading materials in the second language. This is because the materials are well within their 'grasp'. As a result, their confidence level increases and this will motivate them to read more.

Apart from that, as the extensive reading approach emphasizes a wide variety of materials that range from easy to difficult, learners are given the freedom to select materials they can read with ease. They can choose materials they find easy to read and comprehend. From there, they can progress further. Clearly to the learners, their reading ability is able to help them read in the second language. As a result, they become motivated as they are in control over their reading and they would want to read more.

The extensive reading approach also creates a classroom environment that values and promotes a reading culture. The teacher in an extensive reading classroom is a role model of a reader for the learners. He or she demonstrates what it means to be a reader and the

advantages of being a reader. By doing so, the teacher sets an example for his learners and can thus motivate them to read.

Apart from all the other factors i.e. the development of sight vocabulary, the development of general vocabulary and the development of different knowledge types, it is evident that both attitude and motivation are central in the process of developing fluent and competent second language readers. The extensive reading approach provides avenues for teachers to develop and maintain the attitudes and level of motivation of learners reading in a second language.

When learners begin reading in a second language and experience some level of achievement, enjoyment and pleasure, positive attitudes in second language reading will develop. With positive attitudes, learners attempt reading with open minds and will experience more pleasure and excitement in reading. These experiences will increase their motivation to read even more. The more they read the faster they become fluent and competent second language readers.

### **What do second language learners gain from the extensive reading approach**

Extensive reading programmes carried out in ESL classes have shown tremendous progress and results, not only in learners' reading abilities but also in other areas, particularly learners' second language acquisition and development. Learners demonstrate improvement in all the four language skills (Day & Bamford, 1998). In addition, marked improvement can also be seen in learners' vocabulary, spelling abilities, accuracy in usage as well as attitudes and level of motivation.

One of the most significant impacts of extensive reading can be seen in learners' development and progress in reading. Second language learners learn to read in the second language by reading. The more they read, the better their second language reading ability is. According to Day & Bamford (interviewed by Donnes, 1999), students who read large quantities of easy, interesting material will eventually become better readers and will definitely enjoy the experience gathered while and through reading. Simply put, students learn to read by reading. In the extensive reading approach where learners read as much as possible, they develop their second language reading ability. They become fluent and competent readers.

Apart from that, with freedom to select materials linguistically well within their ability, according to their interests and with high motivation, second language learners achieve improvement in their reading speed and greater understanding of the materials (Bell, 2001).

Another significant improvement is the increase in vocabulary (Day & Bamford, 1998). Learners show an increase in vocabulary in terms of total number of lexical items and accuracy in usage. An increase in vocabulary is mainly due to the availability of a variety of materials on a wide range of topics which learners read as much as possible.

In a study conducted by Hafiz and Tudor (1990) where the subjects were studying English in Pakistan with relatively low level of proficiency, significant gains in their vocabulary base

were found. The subjects showed an increase in vocabulary in terms of total number of lexical items as well as accuracy in usage.

In another study related to vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading in a second language conducted by Leung (2002), it was found that the subject's vocabulary knowledge, as measured by a modified Paribakht and Wesche's scale, had improved. The largest improvement was seen in the subject's ability to identify words and use them to construct more semantically and grammatically correct sentences. The gain in vocabulary knowledge in using words in sentences resulted from the large linguistic input the subject received through extensive reading.

According to the subject herself, extensive reading helped her to acquire vocabulary knowledge in various ways. A large amount of input increased her opportunities to be exposed to words learned previously. As a result, it reinforced her existing knowledge of certain vocabulary items and allowed her to apply her vocabulary knowledge in a meaningful way. Apart from that, by reading different genres, she learned words or phrases that would not normally be found in textbooks. Extensive reading also allowed her to discover the meaning of certain words through pictures and contextual clues. In addition, she also discovered new and alternative meanings for certain words that she knew, but in a limited sense.

In addition, the learning of a word, if not soon reinforced by another meeting, will be lost (Nation, 1997). The extensive reading approach, due to multiple encounters of words while reading, strengthens the learning of words.

Multiple encounters of words is also linked to spelling proficiency. The more learners read, the better their spelling becomes. Exposure to target words resulted in learners correctly spelling those words (Day & Bamford, 1998).

Another major influence of the extensive reading approach can also be seen in writing. Because learners learn to write through reading, the extensive reading approach provides a platform for them to develop their writing skills. The more learners read, the more exposed they are to huge number of words and structures in the second language. As a result, the more fluent and competent they become. These influence and assist their writing.

In a study conducted by Robb and Susser (1989) in Japan, it was found that the subjects showed significant improvement in their writing skills especially summary writing.

An L2 study conducted by Hafiz and Tudor (1989) in the UK also displayed marked improvement in the performance of the subjects' written work.

In addition, an increase in the learners' overall competence in the target language can also be achieved. The extensive reading approach promotes competence in both listening and speaking abilities of the learners.

Apart from that, exposure to reading materials, coupled with high reading frequency and quantity also promote accuracy of usage (Hafiz & Tudor, 1990). This is because vocabulary learning achieved through reading does not happen in isolation. Learners' multiple encounters of any particular word in different usage shows the different contexts in which a word may occur. This promotes accuracy in usage that is exhibited in the learners' speaking abilities and written work.

A central area that also demonstrates significant improvement is the affect. Both attitudes and motivation towards second language reading improve. Through the extensive reading approach, learners' attitudes towards second language reading change. They become eager readers. They develop positive attitudes towards books and read as much as possible. They also become motivated to read in the second language, having discovered the pleasure of reading (Day & Bamford, 1998).

In a study conducted by Renandya and Jacobs (1999), it was found that adult second language learners who initially were not very eager to spend time reading graded readers displayed a change of attitude towards reading after going through an extensive reading programme. The subjects showed positive change in reading after discovering the pleasure and insight provided by the reading materials. From the initially not-so-eager readers, the subjects gradually develop a healthy reading habit. Not only was there a marked change of attitude in reading, the subjects also gained greater language proficiency.

Leung (2002) found that the subject, after being exposed to extensive reading, also displayed positive reading attitude throughout the course of her study. She gained confidence and developed excitement towards reading, as she was able to identify different vocabulary in various texts and figure out meanings of words or sentences while reading. As her level of confidence grew, whenever faced with different and complex structures of the language, she acknowledged the complexity and tried to resolve them one at a time. She also became motivated to read books that she came across in order to improve her reading proficiency so she could comprehend the essence of the story. In addition, whenever she was able to read something interesting that was within her level of proficiency, it motivated her to read more.

Grabe (1991) further asserts the benefits of extensive reading comprise not only general language proficiency but also attitudes and motivation.

Apart from encouraging the development of fluency and comprehension, the extensive reading approach can also become a tool to prepare students for academic reading, which requires critical and creative thinking.

Gradman and Hanania (1991) found that reading outside class was the most significant contributing factor in the increase in TOEFL test performance. They found the strongest connection going from individual out of class reading to TOEFL results. Oral exposure, speaking and listening outside class, and communicative oral use affected out of class reading.

## CONCLUSION

In order to develop fluent and competent ESL readers, the extensive reading approach is an approach worth exploring by ESL practitioners.

Students need to read extensively in order to develop good reading habits and become fluent readers. Experimental studies have shown that with the implementation of extensive reading, there are marked improvement in reading, and a whole range of language uses and areas of language knowledge (Nation, 1997). Success in reading and skills related to it, particularly writing, makes learners come to enjoy language learning.

In addition, extensive reading is an important 'instrument' in developing overall language uses and areas of language knowledge. These serve as important tools to prepare students for academic reading, which requires critical and creative thinking. Apart from that, students also benefit in their tests performances from extensive reading as they could utilize knowledge acquired and accumulated.

Although the focus is largely on language improvement, it is clear that there are affective benefits as well involving attitudes and motivation.

Clearly extensive reading displays positive effect whereby the longer concentrated periods of silent reading will build vocabulary and develop structural awareness, develop automaticity, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills and promote confidence and motivation. All of which are important factors in becoming fluent and competent second language readers, in this case the English language.

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