

EXPLORING INTENSIVE AND EXTENSIVE READING

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Abstract: This article explores the complementary roles of extensive and intensive reading in enhancing reading comprehension among English language learners (ELLs). It defines both approaches: extensive reading as reading large amounts of easier texts for overall understanding and enjoyment, and intensive reading as close, analytical reading of shorter, more challenging texts. The article highlights the benefits of extensive reading, including vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency, and learner motivation, while also emphasizing that intensive reading supports deeper understanding of grammar, vocabulary usage, and critical reading skills. The author argues that integrating both methods creates a more balanced and effective reading curriculum. Practical strategies are provided for classroom implementation, such as graded readers, reading journals, vocabulary tasks, and discussion activities. The article concludes that a combined approach fosters both reading fluency and accuracy, ultimately leading to improved overall comprehension in ELLs.

Keywords: English learning, reading comprehension, intensive reading, extensive reading, teaching methods, student motivation, creative, phonology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, decoding.

English learning

The process of learning English includes four skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading is a learning activity dominated by the eyes and brain, where eyes receive the message, and then the brain processes to obtain the meaning of the message received. Reading included in the receptive skill. Receptive skill is emphasis on active involvement of the student as a reader. In each session of the English class, the four English skills are combined into different topics. There are a

number of factors that influence students' success in understanding English text when reading is taught at the higher education level. Several causes, including both internal and environmental factors, may contribute to its occurrence. In order to teach reading, the lecturer hands out a reading text with a fresh theme and attempts to carry out the process of eliciting the general knowledge or prior knowledge of the students related to the theme by responding to questions or inquiring about those themes so that students have an opinion what will be discussed in progress. Students used their prior knowledge of the topics during the process to aid in their comprehension of the book. This approach places a strong emphasis on the lead-in phase, which involves piquing students' interest in the subject matter, getting them to guess what they will be reading, and inspiring them to read. The teacher's creativity is needed in determining the proper method of teaching reading comprehension to students. The method that can be applied to improving reading skills is Intensive Reading and Extensive Reading to produce satisfying output in learning. Intensive Reading (IR) and Extensive Reading (ER) theoretically have the advantage that continuously reviewing and testing in a number of studies in various places all over the world. If used properly during the learning process, Intensive reading and Extensive Reading can speed up the process of learning to read English text as well as increase reading comprehension¹. The way that extensive reading approaches reading instruction is considerably different from the way that intensive reading, a widely used conventional method does. Extensive reading is a different approach for teaching students how to understand English text. Extensive reading is thought of as an additional strategy, not as a replacement for intensive reading. Therefore, there should be studies to determine the extent of the ability to read English text students with the adoption of the IR and ER methods. This prompted the authors to conduct research with the title "Intensive Reading and Extensive Reading in Teaching Reading Comprehension". However, many studies have been done in Intensive Reading (IR) and Extensive Reading (ER).

Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to process written text, understand its meaning, and to integrate with what the reader already knows. Reading comprehension relies on two abilities that are connected to each other: word reading and language comprehension. Comprehension specifically is a "creative, multifaceted process" that is dependent upon four language skills: phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Reading comprehension is beyond basic literacy alone, which is the ability to decipher characters and words at all. The opposite of reading comprehension is called functional

illiteracy. Reading comprehension occurs on a gradient or spectrum, rather than being yes/no (all-or-nothing). In education it is measured in standardized tests that report which percentile a reader's ability falls into, as compared with other readers' ability.

Some of the fundamental skills required in efficient reading comprehension are the ability to:

- know the meaning of words,
- understand the meaning of a word from a discourse context,
- follow the organization of a passage and to identify antecedents and references in it,
- draw inferences from a passage about its contents,
- identify the main thought of a passage,
- ask questions about the text,
- answer questions asked in a passage,
- visualize the text,
- recall prior knowledge connected to text,
- recognize confusion or attention problems,
- recognize the literary devices or propositional structures used in a passage and determine its tone,
- understand the situational mood (agents, objects, temporal and spatial reference points, casual and intentional inflections, etc.) conveyed for assertions, questioning, commanding, refraining, etc., and
- determine the writer's purpose, intent, and point of view, and draw inferences about the writer (discourse-semantics).

Comprehension skills that can be applied as well as taught to all reading situations include:

- Summarizing
- Sequencing
- Inferencing
- Comparing and contrasting
- Drawing conclusions
- Self-questioning
- Problem-solving

- Relating background knowledge
- Distinguishing between fact and opinion
- Finding the main idea, important facts, and supporting details.

There are many reading strategies to use in improving reading comprehension and inferences, these include improving one's vocabulary, critical text analysis (intertextuality, actual events vs. narration of events, etc.), and practising deep reading. The ability to comprehend text is influenced by the readers' skills and their ability to process information. If word recognition is difficult, students tend to use too much of their processing capacity to read individual words which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read.

The implementation of **intensive reading** (IR) the method in a study entitled “teaching reading of narrative text by using intensive reading”. N. Dani stated that the score of student achievement in reading comprehension was in line with the development of their reading interest, it proved that the IR greatly assists students to understand the text starting from an easy passage up to an advanced reading level². Intensive reading (IR) can overcome obstacles encountered by teachers and students while most importantly students can read the text easily and have fun. Based on the empirical results, it concluded that IR and ER methods could be applied in English subjects to improve students' comprehension in reading English text.

Extensive reading is reading widely and in large quantities, with the main aim to enjoy reading activities, while intensive reading is reading that is only limited to the short text and carried out with the aim of understanding the whole content of reading. As an approach to reading literacy, these two methods are differentiated in various aspects relating to reading activities, which include the main objectives of reading, focus on reading text, the sources, and types of reading, the number of reading texts, the speed of reading level, and the method of reading.

In general, successful IR and ER programs adopt the fundamental traits of IR and ER techniques for teaching English. The following ten traits should manifest, in accordance with R. Day and S. Bamford in Miller, in order to develop an effective emergency room program: The objectives of reading activities are for enjoyment, informational purposes, and general comprehension. Students should read reading materials as frequently as they can, and the material should be supplied in a variety of topics, types, and degrees of difficulty. The rewards earned from reading the text are the pleasure and satisfaction of reading activities itself, the level of difficulty from

reading text must be similar to the level of students' reading comprehension, reading is done per student, and in silent reading, reading speed is fast rather than slow speed of reading, lecturer guides students to the aims of the reading activities, explain the methodology, keep record and track what each student reads, and help students to acquire the benefits of reading, and the lecturer should set a good example as an active and extensive reader. *Apart from extensive reading, intensive reading* has the feel of an educational speech activity because either it may be done in a classroom with a teacher present or at home with the textbook author, who has created a unique approach for its (reading) development. Understanding is the end objective of intensive reading (as it is with extensive reading), but the level of comprehension is very different from that of extensive reading. Intensive reading texts require complete comprehension of both the topic and linguistic structure. Methodologists suggest short texts for teaching intensive reading, which can be read in one or two lessons or within one or two homework assignments, and for extensive - quite long texts, intended for independent reading, keeping in mind that as the length of the material being read increases, the process of its detailed understanding becomes more complicated. While not necessary, entertaining texts designed for in-depth reading are preferred. Relevance of the text's substance and linguistic components, as well as compatibility with the student's professional interests, are essential requirements.

Large quantities of graded reader texts help learners read faster and understand meaning more automatically, contributing significantly to improved comprehension and fluency. Learners acquire new vocabulary through repeated exposures and guessing meanings from context rather than through isolated memorization, building lexical competence gradually. Builds positive attitudes and motivation toward reading. Self-selected, engaging reading materials promote enjoyment, confidence, and sustained interest in learning English. Students take charge of their reading choices and pace, fostering independence and intrinsic motivation.

Example methods: Graded readers, reading logs, and self-selected books enable large-scale reading in a low-stress environment. Intensive reading involves a careful and thorough analysis of short, often challenging texts. This close examination helps learners focus on understanding complex grammatical structures and unfamiliar vocabulary in context. By repeatedly analyzing detailed language features, learners deepen their linguistic knowledge, which supports overall language development. Intensive reading tasks often include parsing sentences, breaking down syntax, and clarifying meanings of difficult words. Beyond literal comprehension, intensive

reading fosters critical thinking skills such as making inferences, interpreting implied meaning, identifying main ideas, and understanding the author's purpose. Learners learn to engage with texts analytically, which improves their ability to understand nuanced and complex information. Such skills are essential in academic contexts and professional settings where deep comprehension is required. Because intensive reading demands a thorough understanding of the material, it is particularly valuable for learners preparing for academic exams, standardized tests, or coursework that requires critical reading. It helps students develop strategies to dissect questions, locate relevant information, and build well-informed responses, making it a practical tool in formal education. Intensive reading promotes active engagement with the text through methods such as highlighting key points, annotating margins with questions or summaries, underlining important vocabulary, and taking structured notes. These strategies help learners organize their understanding and retain information more effectively. Additionally, active reading supports metacognition, enabling learners to monitor their comprehension and adjust strategies as needed. In practice, intensive reading often involves classroom activities where learners read short excerpts from academic journals, essays, or literary works. Students analyze the text line-by-line, identify unfamiliar words or structures, discuss meanings, and summarize key points. This process supports detailed understanding and prepares students for more complex reading tasks. Extensive reading focuses on developing reading fluency and overall comprehension through large amounts of easy texts, while intensive reading emphasizes detailed understanding, language accuracy, and critical thinking through careful analysis of shorter, complex texts. Together, they address both the breadth and depth of reading skills.

Effective language programs combine extensive and intensive reading by alternating between largescale reading for pleasure and detailed classroom activities, ensuring learners benefit from both fluency and analytical skills. This integration supports motivation and comprehensive language development. ***Time constraints in curriculum:*** Teachers often face limited classroom time, making it challenging to allocate sufficient periods for both extensive and intensive reading practices within a packed syllabus. Balancing these reading activities with other language skills requires careful planning. ***Choosing appropriate materials for learner levels:*** Selecting texts that match learners' proficiency is crucial. Materials that are too difficult may discourage learners, while texts that are too easy may fail to challenge them or develop their skills adequately. ***Students' lack of motivation or reading habits:*** Many learners

do not have established reading habits or intrinsic motivation, particularly for extensive reading, which relies on voluntary, sustained engagement with texts outside class. Encouraging consistent reading can be difficult. ***Assessment of reading progress (especially for extensive reading)***: Evaluating progress in extensive reading is complex because it involves measuring improvements in fluency, comprehension, and motivation over time rather than performance on discrete tasks. Appropriate assessment tools and strategies are needed. ***Provide a variety of reading materials (graded readers, authentic texts)***: Offering diverse reading resources caters to different learner levels and interests, helping maintain motivation and providing both accessible and challenging content. ***Encourage reading outside the classroom with reading journals or book clubs***: Supporting extensive reading through tools like reading logs, journals, or group book discussions fosters learner autonomy and engagement beyond formal lessons. ***Integrate vocabulary and grammar exercises into intensive reading***: Combining detailed text analysis with targeted language exercises reinforces comprehension and helps learners acquire new vocabulary and grammatical structures effectively. ***Use technology (e.g., reading apps or online libraries)***: Incorporating digital tools such as e-readers, reading apps, and online resources expands access to a wide range of materials and supports flexible learning environments. ***Monitor progress through discussions, quizzes, or reflective writing***: Regular assessment via classroom discussions, comprehension quizzes, and reflective assignments helps track learners' reading development and encourages metacognitive skills.

Conclusion

Both **extensive** and **intensive reading** methods play vital roles in enhancing reading comprehension among language learners. Extensive reading allows learners to engage with large volumes of material, promoting reading fluency, general understanding, and positive attitudes toward reading. By reading widely and frequently, learners develop automaticity and confidence in their reading skills, which boosts motivation and overall language acquisition. In contrast, intensive reading focuses on detailed analysis of shorter texts, helping learners master complex grammatical structures, build precise vocabulary knowledge, and develop higher-order comprehension skills such as inference, critical thinking, and identifying main ideas. This combination supports learners in both the broad and deep aspects of reading comprehension. A **blended approach** that integrates both extensive and intensive reading is highly effective for comprehensive language development. This balanced method addresses the complementary nature of the two approaches: extensive reading builds fluency and

enjoyment, while intensive reading fosters accuracy and critical engagement with texts. Such integration helps learners achieve both speed and depth in their reading skills, which are essential for academic success and real-world language use. Furthermore, employing a blend of these methods ensures that learners do not become overly reliant on either fast, superficial reading or slow, laborious decoding, but instead develop adaptable reading strategies. Finally, it is essential for teachers to adapt and customize these reading strategies based on their learners' specific contexts, proficiency levels, interests, and learning goals. Flexibility in instructional design allows educators to respond to the diverse needs of their students, making reading instruction more relevant and engaging. For example, beginner learners may benefit more initially from extensive reading to build fluency and confidence, while advanced learners might require more intensive reading to refine their analytical skills. Ongoing assessment and feedback are also crucial to tailoring instruction effectively. By being responsive to learner differences and the educational environment, teachers can maximize the benefits of both reading approaches.

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