

Improving Reading Comprehension through Extensive Reading: the case of WCU 2nd year English Majoring students

Abebe Lolamo Anjulo: (MA in TEFL)

Lecturer at Wachemo University, Department of English, Hossana, Ethiopia

Research scholar in Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, India

E-mail: tesfahun65@gmail.com

Co-authors

Addise Abame (MA in TEFL): lecturer at Wachemo University

Molalign Biraga (MA in TEFL): lecturer at Wachemo University

Tsegaye Abe (MA in Literature): lecturer at Wachemo University

Samson Fantu (MA in Linguistics): lecturer at Wachemo University

Abstract

This study was designed to improve students' reading comprehensions through extensive reading. In other words, it was intended to identify to what extent students' reading comprehension is affected through extensive reading strategy in English as a Second or Foreign Language classrooms. Particularly, it was attempted to (a) identify the effect of extensive reading strategy on reading comprehension of English majoring students. Moreover, it was proposed (b) to identify which reading strategy (i. e. extensive or intensive) that learners use more frequently so as to improve their reading comprehension. In the classroom, there were 38 students who were taking courses. There was only one section: 2nd year English majoring students in the university. Test and re-test that need extensive reading strategies was designed and administered to 38 students. For this purpose, after assessing the students' reading comprehension level, the researchers let learners engaged reading short stories, short novels, poems and other texts. Three months training program was designed and delivered accordingly focusing on extensive reading strategy, and they made thorough follow-up of learners' activities. After implementation of training, re-test was given focusing on similar texts: short novels, short stories, poems and others. To address the second objective, questionnaire was developed and administered to all the target population. Subsequently, comparing and contrasting the results of before implementation and after implementation was carried out. Thus, it was identified that extensive reading has a great positive effect on students' reading comprehension, and intensive reading strategy is most frequently used by the students. So, even though teachers are playing their roles regarding the issues, they have to incorporate more extensive reading texts like short stories, novels, poems and others in teaching reading comprehension in EFL classroom context, and they have to encourage students and make them aware of importance of using extensive reading strategy out of classrooms for better improvement of reading comprehension.

Key words: Reading Comprehension, Improving, Extensive Reading, EFL classroom & out of classrooms context

INTRODUCTION

What is Reading?

Reading has got different definitions throughout history, and it is one of the most fundamental skills in a language. As to Smith (1994b) cited in Mikeladze (2014), reading is explained as: “transfer of meaning from mind to mind. The reader gets the meaning by reading. In this process the reader, the writer and the text are involved.” It involves a process of active interpretation of what is written. In other words, reading is defined as the ability to make sense of written or printed symbols. Meaning, reader uses symbols to tiger information in his/her memory, and this information is used to construct sense full interpretation of writer’s message.

Wikipedia, free Encyclopedia explained reading as follows:

Reading is a complex "cognitive process" of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning (reading comprehension). Reading is a means of language acquisition, communication, and of sharing information and ideas. Like all languages, it is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community which is culturally and socially situated. The reading process requires continuous practice, development, and refinement.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading process](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading_process))

As we can recognize, understanding or comprehension is a crucial thing in reading. It’s impossible to say texts are read if readers don’t comprehend. Depending on purpose, the way we read a text varies from text to text. For instance, if our purpose is looking a word on dictionary, scanning will be the best strategies. There are wide ranges of reading strategies which need to be used, but we would like to deal only with one of them: Extensive reading strategy. At the end, it was explained that how far the reading strategy contributes in enhancing students reading comprehension ability.

What are the Roles of Extensive Reading in Language Learning?

Extensive reading has several importances in language learning. According to Bell, T, extensive reading strategy includes the following significance in acquisition of language; it:

- Provides 'comprehensible input'
- Enhances learners' general language competence
- Increases the students' exposure to the language
- Increase knowledge of vocabulary
- Leads to improvement in writing
- Motivates learners to read
- Consolidate previously learned language
- Helps to build confidence with extended texts
- Facilitates the development of prediction skills

(Bell, T, 1998)

This indicates that extensive reading has paramount importance in comprehension of a certain text. Thus, providing a great emphasis for this and other strategies and using them in balanced way is prominent.

Statement of the Problem

Reading is very crucial skills in learning every subject. If one can't read texts properly, he or she can't be successful in his or in her academic achievements. but, perception towards reading is wrong. Many people perceive reading as a simple pronunciation of printed words on paper. Reading is not easy like that. one who reads a given text should understand and knows the way to read a text.

Based on purposes of reading, there are different strategies of reading that help readers to develop their reading skills. Therefore, intensive, extensive, scanning and skimming are some of the common strategies. "Good readers typically employ multiple strategies to achieve their reading comprehension." (Celce- Murcia and Brinton, 2014:197). But in recent years; two approaches have been used in developing reading skills, known as extensive and intensive reading strategies. It is believed that these two approaches can be beneficial, in one way or another, for improving learners' reading comprehension.

In language learning, extensive reading is contrasted with *intensive reading*, which is slow, careful reading of a small amount of difficult text.

According to the researchers' experience, we are doubtful that the target group applies extensive strategies of reading accordingly. So, the main intension of this study was to improve students'

reading comprehension through applying extensive reading strategy that has been used and advocated by many scholars in language learning process.

Different scholars have conducted different studies on different reading strategies, but this study emphasis on only one strategy: extensive reading strategy and its effect on reading comprehension of English majoring students at WCU. To this effect, we are strived to address the following questions:

- a. What effect extensive reading strategy has on reading comprehension of English majoring students?
- b. Which reading strategy learners use frequently so as to improve their reading comprehension? Extensive or intensive?

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The main objective of this study was to improve students reading comprehensions through extensive reading. In other words, it was to identify to what extent students' reading comprehension is affected through extensive reading strategy in English as a second or foreign language classroom.

Specific Objectives

- To identify the effect of extensive reading strategy on reading comprehension of English majoring students
- To identify which reading strategy (i. e. extensive or intensive) that learners use more so as to improve their reading comprehension.

Significance of the Study

Carrying out this study on this issue might have the following importance: it contributes for achieving educational goals and assuring quality of education through improving reading skills.

The first beneficiary of this study are students, particularly second year English majoring students since the study focuses on improving their reading comprehensions. In other words, the main beneficiaries of this study are the learners who are taking reading skills course in the university because the study is believed to give due attention on the improvement of their reading skills through giving emphasis on extensive reading strategies in combination with other strategies. Moreover, the researchers acquired some skills of conducting research on certain problems, and they acquired additional knowledge of the subject matter and other aspects of it while reviewing the related literature and carrying out the whole study process. In addition, it might contribute other researchers who want to conduct similar studies on similar problem by providing relevant information in the area.

Research Design and Methodology

Research Setting

Wachemo University in Hadiyya Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia is purposively selected for this study. The main reason of selecting this site was that the researchers' experience of teaching English as a foreign language or second language in the University. In other words, familiarity and accessibility of the researchers let this research site to be designated. All the researchers are lectures in the university, and they all have experience of teaching different courses of English for the target population. Due to time and financial constraints, the scope is limited

only to extensive reading strategy of second year major English students of Wachemo University.

Procedures of Data Collection

Firstly, the researchers assessed the reading comprehension level of students through providing pre-test. Afterward, they taught reading skills by applying the extensive reading strategy. After that, they gave re-test. Then, they compared and contrasted the results of before implementation and after implementation; So as to identify which reading strategy (i. e. extensive or intensive) is more effective from the students' point of view, they used students' questionnaire.

Participants of the Study

The respondents of this study were students of Wachemo University, specifically; second year learners who were learning English as a major subject. They were 38 in number in a class; all of them were included in the study.

Data Gathering Tools

Test and re-test

Test and re-test that need extensive reading strategies was designed and administered to students. For this purpose, the researchers used short stories, novels, poems and other texts. After assessing the students reading comprehension level, three months training program was designed and delivered accordingly focusing on extensive reading strategy. After implementation of training, retest was given focusing on similar texts: novel short stories, poems and others. Subsequently, comparing and contrasting the results of before implementation and after implementation was carried out.

Students' Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed so as to identify which reading strategy (i. e. extensive or intensive) is more frequently used from the students' point of view. A questionnaire including Closed-ended questionnaire that was constructed in lickert scale, a total of fifteen items was designed and administered to 38 students. It includes rating scales for frequency.

Sampling Techniques

From different departments, this target group was selected purposively. In the classroom there were 38 students who were taking courses. Available sampling technique was employed to

select the target group because it was not beyond the capacity of the researchers to manage. There was only one section: 2nd year English majoring students in the university. All of them were inculcated as respondents for the questionnaire so as to address the next objective.

Methods of Data analysis

Data gathered through students' questionnaire was analyzed by using SPSS, and data collected through test and re- test was also analyzed and interpreted quantitatively.

Result of the study

Result from Students' Questionnaire

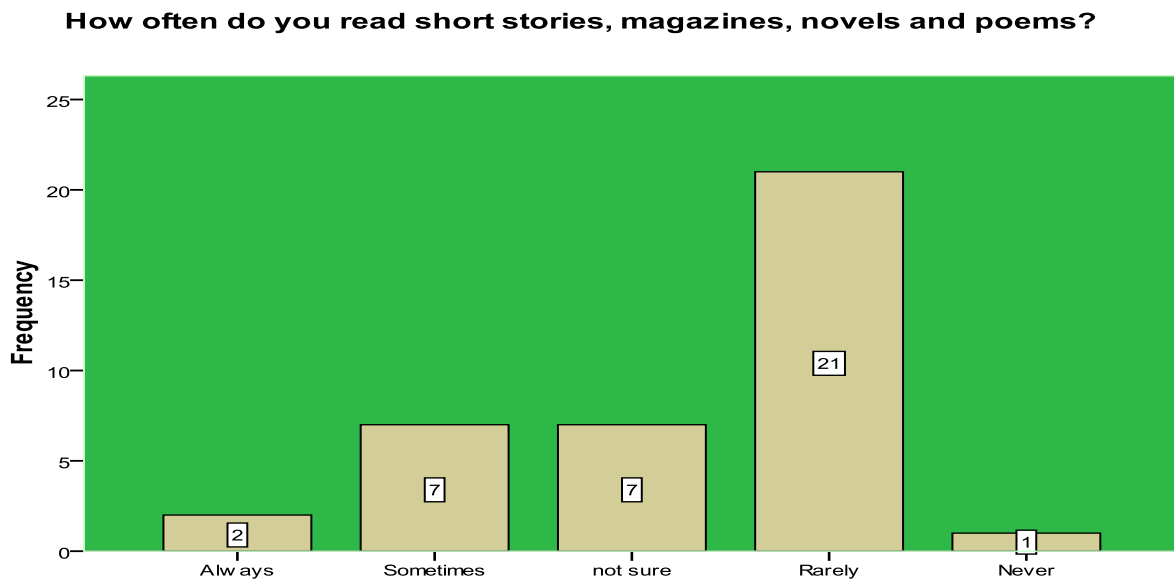


Figure 1, shows frequency that learners read short stories, magazines, novels and poem

As can be noted from table 1, majority 21(55.2%) of the respondents rarely read short stories, magazines, novels and poem out of classrooms, but a few of them 2(5.26%) always read the texts. This indicates that learners are not applying extensive reading strategies for better improvement of their

reading skills rather than reading for only exams purpose. The next chart illustrates us how often instructors use the texts in the classroom.

How often does your EFL teacher use stories, magazines, newspapers... during teaching reading comprehensions in the classroom?

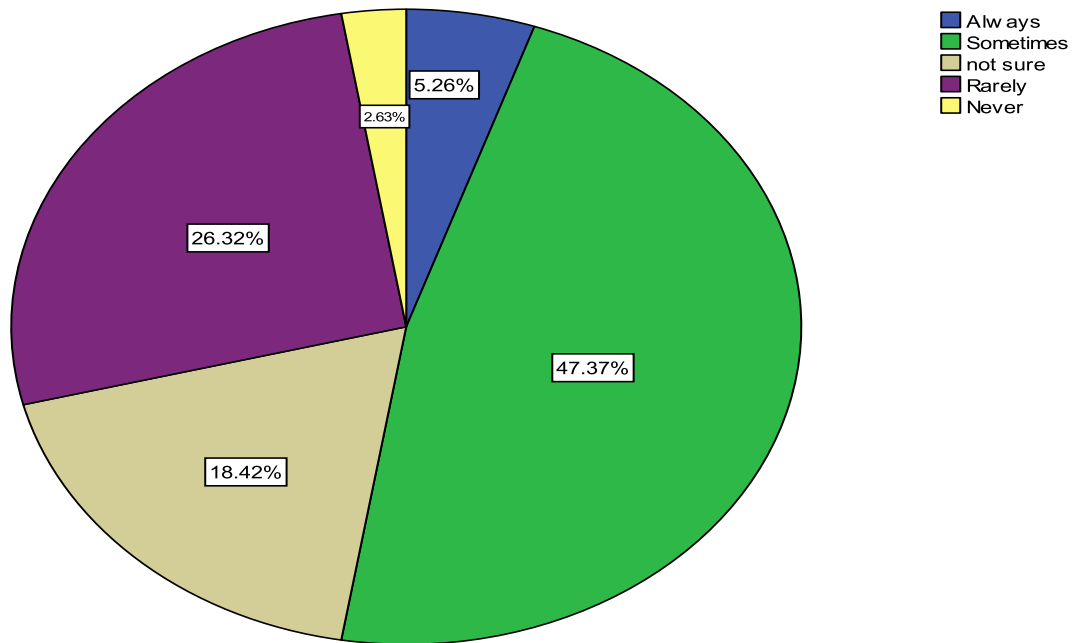


Figure 2, Shows frequency that EFL teachers use stories, magazines, newspapers, poems... to teach reading skills in the classrooms

Figure 2 depicts that (2.63%) of respondents indicated that EFL teachers never use stories, magazines, newspapers, poems... to teach reading skills in the classrooms; in contrary, 47.37% of them responded as teachers sometimes use texts like short stories, poems, newspapers...etc in the classroom. from this it is clear that instructors are trying to apply extensive reading strategies in the classrooms.

How often do your EFL teachers encourage you to read stories, magazines, and newspapers... outside classroom?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	1	2.6	2.6	2.6
Sometimes	20	52.6	52.6	55.3
not sure	3	7.9	7.9	63.2
Rarely	12	31.6	31.6	94.7
Never	2	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Table 1, shows frequency that teachers encouraged their learners to read stories, magazines, and newspapers... outside classroom

According to table 1 above, 20(52.6%) of the target population replied that instructors sometimes motivate and encourage the learners so as to read reading materials: magazines, short stories, news

papers, poems and so on. Both Figure 2 and Table 1 depicts that instructors are playing their roles regarding the issue. Let us look at the result from test and retest subsequently.

3.1.Result of the Test and Re-test

Learner	Test before implementation (50%)	Re-test after implementation (50%)	Average	Difference
A	32	43	37.5	11
B	44	50	47	5
C	25	37	31	12
D	34	39.25	36.6	5.25
E	30	35	32.5	5
F	32	25.5	28.75	6.5
G	27	45	36	18
H	31	47	39	16
I	34	40	37	6
J	17	30.5	23.75	13.5
K	32	38	35	6
L	29	42	35.5	13
M	40	45.5	42.75	5.5
N	32.5	44	38.25	11.5
O	34	32	33	-2
P	31	30	30.5	-1
Q	41	45	43	4
R	26	34	30	8
S	32	41	36.5	9
T	19.5	27	23.25	7.5
U	34	35	34.5	1
V	30	39.25	34.6	9.25
W	32	25.5	28.75	-6.5
X	27	47	37	20
Y	31	45	38	14
Z	20	34	27	14
A2	27.5	30	28.75	2.5
B2	22	35	28.5	13
C2	26	30	28	4
D2	17	20.5	37.5	3.5
E2	30	42	36	12
F2	19	29.5	48.5	10.5
G2	32	25	28.5	7
H2	28	38.5	33.25	10.5
I2	40	45	42.5	5

J2	32	47	39.5	15
K2	36	29	32.5	-7
L2	31	40	35.5	9
M2	35	46.5	40.75	11.5

Table 2, shows result of the test (before implementation) and re-test (after implementation) out of 50%

In table 2 depicts that learners O, P, W and K2 showed negative effect on their reading achievement; they didn't score good results in the after implementation phase, however excluding them, other learners like A, C, G, H, J and others showed good progress in the re-test. This indicates that there is positive effect of reading authentic materials like short stories, novels, newsletters, newspaper, magazines and other on reading comprehension.

Conclusions and recommendations

Thus, from the above illustrations, it is possible to deduce that extensive reading has a great positive effect on students' reading comprehension, and intensive reading strategy is most frequently used by the learners. So, even though teachers are playing their roles regarding the issues, they have to incorporate reading texts like short stories, novels, poems and others more in teaching reading comprehension in EFL classroom context, and they have to encourage students and make them aware of importance of using extensive reading strategy out of classrooms for better improvement of reading comprehension.

Reference

- [1] Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing Reading*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press
- [2] Attaprechakul, D. (2013). Inference Strategies to Improve Reading Comprehension of Challenging Texts. *English Language Teaching*, 6(3)
- [3] Bamford, J, Richard D (2004). *Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language*. CUP
- [4] Bell, T. (2001). Extensive reading: Speed and comprehension. *The Reading Matrix*.7(1),115-121
- [5] Bell, T. (1998). Extensive Reading: Why? and How? *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol. IV, No. 12
- [6] Benettayeb, A. (2010). Extensive reading and vocabulary teaching. *Revue Academique des Etudes Sociales et Humanies*, 3, 20-30
- [7] Bu Saleem, B. (2010). *Impact of Extensive Reading on Literacy Perceptions and On EFL Writing Quality Of English Major Students at the Islamic University Of Gaza*. Retrieved from <http://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle>
- [8] Celce-Murcia, M. and Donna M. Briton. (Ed). (2014). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. 4th edn.
- [9] Chou, P. T. M. (2011). Examining Reading Levels in ELT Course Books and the



Benefits of Extensive Reading.
AJTLHE: ASEAN Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 3(2), 1-11.

[9] Mikeladze, T. (2014) Extensive Reading, Research Gate Peregoy, and Boyle,

(2000). *How Does Extensive Reading Promote Language Development?*, Cambridge CUP

[10] Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading> (process)