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Implementing an Extensive Reading Program in an Intensive University EAP Curriculum

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Implementing an Extensive Reading Program in an Intensive University EAP Curriculum

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Abstract

The goal of this project was to integrate an extensive reading (ER) program within an existing 8-week intensive reading curriculum in a university English for academic purposes (EAP) program. The merits of both intensive and extensive reading approaches were examined and used to develop the methodology for the ER program. Additionally, implementation parameters, as agreed upon by the EAP program director and academic coordinator, were used to determine the design and implementation of the ER program that was piloted on a low-intermediate level reading class. A method of anonymous student feedback, via questionnaires and reading logs, were developed and applied before, during, and after the project to determine if the implementation of the ER program met the implementation parameters.

Keywords: extensive reading program, ER, English for academic purposes, EAP, reading curriculum, reading for fun, reading for pleasure

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Implementing an Extensive Reading Program in an Intensive University EAP Curriculum

When responding to an English language learner's request to improve his or her reading skills, a teacher will likely respond that the best way to improve reading is by reading more. Indeed, the extensive reading approach – the voluminous reading for pleasure - is a well-known, well-researched, and widely accepted methodology that benefits learners in numerous ways. Yet, with such a strong case for the use of ER, it is not universally used in ESL curriculum, particularly in EAP programs. The purpose of EAP programs is to prepare students to enter higher education studies. Certainly, these programs would benefit greatly from an ER program, as students would be prepared for the reading demands they will expect in higher education studies in many subject areas. This project briefly reviews the role of reading in EAPs and the significance of extensive and intensive reading approaches. The findings are then used to design and implement an ER program into an existing EAP to meet the needs of the learners, the teacher, and the EAP program.

EAP and Reading

English for Academic Purposes is concerned with communication skills in English which are required for study purposes in formal education systems (Jordan, 1997, p. 1). Students in an EAP will develop both their language skills and study skills to prepare for higher education studies. The language skills encompass the receptive reading and listening skills, as well as the productive writing and speaking skills. However, to distinguish an EAP program from an English for general purposes program, the EAP will explicitly teach study skills, which can be defined as, “Abilities, techniques, and strategies which are used when reading, writing or listening for study purposes” (Richards, Platt and Platt, 1992). These numerous study skills and strategies include note taking, asking questions, understanding instructions, reading efficiently,

and many others. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001, p. 268) reported that dozens of studies have been done on thousands of learners on strategy use, and that, “These studies have found strong links between strategy use and target-language proficiency.” In Peacock’s study of language learning strategies and EAP proficiency, he concluded, “Learners who can use a wide range of appropriate strategies have a greater degree of self-sufficiency and are developing as autonomous learners. This is particularly important for EAP learners...” (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p. 284).

The strategies employed for reading in an academic setting focus on one particular aspect, students read for a *purpose*. These purposes may vary from obtaining information to understanding ideas or theories. In the process of reading, students will be concerned about the content of the text and the language in which it is expressed. Both aspects involve some type of comprehension, which requires the use of various reading strategies and skills (Jordan, 1997, p. 143). Thus, the focus of EAP reading classes is the teaching and practice of reading strategies and skills, often practiced in combined or integrative approaches. Common examples include: prediction, skimming, scanning, distinguishing fact and non-fact information, making inferences, and deducing meaning of unknown words.

Intensive Reading

These aforementioned reading strategies and skills are most commonly practiced via intensive reading. Intensive reading involves the reading of short, often difficult texts with close guidance from the teacher. The goal is to help students extract meaning from the text, to develop reading strategies and skills, and to enhance vocabulary and grammar knowledge (Renandya and Jacobs, 2002). In an EAP setting, the texts are academic in nature as they contain more difficult and complex content, grammar, and vocabulary. Slow, close, and repeated readings are often

needed in order for students to adequately comprehend the text. Through careful and explicit use of reading strategies and skills - often paired with comprehension exercises and assessments - students learn how to comprehend difficult texts. Clearly, intensive reading has an important role in the explicit modeling and verbalizing of essential and effective reading and vocabulary learning strategies.

According to Brandt (2009, p. 30), an academic reading course provides efficient reading strategies, vocabulary building exercises, and structure to help students read more efficiently.

Such courses could include:

- Understanding meaning: deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words and word groups; relations within the sentence/complex sentences; implications (information not explicitly stated); conceptual meaning, e.g. comparison, purpose, cause, effect.
- Understanding relationships in the text: text structure; the communicative value of sentences; relations between the parts of a text through lexical and grammatical cohesion devices and indicators in discourse.
- Understanding important points; distinguishing the main ideas from supporting detail; organizing unsupported claims and claims supported by evidence; distinguishing fact from opinion; extracting salient points to summarize; following an argument; reading critically/evaluating the text.
- Reading efficiently: surveying the text, skimming for gist/general impression; scanning to locate specifically required information; reading quickly.

Extensive Reading

By contrast, extensive reading, “generally involves rapid reading of large quantities of material or longer readings (e.g., whole books) for general understanding, with the focus

generally on the meaning of what is being read than on the language” (Renandya and Jacobs, 2002). The underlying purpose of extensive reading is that learners read a large quantity of books and other texts in an environment that nurtures a life-long reading habit. In essence, developing a love of reading for pleasure. The following 10 principles for teaching extensive reading as a tool for professional development, as developed by Julian Bamford and Richard Day (2004), are widely accepted as the most important ingredients for a successful ER program:

1. The reading material is easy.
2. A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available.
3. Learners choose what they want to read.
4. Learners read as much as possible.
5. Reading speed is usually faster than slower.
6. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
7. Reading is individual and silent.
8. Reading is its own reward.
9. The teacher orients and guides the students.
10. The teacher is a role model of a reader.

Benefits of Extensive Reading

Numerous correlational studies and case histories have demonstrated the effectiveness of ER in ESL classroom settings. Table 1 is an overview of ER studies from Day (N.D.) that show consistent, positive gains in reading skills, vocabulary, attitude, and motivation.

Similarly, Renandya and Jacobs (2002) state that ER provides many advantages to a language learner, including the following:

1. Enhanced language learning in such areas as spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and text structure.
2. Increased knowledge of the world.
3. Improved reading and writing skills.
4. Greater enjoyment of reading.
5. More positive attitude towards reading
6. Higher possibility of developing a reading habit.

Such benefits also profit students in EAP programs. In addition to developing specific reading strategies and skills, typical objectives of EAP programs include increasing student academic and non-academic vocabulary, preparing students for high volume reading that is to be expected in higher education studies (Brandt, 2009), and exposing students to increased knowledge and cultures of the world. These EAP program objectives corroborate with several of the observed benefits of ER; thus demonstrating that an extensive reading program can provide significant development and gains in skills for the EAP student.

Combining Extensive and Intensive Reading

The approaches of extensive reading and intensive reading focus on different aspects of reading, yet each undeniably benefits learners in developing reading skills and comprehension. Indeed, research has shown that learners' reading abilities improve when using these approaches; however, this should not denote that one method be used in favor of the other. Instead, both methods should accompany one another to maximize learner benefits. Paran (2003) and Hill (1997) found that extensive and intensive reading are complementary to each other and both types of reading can be beneficial for achieving reading goals at the high school (Erfanpur, 2013) and university level (Loucky, 1996; Macalister, 2008).

By combining both approaches, learners can develop targeted academic reading skills associated with intensive reading in an EAP while developing a positive attitude for reading. Yamashita's study (2004) on English language learners' reading attitude indicates that learners have more anxiety toward intensive reading and more comfort toward extensive reading. Thus, integrating ER and IR could result in the gains of skills offered by both approaches as well as the development of an overall positive affinity toward reading.

Method

The goal of this project is to create and implement a stand-alone, complementary extensive reading program into an existing intensive reading program in a university EAP program. The project was implemented in the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) at the University of New Orleans in New Orleans, Louisiana. The student population of the IELP consisted of 50% Arabic speakers with the remaining students from various countries in South America, Africa, and Asia. Most students had finished high school or university in their country and were seeking admittance into the University of New Orleans or other university program in the United States.

The structure of the IELP curriculum combined the reading class and the listening & speaking class into a blocked class known as the RLS (Reading-Listening-Speaking) course. The 8-week RLS course met for 100 minutes per day, 4 times a week. The reading curriculum emphasized intensive reading to develop academic reading skills by using reading text from an EAP textbook. Historically, any external and extensive reading was purely supplemental at the teacher's discretion.

The IELP program had 7 levels of courses starting at the level 1 beginner level and culminating to the level 7 advanced level. To meet the IELP director's preference to implement

an ER program at the low-intermediate level, the level 4 RLS course was chosen for this study. The course for this study contained 12 students: four from Saudi Arabia and one each from Qatar, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, Vietnam, China, Venezuela, and Spain. There were three females and nine males. All but two students were aged between 18 and 29 years old. The other two students were over 29 years old. The overall motivation of the students was high as eight of the students had firm plans to matriculate into a university in the United States, three students had unspecified plans to further continue their education in the United States, and one student was taking the course as an extracurricular activity while temporarily living in the United States. The reading proficiency of the students ranged from low intermediate to upper intermediate. Throughout the course it was demonstrated that the majority of students had similar reading rates and vocabulary knowledge with a few students of notably higher proficiency and one student with low proficiency.

The first step in the development of this ER program was to meet with the IELP director and academic coordinator in order to define parameters, expectations, and needs for the ER program. ER research and theory was discussed, particularly Bamford and Day's 10 principles for teaching ER, which played a fundamental role in establishing the foundation of the program. Additionally, the desired impact on the current reading curriculum and teacher preparation time was discussed, as well as how much classroom time should be allocated specifically for ER activities. After considering each of the stakeholders – the student (maximize learner benefit), the teacher (minimize change of current duties and preparation), and the institution (optimize the balance of extensive and intensive reading activities in class and at home) - the following general parameters were established: 1) Students need to consistently do extensive reading throughout the entire 8-week courses, especially at home. 2) Students should develop a comfort and

amiability for reading easy, yet large amounts of text. 3) The amount of classroom time spent on ER (includes in-class reading and activities) should be minimal – no more than 25% of the current allotted RLS time of 400 minutes per week. Classroom time for ER should decrease as the course progresses with the expectation that the frequency of in-class reading decreases as the frequency of at-home reading increases. 4) It was agreed that a library of graded readers would be created, and expanded every semester, to ensure availability of ER reading texts for the students. 5) As a reference for teachers, an extensive reading handbook would be created to provide guidelines on the principles and benefits of ER and a list of ER activities.

Extensive Reading Principles

The previously mentioned 10 principles for teaching extensive reading, as developed by Julian Bamford and Richard Day, were used as the basis for the design of this project. A pure ER program would strictly follow all 10 principles; however, some of the principles were altered out of practicality or to provide a more academic element to better suite the EAP program. Each of the 10 principles, and how they were considered for this project, is listed below.

The reading material is easy. In order to promote the idea to students that reading can be fun, the reading texts of an ER program must be easy for students to read. The text must not be too difficult for overall understanding. Students should feel comfortable as they read and they should not require the use of a dictionary as they read. Hu and Nation (2000) suggest that learners must know at least 98% of the words in a fiction text for unassisted understanding. The result will be fast, fluent reading that is enjoyable to the learner. According to Renandya and Jacobs, “In terms of Second Language Acquisition jargon, students should be reading texts at an $i+1$, i , or $i-1$ level, with “ i ” being their current proficiency level” (2002).

One method to determine the difficulty of a text is the “5-finger rule”. In order to approximate knowing 98% of the words in a text, a student is asked to read one page and count the number of unknown words. If there are 5 unknown words or less, the text will likely be at an appropriate level for ER reading. This method may be altered to limit the number of unknown words down to one or two in order to accommodate low level readers to ensure an easy text and enjoyable reading experience.

Another method to select easy reading texts is by using graded readers. Publishers of graded readers categorize their texts into various reading levels using language parameters such as number of total words, number of word families or headwords, and complexity and variety of grammar. Additionally, the Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF) has created the ERF Graded Reader Scale (ERF Graded Reader Scale, n.d.), which lists each publisher’s series of graded readers based on headword count so that teachers can categorize their own library of graded readers - presumably assembled from various publishers - on one uniform scale. The ERF Graded Reader Scale can be referenced on Rob Waring’s website (Waring, 2014). The website also provides a table (Waring, 2013) where the ERF Graded Reader Scale can be compared to other major EFL proficiency scales, such as the Common European Framework, TOFEL and TOEIC scores, and the IELTS reading band.

For this project, level 2 and level 3 books from the Oxford Bookworms series were used as the reading text. Additionally, adapted short stories from www.manythings.org (American Stories for English Learners, N.D.) were used for short ER texts. Each reading text was accompanied by at least one activity that asked students to count the number of unknown words on a page of their choosing. Nearly all students reported 2-5 unknown words per page, thus providing verification, via the “5-finger rule”, that the reading texts were of appropriate ease for

extensive reading. Further confirmation was received in the form of weekly reading logs where most students reported that the reading texts were easy to read.

A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available. As Bamford and Day note, “The success of extensive reading depends largely on enticing students to read” (2002). In order to allow students to become interested in reading as a pleasurable act they must be able to enjoy what they read. Providing a variety of reading materials on a wide range of topics will ensure that students will find texts that interest them and encourage them to want to read more.

The primary method used to provide ER texts to students in this ER program was through an in-house ER library of Oxford Bookworms graded readers. The initial books selected for the EAP’s newly created ER library were specifically chosen to provide as much variety as possible. The library contained fiction and non-fiction titles covering a wide range of genres, such as action and adventure, horror, comedy, and human interest. Additionally, other reading texts were made available, including free reading texts on www.ER-central.com (Library, n.d), www.ESLyes.com (1,600 Free ESL Short Stories, Exercises, Audio, n.d.), and www.manythings.org (American Stories for English Learners, n.d.).

Learners choose what they want to read. The purpose of this principle is to promote autonomous learning by allowing students the freedom to choose books that they deem enjoyable or interesting. It also develops the notion that reading is a personal experience that needn’t be dictated by a teacher or other person (Bamford and Day, 2004). In this project, it was assumed that students had little to no experience of extensive reading. Indeed, students’ responses to the initial questionnaire and group discussion about ER indicated that most students did not read for fun in English. Thus, with such limited ER experience students might lack the motivation or confidence to choose their own reading text. This principle was altered by using teacher-selected

texts for the first half of the course with the provision that students were given opportunities to express their opinions about the chosen texts, thereby developing their reading tastes. The post-reading ER activities and the weekly reading logs allowed students to express their opinions about the texts. This allowed them to begin to form individual preferences on genres, length, difficulty and other reading preferences. During the second half of the program, the selector of reading texts was deliberately shifted from the teacher to the student. The final reading text was completely chosen by each student among the graded reader library.

Learners read as much as possible. An extensive reading program would not be complete without the promotion of extensive, or voluminous, reading. Bamford and Day suggest that, at a minimum, readers should read one book per week in order to gain benefits of extensive reading (2002). Such a goal may be daunting to a new or inexperienced reader. Thus, the one-book-a-week target served as the end-of-course goal to progress toward. The stepwise progression is intended to match the growing confidence and positive attitude in the readers as they realize that they are indeed capable of reading more and more as each week passes.

Table 2 shows the reading texts in the order they were read throughout the course. The texts were ordered so that the volume and rate of reading would progress throughout the course. Students read several short stories for the first two weeks of the course with each story getting progressively longer. During the middle weeks of the course, reading texts consisted of entire chapters of books. Students typically read five to eight pages for homework. For the final reading activity, students selected their own text – an entire graded reader book - and were expected to complete it within a week with minimal in-class reading time and only one post-reading activity.

The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding. The intent of this principle is to shift focus away from academic style reading

where full comprehension is desired. Rather, students are encouraged to read because they genuinely want to read. It is often said that reading is a personal experience. Developing how a reader personally engages with a text will foster a love of reading. Thus, the goal of this principle is to allow students to begin to develop their personal reading experiences.

To promote personal reading experiences, post-reading activities were specifically and strategically chosen to focus on interactive activities where students could share their experiences, emotions, and feelings about the texts they had read. Additionally, activities were chosen to monitor students' general understanding of the text rather than specific details. Most of the activities were taken or modified from Bamford and Days *Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language* (2004). Table 3 shows each of the post-reading activities and the specific purpose(s) for each activity.

Reading is its own reward. This particular principle distinguishes extensive reading from intensive reading in that reading is not followed by comprehension questions or assessments. It is an experience complete in itself (Bamford and Day, 2004). Since students aren't pressured to read a text for an upcoming exam or book report, they are allowed to relax and read for the enjoyment of reading. However, it is the nature of an EAP to provide assessments in order to verify acquisition, development, and use of academic skills. Bamford and Day (2004) suggest post-reading extensive reading activities that foster the spirit of ER among the students while serving as a subtle assessment tool for the teacher and EAP program. In general, these activities are easy, fun and allow students to share their opinions of their reading texts and their reading experiences with one another. Underlying purposes of these activities could be to motivate students, monitor student attitudes toward reading, keep track of how much

students read, verify if students understand the gist of a reading text, and practice one or more of the four language skills.

Some of the post-reading activities (see Table 3) were collected and graded, while others were shared and discussed but not scored. As discussed in the results, most students enjoyed and saw benefits in the reading activities. Students particularly liked activities involving the sharing of their opinions with others. Even though these reading activities are a form of assessment, which can be seen as a contradiction of the purpose of an ER program, the primary function of these activities was to not create demands or pressures on students to read, but to further promote that reading is its own reward.

Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower. When students read material that is easy, interesting, and without fear of formal assessment, it is a recipe for fluent reading (Bamford and Day, 2002). Nutall noted of reading literacy that, “speed, enjoyment and comprehension are closely linked with one another” (1996: 128). She further explains that extensive reading can help readers enter the virtuous circle of the good reader, where a reader, “reads faster; reads more; understands better; enjoys reading; reads faster...” (p. 127).

This project did not aim to specifically improve students’ reading rates. However, through the use of the before session, during session, and after session questionnaires students had the opportunity to report their reading rate and any perceived changes throughout the course. As discussed in the results, students not only reported gains in reading rate, but gains in each aspect of the virtuous circle of the good reader.

Reading is individual and silent. Intensive reading activities and pronunciation activities may require a student, or groups of students, to read aloud. In contrast, extensive reading is done individually and silently to allow students to develop a personal interaction with

the text. Additionally, students need not worry about pronunciation or reading rate when done individually (Bamford & Day, 2002). This ER program promoted individual and silent reading by incorporating sustained silent reading (SSR), “a well-known school-based recreational reading, or free voluntary reading, where students read silently in a designated time period every day in school” (Sustained silent reading, n.d.). Other names for SSR include “Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)”, “Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)”, “Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun (SURF)”, and the Book Flood Approach (Renandya and Jacobs, 2002). Students will not read for length or coverage; thus, enabling them to find their reading comfort and preferences.

This ER program was structured to begin with more in-class DEAR sessions during the first couple of weeks that decreased in length and frequency as the course progressed. The purpose of this gradual reduction of classroom extensive reading time was to promote the notion that pleasure reading should occur outside of the classroom in a comfortable environment of their choosing, as is typically the case with native readers. Additionally, the lessening of classroom time for extensive reading minimizes time taken away from other required curriculum components, such as intensive reading, vocabulary, and development of listening and speaking skills.

Teachers orient and guide their students. Extensive reading may be a new concept to students, especially to those that have only experienced intensive reading in English or lack ER experience in their first language. Bamford and Day comment that, “Serious-minded students...might not understand how reading easy and interesting material can help them become better readers” (2002). Students need careful and explicit orientation and instruction to do extensive reading. In this project the initial class activity was a discussion about reading for fun

and a questionnaire about students' reading experiences and expectations. The purpose and benefits of the ER program were clearly explained and students had the opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions. As each ER activity was proctored during the course, clear instructions, purpose, and benefits were fully explained to the students. The goal was to guide students so that they could realize and experience the benefits of ER for themselves.

The teacher is a role model of a reader. In order to fully sell the idea of extensive reading to students, teachers must show a positive attitude toward ER and serve as a role model. The best way to do this is to participate equally among the reading community in the class (Bamford and Day, 2002). It was a requirement of this ER program that during in-class silent reading activities the teacher was also reading silently. This not only showed a commitment to reading and the values of the ER program, but it also allowed the teacher to engage with students on commonly read texts. The teacher could make specific conversations and recommendations to individual students having read common books and knowing the extent of the ER library.

Procedure

By incorporating the parameters set by the meeting with the program director and academic coordinator and the methodology based on the 10 ER principles, the following implementation criteria for this ER program were established:

1. Students will begin reading teacher-selected text but will be given increasing freedom of choice as the course progresses.
2. Reading texts will initially be short in length - using short stories - and will increase in length as the course progresses with the ultimate goal of reading entire books by the end of the course.

3. No more than 25% of the allotted RLS in-class teaching time will be used for ER activities. Thus, per week, at most, 100 minutes of the 400 minutes of RLS class time will be used toward the ER program.
4. The time spent for in-class ER activities will decrease as the course progresses.
5. The course will begin with more in-class “DEAR” reading time but will decrease in frequency and length as the course progresses with the expectation that students will increase their volume of at-home extensive reading.

Implementation

The ER program was implemented throughout the entire eight weeks of an RLS course. As evident in the five implementation criteria, the ER program was progressive in nature with incremental progressions occurring on a weekly basis. It was at the teacher’s discretion to determine the amount of progression from one week to the next so as to meet student needs while maintaining the spirit of extensive reading. The progression of the various implementation criteria followed the schedule as shown in the extensive reading schedule (see Figure 1). Additionally, the teacher was expected to complete the DEAR and reading activities as specified on the ER schedule. The teacher was given the freedom to choose the length of DEAR time as he or she deemed appropriate so long as it was at least five minutes. The type and duration of reading activities were also the choice of the teacher so long as they were extensive reading activities in nature as described in the 10 ER principles.

Feedback

An important component of this project was student feedback. Students completed a beginning-of-session questionnaire (see Appendix A) about their reading habits and experiences at the start of the course, as well as an end-of-session questionnaire at the conclusion of the

course (see Appendix D). Additionally, students completed a reading log (see Appendix B) at the end of each week. These feedback forms had several purposes. First, they served as a barometer on the efficacy of the ER program by recording students' attitudes, expectations, and opinions about reading, particularly any changes as the course progressed. Next, the reading logs served as input to the ER program on the appropriateness and likeability of reading texts. Furthermore, the reading logs provided a record on the quantity and rate of reading, which will be used as input on the amount of reading that students can handle for future courses, as well as an indicator of student progress.

In addition to student feedback, the teacher of the course was also expected to maintain notes and a reading log (see Appendix C) of the class. The teacher's notes and feedback on teacher-selected text and reading activities will serve as a valuable planning resource for teachers of subsequent ER courses.

Results

The purpose of this extensive reading program was that learners would engage in voluminous reading in an environment that nurtured reading for pleasure. In turn, this would lead to gains in reading skills that would support the EAP's goal of providing academic skills. The results of this ER program were examined based on the five implementation criteria established at the onset of the project along with feedback provided by the students and teacher.

Selection of reading texts

This criterion stated that the reading texts (see Table 2) would progressively move from teacher-selected to student-selected. The teacher of the course for this project decided to begin with short stories of considerable ease so that students would not feel overwhelmed by the length or difficulty of the reading texts. The student reading logs indicated that the short stories were

easy to read and had moderate to high popularity. Once the students demonstrated a comfort for reading longer short story texts, the teacher selected chaptered books, *Dracula* (Mowat & Stoker, 2007) and *Anne of Green Gables* (Montgomery & West, 2000), as the next class texts. These texts were selected for their similar reading level as the short stories. Students reported that the books were fairly easy and very enjoyable to read. Post-reading monitoring activities indicated that the “5-finger rule” was being met for all students signifying the texts were appropriate for the students for extensive reading. For the final reading text of the course students selected one of three books. Students applied the “5-finger rule” to each book then chose a book based on their preference. Students reported that, after narrowing the books by the “5-finger rule, looking at the title, pictures, and chapter titles helped determine if they had an interest to read it.

Based on student feedback before, during, and after the course, it is clear that there are two critical criteria to determine if a text is of appropriate reading ease for extensive reading: the vocabulary must be very easy and the story must be interesting. Many students reported that the readings were fun and easy because the vocabulary didn’t hinder their reading. Additionally, students commented that the stories were so interesting that they wanted to continue to read to find out what happened next, prompting some students to read beyond the assigned homework reading. Based on pre and post course student responses to the question, “Do you like to read in English?” students’ attitude towards reading in English improved during the course (see Table 4). This is likely due in part to the selected texts being sufficiently easy to read. Furthermore, students demonstrated that even though they read longer texts at a faster rate as the course progressed (see Table 2), their desire to read did not decrease. So long as the texts were easy and interesting to read – regardless if teacher or student selected – students exhibited improved reading capabilities.

Volume of reading

In order to prepare students for the voluminous reading they will encounter at the university level, one of the criteria for this ER program was to progressively increase the volume of student reading from short stories to entire books. As shown in Table 2, students demonstrated the ability to not only increase their volume of reading, but also increase their rate of reading. For the first two weeks of the course, the teacher assigned one or two pages to read for homework. As the reading text progressed to entire books, homework reading assignments included entire chapters that were 5-7 pages in length. Post-reading activities indicated that students had completed their reading homework and were able to understand, summarize, and share their ideas and opinions about the text. At the end of the session students reported, via questionnaire and class discussion, that they were surprised and proud of their improvements in reading volume and rate. They attributed their success to reading easy texts that were interesting.

Allotment of classroom time for ER activities

In order to ensure that class time was proportionally distributed to cover all curriculum items for the course, a criterion was established to not use more than 25% of the weekly classroom time for ER activities. Thus, per week, it was targeted that at most, 100 minutes of the 400-minute course would be used toward the ER program. As shown in Figure 2, this criterion was met for all weeks of the course except for week four. It should be noted that weeks four and eight included a special book-share activity that combined this class with another class where students did activities to talk about and share recently read stories.

The teacher reported that using less than 25% of the total classroom time for ER activities was not difficult. A general weekly pattern was established where in-class reading (DEAR) sessions were done on Mondays and Wednesdays. Short post-reading activities were done each

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, while a longer ER activity was done each Thursday. The teacher felt that the 25% cap on ER activities was appropriate to allow classroom time to do intensive reading, speaking, and listening activities to meet the coverage expectations of the course curriculum.

Progressive decrease of ER activities in the classroom

It was assumed that extensive reading might be a new concept for students in the course. Thus, the ER program was designed to include orientation and an initial period of adjustment until students became comfortable with the ER program expectations and activities. Once students become comfortable with ER, less classroom time was needed for ER activities, which allowed more time to cover other curriculum items.

One of the implementation criteria mandated that the 25% cap of weekly classroom time for ER activities - which equated to 100 minutes per week for the 400-minute course – should decrease as the course progressed. Indeed, a week-by-week decrease of ER classroom time can be observed in the teacher's notes (see Figure 2). The notable exceptions are week 4 and week 8; however, those weeks included a special joint class session where classes of different levels were combined in a special mid-session and end-of-session book share activity. Exclusion of these special activities would have completely satisfied the criterion to progressively decrease the amount of ER time in the classroom throughout the course.

It was encouraging to see that even though students were progressively reading longer texts at a faster rate as the course continued, they were able to do so with progressively less in-class reading time (see Table 2). The teacher reported that students were able to keep up with the increasing ER reading demand with less ER classroom time, yet continually and satisfactorily complete ER activities and demonstrate understanding of the texts. An important conclusion of

the decreased ER classroom time is that ER activities needn't be lengthy to be effective. Simple and fast activities, such as 1-sentence summaries, group discussions, talk-for-a-minute, and beginning-middle-end, allow efficient use of classroom time for students to share and express their reading experiences while serving as an assessment tool for the teacher on student motivation, attitude, and reading skills.

Progressive increase of at-home reading

As classroom time progressively decreased throughout the course, another criterion was established that at-home readings would progressively increase. Table 2 shows the increasing reading demand for each ER reading text. The simultaneous decreasing classroom time spent on ER activities (see Figure 2) meant that students had to read more at home as the course progressed. The teacher of the course expressed initial worry of increasing at-home reading, especially for students with little to no experience of at-home reading. However, the teacher was pleasantly surprised to observe students demonstrate the ability to read at a higher volume and rate at home. Furthermore, students fully and capably participated in post-reading activities. This further supports the conclusion that so long as ER texts are easy and interesting, students will be motivated to read extensively. The teacher noted that the course did not reach an upper limit on the amount or rate of at-home reading. Students were able to keep up with the increasing reading demands without any negative impact on performance or motivation. The teacher commented that as a result of this, for future ER courses he would transition to more at-home reading sooner in the course to allow more classroom time for intensive reading and other curriculum items.

Student feedback

Throughout the course students were given opportunities to give feedback on their experiences with the ER program via a beginning-of-session questionnaire (see Appendix A),

reading logs (see Appendix B), an end-of-session questionnaire (see Appendix D), and class discussions with the teacher. The purpose of the beginning-of-session questionnaire was to gain insight on student attitude, preference, and practice of reading in English. According to Table 5, most students enjoyed reading in their native language with 8 of the 12 students scoring 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 (“I don’t like it”) to 5 (“I like it a lot”). When asked if they liked reading in English all students marked an equal or lesser rating than they did for their native language. 8 of the 12 students marked a rating of 2 or 3, indicating an overall decrease in likeability for reading in L2 than L1. Perhaps more revealing were the students’ responses at why reading is difficult. 75% of the students reported that vocabulary caused difficulty in their English reading. The other reported difficulties were spelling, idioms, ideas of the story, and confusion when reading loudly. Through the initial orientation and class discussion about the ER program, it was clear to the teacher that students’ biggest fear and cause of frustration when reading in English was not being able to understand a text because of many unknown words. These findings support the basic principle that ER texts should be easy. As a result of this initial feedback, the teacher made extra effort to carefully select easy ER texts. In the teacher’s opinion, choosing easy texts based on vocabulary was by far the most significant factor to maintain enthusiastic student attitude and eagerness toward the ER texts.

The end-of-session questionnaire served to monitor any changes in attitude toward reading in English and to gain insight on student experiences and benefits as a result of the program. Based on responses to the end-of-session and beginning-of-session questionnaires, students indicated an overall increase of likeability of reading in English at the end of the course as compared to the beginning (see Table 4). Regarding reading preferences, students gave a mixed response if they preferred short stories or complete books. Additionally, students gave a

mixed response on their preference of reading in class, reading at home, or both. Some students reported that in-class reading was beneficial because of the teacher's explanation of ideas or words. Others preferred to read at home because it was more quiet and comfortable. These responses indicated that students had begun to form their own personal tastes and preferences towards reading in English.

The final question of the end-of-session questionnaire asked students if they thought the ER program helped their reading skills. All students indicated general improvement in their reading skills. One student wrote, "Yes, this class let me love to read the stories, and I can read very good." Some students gave specific reasons about their improvements, such as an improved reading rate, "Yes it does because now I can read faster than before." Other students remarked on vocabulary improvement, "Yes, I read fast than before and know more vocabulary." These responses demonstrate positive benefits of the ER program that directly supported the goals of an EAP program to develop academic skills. Additionally, students were practicing and developing self-awareness of their learning.

Overall, the student feedback in this ER program not only helped to support the program's goal, but it also guided the teacher's action in response to the students' needs and also provided a way for students to monitor their own learning.

Teacher feedback

The teacher of this course maintained a record of notes and comments throughout the ER program. At the start of the session, it was noted that the initial discussion and questionnaire provided valuable insight about the students' prior reading histories and apprehensions. The students' uniform feedback that difficult vocabulary was the primary cause for reading difficulties and frustration strongly resonated with the teacher. The intensive reading texts for the

course were notoriously difficult because of the vocabulary, so the teacher deliberately and carefully selected ER texts of sufficient ease. This was done by asking students to test the “5-finger rule” on all ER texts and by implementing post-reading activities that periodically asked students to record unknown words on a page.

The other factor that the teacher noted as critically important for the success of the ER program was to provide interesting ER texts. The teacher noted that students enjoyed discussing the texts after having completed a reading assignment, and they especially liked sharing their opinions and finding meaning behind the text that they could personally relate to. The ER texts in the course varied by genre, length, and style, but based on the student reading logs, the most popular stories contained a continually moving plot with underlying themes of human interest and emotions that were easy to grasp and were relatable. With such easy-to-read and interesting texts, the teacher noted that students were fully engaged and enthusiastic during ER post-reading activities, and they capably handled the increased reading demands placed on them. The teacher commented that, “A positive attitude and desire to read was essential for such a fun and effective ER program. The secret to unlocking this was using easy-to-read books that were captivating or provocative.”

The teacher reported initial concerns on taking too much class time for ER, thereby, leaving little time to cover the remaining curriculum. As shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, the teacher followed the implementation criterion of increasing the reading volume and rate while decreasing ER class time. The teacher noted surprise at how well students responded to the change without a decrease in performance. As a result, the teacher developed a pattern where most classroom reading time was spent on intensive reading – an area that students were struggling with, and only 5-15 minutes of class time was spent on ER each day. Homework

assignments consisted of at-home ER reading and a vocabulary assignment. With more classroom time dedicated to IR, the teacher focused on giving ample instruction and practice on intensive reading skills and reported improvements in these skills than earlier in the course. The teacher noted that in future sessions he would decrease the ER classroom time sooner – knowing that students could handle it – so that more reading class time could be used for IR and vocabulary development.

Discussion

The goal of this project was to successfully implement an ER program into an existing EAP curriculum. Success of the ER program relied on upholding the goals of the EAP program, applying the 10 principles for teaching extensive reading, and satisfying the five implementation criteria that were established with the EAP program director and academic coordinator.

This ER program preserved the purpose of the EAP program to provide development and practice of language and academic skills in order to prepare students for university studies. Based on student performance and student and teacher feedback throughout this ER program, students improved their reading skills by increasing their rate of reading, increasing their volume of reading, and demonstrating the ability to summarize and identify main ideas. Students also reported gains in their vocabulary knowledge. Additionally, the ER program promoted autonomous learning through student self-awareness of learning strengths, weaknesses, and observation of progress throughout the course. Finally, student attitude, comfort, and confidence toward reading were improved. As a result of these skills provided by the ER program, students were able to progress in both the language and academic realms.

The foundation of this ER program's design relied on Bamford and Day's "10 Principles for Teaching Extensive Reading." In order to apply an academic spirit to the 10 principles, three

of the principles were modified. First, the teacher selected all of the reading texts, except for the final reading assignment. The teacher noted that nearly all of his selected texts were well received by the students. The selected texts varied in genre and length, and served to help students develop their reading tastes. The result was seen in the comfort and ease in which students were able to choose their own text for the final reading assignment. Second, post-reading activities were done after most of the reading assignments. Extensive reading in its purest form follows the principle that reading is its reward; thus, use of reading activities is unnecessary. In this ER program, post-reading activities were carefully selected to be fun and interactive in order to further promote the ER mantra that reading is fun while simultaneously assessing student motivation, attitude, difficulty of reading text, and reading skills and allowing integration of other language skills. The reading activities were well received by the students, especially activities that allowed sharing of opinions and personal experiences related to the texts. Finally, the principle that learners read as much as possible was modified to accommodate the course curriculum. Classroom time spent specifically for ER was controlled to allow time for other curriculum items. Even though classroom time designated for ER activities progressively decreased throughout the course, the daily practice of extensive reading or ER activities - whether five or fifteen minutes, or in class or at home - helped develop a positive habit of reading. Students demonstrated this by capably meeting the increased reading volume and rate with progressively less ER classroom time. As reported by the teacher and students, the two most essential factors that developed their positive reading habit were reading an easy and interesting text. These correspond to the first two of the 10 principles for teaching extensive reading that, “the reading material is easy [and] a variety of reading material on a wide range of

topics is available.” Once these two principles were met, many of the other principles naturally followed or were easy to apply, thus improving the quality and success of the ER program.

The ultimate success of this ER program was acceptance by the EAP program. The five agreed upon implementation criteria were established to meet the needs of the EAP program and of the ER program teacher. From the perspective of the EAP program, this standalone ER program needed to further benefit student learning but it had to be implemented in a manner that minimized coverage of existing curriculum material and minimized teacher preparation. As a result, implementation criteria 3, 4, and 5 purposefully established a cap on classroom time used for ER activities that were reduced as the course progressed. The teacher credited the successful decrease in ER classroom time to the effective application of the 10 ER principles. In other words, students were on-board with the ER program and enjoyed the readings texts and activities so much that they were able to shift their ER time from the classroom to outside the classroom, which allowed the teacher to use more classroom time for other curriculum items. Each of the five criteria was satisfactorily met and the ER program was accepted into the reading curriculum.

Future Considerations

Even though this ER program was successfully implemented and accepted by the EAP program, several recommendations are presented here for future consideration to further enhance the ER program. First, a key factor for success of the ER program was the use of easy and interesting reading texts. Thus, it is strongly recommended that a course reading log be created and continually updated to record all ER texts used in each class for each semester with feedback from the teacher and students regarding ease of reading and popularity. This will help develop a library of appropriate texts for each reading level, as well as assist teachers to prevent students from repeating a text as they advance through the program.

Another consideration to enhance the ER experience is to shift the selection of reading texts even more toward the students. In this ER project, the teacher expressed regret at only providing one opportunity to allow students to select a text. In future sessions, the teacher plans to begin the course by providing two teacher-selected short stories followed by two student-selected short stories among a pool of short stories. When transitioning to entire books, the teacher plans to begin with two teacher-selected books followed by two student-selected books. By providing more student selection of texts students will have more opportunities to work together in small groups based on the same text, and students will be able to share and report their individual reading experiences and opinions to others with different texts. Selection of texts by students also allows students of different reading abilities to be paired with appropriate texts rather than being forced to read overly difficult or easy texts based on the teacher's selection.

A final consideration to improve this ER program is to more efficiently use classroom time for ER activities. A positive feature of this ER program, as reported by the teacher, was the flexibility of the ER schedule (see Figure 1). The implementation criteria established an upper limit of no more than 100 minutes of class time per week to be used for ER activities, and that such ER classroom time progressively decreased throughout the course. As shown in Figure 2 the teacher followed this protocol by decreasing the weekly in-class reading time, thereby increasing the at-home reading load. The teacher was surprised at how capably students responded to the change and noted regret at not increasing the demand earlier in the program. Thus, it is recommended that the decrease of classroom time for ER activities - given that students have demonstrated the ability to handle the ongoing demand - be done sooner in the course, possibly as early as week three. Students will continue to gain the benefits of the ER program while spending more class time on other curriculum items.

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Table 1

Results of Studies of the Benefits of ER on EFL & ESL Learners

Study	Population	Results
Iwahori 2008	EFL; secondary; Japan	Increase in reading rate & general language proficiency
Nishono 2007	EFL; secondary; Japan	Increase in reading strategies & motivation
Horst 2005	ESL; adults; Canada	Increase vocabulary
Kusanagi 2004	EFL; adults; Japan	Increase in reading rate
Taguchi et al. 2004	EFL; adults; Japan	Increase in reading rate
Sheu 2003	EFL; junior high school; Taiwan	Increase in general language proficiency
Asraf & Ahmad 2003	EFL; middle school; Malaysia	Increase in attitude
Takase 2003	EFL; secondary; Japan	Increase in motivation
Bell 2001	EFL; university; Yemen	Increase in writing proficiency
Tsang 1996	EFL; university; Hong Kong	Increase in writing proficiency
Masuhara et al. 1996	EFL; university; Japan	Increase in reading proficiency & rate
Cho & Krashen 1994	ESL; adults; USA	Increase in reading proficiency, oral fluency, vocabulary knowledge, & attitude & motivation
Laia, b 1993	EFL; secondary; Hong Kong	Increase in reading proficiency & vocabulary
Elley 1991	EFL; primary; Singapore	Increase in reading proficiency & attitude & motivation
Hafiz & Tudor 1990	EFL; primary; Pakistan	Increase in writing proficiency & vocabulary knowledge
Robb & Susser 1989	EFL; university; Japan	Increase in reading proficiency & attitude
Pitts, White, & Krashen 1989	ESL; adults; USA	Increase in vocabulary knowledge
Janopoulos 1986	EFL; university; USA	Increase in writing proficiency
Elley & Mangubhai 1981	EFL; primary; Fiji	Increase in reading proficiency & general language proficiency including listening & writing; increase in attitude & motivation

Note. Reprinted from “The benefits of extensive reading (ER)”, by Day, R.R.

Table 2

Reading rate and in-class reading time

<u>Text</u>	<u>Words^a</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Reading rate^b</u> (words/day)	<u>In-class reading</u>
The Story of an Hour	765	2 days	383	1 session – 15 minutes
The Exact Science of Matrimony	1381	3 days	460	2 sessions – 15 minutes
The Open Boat	2418	4 days	605	2 sessions – 15 minutes each
Dracula	8000	12 days	667	4 sessions – 10 minutes each
Anne of Green Gables	7000	10 days	700	3 sessions – 10 minutes each
Robinson Crusoe ^c	9,000	7 days	1286	1 session – 10 minutes
Frankenstein ^c	11,000		1571	1 session – 10 minutes
Mosquito Coast ^c	17,320		2474	1 session – 10 minutes

^a Approximated by counting lines and assuming an average of 9 words per line.

^b Includes teacher reading, individual in-class reading, and reading at home.

^c Students selected one of the three texts. All other texts were selected by the teacher.

Table 3

Extensive reading activities

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Skill</u>
Class discussion	General understanding Share opinion Monitor difficulty of text	Listening Speaking Summarizing
Small group Discussion	General understanding Share opinion	Clarifying Negotiating
Partner discussion	General understanding Share opinion	Predicting
Weekly reading logs	Monitor reading rate Monitor difficulty of texts Monitor popularity of texts Demonstrate progress	Writing Self-evaluation
1-sentence summary	General understanding	Writing Summarizing
Beginning-middle-end	General understanding	Writing (or speaking) Summarizing
Talk for a minute	General understanding Oral summarizing	Speaking Summarizing
Page gallery	Express opinions in writing and drawing Identify new vocabulary words to confirm ease/difficulty of texts	Identifying new vocabulary Identifying sentences with personal meaning Writing about emotions
Critic's review	General understanding Express opinions	Summarizing Writing about emotions Giving recommendations
Role-play	General understanding	Speaking
3-2-1	General understanding Oral summarizing	Speaking Listening Summarizing
Story jigsaw timeline	General understanding Pictorial summarizing	Listening Speaking Writing Summarizing Clarifying Negotiating

Table 4

Student responses to a question on the questionnaire

Do you like to read in English? (rate from 1 = I hate it to 5 = I love it)

<u>Rating</u>	<u># of responses for each rating at the start of the session</u>	<u># of responses for each rating at the end of the session</u>	<u>Change</u>
1	1	1	0
2	3	0	-3
3	5	4	-1
4	1	4	+3
5	2	3	+1

Table 5

Number of end-of-session student responses for each rating about reading in L1 and L2

<u>Rating</u>	<u># of responses</u>	<u># of responses</u>
1 = I don't like it	How much do you like to	How much do you like to
5 = I like it a lot	read in your 1st language?	read in English?
1	0	1
2	2	3
3	2	5
4	4	1
5	4	2

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	
In-class reading More in-class time for ER	Week 1	ER intro & survey DEAR	DEAR Reading activity	DEAR Reading log	Teacher-selected Short Stories
	Week 2	DEAR Reading activity	DEAR Reading activity	DEAR Reading log	
	Week 3	DEAR Reading activity	DEAR Reading activity	DEAR Reading log	
	Week 4	Reading activity	DEAR	DEAR Reading log	Chapters
	Week 5	Reading activity	DEAR	DEAR Reading log	
	Week 6	Reading activity	DEAR	DEAR Reading log	
At-home reading Less in-class time for ER	Week 7	DEAR	Reading activity	DEAR Reading log	Student-selected Complete books
	Week 8	DEAR	Reading activity	Reading log ER survey	

Figure 1. Extensive reading schedule.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Total Time
Week 1		ER intro (15) survey (5) DEAR (15)	Activity (10) Teacher reads (5) DEAR (10)	Activity (10) DEAR (15) Reading log (5)	90 min.
Week 2	Activity (10) DEAR (15)	Activity (5)	Activity (5) DEAR (15)	Activity (15) Reading log (5)	70 min.
Week 3	Activity (10) DEAR (15)	Activity (5)	Activity (5) DEAR (15)	Activity (15) Reading log (5)	70 min.
Week 4	Activity (5) DEAR (10)	Activity (5)	Activity (5) DEAR (10)	Activity (75*) Reading log (5)	115 min.
Week 5	Activity (5) DEAR (10)	Activity (5)	Activity (5) DEAR (10)	Activity (15) Reading log (5)	55 min.
Week 6	Activity (5) DEAR (10)	Activity (5)	Activity (5) DEAR (10)	Activity (15) Reading log (5)	55 min.
Week 7		DEAR (10)	Activity (5)	Reading log (5)	20 min.
Week 8			Activity (75*)	ER close (5) ER survey (5)	85 min.

*Multi-class activity

Figure 2. Summary of class time use for ER activities.

Appendix A

Beginning-of-Session Questions about Reading

1. How much do you like reading in your first language?

(I don't like it) 1 2 3 4 5 (I like it a lot)

2. How much do you like reading in English?

(I don't like it) 1 2 3 4 5 (I like it a lot)

3. How much time do you spend each week reading for fun in your first language?

4. How much time do you spend each week reading for fun in English?

5. What difficulties do you have with reading in English?

6. In your opinion, what makes a story or a book good?

7. What kinds of books do you enjoy?

Appendix D

End-of-Session Questions about Reading

1. How much do you like reading in English?

(I don't like it) 1 2 3 4 5 (I like it a lot)

2. What is your opinion about the number of stories you read this session and the number of pages you read? (Do you want more or less stories? Do you prefer short or long stories?)

3. What reading activities did you like and not like?

4. Do you prefer to read in class, read at home, or both? Why?

5. Do you think this reading program helped your reading skills? Why or why not?