

## Newsletter No. 5

### Workshop in October

#### “Extensive Reading: Affordances, Constraints, and Useful Tips”

**Date:** October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021 9:00-12:15 (Zoom Meeting)

**Presenter:** Merve Savaşçı, PhD  
(Sakarya University, Turkey)



#### **Abstract:**

Extensive reading (ER) has been a popular approach to second/foreign (L2) reading, where learners read large amounts of materials within their competence for general understanding with the aim of enjoying reading. ER provides several useful affordances and helps learners enhance their comprehension, fluency/reading rate, vocabulary knowledge, reading motivation, and other benefits. However, it is also sometimes overlooked as a classroom practice, or there are oftentimes malpractices. In this workshop, I will introduce practitioners to ER by providing a brief theoretical knowledge, discuss its affordances and constraints, review the guidelines for planning, setting up, and implementing successful ER courses/programs, and offer hands-on experience in a number of ER activities.

**The number of participants:** 25

### 1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- I will try to introduce “extensive reading” itself to my classroom. I hope this will encourage my students, most of whom like English, but don’t like studying English, to keep connection with English.
- Guess the title by cover, or continue the story. They might be easy enough for my younger classes
- I really enjoyed the activities which we could guess titles or stories from book covers and blurbs. I have



experience teaching reading classes involving an extensive reading program, and I have had some students who do not know where to start or what they want to read. I thought those exercises were fun and easy, and they could help students discover new interests towards certain stories. I would love to use this idea for discussions in my college classes, and I believe it could be a great way to motivate students to read more.

- I like ‘Book Covers without title’ activity. It will be a good introduction for how to find an interesting book. It might be interesting to have students guess not only the title but also the abstract of the book.

## 2. What you learned from today’s workshop

- I learned that reading should be classified into several purposes, such as searching for simple information, skimming, integrating information, and so on. As for my students, they first want to be able to catch the simple information in English, which are like checking the maps, understanding the timetables or understanding what is written in advertisements. On

When students are reading extensively they READ:

**R**ead quickly and  
**E**njoyably with  
**A**dequate comprehension so they  
**D**on’t need a dictionary

- the other hand, what I get them to do at school is intensive reading. Here is a gap between what they want to do and what a teacher want them to do. Thus, I’m aware of clarifying the level of reading is one of the important aspects that teachers take into account when they teach English.
- A lot of interesting information and ideas I might want to try in the future, if I have older or higher lever classes. I’d like to try letter from a character at some point.
  - I appreciated some of the links too, such as erfoundation.org.
  - I am not a big reader, and I have considered reading in English as a part of study. However, through the workshop, I see the possibility of myself enjoying reading more. I got interested in some of the stories just by reading the first line, and listening to others’ ideas about a book made me want to know more about it. In my context, the focus is more on the skills but I’d like my students to enjoy reading more; not for class, but for themselves. This workshop made me think about what I could do for creating a fun and more enjoyable reading class.
  - I learned ER is not a passive activity but teachers can apply ER to writing and speaking. I had thought ER was a student’ individual activity as homework, but today I realized students can deepen their reading together with their classmates in the classroom.

## 3. Questions and Answers

- 1) *You mentioned about setting a minimum line for students of ER, such as the number of words they should read a week. I think it might hinder students’ freedom to choose a book. What do you think?*

**Merve:** In my humble opinion, setting word limits could be done on a semester basis, not on a weekly basis (there might be some teachers who would prefer that though) as I think time is quite limited (I put myself in students' shoes). And yes, you have a good point as dictating or requiring something might 'kill' the 'enthusiasm' part of the reading activity.

Rather, as one of the attendees indicated in the workshop, you-as the teacher- can set a semester-based minimum word limit (a realistic and optimum one) to be read; however, students would set their own limits according to their reading ability and performance. We should know our students and set those minimum limits accordingly. For instance, you might set a minimum number of 1,000 words per semester, but some students might aim at reading 1,000 words (just the limit) whereas some others might prefer reading 3,500 words. You should promote friendly competition in the classroom and guide the students accordingly, too. I hope I could answer your question. Please let me know if you have any more questions and/or suggestions: [msavasci@sakarya.edu.tr](mailto:msavasci@sakarya.edu.tr)

2) *During the workshop, I wished I'd had more knowledge about some literature so that I could have enjoyed the activities even more. As we talked about in the discussion, some people, including myself, are not very good at reading in L2, and often it is hard to make a reading an enjoyable habit. Because everyone has different speed and different interest in reading, it could be hard to manage some activities which require the knowledge from certain books and stories. (For example, some people are familiar with the style of certain writers, so guessing the title from the first line would be very easy, but for some, they do not have enough knowledge to start guessing.) I would like to know how Dr. Savaşçı has been dealing with the individual differences when she applies the activities with extensive reading.*

**Merve:** First of all, thank you for sharing your insights and question with me. I completely understand your situation and concern. I was not very good at reading in L2 either, nor did I enjoy it. However, I got used to it in time; I started to enjoy it in time- as I read more (I was in that vicious cycle).

By the way, yes, this is what our students would feel (i.e., wishing that they had read to enjoy the activities more), which would push them to read more and enjoy reading and follow-up activities more. Indeed, the activities I suggested could be adapted for the books read by every student in the class so they would not fall behind the discussion. For example, all the students could read one book and the activities could be based on that book. Or, you might prefer the activities which would not require background knowledge about certain books, but about the books that students read. To exemplify, you can ask your students to guess the title from the first line (before they start reading their own books) and make some predictions about the book (either in the written or oral form). Then, students would read and verify or reject the predictions they had made before reading the book. Every single student would be responsible for their own book, not for the others'. It might work more effectively and

eliminate your concerns as a teacher, too. This is how I would deal with individual differences: by individualizing the activities through some adaptation. I hope I could answer your question. Please let me know if you have any more questions and/or suggestions: [msavasci@sakarya.edu.tr](mailto:msavasci@sakarya.edu.tr)

3) *What is the relationship between ER and EFL writing? Both pedagogically and theoretically? Thank you for staying up so late.*

**Merve:** First of all, thank you very much. It was quite a different and enjoyable experience for me to meet you and have a fruitful discussion. Well, as to your question, which by the way I think is a great one, here is my answer:

From a theoretical perspective, I can refer to one form of Comprehension Hypothesis- the Reading Hypothesis, a hypothesis which suggests that "...reading is a form of comprehensible input and results in the acquisition of literacy-related aspects of language." (Krashen, 2018, p. 1). Accordingly, reading acts as a form of comprehensible input for the learners. ER enables readers to be exposed to rich amounts of input, which in turn promotes reading competencies and skills, vocabulary knowledge, linguistic knowledge (e.g., semantic, syntactic, etc.), mechanics, spelling, and so forth. Therefore, there is no doubt that 'A good reader makes a good writer'. Several earlier studies in the literature providing empirical data have also confirmed this, too (Please see the list of suggested readings indicated below).

From a pedagogical perspective, reading and writing are intertwined and reading serves as a model for writing. By integrating ER into traditional intensive-reading classes, one can create several different reading and writing opportunities. As I also shared in the workshop, students can be encouraged to do some informal writing (fluency or meaning-based) so that they can transfer what they read to another form, writing. As Park (2015) states, 'ER per se may not directly guide ESL students into academic writing' (p. 7), yet it can help them practice their writing skills (and maybe motivation) in general.

I hope it is more clear now. Please let me know if you have any more questions: [msavasci@sakarya.edu.tr](mailto:msavasci@sakarya.edu.tr)

By the way, here are some publications you might want to read:

- Kirin, W. (2010). Effects of extensive reading on students' writing ability in an EFL class. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 7(1), 285-308.
- Lee, S. Y., & Hsu, Y. Y. (2009). Determining the crucial characteristics of extensive reading programs: The impact of extensive reading on EFL writing. *The International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 5(1), 12-20.

Lee, J., & Schallert, D. L. (2016). Exploring the reading–writing connection: A yearlong classroom-based experimental study of middle school students developing literacy in a new language. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 51(2), 143-164.

Mermelstein, A. D. (2015). Improving EFL Learners' Writing through Enhanced Extensive Reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 27(2), 182-198.

Park, J. (2015). Integrating reading and writing through extensive reading. *Elt Journal*, 70(3), 287-295.

Sakurai, N. (2017). The relationship between the amount of extensive reading and the writing performance. *Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 17(2), 142-164.

4) *I sent my close Finnish friend the Finnish text and his reaction was “What's that text? It's ridiculous, it's so Finnish I can't even translate it.”*

**Merve:** Wow, that is quite interesting, and thanks for sharing it with me. Well, I can't speak Finnish, but I assume it is an old text (and presented out of its context). And remember, the other sample texts, although they were English, did not make that much sense, either. Maybe we should ask Nuttall, the author of the book from which I got that Finnish text sample, about what it meant :) Here is the source if you would like to check it:

Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. Heinemann.

## AR Discussion

**Date:** October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 13:00-15:00

**Title:** Group discussion on action research

**Advisers:** Kazuyoshi Sato (NUFS), Duane Kindt (NUFS), Juanita Heigham

**The number of participants:** 13

