

THE IMPACT OF EXTENSIVE READING ON VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND READING FLUENCY

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Abstract. Extensive reading (ER) — the practice of reading large quantities of easy, self-selected material for general meaning and enjoyment — has long been proposed as an effective complement to intensive reading instruction in EFL contexts. This article examines the impact of extensive reading on two closely related outcomes: vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency. Drawing on Krashen's Input Hypothesis and research on incidental vocabulary learning, the article discusses how repeated exposure to words in varied, meaningful contexts through extensive reading supports the gradual, incidental acquisition of vocabulary, including word meaning, collocation, and usage. It further explores how sustained engagement with graded and authentic texts contributes to reading fluency by strengthening word recognition automaticity, increasing reading rate, and improving overall reading comprehension. The article concludes by outlining practical considerations for implementing extensive reading programs in EFL classrooms, including the selection of graded readers, the use of free voluntary reading time, and the role of the teacher in guiding and monitoring learner progress.

Keywords: extensive reading, vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency, incidental learning, EFL learners, graded readers

Annotatsiya. Keng ko'lamli o'qish (extensive reading) — o'quvchi tomonidan erkin tanlangan, tushunish jihatidan yengil bo'lgan katta hajmdagi matnlarni umumiy mazmunni tushunish va zavqlanish maqsadida o'qish amaliyoti bo'lib, u chet tili sifatida ingliz tili (EFL) ta'limida intensiv o'qishga samarali qo'shimcha vosita sifatida uzoq yillardan beri e'tirof etib kelinmoqda. Ushbu maqolada keng ko'lamli o'qishning ikkita bir-biriga bog'liq bo'lgan natijaga — leksik boylikni oshirish va o'qish ravonligiga ta'siri tahlil qilinadi. Krashenning Input gipotezasi hamda tasodifiy (implicit) leksik o'zlashtirish bo'yicha tadqiqotlarga tayangan holda, maqolada so'zlarning turli va mazmunli kontekstlarda takror-takror uchrashi qanday qilib so'z ma'nosi, birikmalar (collocation) va qo'llanilishining bosqichma-bosqich, tasodifiy tarzda o'zlashtirilishiga yordam berishi ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, darajalashtirilgan (graded) va original matnlar bilan uzluksiz shug'ullanish so'zlarni avtomatik tanish qobiliyatini kuchaytirish, o'qish tezligini oshirish va umumiy o'qish tushunchasini yaxshilash orqali o'qish ravonligiga qanday hissa qo'shishi tahlil qilinadi. Maqola yakunida EFL sinflarida keng ko'lamli o'qish dasturlarini joriy etishning amaliy jihatlari — darajalashtirilgan kitoblarni tanlash, erkin ixtiyoriy o'qish vaqtini tashkil etish va o'qituvchining o'quvchi rivojlanishini yo'naltirish hamda nazorat qilishdagi roli — bayon etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: keng ko'lamli o'qish, leksik boylikni oshirish, o'qish ravonligi, tasodifiy o'zlashtirish, EFL o'quvchilari, darajalashtirilgan kitoblar

Аннотация. Экстенсивное чтение (extensive reading) — практика чтения больших объёмов самостоятельно выбранных, доступных по уровню текстов с целью понимания общего смысла и получения удовольствия — уже долгое время рассматривается как эффективное дополнение к интенсивному чтению в обучении английскому языку как иностранному (EFL). В данной статье рассматривается влияние экстенсивного чтения на два тесно связанных результата: пополнение словарного запаса и беглость чтения. Опираясь на гипотезу восприятия (Input Hypothesis) Крашена и исследования непроизвольного (инцидентального) усвоения лексики, в статье анализируется, каким образом многократное встречаение слов в разнообразных и содержательных контекстах при экстенсивном чтении способствует постепенному, непроизвольному усвоению значения слов, их сочетаемости и особенностей употребления. Далее рассматривается, как систематическая работа с адаптированными и аутентичными текстами способствует развитию беглости чтения за счёт укрепления автоматизма распознавания слов, повышения скорости чтения и улучшения общего понимания текста. В заключение статьи представлены практические рекомендации по внедрению программ экстенсивного чтения в классах EFL, включая подбор адаптированной литературы, организацию времени для свободного добровольного чтения и роль преподавателя в направлении и контроле прогресса учащихся.

Ключевые слова: экстенсивное чтение, пополнение словарного запаса, беглость чтения, непроизвольное усвоение, изучающие EFL, адаптированная литература

1. Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge and reading fluency are widely recognized as two of the strongest predictors of overall reading proficiency in a foreign language. While intensive reading — the close, detailed study of short texts, often accompanied by explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction — remains a staple of EFL classrooms, it is frequently insufficient on its own to provide learners with the volume of exposure to English needed for vocabulary growth and fluent processing to occur. Extensive reading (ER), defined as the reading of large quantities of self-selected, comprehensible texts primarily for meaning and pleasure, has been proposed as a complementary approach capable of addressing this gap. This article reviews the theoretical rationale for extensive reading and examines its impact on two central outcomes of EFL reading development: vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Defining Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is typically characterized by several core principles: learners read large amounts of material; texts are self-selected and pitched at or slightly below the learner's current proficiency level to ensure comprehensibility; reading is done primarily for general understanding, information, or enjoyment rather than for detailed analysis;

and reading speed is generally faster than in intensive reading, since the goal is fluent processing rather than exhaustive comprehension of every word or structure.

2.2 The Input Hypothesis and Incidental Learning

Krashen's Input Hypothesis proposes that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence. Extensive reading operationalizes this principle by providing learners with sustained exposure to large quantities of comprehensible written input. Within this framework, vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading is understood as largely incidental: learners do not set out to memorize specific words, but acquire lexical knowledge as a by-product of reading for meaning, through repeated encounters with words in varied and meaningful contexts.

3. The Impact of Extensive Reading on Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading is generally described as incremental rather than immediate: a single encounter with an unfamiliar word rarely results in full acquisition, but repeated exposure across multiple texts allows learners to gradually build a fuller representation of a word's meaning, form, and typical usage. This incremental process is thought to depend on several factors, including the frequency with which a word appears across the texts a learner reads, the richness and clarity of the surrounding context, and the learner's ability to infer meaning from context without the exposure being so demanding that it disrupts overall comprehension. Because extensive reading exposes learners to vocabulary embedded in natural, connected discourse rather than in isolated lists, it also supports the acquisition of collocational patterns and contextually appropriate usage, which are often difficult to teach through direct instruction alone.

4. The Impact of Extensive Reading on Reading Fluency

Reading fluency is commonly understood as the ability to read accurately, at an appropriate rate, and with adequate comprehension, reflecting the automaticity with which lower-level processes such as word recognition are carried out. Extensive reading contributes to fluency development primarily through the sheer volume of practice it provides: as learners repeatedly encounter high-frequency words and common syntactic patterns across many texts, word recognition becomes faster and less effortful, freeing cognitive resources for higher-level comprehension processes such as inferencing and integrating information across a text. Because extensive reading materials are selected to be within or slightly below learners' current level, learners are able to read at a natural pace without being slowed by constant vocabulary lookup or grammatical analysis, which further reinforces fluent reading behavior over time.

5. Pedagogical Implications for EFL Classrooms

Implementing extensive reading effectively in EFL classrooms requires attention to several practical factors. Graded readers — texts written or adapted to specific vocabulary and grammar levels — are commonly used to ensure that material is comprehensible while still providing meaningful exposure to new language. Programs typically allocate dedicated time for free voluntary reading, both in and outside the

classroom, and encourage learners to select texts based on personal interest to sustain motivation and engagement. The teacher's role shifts from direct instructor to facilitator, guiding text selection, monitoring reading volume and comprehension, and organizing follow-up activities — such as book talks, reading logs, or brief written responses — that reinforce engagement without turning extensive reading into intensive analysis. Combining extensive reading with intensive reading instruction, rather than replacing one with the other, is generally recommended, as each addresses complementary aspects of reading development.

6. Conclusion

Extensive reading offers EFL learners sustained, meaningful exposure to written English that supports both incidental vocabulary acquisition and the development of reading fluency. By providing large quantities of comprehensible input, extensive reading allows learners to encounter vocabulary repeatedly in varied contexts, gradually building depth of word knowledge, while simultaneously strengthening the automaticity of word recognition that underlies fluent reading. For EFL programs, integrating structured extensive reading alongside intensive reading instruction represents a practical and theoretically grounded way to accelerate learners' vocabulary growth and reading fluency, ultimately supporting their broader development as confident and independent readers of English.

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