

INVESTIGATING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EXTENSIVE READING TOWARD THEIR VOCABULARY MASTERY IN ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF PATTIMURA UNIVERSITY AMBON

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Reading is one of the critical skills in learning English in which students can develop their cognition, build vocabulary, as well as bring enjoyment. Extensive reading is known as one of the useful approaches to build students' vocabulary repertoires by engaging students to read as much as they can be based on their appropriate reading level. Therefore, this survey study aims to find out how the students perceive their reading experiences in the extensive reading, how this approach increases their English vocabulary, as well as their reading comprehension. For the data collection technique, we distributed questionnaires for 40 undergraduate students in their second and fourth semester in the English department. To gain more comprehensive data, we also interviewed 20 students. The results of this study revealed that the majority of students show their positive response to and perception of extensive reading. We also found that this approach impacts the progress of students' reading comprehension as well as the development of their vocabulary building. The findings of this study shed light on students' perceptions of extensive reading and how it impacts their vocabulary building and reading comprehension. This study prompts further studies to examine the effectiveness of extensive reading on vocabulary learning of English foreign language students in various reading levels.

Keywords: *perception; extensive reading; vocabulary building; reading comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the critical skills in learning English in which students can develop their cognition, building vocabulary, as well as bring enjoyment. Reading can support students to get many language inputs to be used in their daily communication. Teachers of higher education tried hard to create various materials and develop their reading ability better. Before the teachers design reading materials, they must identify students' need. Reading materials may offer vocabulary inputs and improve students' comprehension in reading various texts.

The second language curricula of most developing countries put stress mainly on intensive reading leaving the idea of extensive reading ignored (Haider, 2012). The focus of intensive reading is reading speed and fluency of the reader. While, extensive reading concerns on critical

thinking and analytical skill in the reader. Here, we can say that extensive reading extends the knowledge and skill of the students. To be an effective reader, critical thinking is of great significance. Therefore, a critical thinker has an ability to analyze the chosen texts and handle problematic parts during the reading time.

As we know that extensive reading is a continuation of intensive reading. Extensive reading has posited as one of the useful approaches besides intensive reading to build students' vocabulary repertoires by engaging students to read as much as they can be based on their appropriate reading level. The idea of the meaning of extensive reading differs between related experts. Extensive reading can bring about a smoother reading experience, allowing readers to automatically identify and comprehend new words in a piece of writing, and

can also cause a more positive reading attitude (Lin, 2010).

Extensive reading is intended to get the reader to focus on reading for the sake of reading (for information or entertainment), and less on reading for the sake of mastery of a particular linguistic structure of even a particular reading strategy or skill (Carrell & Carson, 1997). Given the many positive benefits of ER, L2 scholars, including ELT experts (e.g. Macalister, 2014; Maley, 2005, 2008), L2 reading specialists (e.g. Day and Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Nuttall, 2005), coursebook researchers (e.g. Brown, 2009; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2013), and SLA researchers (e.g. Ellis, 2005; Nation, 2007) gave ER a respectable place in language teaching. This kind of reading creates many activities to be done by the students freely and voluntarily. It becomes a substantial area because it can be helpful in spreading awareness of the English language. The benefits of this reading are to increase students' self-esteem and develop reading fluency. In this current study, the researchers tried hard to find out students' concepts of extensive reading itself.

Extensive reading becomes a prerequisite program at English department in Indonesia. The idea behind extensive reading has shown that a lot of materials available to attract students' interest in reading and enrich their vocabulary knowledge. Many research studies found that extensive reading can affect vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary knowledge plays important role in foreign language learning process.

EFL students give significant improvements in their reading and vocabulary growth to make them feel interested to gain new words through their reading passages. Therefore, Day and Bamford (2002) proposed the following important features of extensive reading: (1) Students should do their best to extensively read materials not related to the classroom. (2) There should be a wide variety of reading materials to help encourage reading from different perspectives. (3) Students can freely choose their reading materials. If they find one book to be boring, they can stop reading then find a different book. (4) Reading goals should be determined by the content of the reading materials and personal interests. (5) Students read for themselves and therefore seldom need to hand in homework relating to what they have read. (6) The vocabulary and grammar level of the reading

materials should not exceed the students' language abilities so that they do not need to refer to a dictionary when reading. Constant breaks to look up words in the dictionary can make a smooth reading experience impossible. (7) Reading is a personalized and sedentary experience. Students should read outside of the classroom at their own pace and decide when to finish reading a book. (8) Reading speed is often rapid. Students should read books or articles that they find easy to understand. (9) Teachers should guide students to their goals, explain to students the methods of extensive reading, follow up on books read, and guide students to completion of their reading goals. (10) A group of students in a class can be viewed as a reading community. The teacher should be an example for students. The teacher is also a member of the reading community and should display the temperament of a good reader to set an example for students.

We can see that extensive reading can be successful done if the students are eager to read more and completed whether inside or outside the classroom. Extensive reading is about students' reading willingness. The reading materials are chosen freely by the students based on their interests on their contents. It was said that the materials should be those that students actively enjoy reading and gain enjoyment from, which can increase their motivation for English learning (Day & Bamford, 2000; 2002). By choosing a good material, the reading habit can be increased. Successful promotion of extensive reading relies on the aforementioned features and suitable English reading materials and strategies that can guide students to a habit of extensive reading (Liu & Young, 2015). Therefore, cultivation of the reading habit is a way to help students to find joy in and be willing to continue reading. In this current study, the researchers guided the students in reading activities. Students worked in small groups and applied certain strategy in order to gain enjoyment while reading various materials.

In extensive reading learning, enjoyment has become a principal aspect needed by the students. Sometimes, it can be an obstruction in reading activities. Some researchers also concern about it. Based on the national reading survey conducted by Global Views journal in 2014, showed that people in all ages in Taiwan did not enjoy reading and contact with books in daily lives, this was much

lower than contact with personal computer or laptops and smartphones (Wang, 2015). This data affirms that the students' reading habit should be more encouraged by the parents at home, as happened in Taiwan. The implementation of 12-years compulsory education policy has caused parents to be more encouraging of reading habits in their children, showing that traditional Asian parental desires for success continues to impact deeply upon parental attitudes to the reading habits of their children (Wu & Honig in Liu, 2016). For this reason, extensive reading is regarded as an effective strategy to enhance students' language abilities when learning a foreign language, especially English.

In extensive reading, the students had low persistence to develop the habit impacted to the vocabulary mastery. They did not enjoy in reading. Vocabulary is an important component of extensive reading instruction for English students who has weaknesses in comprehending reading materials from easy to complex one. In practice, researchers operationalize vocabulary breadth knowledge as knowledge of form-meaning mapping (Schmitt, 2014). Laufer, Elder, Hill, & Congdon (2004) and Laufer and Goldstein (2004) distinguished four categories of form-meaning mapping knowledge: Active recall, passive recall, active recognition, and passive recognition: (1) Active recall is defined as the ability to produce the L2 form of a given meaning (e.g. word translation task). (2) Passive recall involves the ability to provide the meaning for an L2 word (e.g. word definition task). (3) Active recognition requires language users to recognize the L2 word form of a given meaning (e.g. word selection task based on a given meaning). (4) Passive recognition requires language users to recognize the meaning of an L2 word (e.g. meaning selection task based on a given L2 word form).

There are number of studies confirmed that FL or L2 learners can acquire vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading (Renandya, 2007; Horst, 2005; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Suk, 2016). It is a complication to assessing how English learners acquire vocabulary through extensive reading because each student may read different books. Besides, other studies have explored ways that vocabulary instruction can be incorporated into individual reading interventions for ELL students, and development of such interventions would be beneficial to schools given that ELL students as a

greater risk for reading difficulties (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Helman, 2008). From the previous studies, it can be assumed that vocabulary learning is very influential in extensive reading. Without vocabulary learning, the extensive reading becomes empty. Accordingly, this current study examines how EFL students acknowledge that their vocabulary is going to improve as well as interest to extensive reading.

Extensive reading for enjoyments has numerous benefits and have ideas to promote this habit among the students in learning class. It can motivate students to read more with various texts. Teacher facilitates them to be active readers and choose the books that they are interested to read. The teacher is a role model of a reader (Day & Bamford, 2002). The teacher should promote pleasure reading either in classrooms or homes.

There are previous studies related to this current issue. First, Ferdila (2014) investigated benefits of using extensive reading in teaching reading. The findings revealed that extensive reading is beneficial in teaching reading. There are five benefits found, those are reading as fascinating activity, creating enjoyable learning atmosphere, helping students in developing a wide vocabulary, improving students' reading comprehension, and increasing students' motivation. Second, Fawzia & Salwa (2016) identified the current practices regarding the implementation of extensive reading in Omani Public Schools. Result of the study revealed that the frequency of reading among students is very low as 53% of the students read only once a semester and they read the same type of genre. Besides, most of the English teachers chose the same reading materials for their students regardless of the students' interests or proficiency level. Third, Johnston, *et al.*, (2016) did a preliminary study to determine whether incorporating vocabulary instruction in individual reading fluency interventions for English Language Learners (ELLs) would improve reading comprehension. Results indicated that the two vocabulary instructional procedures, on average, did not affect reading comprehension. Finally, Hsu (2018) studied about vocabulary level of VOA news as voluminous reading material for mid-frequency vocabulary learning. Results showed that VOA news reached the sixth 1,000-word-family level at 98% text coverage. The results may serve as a reference for English extensive reading practitioners

and learners who are concerned with mid-frequency vocabulary learning. Based on the findings above, the researchers were more focused on students' perception of extensive reading toward their vocabulary mastery.

Based on that there are some crucial problems appeared here that is the students have lack of motivation in reading and also lack of vocabulary. Those facts become focus of this study. This survey used survey method to find out how the students perceive their reading experiences in the extensive reading, how this approach increases their English vocabulary, as well as their reading comprehension. The survey was intended to address three broad questions: (1) What do students know about extensive reading? (2) What do students know about the effect of extensive reading on vocabulary? (3) What are students' expectations to extensive reading course?

METHOD

The current study adopted survey method to analyze students' perception of extensive reading in English department. There were only forty undergraduate students in second and fourth semester that filled out the complete questionnaire. On the other hand, interview was conducted for ten students. The data were collected using questionnaire and interview.

The questionnaire contained a variety of questions about the extensive reading practice. The questionnaire was constructed based literature review and also observation during teaching of extensive reading for two years. The form of interview was a structured interview which consisted of five questions. The first question was regarding extensive reading materials; the second question looked into the effect of extensive reading to students' comprehension and vocabulary learning; the third question inquired about learning situation; the fourth question asked about extensive reading practice in English department; and the last question targeted to discover students' expectation to extensive reading course.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results for each of ten questions are given. In this study, the researchers administered the questionnaire sheet and in-depth interview. The questionnaire was distributed for 40 undergraduate students in their second and fourth semester in the English department. The questions are discussed in two broad categories: knowledge about extensive reading and the effect of extensive reading on students' vocabulary. The result of the questionnaire is as follows.

Table 1. *The result of questionnaire*

Semester 2				
Respondent	Knowledge about extensive reading	YES	NO	UNSURE
1	I know what extensive reading is	48%	10%	42%
2	I know extensive reading is important course	95%	0%	5%
3	I believe that extensive reading activities encourage me to be comprehensive reader	88%	0%	12%
4	I believe that extensive reading can enhance my language skills very greatly	93%	0%	7%
5	I can learn English through reading for pleasure	93%	0%	7%
Respondent	The effect of extensive reading on students vocabulary	YES	NO	UNSURE
1	I believe that extensive reading has a positive effects to increase comprehension and vocabulary	98%	0%	2%
2	I believe that extensive reading materials affect me to be motivated on the vocabulary building in class	88%	3%	9%
3	I believe that materials written with a vocabulary range help me to acquire many new words	90%	0%	10%
4	I understand words in text and able to introduce them to many words	30%	0%	70%
5	I can manage my vocabulary difficulties	53%	3%	44%

And the following is the categorization of the questions in the questionnaire.

Part 1

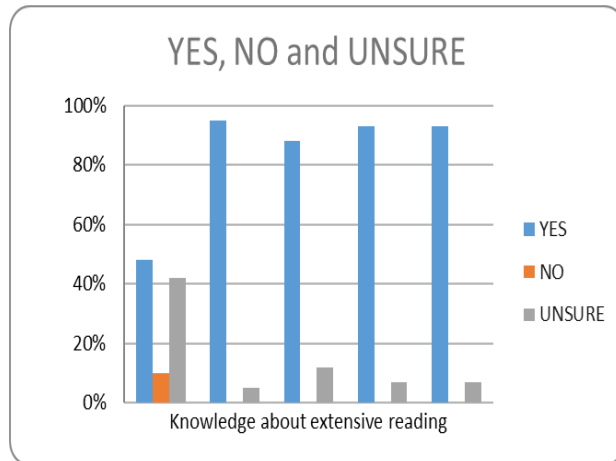


Figure 1. The students' knowledge about extensive reading

In part 1, the graph focuses on the students' knowledge about extensive reading. It showed that most of the students knew and had experience of extensive reading. The students had little (48%) information about extensive reading. But, they did agree (95%) that this course is important to increase their reading skill. By studying extensive reading, most of the students (88%) believed that extensive reading activities encourage them to be comprehensive reader. Besides, many of them agreed (93%) that it can enhance their language skills very greatly. So, almost all students agreed that they can learn English through reading for pleasure.

Part 2

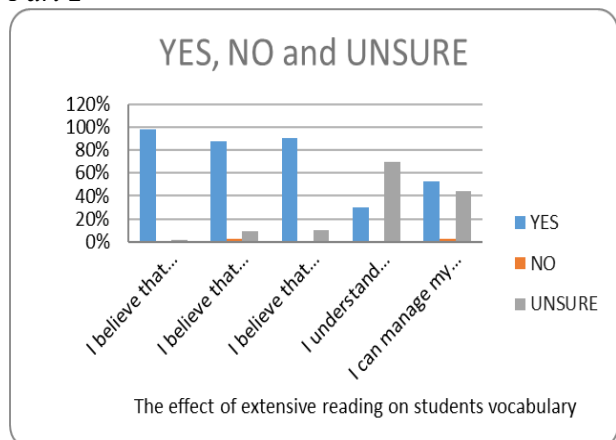


Figure 2. The effect of extensive reading on students' vocabulary

In part 2, it shows about the effect of extensive reading on students' vocabulary. From the graph, the researcher can say that most of them (98%) believed that extensive reading has positive effects to increase comprehension and vocabulary. While, most students (88%) agreed that extensive reading materials affect them to be motivated on the vocabulary building in learning activity. On the other hand, many of them (90%) believed that materials written with a vocabulary range help them to acquire many new words. But, unfortunately little students (30%) could not understand words in text and able to introduce them to many words. So, some students (53%) felt unsure that they can manage the vocabulary difficulties. The result of part 2 can be seen in the graph above.

Interview result

The interview was conducted in order to gain data about students' expectations to extensive reading course. There were 20 students involved in this interview session. As the interview proceeded, the researchers asked each student about the reading materials in extensive reading class. Through the question "Say about reading materials in extensive reading class", the participants generally conveyed the same answer towards this particular question. They pointed out about their appreciation towards their enhancement in new vocabularies through the extensive reading materials. Since the lecturer required them to read and list their new vocabularies in the vocabulary log. Student 1 and 2 stated:

"Um what I think about materials for me that first I experienced it, it really helped me at the time because it was really full with any kind of text that discusses any kind of events or a person or things that happened around us. Also in those texts, there are so many new vocabulary words that I can learn and remember. That is what I think about extensive reading material, ma'am."

"For me it's interesting. Because the lecturer has given materials that require me to read to increase my vocabulary especially in vocabularies log."

Beside new vocabularies, they also admitted that reading materials in extensive class was helping them in understanding countries' culture and short story such as fairy tale. As what Student 3 explained below:

"I think, when I was in the extensive reading class ma'am, we got a lot of materials. But I think it is really helpful material for us as students. I think it

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really helps us to understand many things, like other countries' cultures, and also about short story, fairy tale. The point is I think the material really enhance our ability to understand the reading passage ma'am, in our class. Yes, I think reading materials are really good for us as students. It also brings us many benefits for learning process ma'am."

Meanwhile, there were slightly different answers than what have been stated by the other participant. Some of the participants believed that the reading materials in extensive reading were more complex than intensive reading since it provided harder vocabularies to be understood and remembered. Reading material in extensive reading class was not only about gaining new vocabulary but also required and helped them to build their perspective reading and develop their critical thinking. These two aspects were implicitly happening since they read and built their perception regarding things and asking questions before reading. Moreover, the reading material was valued good and interesting because of the activities after reading itself. The students had to summarize and made a mind map of the reading passages.

"There is a statement which mentions that extensive reading is important to enhance students' comprehension and to mold students' motivation on vocab, do you agree?" being asked, all the participants boldly showed their agreements toward the statement. They mostly agreed that extensive reading materials could enhance their comprehension and vocabularies. The answers are represented by Students 4:

"Yes, I strongly agree. Because when I find some new words in the text that I never knew before it is really important to help me understand the whole text, and to motivate me to increase my vocabulary."

Further explained, the new word which they discovered in the text triggered their curiosity in order to understand the whole passages or text. The situation of not acknowledging a new word motivated them to find the meaning and it was easier for the new words to be absorbed.

Extensive reading materials also probed the students to gain more benefits such as applying their new vocabularies into their academic writing. Aligned with that, to enrich their word bank they had to find the synonyms in words thesaurus. In a deeper answer, Student 5 explained as follow:

"I agree with it because vocabulary is important not just in reading but also in writing and more beneficial if you have a lot of vocabulary and if you have big vocabulary here is a big chance you know their synonyms. I often use thesaurus to look for similar words."

"Okay what do you think about the learning situation during class?". This question focused on their opinion of the class situation or atmosphere during Extensive Reading class. Whether the class situation provided by the lecturer helped them comprehend the material or otherwise. Since the question focused on students' opinion, the answers were varied and not stagnantly in the good side only. This question divided the participants into two sides where some of them agreed that the class situation was interesting and helpful for them, while the rest of the participants seemed to disagree. The participants who believed that the situation was helpful is represented by Student 6, as she stated:

"Talking about the learning situation during the class, actually, I really like it ma'am. Because our lecturer provides many good materials, we got something new to learn. Our lecturer also tries to make a good situation, like comfortable situation for us to learn where we as students can really be active to answer his or her questions and then also learn more about many things ma'am."

By stating that the lecturer provided many good materials, some of the participants believed that these good materials helped them building their reading comprehension. In the activities during class, the students were required to do more than only read. Such as, discussing the content of the passages in order to gain the implicit meaning from the text provided by the lecturer. Discussing in extensive reading class was not only revolving between lecturer and particular students, but the discussion also revolved among students themselves. By discussing and sharing among students, when they were divided in groups, they could independently gain new insights through the session. Since there was no gap between them. The discussion could go easy and surely eased them to deliver their thoughts and to listen to others'. The explanation highly conveyed the answer by the participants that the lecturer provided comfortable situation to the students for them to be active in the class activities.

On the other side, the rest of the participants believed that the class situation was no that helpful. It was due to the monotonous learning strategy

where they were required to read and there was no interesting activity afterwards. It is also supported by Student 7, as she answered:

“I think it is not really active but because just a few students are speaking and they are always speaking and no one really stands up for speaking other than them. The students are not really active.”

Being interpreted, these participants agreed that the reading class was not active as the students tended to be quiet rather than spoke up. This also related to the situation where there were no following activities after reading. Student 2 admitted that the class situation was boring. The case was “the situation in extensive reading class is quite boring ma’am. I’m so bored at that time because it’s only read and read and no activity that is interesting.” he elaborated more. It could not be denied that dividing the students into groups might be a good strategy for learning, however this could not guarantee the students’ motivation in studying and participating in class. Instead, this situation was considered to demotivate students’ willing to participate. Since the students who would take the role in speaking when asked were always the same students. They believed, this situation of being in a group was not enough to motivate each other in participating and be active in class. Thus, the class situation became boring and more quite despite having discussion. Supporting these, Student 1 stated:

“At that time truly it’s a bit boring because I think it’s just monotone and students do not have motivation to stand up and say what we think or opinion during class about the materials. The class did not really motivate us.”

The next question, the researcher tried to probe the participants’ outlook toward the practice of extensive reading in English Department by asking “Okay, that was about learning situation, you already passed extensive reading and you have experience. Maybe you can share with friends from the other class and maybe your seniors about this course, how do you see the practice of extensive reading in English Department?”. Being asked about the question, the participants portrayed varied answers to one another. Although, in some points, the paths of their answer was aligning and headed for the same purpose. According to the answers, they accepted as true that the practice of extensive reading in English Department was relatively enjoyable. As the class provided interesting reading

materials about foreign countries’ culture and stories. There were projects such as mind mapping, presentations, and assignments as well. To this condition, the participants admitted the improvement of their creativity in thinking and practicing reading activities. Having elaborated more, the practice of extensive reading class delivered beneficial insights in helping the students to comprehend the text or passage. Through the reading materials, the students might discover brand new knowledge, terms, vocabularies which they had never known previously.

Nevertheless, there were always possibilities of diversity when it dealt with perspective. The minority of the participants conveyed their contrast points of view regarding the practice of extensive reading. These minorities perceived that the practice had not gone well. They believed the practice of this class had to be improved in terms of the activity and class management. Since a good practice of a class was where all students should talk about their own opinion and perspectives instead of only small number of students. Aligned with this, Student 3 supported by saying:

“In my opinion, I see that it’s not going well because there are some people that don’t have any comprehension when they read something. That is why it’s not going well since there is only about 40% of the students that can comprehend what they read. So, I think it’s not going well ma’am.”

Moreover, beside the new vocabularies they gained through the reading materials provided in the class, there was no big difference between extensive reading class and intensive reading class. Therefore, the minority of the participants believed that the practice of reading extensive class had to be improved.

Although there were different answers toward this question, the majority of the participants still believed that despite the weaknesses of this class, Extensive Reading class still had a part in helping them to be a good reader. Furthermore, the practice helped them to understand the passage clearer and once again added their vocabularies through vocabulary log.

To the last question of the interview, the researcher asked “After you have extensive reading class, what do you expect or what do you hope from this class?”. The answers to this question were aligned from one participant to the others. They more likely hoped that in the future the class could

get more creative in providing many new and unique materials. Not only from the cultures of foreign countries but also Indonesia as well. Not only about stories, but also journals, famous books, and novels to increase the level of the class to be more complex. As well as distinguish the class from intensive reading. This way, the students could be more interested in the class, they believed. Furthermore, they hoped the class was able to help them improve their reading fluency and reading comprehension. As they had their own ambition relating to reading, they wished to be improved and motivated by the Extensive Reading class.

Through extensive reading, their language skills become better. Besides, it contributed largely to the students' vocabulary gain through texts read. Finally, it can raise awareness and impact on materials' design change to be prepared for better extensive reading learning practice. These results may reflect the real learning situation in extensive reading course. It cannot be avoided that teacher's role is needed in the case of determining the students' needs and situation in the classroom. Data from this study demonstrated the important role of pedagogy aspect to enhance students' comprehension and promoting students' motivation on the vocabulary learning. More studies are needed to explore more about effectiveness of extensive reading on vocabulary learning of EFL students. Research on extensive reading materials used in classroom should be the focus for the future researchers.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study revealed that the majority of students show their positive response to and perception of extensive reading. We also found that this approach impacts the progress of students' reading comprehension as well as the development of their vocabulary building. The findings of this study shed light on students' perceptions of extensive reading and how it impacts their vocabulary building and reading comprehension. When FL students do more reading and become more fluent readers, their ability to comprehend texts improves as well as vocabulary. This study prompts further studies to examine the effectiveness of extensive reading on vocabulary learning of English foreign language students in various reading levels.

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