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Extensive Reading and Vocabulary Acquisition:
How and Why EFL Countries Should Adopt this Practice

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Abstract

There have been a good number of research studies on how second language (L2) learners can acquire vocabulary through extensive reading, and different aspects of word knowledge have been in focus. There are also studies arguing that extensive reading can be beneficial only if it is supplemented with classroom activities for enhancing vocabulary knowledge. Through a review of relevant literature, this study investigates the impact of extensive reading on developing L2 learners’ vocabulary proficiency in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Furthermore, as extensive reading demands quite untraditional roles on the part of teachers and learners, implementing extensive reading practices in EFL contexts is not easy. This study proposes some recommendations for successfully implementing extensive reading practices in Asian EFL contexts by taking into consideration the practical realities prevalent in most EFL settings.

In English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, reading is often the skill most emphasized. In extensive reading, learners are exposed to plenty of reading materials, which they choose themselves out of their own interests, and their “attention should be on the meaning, not the language of the text” (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 5). The facilitative role played by extensive reading in enhancing learners’ linguistic proficiency is well documented in literature (Brown, 2009; Davis, 1995; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Renandya, 2007). While learners in EFL/ESL contexts are usually more concerned with intensive reading, the practice of extensive reading can provide them with a whole new approach to reading that “develops good reading habits” (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 6). Knowledge of vocabulary is a crucial aspect of L2 acquisition, and extensive reading can facilitate incidental acquisition of vocabulary in addition to developing learners’ receptive and productive skills (Coady, 1997). In incidental vocabulary acquisition, learners encounter target words incidentally while reading a text with their focus on meaning, and any gain in word knowledge can be attributed to their reading (Horst, 2005).

A good number of researchers have focused on how L2 learners can acquire vocabulary through extensive reading, and different aspects of word knowledge (such as orthography, grammatical aspects, meaning, etc.) have been explored (Kweon & Kim, 2008; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). Mason & Krashen (1997) provide additional support for the effectiveness of extensive reading through a series of experiments conducted in an EFL context. These studies show that the groups of Japanese university and college students, who took part in an extensive reading program for a specific period (e.g. one
year/a semester), made “better gains than the regular students” who went through regular instructions during the same time (Mason & Krashen, 1997, p. 95). However, there are arguments against the view that learners can attain considerable vocabulary proficiency through extensive reading, along with supporting studies (Laufer, 2003; Tudor & Hafiz, 1989).

Successful acquisition of vocabulary through extensive reading can be influenced by different variables such as learners’ basic level of linguistic proficiency, presence/absence of pedagogical instruction, frequency of learners’ exposures to target materials, types and comprehensibility of reading materials, and learners’ level of motivation. Therefore, it is important for pedagogical practitioners in EFL/ESL contexts to be aware of how extensive reading is related to L2 learners’ vocabulary acquisition and the conditions that can affect such acquisition. Through a review of relevant literature, this study investigates the impact of extensive reading on L2 learners’ vocabulary acquisition and discusses the issues that pedagogical practitioners need to keep in mind if they are to use extensive reading practices for developing EFL/ESL learners’ vocabulary proficiency.

Furthermore, as extensive reading demands quite untraditional roles on the part of teachers and learners, implementing extensive reading practices, especially in EFL contexts, is not easy. There are variables like time constraints, financial limitations, and exam-oriented education system that can further complicate proper implementation of extensive reading programs in EFL contexts. Therefore, this study also proposes some recommendations for successfully implementing extensive reading programs in EFL/ESL (especially in Asian) contexts.

**L2 Reading Proficiency and Vocabulary Knowledge**

Proficiency in vocabulary is an essential component of L2 knowledge, as lack of vocabulary can hinder basic expression of meaning for L2 learners (Barcroft, 2004). Learners’ ability to use L2 accurately is influenced by their processing of lexical input through repeated exposures to L2 over longer periods, and extensive reading can positively impact L2 lexical input processing by ensuring repeated exposures to target materials (Barcroft, 2004). Rott (1999) also argues that learners acquire vocabulary incidentally in the process of reading texts for “global comprehension” although SLA research is yet to determine the conditions or facts that influence incidental acquisition of vocabulary through extensive reading (p. 590). Coady (1997) maintains using extensive reading ensures incidental acquisition of vocabulary by L2 learners because “a great deal of L2 vocabulary is indeed learned through extensive reading,” but L2 learners first need to build up a basic knowledge of more frequent vocabulary (p. 235). In this regard, Horst (2005) proposes that to acquire vocabulary incidentally and to guess meanings of unknown words from context, learners should not be unfamiliar with more than 5% vocabulary of a text. Therefore, it seems that L2 learners should be exposed to a range of simplified graded materials (rather than original texts) to facilitate their vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading. Similarly, Coady (1997) argues that beginner level learners need a threshold level of vocabulary (3000-5000 word families or 5000-8000 lexical items of high frequency rate) to guess the meanings of unknown words from contexts and thus, to improve their vocabulary through reading. Therefore, pedagogical instruction seems to be necessary for beginner level learners to improve their basic proficiency in comprehending and using those high-frequency words of 3000-5000.
families so that they can develop automaticity “in their recognition, i.e., sight vocabulary” (Coady, 1997, p. 232). Likewise, Collins (2005) finds that beginner level learners’ basic proficiency level in receptive skills helps them to learn more vocabulary than those with comparatively lower proficiency in receptive skills. Additionally, Lee and Mallinder (2011) emphasize the “reciprocal” relationship between vocabulary skill and reading ability, as a learner with a stronger vocabulary base can have better comprehension level, which in turn motivates him/her to read more (p. 146). Beginner learners’ background experiences and interests should match their reading texts to facilitate their comprehension process and instigate their motivation; the more motivated learners are in the process of reading the better is their chance of increasing their lexical skills through extensive reading (Coady, 1997). Therefore, teachers can provide learners with additional vocabulary instructions to accelerate their comprehension of texts, which is an important factor for successful vocabulary acquisition (Lee & Mallinder, 2011).

Extensive reading can provide learners with exposure to enough comprehensible input that can facilitate their acquisition of new vocabulary (Krashen, 1989; Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, & Gorsuch, 2004). Krashen (1989) is of the opinion that acquisition of vocabulary is associated with “the language faculty, the mental organ specialized for language,” which can effectively be activated when learners are exposed to enough comprehensible input in relaxed atmosphere, and conscious learning of vocabulary can only result in developing “a limited amount of ‘language like’ competence” (p. 454). Krashen (1989) thinks that learners should be exposed to as much L2 input as possible so that they can acquire the necessary competence in L2 skill areas including vocabulary and grammar because “more comprehensible input, in the form of reading, is associated with greater competence in vocabulary and spelling” (p. 441). Based on Krashen’s comprehensible input hypothesis, Day and Bamford (1998) advocate making plenty of reading material available to learners that is below their current proficiency level so that they can successfully acquire new vocabulary without being overwhelmed by too much complexity (as cited in Day & Bamford, 1998). This view is also shared by Elley and Mangubhai (1983) who assert that teachers should expose learners to “an abundance of high-interest, illustrated story books, printed in the target language” so that learners can develop their L2 vocabulary skills in a motivating, meaning-based environment that can “make L2 acquisition more like L1 acquisition and consequently facilitate the acquisition process” (p. 55). Thus, extensive reading of interesting and comprehensible materials can provide learners with the opportunity to acquire vocabulary skills in relaxed atmosphere — a goal that is not easy for them to achieve by any other means.

In research literature, as mentioned earlier, there is ample evidence of the efficacy of extensive reading in developing learners’ vocabulary skills. In Table 1, the findings of some experimental research studies are presented:
### Table 1. Extensive reading: Summary of experimental research studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Texts/Materials used</th>
<th>Experimental Design</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kweon &amp; Kim (2008)</td>
<td>12 Korean learners of intermediate proficiency level</td>
<td>Authentic unsimplified texts (target words: 367)</td>
<td>Pretest, ER Treatment (4/6 hours per day for 5 weeks), Posttest 1 (on the final treatment day), Posttest 2 (4 weeks after posttest 1)</td>
<td>Pretest &lt; Posttest 1 = Posttest 2 [Increase of nouns: 29% in Posttest 1, 26% in Posttest 2; verbs: 17% in Posttest 1, 19% in Posttest 2; adj: 18% in Posttest 1, 17% in Posttest 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigada &amp; Schmitt (2006)</td>
<td>An intermediate level learner of French</td>
<td>Simplified reading materials (Target words: 70 nouns, 63 verbs)</td>
<td>Pretest (one-on-one interview and tests on knowledge of the target words) ER Treatment (one reader/week for one month) Posttest (one-on-one interview)</td>
<td>Learning was evident for 87 out of 133 target words (65.4%). The learner’s improvement of scores in the posttest: 23% in spelling, 15.4% in meaning, 30% in grammatical aspects of nouns, 16.6% in that of verbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rott (1999)</td>
<td>95 intermediate level learners of German as a foreign language</td>
<td>Six paragraphs (each 4-6 sentences long) for each of the 12 target words</td>
<td>Pretest Two treatment groups (each further divided into 3 groups based on different exposure frequencies: 2/4/6 times) Vocabulary recognition and production tasks were performed immediately after reading (acquisition), after 1 week (retention 1), and after 4 weeks (retention 2)</td>
<td>Significant gain of vocabulary knowledge for learners exposed to the target words 2, 4, or 6 times in course of their reading. Learners’ success was noted in retaining receptive word knowledge over 4 week period but not in productive word knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horst (2005)</td>
<td>21 adult ESL learners from elementary to high intermediate level</td>
<td>35 Simplified graded readers</td>
<td>Pretest (containing 100 vocabulary items) Treatment (6 weeks long) Individualized posttests (each containing 100 items)</td>
<td>Knowledge of (on average) 10 vocabulary items was gained from pretest to posttest. Learners gained full or partial knowledge of 18 out of 35 words tested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cho &amp; Krashen (1994)</td>
<td>4 Adult immigrants to the US of varied proficiency level (from low intermediate to advanced)</td>
<td>Books from Sweet Valley Kids Series (written at the 2nd grade level)</td>
<td>No Pretest (except for one learner) Learners were asked to underline unknown words. ER Treatment: no specific time limit was set. Posttest</td>
<td>The percentage of learners’ gain in vocabulary knowledge ranged from 56% to 80%. Use of dictionary proved to be fruitful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown, Waring, &amp; Donkaewbua (2008)</td>
<td>35 adult Japanese learners of English from pre-intermediate to intermediate level.</td>
<td>3 stories from graded readers (each appx. 5500 words long). 84 target words</td>
<td>Learners, divided in 3 experimental groups, were exposed to materials in three modes over 2 weeks period: reading only, reading-while-listening, and listening only. Posttest 1 (immediately after the treatment), Posttest 2 (1 week later), Posttest 3 (3 months later)</td>
<td>Most vocabulary acquisition occurred in the reading-while-listening mode (4.39 of 28 words) than in the reading-only mode (4.10 of 28). Vocabulary knowledge was mostly retained over 3 month period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 delineates some empirical studies that document the beneficial effects of extensive reading on vocabulary acquisition. However, the studies also differ in terms of their scope and procedures. Kweon and Kim (2008) investigate how word frequency rate
and word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives) are related to incidental acquisition of word knowledge through extensive reading of authentic literary materials by EFL learners in Korea. The target words (367 in total) are divided into three frequency groups depending on whether the occurrences are 20 or more, 7-19, or 1-6 (Kweon & Kim, 2008). As can be seen in Table 1, the learners’ knowledge of vocabulary (including nouns, verbs, adjectives) “significantly increased” from pretest to posttest 1, and their learning is also retained in the posttest 2 (one month after the post test 1) (Kweon & Kim, 2008, p. 200). Moreover, nouns have significantly higher acquisition rate (29% in posttest 1) than verbs and adjectives (17% and 18% respectively in Posttest 1) (Kweon & Kim, 2008).

Similarly, Pigada and Schmitt (2006) also find that nouns have higher acquisition rate than verbs (as can be seen in Table 1, the rate of improvement is 30% for nouns as opposed to 16.6% for verbs). According to Pigada and Schmitt (2006), as vocabulary knowledge is “incremental” in nature and as it has multifarious aspects (orthographic, collocation, grammatical, etc.), measurements of vocabulary knowledge should take such varied aspects into account rather than focusing solely on the semantic aspects and their study “adds a new dimension to extensive reading research by examining types of word knowledge other than meaning” (p. 5). Pigada and Schmitt (2006) find that among the aspects of vocabulary knowledge, learning rate is higher in case of spelling than in other aspects of word knowledge (as Table 1 shows, 23% improvement of spelling scores in the posttest as opposed to only 15.4% increase in the meaning scores). However, while Kweon and Kim (2008) find that learning rate is higher in case of the high frequency words than in the low frequency words, Pigada and Schmitt (2006) do not find any strong relationship between the word-frequency and the learning rate. On the other hand, Horst (2005) uses measures such as scanning, individual self-rating checklist, and word frequency profiling to ensure that any language gain after extensive reading can be attributed to the reading only and that such measures of vocabulary knowledge can be applicable to a large number of participants. In Horst (2005) (as can be seen in Table 1), learners successfully acquire full or partial knowledge of 18 out of 35 words tested of which they had no knowledge during the pretest. However, unlike Kweon and Kim (2008) and Rott (1999), both of which include delayed posttests in the experimental designs, Horst (2005) cannot confirm if the vocabulary knowledge gained through extensive reading lasted for long, as there is no delayed posttest.

Moreover, frequency of exposure to target words is a crucial issue when it comes to acquisition of vocabulary through extensive reading. Unlike Kweon and Kim (2008) and Pigada and Schmitt (2006) (with the target population 12 and 1 respectively), Rott (1999) conducts the experiment on a large population sample (95) and similar to Kweon and Kim (2008), Rott (1999) finds a positive relationship between frequency of exposure and vocabulary learning rate. Similarly, Brown et al. (2008) argue that frequency of exposure is a necessary precondition for successful vocabulary acquisition and that vocabulary knowledge is likely to decay unless “the words are met a sufficient number of times and are met again soon after in subsequent reading or listening experiences” (p. 156). According to Brown et al. (2008), this ‘sufficient number’ is likely to be “considerably higher than seven to nine times for long term retention” (p. 156).

However, Rott (1999) finds that while six encounters with the target words results in significant gain in productive and receptive word knowledge, four such encounters do not result in such an increase. Furthermore, learners’ retention rate is found to be better in
receptive word knowledge as is evident in the delayed posttest than in the productive word knowledge (Rott, 1999). Thus, the relationship between frequency of exposure and vocabulary acquisition rate seems to be complex.

Additionally, as can be noticed in Table 1, the use of simplified graded materials is more commonly used by extensive reading researchers, which is in support of earlier discussion that to acquire vocabulary through extensive reading, learners need to be familiar with about 95% vocabulary of a text (Horst, 2005). By using graded texts, learners can be exposed to appropriate vocabulary based on their level of competence, as simplified graded materials are tuned to different proficiency levels. However, Rott (1999) uses tailor-made short paragraphs (as reading texts) for each target word, and it may be questionable whether reading such tailor-made paragraphs (each only 4-6 sentences long) can really give a learner the experience of extensive reading. On the other hand, Cho and Krashen (1994) acknowledge the beneficial effects of using a dictionary in acquiring vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading, and similarly, Grabe and Stoller (1997) argue that the practice of reading extensively and using a bilingual dictionary can lead to improved vocabulary skills as well as reading ability in an L2, especially when the L2 is not much different from the L1 (for example, Portuguese as L2 and English as L1).

However, the effect of extensive reading on development of learners’ vocabulary skills can be varied, and in research literature, there are studies that cast doubts on the efficacy of extensive reading in this regard. Laufer (2003) questions whether it is really possible for L2 learners to increase their vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading that involves no explicit vocabulary instruction. Laufer (2003) presents arguments against the main theories (“noticing,” “guessing ability,” “guessing-retention link,” and “cumulative gain”) underlying the standpoint that learners can acquire substantial vocabulary knowledge in their L2 by only reading (p. 568-569). Laufer (2003) argues that it is difficult for L2 learners to notice or identify an unknown word as unknown, to retain the guessed meanings of unknown words, to guess or infer the meanings of unknown words from contextual clues, and to read any vast amount of texts in a short while to incidentally acquire word meanings. Laufer (2003) further compares the relative effectiveness of vocabulary gain from reading and from “word-focused activities” (p. 574). From the results of three experiments in each of which a group of learners participate in reading and another in vocabulary focused tasks such as sentence completion, sentence writing, and writing composition, it is clearly shown that “if a word is practiced in a productive word-focused task, its meaning has a better chance to be remembered than if the word is encountered in a text, even when it is noticed and looked up in a dictionary” (p. 581). Therefore, Laufer (2003) points to the paucity of research in extensive reading literature that experimentally investigates acquisition of particular vocabulary knowledge and emphasizes learners’ superior gains in vocabulary knowledge after participating in specific word-focused activities than in reading tasks. However, the subjects in Laufer’s (2003) experiments only participated in reading short texts, not in extensive reading of longer texts, and therefore, one might wonder whether extensive reading of longer texts would also yield similar results.

Likewise, Brown et al. (2008) find that learners’ success rate in vocabulary acquisition is higher in reading-while-listening mode than in reading-only mode, and learners’ overall success rate is not high in acquiring vocabulary knowledge after
participating in extensive reading/listening activities. Similarly, Tudor and Hafiz (1989) analyze the kind of effects that exposure to graded reading materials can have on a group of ESL learners’ (from the same L1 background) linguistic competence. They find that the range of learners’ vocabulary base does not develop after participating in the extensive reading program. Tudor and Hafiz (1989) attribute such findings to the simpler structures and limited vocabulary used in the graded readers. Therefore, the kind of input, which learners are exposed to in extensive reading, can also have an effect on development of their vocabulary skills. In this regard, pedagogical instructions/activities can be another important factor. Min and Hsu (1997) find that secondary school Taiwanese EFL students who received vocabulary-related tasks along with reading texts outperformed those who only read texts (without receiving any vocabulary-focused activities) in attaining both productive and receptive knowledge of the target words after participating in the five-week long experiment. Therefore, according to Min and Hsu (1997), extensive reading can produce better results in learning vocabulary if such reading is supplemented with classroom activities for enhancing vocabulary knowledge. Similarly, Paribakht and Wesche (1997) compare the effectiveness of reading-plus-vocabulary instruction and “reading-only” treatments for intermediate level ESL learners from diverse L1 backgrounds (p. 187). They find that although in both the treatments learners have successful vocabulary acquisition, they have “significantly greater gains” in reading-plus-instruction treatment than in reading-only treatment (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997, p. 188). Paribakht and Wesche (1997) argue that vocabulary exercises following reading texts ensure greater cognitive processing of the target words than repeated exposure to target words only through reading, and such cognitive processing can lead to higher levels of vocabulary knowledge beyond the level of simple recognition. Similarly, while attesting to the fact that “vocabulary enhancement techniques” along with reading can lead to better vocabulary knowledge, Rott (1999) also mentions some factors that influence learners’ ability to guess unknown word meanings while reading, such as contextual clues, learners’ knowledge of the structural properties of words, and their “awareness of and attention to” unknown vocabulary (p. 592-593). Similar to Min and Hsu (1997), Grabe and Stoller (1997), and Paribakht and Wesche (1997), Rott (1999) also argues for providing learners with access to a dictionary or “post – reading vocabulary activities” to facilitate their inferring the meanings of unknown words and thus, to strengthen their vocabulary knowledge (p. 593). Likewise, Collins (2005) thinks that explanation of new words can help L2 learners of any proficiency level to learn new vocabulary. In similar vein, Laufer (2003) also argues for incorporating word-focused activities in ESL/EFL courses rather than relying solely on extensive reading activities for increasing learners’ vocabulary knowledge.

To sum up, research has shown that extensive reading has positive effects on developing learners’ vocabulary skills (Elley, 1991; Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Kweon & Kim, 2008; Lao & Krashen, 2000; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Rott, 1999). The more learners are exposed to comprehensible input the better is the chance that they will be motivated to read more, which can ultimately strengthen their vocabulary skills by ensuring frequent exposures to target words. However, there are some caveats. Learners need to have a basic level of linguistic proficiency (3000-5000 word families or 5000-8000 high frequency lexical items) to comprehend reading texts or to guess meanings of unknown vocabulary while reading extensively (Coady, 1997). It also becomes difficult
for learners to guess the meanings of unknown words in the absence of any textual clue (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997). Similar to Laufer (2003), Bensoussan and Laufer (1984) also argue that ESL learners often use their schema rather than contextual clues to guess meanings of unknown vocabulary, which might lead to wrong guesses, and in most cases, ESL learners tend to ignore an unknown word rather than making a guess. Therefore, it might be important for beginner level learners to acquire a basic level of proficiency in using highly frequent lexical items before they can be engaged in extensive reading to develop their vocabulary skills. The beneficial effects of using a dictionary while reading extensively are also acknowledged in research literature (Cho and Krashen, 1994; Grabe and Stoller, 1997). Furthermore, as argued by Paribakht and Wesche (1997) and Min and Hsu (1997), extensive reading practices should be supplemented with related pedagogical instructions or exercises to engage learners in high level of mental processing to strengthen their vocabulary skills. The use of an appropriate assessment technique could also prove to be crucial in judging learners’ actual gain from extensive reading activities.

For example, Brown et al. (2008) find that a multiple choice test is more effective in assessing minute details of learners’ vocabulary knowledge (including “partial knowledge”) than a meaning-translation test (p. 156). Moreover, to increase vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading, learners need to be exposed to multiple reading materials on a regular basis, as only a brief exposure to extensive reading is not likely to be beneficial in this regard (Brown et al., 2008; Kweon & Kim, 2008; Rott,1999). And here is where it becomes challenging for the educational practitioners in EFL contexts who may have to accommodate extensive reading practices within a variety of constraints imposed by their academic curricula.

**Implementation of Extensive Reading Practices in EFL/ESL contexts**

As the multifarious benefits of extensive reading in increasing learners’ vocabulary skills are well established in the literature, the question arises as to the status of extensive reading in the EFL/ESL settings all over the world. Day and Bamford (1998) mention that “reading is its own reward” in extensive reading with “few or no follow-up exercises” (p. 8). However, trying to implement such extensive reading practices in the ESL/EFL contexts might be difficult because of different socio-economic and educational contexts prevailing there. Robb (2002) argues that concepts like “learners choose what to read” or “self- motivated learning” might be difficult to implement in non-Western contexts, especially in Asian countries, as Asian learners are more inclined to be engaged in other extra-curricular activities rather than reading for pleasure.

On the other hand, Macalister (2008b) elaborates on the successful implementation of extensive reading practices in the advanced English for Academic Purposes (EAP) settings of New Zealand. Macalister (2008b) argues that the exact nature of extensive reading practices in a program should be “determined by the specific language learning environment” (p. 23). Thus, contextual factors play important roles in deciding the “exact nature of any extensive reading program,” and such a program should be “flexible” enough to adapt to the needs of a particular learner group (Macalister, 2008b, p. 31). Furthermore, Davis (1995) discusses the characteristics of successful extensive reading programs in the secondary school systems of Singapore and Cameroon. In Cameroon, the extensive reading program has to be accommodated within financial constraints as opposed to that in Singapore. The successful implementation of the extensive reading program in Cameroon shows that “even without the luxury of donated
Apart from these success stories, it has not been easy to implement extensive reading projects in many cases where those projects lack specific purposes or do not integrate with the mainstream curricula. Green (2005) investigates the reasons for the failure of Hong Kong Extensive Reading Scheme, which was initiated in the secondary schools of Hong Kong in the early 90s. According to Green (2005), the reasons of this failure include the “undifferentiated and top-down manner” in which the scheme was applied in Hong Kong (p. 308). Moreover, lack of teacher training and motivation, lack of integration of the scheme into other elements of the curriculum, an exam-oriented education system, and lack of definite purposes all contributed to the failure of this scheme in Hong Kong (Green, 2005). On the contrary, Macalister (2008a) shows through the results of an action research project in New Zealand that extensive reading practices can be successfully implemented in an EAP program intended for pre-university level ESL learners. An interesting fact is that this action research project is similar to the Hong Kong extensive reading scheme described by Green (2005); in both cases, extensive reading is not integrated to other parts of the curriculum but is implemented more as an isolated unit. However, in the New Zealand EAP program, as opposed to that in the Hong Kong scheme, the teachers are motivated and trained to practice extensive reading effectively in the classroom, and the learners can also see “the reading as contributing towards their language learning needs” (Macalister, 2008a, p. 255). Differences like these might have contributed to the success of extensive reading project in New Zealand and failure of it in Hong Kong. Such facts underscore the need for training and motivating teachers for developing appropriate extensive reading programs while keeping in consideration the particularities of specific contexts (Macalister, 2008a).

Therefore, despite the success of extensive reading practices in a number of ESL/EFL contexts, many problems inherent in such contexts may hinder the successful implementation of these programs. Day and Bamford (1998) sum up some difficulties associated with the implementation of extensive reading practices in EFL countries, including scarcity of necessary funding, lack of time for free reading in classroom, untraditional roles of teachers, dominance of skills-based approach in classroom pedagogy, and the kind of attention and organization required for setting up such a program. In this regard, some recommendations are offered below that can facilitate successful implementation of extensive reading practices in EFL contexts.

**Recommendations**

**Effective Teacher Education**

For successful implementation of extensive reading practices in EFL contexts, teachers need to be aware of the benefits of extensive reading and how it can be integrated in classroom pedagogy. In this regard, effective pre- and in-service training can be arranged for EFL teachers who will thus get an opportunity to update their knowledge and beliefs about effective learning. Macalister (2010) argues that the nature and benefits of extensive reading requires “greater emphasis in language teacher education” because of the lack of necessary awareness and knowledge among teachers in this area (p. 69). According to Macalister (2010), teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge based on previous education and professional experiences contribute to teacher cognition that directly influences classroom practices. Teachers need to be aware
that they can assume such novel roles in classroom like “the model of a language learner” by practicing extensive reading themselves so that students can also be encouraged to be engaged in this type of reading (Macalister, 2010, p. 69). Hence proper pre-service and in-service teacher education programs need to be arranged for teachers in EFL countries so that they can be well prepared to integrate extensive reading activities in their classroom practices.

**Training for Administrators and Authorities**

Not only teachers but also administrators or authorities of educational institutions need to be aware of the importance of extensive reading in increasing the linguistic proficiency of EFL learners. In most EFL contexts in the Asian countries, the focus in classroom contexts is on teaching all the four skills rather than on spending much time on any one skill (Robb, 2002). Therefore, appropriate training needs to be arranged for authorities or administrators of educational institutions to make them realize that the practice of extensive reading can have multiple beneficial effects on learners’ linguistic development; then, they might be more willing to accommodate such reading practices in their class schedules (Davis, 1995).

**Integration to curriculum**

In order to gain acceptability in EFL contexts, extensive reading needs to be integrated into curricula. In the majority of Asian EFL contexts, the education system is exam-oriented, and extensive reading practices will be pushed in a corner if such practices are not directly integrated to the overall curricula. Green (2005), Grabe (2009), and Macalister (2010) argue for integrating extensive reading practices into curricula so that learners have sufficient motivation for engaging in this type of reading. Green (2005) proposes that if extensive reading is part of a curriculum, such as a task-based one, then the drawback often associated with extensive reading that it fails to “provide a clear learning purpose for learners” can be withdrawn (p. 309). Green (2005) argues that “extensive reading incorporated in a task-based approach acquires purpose automatically by becoming a key component in gathering information on a topic or as input to solving a problem” (p. 309). Grabe (2009) also mentions a list of recommendations for including extensive reading activities in a reading curriculum, for example, providing adequate in-class time for reading and making attractive reading materials available to learners. According to Grabe (2009), “time constraints” is the most frequent reason for extensive reading programs being ignored in L2 educational contexts (p. 326). Likewise, Macalister (2010) is of the opinion that if extensive reading is part of a reading course, then courses should allow sufficient in-class time for reading and interaction among students. According to Day and Bamford (1998), “finding time for extensive reading is a matter of priorities” (p. 47). If teachers and authorities concerned want their students to be “fluent, independent readers in the second language,” then they will definitely be able to manage some time for extensive reading “even if it is only an hour of homework a week” (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 47). Furthermore, textbooks can also help overcome concerns about the “legitimacy” and “practicalities of setting up an extensive reading program” because “textbooks are powerful legitimizing tools, for teachers, for learners, and for institutions” (Brown, 2009, p. 240). Therefore, textbooks can inspire learners to engage in extensive reading by, for example, recommending appropriate and interesting books for them, including reading logs or flowcharts for monitoring students’ reading,
incorporating activities for motivating learners to discuss their reading, and including excerpts from the graded readers “to give students a taste of extensive reading” (Brown, 2009, p. 242). Thus, if textbooks can encourage extensive reading activities directly or indirectly, it will become easier for the authorities concerned to include such activities in a curriculum.

Consideration of Contextual Factors
Contextual factors and constraints, for example, students’ and parents’ expectations, need to be taken into account while designing an extensive reading program in an EFL context. According to Macalister (2010), contextual factors influence, to a great extent, teachers’ attitudes and beliefs on the one hand and their classroom practices on the other. In many EFL contexts such as in Bangladesh, the focus is mainly on teaching the productive and receptive skills in class, and parents, who usually have to pay fees for their children’s education, expect their children to be taught the “skills” rather than reading interesting materials for pleasure. Therefore, steps should be taken for raising the awareness among students and parents about the beneficial effects of extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 1998). Moreover, in many EFL (especially in the Asian) countries, a teacher is viewed as the giver of knowledge, and the main role of a student is that of the receiver. In such contexts, extensive reading practices, where “the primary activity of a reading lesson should be learners reading texts” and “teachers must learn to be quiet,” can instigate resistance among both teachers and learners (Day & Bamford, 2002, p. 136). Robb (2002), while describing the educational reality of Japan, questions the applicability of Day and Bamford’s (2002) proposed principles of extensive reading in the Asian contexts. Therefore, while implementing extensive reading practices in EFL contexts, teachers should take into consideration the practical realities and should aim for feasible goals. For example, if EFL learners need teachers’ assistance in choosing or comprehending a reading text, then teachers should assist them rather than being “quiet” in the classroom (Day & Bamford, 2002).

Devising Proper Assessment Methods
Educators in EFL countries should also think of how to assess learners’ extensive reading so that students can relate their extensive reading practices to their broader goals of language learning and can perceive real purposes for doing such pleasure reading. Macalister (2010) thinks that as part of a reading program, extensive reading needs “to be linked to assessment as a means of ensuring its acceptability to various stakeholders” (p. 71). Day and Bamford (1998) offer some suggestions for teachers to keep track of and evaluate learners’ extensive reading; for example, students can be asked to keep their own “reading notebook,” “weekly reading diary,” or “book reports” (p. 87). Teachers can also use other alternative measures of assessing learners’ progress in extensive reading; for example, learners can be asked to write down their opinions or feelings about books on comment cards and attach those to their individual portfolios. Thus, teachers need to find a “valid and reliable assessment tool that did not turn extensive reading into a chore” (Macalister, 2010, p. 71).

Avoiding Financial Constraints
In many EFL countries, for example, in Bangladesh, lack of adequate funds can be an issue because buying books for setting up an extensive reading scheme costs
money. With careful planning, school authorities can ensure that financial constraints would not be an issue in this regard. For example, attempts can be made to manage grants from international organizations that, in many cases, have funds available for facilitating educational advancement in EFL countries. Davis (1995) discusses how it was possible in Cameroon to set up the “cheapest possible extensive reading programs, which schools can implement themselves with the minimum of input” (p. 332). In Cameroon, only one set of books was given to a school for an entire year, and that set was supposed to be used by all the classes in turn with the hope that the success of this scheme would encourage the school authority to invest more money and effort in implementing such a beneficial project (Davis, 1995). Day and Bamford (1998) also support the idea of starting an extensive reading program on a small scale if money is the issue. Moreover, if a school has a library nearby, then the library can also be used as a valuable resource provided the library authorities agree to collaborate.

Roles Teachers Can Play
For the success of any extensive reading program, teachers need to make the experience entertaining and motivating for learners. Teachers need to carefully explain the purpose and methodology of extensive reading practices and emphasize that learners’ focus in this type of reading should be on their enjoyment and overall comprehension of texts, not on analyzing linguistic features. Bell (1998) argues for the use of “multimedia sources” like “video, audio, CD ROM, [and] film” to make extensive reading experiences more entertaining for EFL learners (n. p.). In this regard, Bell (1998) also mentions some other measures that teachers can use, for example, making arrangements for learners to watch film-adaptations of popular books, utilizing library resources, inviting visiting speakers, and telling interesting stories related to popular books. Day and Bamford (2002) are of the opinion that teachers, if necessary, should guide students in making their choices of reading texts because EFL learners, accustomed to the teacher-centered education system of EFL contexts, might be lost if they are asked to choose reading texts on their own. Day and Bamford (2002) also emphasize that in an extensive reading classroom, teachers should read with students because “effective extensive reading teachers are themselves readers,” as they should assume the “attitudes and behavior of a reader” (p. 140). Therefore, a teacher should be the role model of an avid reader to learners.

Involving Students
In a successful extensive reading program, students should be involved and interested in reading books for pleasure, and those books also need to be motivating. Bell (1998) argues for involving learners in the management of extensive reading programs so that they can form “a strong sense of ownership” of the program (n. p.). For example, in the successful implementation of extensive reading program in the EFL context of Yemen, the learners were given the chance to make short in-class oral presentations on the books read, and thus, they could exchange their views with their classmates (Bell, 1998). Moreover, those learners chose many of the books on the basis of their classmates’ recommendations apart from their own choices. The success of the Yemen program prompts Bell (1998) to assert that if teachers can instill in learners necessary motivation, involvement, and sense of belongingness to an extensive reading program, it
can eventually promote “student independence and autonomy,” and the program can achieve “a direction and momentum governed by the learners themselves” (n. p.).

In conclusion, we can wonder with Grabe (2009), “how much evidence is needed to make the case for extensive reading!” (p. 328). The beneficial effects of extensive reading on developing learners’ vocabulary skills can provide necessary impetus to educators in EFL contexts to implement extensive reading practices sincerely. Regardless of the contextual constraints, EFL teachers need to be aware of the linguistic benefits of extensive reading, and they should take necessary steps to integrate such reading in their academic curricula if only to give their learners a feel of how motivating and beneficial an activity extensive reading is.

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