



Extensive Reading Practices, Reading Attitudes, and Writing Performance



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Abstract

Despite its importance, extensive reading is still neglected in Algerian EFL classes, and the focus is generally on intensive reading. This study aims to identify if students practise extensive reading. Besides, it seeks to determine if students hold positive reading attitudes and if a correlation exists between extensive reading and good writing performance. To achieve these aims, a quantitative method was adopted. A questionnaire and a written test were administered to seventy-seven students of English at the University of Oum El Bouaghi. The results revealed that students practise most of the principles of extensive reading. Additionally, they showed that students hold positive reading attitudes towards English. The findings also indicated that good writing is positively associated with more reading. In the light of these findings, it is recommended that EFL teachers integrate extensive reading in their classes to help their learners reap its benefits.

Keywords

Extensive Reading;
Reading Attitudes ;
Writing Performance.

الكلمات المفتاحية

القراءة الموسعة ؛
توجهات نحو القراءة ؛
أداء الكتابة.

ممارسات القراءة الشاملة، واتجاهات القراءة، والأداء الكتابي ملخص

على الرغم من أهميتها، لا تزال القراءة الموسعة مهملة في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بالجزائر، وينصب التركيز بشكل عام على القراءة المكثفة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد ما إذا كان الطلاب يقرؤون على نطاق واسع باللغة الإنجليزية. كما تسعى إلى تحديد ما إذا كان الطلاب لديهم توجهات قراءة إيجابية وما إذا كان هناك ارتباط بين القراءة الموسعة والأداء الجيد في الكتابة. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف تم اعتماد الطريقة الكمية. تم توزيع استبيان واختبار تحريري لسبعة وسبعين طالبًا من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة أم البواقي. أظهرت النتائج أن معظم الطلاب يمارسون مبادئ القراءة الموسعة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تبين أن الطلاب لديهم مواقف قراءة إيجابية. كما أشارت النتائج إلى أن الكتابة الجيدة ترتبط بشكل إيجابي بمزيد من القراءة. في ضوء هذه النتائج، يوصى بأن يقوم مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بدمج القراءة الموسعة في فصولهم لمساعدة المتعلمين على جني فوائدها.

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I. Introduction

Teachers of English as a foreign language adopt two approaches to encourage their students to read. The first approach, which is teacher-centered, is known as intensive reading. It is used with short, difficult texts for the aim of language study. The second one, which is student-centered, is called extensive reading. It involves reading large amounts of text for the purpose of enjoyment (Day et al., 2016). These approaches complement each other ; however, it is strongly believed that only extensive reading helps students to develop into lifelong readers and benefits them in a number of ways (Renandya, 2007). Research has proved that students who read extensively improve their overall language proficiency (Sheu, 2003), their vocabulary (Horst, 2005; Subramaniam & Zainal, 2016), their reading (Bell, 2001; Iwahori, 2008; McLean & Rouault, 2017), their writing skills (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Mermelstein, 2015), and even their attitudes towards reading (Mohd Asraf & Ahmad, 2003).

Despite the well-documented benefits of reading for pleasure, intensive reading is still overemphasised in many second language contexts. The most common reasons for its dominance are the teachers' satisfaction with the skills-building approach and their reluctance to depart from their traditional role in the classroom (Day & Bamford, 1998). EFL teachers at the University of Oum El Bouaghi, Algeria, follow this general trend. For example, teachers of reading techniques and written expression assign students short texts every now and then to answer comprehension questions and to identify the various textual features. Similarly, teachers of literature require students to read some novels to reflect on the literary movements and the figurative language. Thus, the major issue that is raised is whether this single-approach of in-class reading limits students' out of class reading practices and accordingly affects their reading attitudes and language performance.

The current study aims to find out whether third-year students of English at Larbi Ben M'Hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi practise extensive reading and whether they hold positive attitudes towards reading in English. Besides, it attempts to determine if a relationship exists between extensive reading and writing performance.

I.1 Principles of Extensive Reading

Extensive reading (ER) assumes that students become good readers by getting engaged in reading a wealth of material (Day, 2003). Day and Bamford (2002) suggested ten principles, which help to get a comprehensive definition of ER and guide teachers' and students' practices.

1. Reading abundantly over extended periods of time is the cornerstone of extensive reading.
2. Free choice of materials is another ingredient of ER. Students should choose their texts by themselves. They can even stop reading a certain material that does not suit their interests or language ability.
3. Reading different genres and themes is also an important feature of ER. Since students have different preferences, they should be encouraged to read fiction and non-fiction texts, magazines, newspapers, etc.
4. Reading materials whose language is fairly easy is a common practice of ER. It is believed that when materials contain only a few unknown words, students will be motivated to read more ; in contrast, they may be discouraged to read if they struggle with getting the overall meaning because of many ambiguous words.
5. Unlike reading for academic purposes, ER is done for enjoyment and general understanding. Its purpose is not comprehension of the entire material.
6. Silent reading is typical of ER. Students get to interact with the texts that they read, and "they turn the text into a theatre in their mind" (Prowse, 2002, p. 142).
7. Reading is practised for its own sake ; the experience of reading itself is a worthwhile activity. It should not be evaluated ; that is to say, no tests are to be administered to measure students' reading comprehension after ER. Only some motivational post-reading activities, like group discussions and students' reactions to books can be used.
8. Reading is done as quickly as possible. Students use the context instead of dictionaries to get the meaning from the reading materials. The purpose is to develop reading fluency which allows them to enjoy reading and read as much as possible.
9. Teachers' guidance is very important, especially for novice readers. Teachers are advised to explain the ingredients and the benefits of extensive reading to their students, to guide them in choosing appropriate reading materials, and to monitor their reading.
10. When students read extensively mainly in class, teachers should set a good example. They should read their own materials silently while their students are simultaneously engaged in silent reading.

(Day & Bamford, 2002)

It should be noted that the first eight principles are adopted in Independent (Non-instructed) ER. Students apply some or all of them when they are reading on their own out of class. Research has revealed that the first six principles are the most commonly practised ones. The last two principles are taken into consideration only when students are involved in a Supervised ER programme, i.e, when ER is added as an extra curricular activity that may be started in-class and carried out out of class (Day, 2015).

I.2 Reading Attitudes

Reading attitudes are considered as psychological constructs that are not easy to conceptualise. Their conceptualisation actually involves mainly the grasp of their components and their sources, and their measurement.

Reading attitude was defined as “a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation” (Alexander & Filler, 1976, p. 1). It is also referred to as “a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that makes reading more or less probable” (Smith, 1990, p. 215). This means that students’ thoughts and emotions about reading play a vital role in deciding whether to read or not.

Reading attitudes are classified into three domains: the affective, the cognitive, and the Conative. Affective attitudes are concerned with the feelings that reading evokes in individuals (McKenna et al., 1995). Cognitive attitudes cover the individuals’ beliefs about “the perceived instrumentality of reading, such as linguistic, intellectual, or practical values associated with reading” (Lee & Schallert, 2014, p. 247). Conative attitudes consist in individuals’ willingness to engage in reading. According to Stokmans (1999), reading attitude is limited to the affective and the cognitive components; the conative component is excluded and is “typically...referred to as the behavioral intention that is affected by the attitude” (p.247).

The development of second language reading attitudes is attributed to four main sources. The first source is students’ perceptions of their native language reading. The premise is that students who have positive attitudes towards their mother tongue reading tend to view second language reading positively and vice versa. The second one is students’ previous experiences with reading other second languages. The third one is students’ attitudes towards the target language itself, its speakers and its culture. Lastly, the foreign language classroom environment, including teachers, classmates, and learning resources and practices, plays a vital role in shaping students’ L2 reading attitudes. One common practice that is believed to foster positive attitudes is extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 1998). In addition to the four sources suggested by Day and Bamford, Lee and Schallert (2014) claimed that students’ proficiency is also an important factor that contributes to the development of second language reading attitudes.

To elicit students’ attitudes towards certain objects, researchers generally use direct measurement instruments. An example of these explicit attitude measures is the Likert scale questionnaire, which covers a set of statements asking participants to indicate their level of agreement with each of them. Generally, if the scores are low, respondents are said to have negative attitudes and vice versa (Haddock & Maio, 2008). When the questionnaire includes multiple sub-scales that address different attitude aspects, each aspect is assigned a separate average score. For instance, Yamashita (2013) assessed students’ reading attitudes by assigning the affective and cognitive components separate scores.

I.3. The Relationship between Extensive Reading and Writing

It is commonly acknowledged that writing is the most difficult skill for both native and non-native speakers. One of the best ways of developing this skill is reading in abundance (Krashen, 2004). Both non-experimental and experimental studies confirm that students who perform well on writing tend to read voraciously.

One of the earliest studies addressing the reading-writing relationship was that of Janopoulos (1986). In this study, 79 foreign graduate students at Ohio State University were asked to write compositions in English and to record the weekly time they devote to reading for pleasure. The findings revealed that competence in second language writing is strongly associated with reading widely in the second language. A recent research that tackled the link between extensive reading and writing proficiency was conducted by Sakurai (2017), and it also pointed to the existence of a positive association between the two variables.

Experimental research that was carried out in the EFL context has also proved that students who read extensively outperformed poor or non-readers on the writing tests. These cover long-term studies extending over one-year (Lee & Hsu, 2009; Mermelstein, 2015) as well as short-term studies of some weeks (Al-Mansour, 2014; Salehi et al., 2015).

In a nutshell, research has underscored the role of extensive reading in developing students’ writing ability. It has unveiled that competent writers are usually good readers.

II. Methods and Materials

To find out whether students practise extensive reading, whether they hold positive attitudes towards reading, and whether a relationship exists between reading and writing, a quantitative method was followed. The data were obtained from a questionnaire and a test of written expression administered during the second semester of 2023.

Seventy-seven third-year students of English who belong to a population of 164 students at Larbi Ben M'Hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi took part in this study.

The questionnaire includes 22 five-point scale items, aiming at identifying students' extensive reading practices and measuring their reading attitudes (Appendix). It was first piloted with only one group of thirty third-year EFL students. SPSS V26 was used to measure the reliability and validity of each construct: Extensive Reading Practices (ERP), Cognitive Reading Attitudes (CRA), and Affective Reading Attitudes (ARA).

The questionnaire items related to extensive reading practices (Q1 to Q6) were inspired from Day's Article "Extending Extensive Reading", considering the six most frequently used principles in independent extensive reading. Besides, the questions exploring students' reading attitudes (Q7 to Q22) were based on the work of Yamashita (2013). They address both the cognitive and the affective components. On the one hand, the cognitive component contains ten questions on the intellectual value of reading (Q8, 13, 18, & 20), its practical value (Q10, 16, & 22), and its linguistic value (Q11, 15, & 19). On the other hand, the affective component includes six questions (Q7, 9, 12, 14, 17, & 21) that elicit students' feelings towards reading in English. Positively worded items were assigned 5 as the highest score and negatively worded statements (Q9, 12, 14, 21) were code-reversed. In addition to including attitudinal questions, the questionnaire also solicited information on the amount of time that students spent weekly reading for pleasure and the students' names which allowed the researcher to match the questionnaire responses with the scores of the writing test.

The written test was an argumentative essay asking students whether they agree with the statement that vital decisions should be made alone. To assess students' writing performance, holistic scoring was followed. The lowest score was 5.5 and the highest score was 17 out of 20.

III. Results and Discussion

III.1. Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

Using SPSS V26., the Cronbach's Alpha of each construct (ERP, CRA, and ARA) was calculated. As displayed in table 1, the findings prove that the questionnaire is reliable as the alpha cronbach of each construct is higher than 0.70 which is statistically representative.

Table 1.
Reliability of the Questionnaire

Sections	Reliability Statistics		
	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	N
ERP	0,715	6	30
CRA	0,732	10	30
ARA	0,721	6	30

To test the validity of the questionnaire, Pearson's Correlations were performed. Table 2, 3, and 4 show that each item in each construct records a statistically significant correlation coefficient.

Table 2.
Validity of the Questionnaire (ERP items)

	Enjoyment	Choice	Variety	Quantity	Simplicity	Individuality
Pearson Correlation	,560**	,747**	,738**	,668**	,590**	,532**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0,001	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,001	0,002

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3.
Validity of the Questionnaire (CRA items)

	Int1	Pra1	Ling1	Int2	Ling2	Pra2	Int3	Ling3	Int4	Pra3
Pearson Correlation	,436*	,542**	,416*	,439*	,551**	,495**	,729**	,522**	,612**	,724**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0,016	0,002	0,022	0,015	0,002	0,005	0,000	0,003	0,000	0,000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.

Validity of the Questionnaire (ARA items)

	A1	A2_R	A3_R	A4_R	A5	A6_R
Pearson Correlation	,529**	,808**	,608**	,610**	,586**	,736**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0,003	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,001	0,000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

III.2 Analysis and Discussion of the Results

A. Extensive Reading Practices

Descriptive statistics (Table 5) were used to determine if students practise extensive reading and to identify which of its principles they adopt most often.

Table 5.

Extensive Reading Practices

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean
Item1	N	2	14	40	12	9	3,15
	%	2,6	18,2	51,9	15,6	11,7	
Item 2	N	2	11	27	28	9	3,40
	%	2,6	14,3	35,1	36,4	11,7	
Item 3	N	4	17	26	17	13	3,23
	%	5,2	22,1	33,8	22,1	16,9	
Item 4	N	13	27	20	14	3	2,57
	%	16,9	35,1	26	18,2	3,9	
Item5	N	3	7	23	28	16	3,61
	%	3,9	9,1	29,9	36,4	20,8	
Item 6	N	6	14	22	14	21	3,38
	%	7,8	18,2	28,6	18,2	27,3	
Weighted mean							3,22

A close scrutiny of table 5 shows that for five out of six items (item 1, 2, 3, 5, & 6), many students opted for the options ‘sometimes, often, and always’. For these same items, only a few students opted for the options ‘rarely and never’. However, the responses for item 4, that is about reading in large amounts, are quite different. It is observed that almost the same number of responses was recorded for ‘rarely and never’ (40) and ‘sometimes, often, and always’ (37). It is even noticed that the mean of this question (2.57) is the lowest compared to the other means. This suggests that reading in quantity is the least practised principle. The majority of students choose a variety of easy materials by themselves, and they read them silently for the purpose of enjoyment.

Ranking the principles of extensive reading on basis of the calculated means also confirms the finding that reading in large amounts is the least practised ingredient. It is evident that item 5 (Reading easy materials) was ranked first and it is followed respectively by item 2 (Reading self-selected materials), item 6 (Reading silently), item 3 (Reading a variety of materials), item 1 (Reading for enjoyment), and item 4 (Reading in large quantities).

The findings indicate that many students are aware of the major ingredients of extensive reading. However, since they are reading independently, they probably do not feel the need to read large amounts of text constantly. As a result, teachers should orient their students and keep track of their reading.

B. Reading Attitudes

Because most of the data were not normally distributed as table 6 demonstrates, opting for the non-parametric tests was necessary. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used as a substitute for the *t* test to measure students' reading attitudes.

Table 6.

Tests of Normality

Tests of Normality			
Sections	Kolmogorov-Smirnova		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Cognitive Reading Attitudes	0,122	77	0,006
Affective Reading Attitudes	0,08	77	0,200*
Amount of Reading	0,224	77	0,000
Writing Performance	0,095	77	0,081

P is bigger than 0.05 = Normal distribution

P is lower than 0.05 = No normality

B.1 Cognitive Reading Attitudes

Table 7.

Cognitive Reading Attitudes

	Mean	Sig
1. I can broaden my knowledge if I read English materials.	4,31	0.000
2. Reading English materials is beneficial to my professional life.	4,35	0.000
3. I can develop my reading ability if I read English materials.	4,33	0.000
4. I can get various kinds of information if I read English materials.	4,28	0.000
5. Reading English materials helps me to improve my writing.	4,44	0.000
6. Reading English materials is useful to my academic life.	4,22	0.000
7. I get to know about new ways of thinking if I read English materials.	3,92	0.000
8. Reading English materials enables me to learn new vocabulary.	4,54	0.000
9. I get to know about different values if I read English materials.	3,88	0.000
10. Reading English materials is useful to my personal life.	4,01	0.000
Weighted mean	4,23	0.000

To check whether the mean of the cognitive reading attitudes significantly differed from 3 that represents the neutral value, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was executed. The results of this test, as portrayed by table 7, revealed that all the significance values were 0.000. They implied that the means of all the cognitive reading attitudes items as well as

the overall mean are distinct from the neutral value; thus, the null hypothesis stipulating that the means are equal to 3 was rejected. In other words, it can be said that students hold positive cognitive reading attitudes. They believed that reading English materials has an intellectual, a practical, and a linguistic value.

One possible justification for students' positive perceptions of reading is that they may have observed that after reading they got more knowledge, gained more vocabulary, improved their language skills, etc. These results are in line with Yamashita's (2013) work.

B.2. Affective Reading Attitudes

Table 8.

Affective Reading Attitudes

	Mean	Sig
1. Reading English materials is enjoyable.	4,22	0.000
2. I feel anxious if cannot understand the content of the whole reading material.	2,24	0.000
3. Reading English materials is boring.	3,92	0.000
4. I get anxious if I do not know all the words in the reading materials.	2,68	0.010
5. Reading English materials is relaxing.	3,38	0.003
6. Reading English materials that deal with unfamiliar topics is stressful.	3,06	0.592
Weighted mean	3,25	0.01

The findings of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for the affective reading attitudes indicated that overall students had positive feelings towards reading because the recorded significance value for the weighted mean (3,25) was 0.01.

The detailed examination of table 8 displays that the significance values for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are lower than 0.05. The results mean that on the whole students enjoy reading English materials, they get anxious when they are unable to grasp the entire content or the meaning of all the words, and they find reading materials relaxing.

The only significance value that is greater than the 0.05 was recorded for item 6 (0.592). There is inconclusive evidence to say that reading materials that tackle unfamiliar topics is stressful for students.

The finding that students feel worried when they do not get the details from the reading material may be due to getting used to the practices of intensive reading. Students may be unaware of the fact that when reading for pleasure the focus is on the general meaning, not on the details.

C. The Relationship between Extensive Reading and Writing Performance

Table 9.

Correlation between Reading and Writing Performance

		Amount of Reading	Writing Performance
Spearman's rho	Amount of Reading	1,000	,237*
	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.	,038
	N	77	77
	Writing Performance		
	Correlation Coefficient	,237*	1,000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	,038	.
	N	77	77

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's rho was run to determine if good writing performance is associated with much reading. The amount of time represented in minutes that students spent reading each week was matched with the writing scores. The correlation coefficient turned out to be a positive one ($\rho = 0,237$) at a significance level ($p\text{-value} = 0.038$) that is statistically significant. Despite the fact that the calculated correlation coefficient is a moderate one as it ranges between .20 and .50 (Urdan, 2022), it is an important one. It indicates that students who devote more time to extensive reading write better than those who devote less time. This result corroborates Lee and Krashen (1996)'s finding that a positive correlation whose magnitude was not strong existed between free voluntary reading done by 389 Taiwanese high school learners and their writing proficiency.

IV. Conclusion

The findings of the current research showed that students practise most of Day's principles of extensive reading. They also revealed that students have positive attitudes towards reading in English. Additionally, the results proved that there is a positive, moderate correlation between more reading and good writing. These results imply that extensive reading is vitally important in fostering students' positive reading attitudes and enhancing their writing abilities. Thus, to encourage EFL students to develop into avid readers, teachers are recommended to guide them in the process of selecting appropriate materials and to monitor their reading. Ultimately, teachers' guidance and monitoring would convince students with Nuttal's (1996) idea that extensive reading is the second best way to improve one's foreign language after living with native speakers.

Appendix

Students' Questionnaire

Dear Student,

This questionnaire aims at exploring your reading practices and attitudes. I would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete it. You are kindly requested to read each statement carefully and to provide the answer that best reflects your real experience, feeling or opinion. I assure you that your answers will be kept completely confidential.

N.B. English Materials= printed and electronic books, texts, magazines, etc.

Thank you in advance!

Section One : Please insert the frequency adverb that reflects your experience.

NV= Never ; **R**= Rarely ; **SM**= Sometimes ; **OF**= Often ; **AL**= Always

Items	Scale
1. Out of class, I read English materials for enjoyment.	
2. In addition to the texts assigned by my teachers of reading and written expression, I read English materials that I choose by myself.	
3. Out of class, I read a variety of English materials (books, stories, magazines, autobiographies, etc.) on different topics.	
4. Out of class, I read English materials in large quantities (i.e., I read as much as possible).	
5. Out of class, I read materials that are relatively easy to understand (i.e., that suit my language ability).	
6. Out of class, I read English materials silently.	

Section Two : Please insert the scale that reflects your feeling or opinion.

SD= Strongly Disagree; **D**= Disagree; **N**= Neither agree nor disagree; **A**= Agree; **SA**= Strongly Agree

Items	Scale
7. Reading English materials is enjoyable.	
8. I can broaden my knowledge if I read English materials.	
9. I feel anxious if cannot understand the content of the whole reading material.	
10. Reading English materials is beneficial to my professional life.	
11. I can develop my reading ability if I read English materials.	
12. Reading English materials is boring.	
13. I can get various kinds of information if I read English materials.	
14. I get anxious if I do not know all the words in the reading materials.	
15. Reading English materials helps me to improve my writing.	
16. Reading English materials is useful to my academic life.	
17. Reading English materials is relaxing.	
18. I get to know about new ways of thinking if I read English materials.	
19. Reading English materials enables me to learn new vocabulary.	
20. I get to know about different values if I read English materials.	
21. Reading English materials that deal with unfamiliar topics is stressful.	
22. Reading English materials is useful to my personal life.	

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