

# Extensive Reading to Promote ESL Learners' Reading Motivation: A Literature Review

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## Abstract

The importance of fostering reading motivation among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners cannot be overstated, as it plays a pivotal role in language acquisition, vocabulary development, and overall language proficiency. This literature review aims to explore the effectiveness of extensive reading (ER) as a powerful tool to promote reading motivation among ESL learners. The research delves into various aspects related to the topic, such as the significance of the English language as an international lingua franca, the importance of reading skills, the concept of reading motivation, the implementation of extensive reading programs in Malaysia, related studies, challenges, and implications. This literature review draws on a comprehensive search of academic databases and relevant research articles published within the past decade. The selected studies shed light on the impact of ER on ESL learners' reading motivation and their overall language development. The autonomy granted to learners in selecting their reading materials fosters a sense of ownership and enjoyment, making the reading experience more fulfilling. The implementation of ER programs may encounter certain challenges, including the availability of suitable reading materials, time constraints, and lack of motivation among learners. To strengthen the effectiveness of extensive reading in promoting reading motivation among ESL learners, future research could focus on exploring strategies to overcome challenges related to access to suitable reading materials and time constraints. Investigating the role of teachers and parents in encouraging and sustaining learners' reading motivation is also essential. In conclusion, extensive reading is a promising approach to promoting reading motivation among ESL learners. This literature review provides valuable insights for teachers, researchers, and policymakers seeking to improve language learning outcomes and foster a positive reading culture among ESL learners.

**Keywords:** Extensive Reading, Reading Motivation, English As A Second Language, Language Proficiency, Reading Materials

## Introduction

As an international lingua franca, English has held a prominent role as a language that has been chiefly the favoured choice in communication across a wide range of key fields. Khair and Shah (2021) stated that the language had been used as a teaching medium in various countries' educational systems to facilitate English acquisition among its students. In this

21st-century learning, numerous methods are available to students for studying English as a second language. According to Meganathan et.al (2019), with so many languages in use worldwide, understanding a second language (L2) with socioeconomic value might provide a person an advantage in a multilingual world. In Malaysia, English is to be called the second language because it is employed not only in primary and secondary school but also in postsecondary education. English is known as the Second Language in Malaysia since it is the language of academics (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020). The English language is separated into a few abilities that a learner should acquire in order to understand the language thoroughly. The importance of language is constantly emphasized in the media, in school, and at home. According to Aziz and Kashinathan (2021), the importance of the English language dubbed the "global trade language," has become abundantly obvious due to globalization.

Listening, speaking, writing, and reading are the four linguistic abilities that English learners must master. Speaking and writing are productive abilities, but listening and reading are passive. Each skill is critical to acquiring the language. Despite being the second language that needs to be mastered, most learners still have difficulty learning and understanding the language. According to Lee, Krishnamoorthy, and Rong (2019), Malaysian students struggle to understand and communicate in English with their teachers and peers who have a higher level of English competence. One of the ways to acquire the language is through reading. Reading is at the heart of literacy and education. Reading is how people gain knowledge, discover new concepts, and obtain information on a variety of topics. Individuals with strong reading abilities can grasp textbooks, academic papers, and instructional materials, helping them to excel academically. Reading is a crucial learning activity since it offers insightful knowledge and helps people become more intelligent (Fuad et.al., 2021). Exposure to a variety of reading materials allows for personal interest and choice, both of which are important motivators for reading. Reading different types of literature broadens one's reading experiences and promotes motivation.

Reading motivation refers to the different aspects that impact an individual's willingness to read. According to Daud et.al (2020), this motivation is vital as an internal force that drives activity and keeps one's goals in sight. Individuals who have a personal interest in a topic or genre are more likely to be encouraged to read related information. Choice and autonomy in picking reading materials that correspond with personal interests may considerably promote reading motivation. Reading motivation is enhanced by a helpful and encouraging reading environment, both at home and at school. Access to a wide range of books, positive role models, and chances for conversation and sharing reading experiences may all help promote motivation. Promoting reading motivation in educational environments is critical since it affects students' academic progress as well as their lifetime reading habits. Active engagement and sustained interest help to increase reading motivation by generating a pleasant reading experience that individuals desire to continue.

Thus, this review of literature attempts to look at the current studies on extensive reading and its effect on the reading motivation of ESL students. This review provides helpful insights for teachers and researchers looking to increase the reading motivation of ESL learners by examining the advantages, challenges, and strategies related to extensive reading.

### **Literature Review**

This chapter will examine the utilization of Extensive Reading to promote reading motivation for ESL learners. Next, some related studies on Extensive Reading programs in other countries

as well in Malaysia. The challenges of implementing Extensive Reading programs to promote learners' reading motivation and improve their mastery of the language overall.

### Reading Skills

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four major English language skills. Each ability is crucial and plays a significant part in language mastery. Language input is seen as being one of the most important aspects of learning a language. The easiest way to receive comprehensible input is to read, especially in environments with little exposure to the target language (Namaziandost et.al., 2019). Reading is the process of drawing meaning from text. Moreover, reading is an essential ability for learning and succeeding in life, whether academically or socially. Reading is important because it allows students to broaden their knowledge, comprehend new information connected to their academics, and increase their reading comprehension (Pragasam and Sulaiman, 2023). It is well acknowledged that reading is a challenging but essential skill for language learners. The PISA framework gives additional data on the type of reading *"Reading literacy is understanding, using, evaluating, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to get involved in society"* (OECD, 2019, p.28). Fostering reading motivation is crucial for ESL learners' success in language learning because reading is a core skill for language acquisition and growth. Reading is a talent that must be learned because it does not come naturally. Reading ability has been identified as one of the most crucial skills in understanding the English language. Students must be enthusiastic about books in order to build good reading habits. Reading behaviour and reading comprehension are closely connected, as Pham (2021) observed. According to Risman et al (2019), a person's reading habits are influenced by

several major elements, including the amount of time spent reading, how frequently it was done, the books he selected to read, his attitude towards those books, the reason he read, and his reading practices. To support the act of reading, reader motivation and positive reader are needed.

### Reading Motivation

One of the hindrances of reading habits is reading motivation. Most of the children only read when necessary or when they are told to do so. Learners need the motivation to make reading a habit. Azar and Tanggaraju (2020) believe that motivation is not static but dynamic and can shift from one type to another. Another major factor that can enhance reading habits is when the children can pick and choose their own reading materials. Learners who have the authority to choose the reading materials will tend to do it voluntarily compared to the ones who are chosen for. McGeown et. al (2020) highlights in their research that children's reading motivation varied significantly among text types. Learners should be exposed to reading at an early age so that it could be developed into a habit and they will read as a hobby. In keeping with that notion, if reading becomes a joyful pastime for the student, it will become a habit (Ermerawati, 2019). Hebbeker et.al (2019), indicated that positive early reading experiences are significant for subsequent development and that reading motivation influences reading achievement. The capacity to read more widely and extensively contributes to the development of greater confidence and motivation among students, which in turn improves students' positive attitudes toward reading (Edwina & Govindan, 2020). In fact, instilling and maintaining high levels of intrinsic reading motivation in primary school-aged children benefits their reading activity or frequency, engagement, and skill (Hebbeker et al., 2019;

Miyamoto et al., 2019). A recognized effective pedagogical strategy to encourage reading motivation in ESL students is extensive reading, which is defined as extensive exposure to authentic and pleasant reading materials.

### **Extensive Reading for ESL**

Extensive reading is a method of language acquisition that entails reading a huge amount of material for pleasure and satisfaction. ER is defined by Bamford and Day (2004: 1) as "an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy material in the new language." During ER students are exposed to many reading materials and can choose any books they like to read. The 'exposure gap' between L1 learners and L2 learners, according to Schroeder (2020), can be closed by giving children access to a lot of reading material. Extensive reading allows pupils to choose their book levels and genres. This approach increases their motivation to read an increasing number of books. According to an interview with Paul Nation conducted by Iswandari and Paradita (2019), Nation stated that pupils who are exposed to a variety of texts are better prepared for L2. They will have solid English skills in the future to help them have successful professions. ER encourages learners to read widely and effortlessly, as opposed to intensive reading, which focuses on deep understanding and study of complicated literature. The goal is to foster reading fluency, vocabulary development, and a love of reading. Extensive reading is contrasted with intensive reading, which focuses on language rather than meaning and is frequently chosen by the teacher (Bell, 1998; Waring, 2006). They read for information and enjoyment, as well as for general, overarching meaning. Gustavem et al (2022) argued that Extensive Reading has grown in popularity as an efficient method for improving English language proficiency. ER also played a role in motivating learners to read more books. Meganathan et.al (2019) explained that extensive reading normally involves reading a massive number of independent materials in order to achieve a comprehensive comprehension of the content. Undoubtedly there are many benefits gained from reading specially to improve overall mastery of the language. Krashen (2004) summarized several studies showing the benefits of extensive reading not only for reading ability and vocabulary but also for spelling, writing, listening skills, fluency, comprehension, improvements in reading in the target language, and second language (L2) competence in his review of the research on ER. More research has shown that students who participated in ER programs were highly motivated and may have a good attitude toward L2 reading (Nakanishi & Ueda, 2011; Safaeia & Bulca, 2013; Chan, 2020). Thanh et.al (2021) concluded that to maintain and improve students' positive attitudes toward reading, ER activities should be incorporated into a reading program. They also argued that ER can help to enhance lower-level processing, which means that L2 learners can use ER to improve and hence develop reading fluency. A great deal of research has been done to indicate that extensive reading (ER) is essential for achieving language competency since students learn unconsciously (Carrell et al., 2000; Thanh et.al., 2019; Ermerawati, 2019). Moreover, ER provides context-rich exposure, which is an effective approach to learning a language

### **Related Studies on Extensive Reading to promote reading motivation**

Noro and Fujita (2009) studied how 10-minute ER (10 minutes of free, voluntary reading during regular English class hours) affected the reading motivation of EFL high school students. The results were revealed using Factor analysis of a 30-item questionnaire given before and after the ER. The research was on Japanese high school EFL learners and they found that ER enhanced both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

A case study Ro (2013) on a Korean female who was born and raised in South Korea. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The findings revealed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivating desires both influence extensive reading and vice versa. Another case study in the Slovene context (Pirih, 2019). The final case study group consisted of 10 kids, aged 13 to 14, from a semi-urban primary school in Slovenia (8 females and 2 boys). The group's levels of English reading skills varied, making it diverse. The students completed Slovene ER reports after each reading. In this study, self-report data were gathered using qualitative and quantitative methods. This study demonstrates that a variety of factors may affect readers' motivation to read, and that building a reading program to foster that drive requires considering each of these elements. Despite its drawbacks and numerous influencing factors, the ER technique is a powerful and inspiring way to teach FL reading to primary school pupils.

The British Council Language Centre in Sanaa, Yemen, has devised an extensive reading program for elementary-level language learners (Bell, 2020). Questionnaires were utilized to assess students' reading interests, habits, and attitudes both before and after the program. Reading diaries, book reports, and a card file system and book reports, as well as a card file system, was utilized to document the program and record both the titles read and the student's written comments on the books. A wall chart served as a focal point for in-class reading, debate, and title exchange. Reader interviews were done throughout the six-month program, which was divided into two semesters.

### **Extensive Reading in Malaysia**

Developing proficiency in a second or foreign language demands significant reasonable target language input. However, for many English learners in Malaysian schools, exposure to the language is sadly limited to the classroom setting, making teaching English an even more significant burden for teachers. Considering the limited time available for language input during classes, the solution appears to reside outside of English language teaching. One method of increasing language input is to implement extensive reading programs that give language learners much-needed input. Nanda and Azmy (2020), argued that the fundamental cause of bad reading habits among pupils is a lack of motivation. This is because most individuals only read if they have a compelling reason to. In Malaysia, NILAM is used in primary and secondary schools to encourage pupils to read. NILAM is an acronym that stands for "Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca," or "Reading as the Pulse of Knowledge". The program was officially introduced in 1999 for pupils in Year 1 to Form 5 via a Professional Circular Letter dated May 22, 1998 (Taib et al., 2021). The NILAM program's major goal was to instill a reading habit in pupils, and proof of this was to be documented by recordings of the number of books read by students from Year 1 to Form 5 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2008). After two decades, the NILAM project is still in schools, but slightly reimagined and relaunched as NILAM 2.0 in 2019. The program's goal is to foster a love of the language and assist students to improve their English competence by reading more. However, due to poor implementation, NILAM is not very successful as an ER program in the Malaysian context. According to Taib et.al (2021), while some teachers saw the importance of an ER program, they viewed the execution of the NILAM plan as an extra load on teachers. Even though ER offers numerous benefits, its implementation faces several challenges.



**Challenges in Implementing Extensive Reading**

Implementing ER in an educational setting can come with various challenges. Learner-individual differences, including reading proficiency, interests, and background knowledge, also pose challenges for implementing ER. These challenges could influence the integration of ER program.

**Availability of Suitable Reading Materials**

Access to appropriate reading materials, especially at different proficiency levels, can be a significant obstacle. It might be difficult to find a wide variety of relevant reading materials. Nation and Waring (2019) strongly believed that the heart of ER is reading many interesting books at the appropriate level. Wang and Kim (2021) proclaimed that learners should be provided with a variety of readable texts. Nuttall (1996) further explained that engaging content at the right language level is what he meant by texts being readable. That is, learners must know at least 95% of the words (ideally 98%) (Nation, 2009) or there should be no more than five words that they do not know on each page (i.e., the rule of hand, Day & Bamford, 2002). Hence, gathering materials at various proficiency levels, genres, and interests can be time-consuming for teachers. Limited access to books, especially in schools with budget constraints, may further exacerbate this challenge. However, utilizing online resources with guidance can be a good solution to this. Renandya et.al (2021) suggested using free websites to explore online reading materials available or purchasing a digital library.

**Time Constraints**

Allocating sufficient time for ER within the curriculum can be difficult. Time appears to be a scarce resource for teachers. In addition to a heavy teaching load, they are responsible for a variety of school-related tasks such as marking, supervision, mentoring junior colleagues, providing extra tuition to low-progress students, attending endless staff meetings, and organizing educational trips for their students, to name a few (Renandya et.al., 2021). Teachers may feel pressure to cover other content or meet specific learning objectives, leaving limited time for independent reading activities. According to Taib et.al (2021), teachers complained that NILAM which is an example of ER program in Malaysia taking up time for language learning and they struggled to deal with the extra loads to make it successful. Renandya et.al (2021) suggested working with school leaders or ministry authorities. Despite realizing the benefits of ER teachers have a difficult time implementing them in schools. Help from the school authorities and clear implementation guidelines from the MOE can ease the burdens of teachers. Another option is support and encouragement from the parents. Building a reading habit is a more major long-term goal of ER, which takes time and requires motivation, and would be difficult for young people to attain without parental support and encouragement (Taib et. al., 2021). Encouragement and continual reinforcement of children's extensive reading habits should thus be an ongoing endeavor for parents.

**Lack of Motivation**

Motivation is an important aspect that influences learning. Success frequently hinges on how motivated pupils are and if that drive can be sustained over time (Renandya et.al., 2021). Encouraging pupils to create a reading habit and keep their enthusiasm for reading throughout time could be a major challenge in ER. According to Garcia (2018), differences between the experiences of students and those of fictional characters might make it harder

for them to be motivated to read. Many students stated that allowing them to pick what they read in class helped them stay interested and inspired to read (Allfred & Cena, 2020). The researcher also concluded that although learners have greater control over what they read, the teacher's involvement remains critical in the process. Learners should be given choice and freedom in picking reading materials to suit their own interests and preferences to foster a healthy reading culture. Teachers can set reading targets and provide incentives, such as awards or recognition, to inspire learners. When children discover the ideal books to read, whether on their own or as advised by their instructors, their reading motivation improves, as do their chances of repeating the same joyful reading experience (Renandya et.al., 2021). To promote reading motivation, teachers play an important role in encouraging students to read. Teachers have an important role in cultivating a reading culture in elementary school students because they are the first to teach reading skills in class (Fuad et.al., 2021). Teachers could share their personal reading experiences, propose books, and convey their excitement for reading to serve as reading role models. Teachers' enthusiasm for reading will motivate students and illustrate the delight that can be found in books.

With the right tactics, teachers may effectively administer ER programs to promote ESL learners' reading motivation and establish an environment that supports children's language development, vocabulary growth, and reading attitudes.

### **Implication**

The implications of the research on extensive reading to promote ESL learners' reading motivation can be significant for both teachers and learners. According to the findings, ER can be an effective method for increasing ESL learners' reading motivation. Teachers may foster a love of reading among learners by providing a diverse range of fascinating and accessible reading materials, resulting in improved engagement and enjoyment. ER can help with the development of reading abilities and fluency. Learners can increase their vocabulary, comprehension, and general reading competence by being exposed to a range of texts, which can have a favourable influence on their academic achievement and language acquisition. Moreover, ER helps learners to take control of their reading preferences and speed. As learners could choose books that match their interests and reading skills, this encourages autonomy and self-directed learning. It encourages learners to take an active role in their language-learning journey. Reading extensively exposes learners to a variety of cultural viewpoints, situations, and experiences. Their comprehension of many cultures is widened, and it also fosters cultural awareness and empathy. Additionally, it can aid in the improvement of cross-cultural communication abilities. Consistently reading extensively might encourage learners of ESL to develop good reading habits. Learners who include reading in their everyday lives are more likely to fall in love with reading and continue to improve their language abilities after they leave the classroom.

On the other hand, school administrators can encourage and support the integration of ER programs into the curriculum. They can set aside funds to purchase a range of reading materials, such as books, periodicals, and internet resources. Administrators should encourage teachers to participate in professional development opportunities to successfully improve their knowledge and abilities in implementing ER successfully. According to the findings, including ER in the curriculum can improve ESL learners' reading motivation and language growth. Hence, curriculum planners should think about using ER as a major component of language programs to help learners improve their reading abilities and cultivate a love of reading. They can offer instructions and recommendations for the selection

and evaluation of acceptable reading materials depending on the competence levels and interests of the learners. Additionally, ER at home may be supported and encouraged with the help of parents. They can develop a reading-friendly environment at home and give access to a choice of reading resources. Reading aloud to one another, having discussions about the texts, and modeling good reading practices can help ESL students develop a positive approach toward reading.

Overall, the review highlights the benefits of ER, including developing a positive attitude towards reading, improving language skills, increasing reading fluency, and encouraging independent learning. There are some challenges that can hinder the successful implementation of ER programs. However, these challenges can be overcome with careful planning and effective strategies. Understanding the effects of ER on ESL learners' reading motivation allows these stakeholders to collaborate and work together to create an environment that fosters a love of reading, supports language development, and ultimately improves ESL learners' overall language learning experience. As for future research, it is implored that further studies should be conducted in the near future to explore the effectiveness of ER in promoting ESL Learners' reading motivation in your own classroom context.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, extensive reading is a powerful tool for promoting reading motivation among ESL learners. The findings strengthened evidence of ER's positive effect on ESL learners' reading habits. Moreover, ER will be beneficial to learners to improve their mastery of the language. Extensive reading can be used not only to promote reading motivation but can also be used as a strategy to boost learners' motivation in mastering the language. Hence, ER should be used extensively in our curriculum to help learners to make reading a habit and gain benefits from reading. For teachers to develop a reading culture and environment that supports all students, it is essential to understand what and why children choose to read as well as the depth and variety of experiences children can have while reading. In order to ensure that teachers have a sufficient understanding of children's reading motivation and that they are aware of the reciprocal relationship between reading motivation and reading skill, literacy instruction within the first year of education and teacher training should be prioritized. (Hebbecker et al., 2019). The present study adds to the existing literature by exploring the effectiveness of ER as a tool for promoting reading motivation among ESL learners. ER can be a tool to cultivate reading habits among pupils which can help them in improving their language. There are a lot of factors that need to be determined before designing the Extensive Reading Program. Give pupils the autonomy to choose their reading materials so they would not feel burdened and enjoy the program. Overall, through ER, ESL learners can enhance their language proficiency, expand their vocabulary, improve reading fluency, and cultivate a lifelong habits of reading.

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