

# CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

eISSN: 2660-6828 | Volume: 03 Issue: 08 Aug 2022  
<https://cajipc.centralasianstudies.org>

## Extensive Reading for Year 1 Students of Uzbek State World Languages University: An Unconventional Agenda for the Completion of the Course

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*Received 19<sup>th</sup> Jun 2022, Accepted 15<sup>th</sup> Jul 2022, Online 20<sup>th</sup> Aug 2022*

### ABSTRACT

One recommended way to promote interest in foreign language reading is through Extensive Reading. This paper aims at revisiting Extensive Reading along with its pertaining principles. In addition, it proposes an alternative completed framework to implement Extensive Reading with Year 1 EFL university students of Uzbek state world languages. It will specifically cast some light on how to implement supervised (or instructed) Extensive Reading. This kind of reading has gained popularity over the years, ever since it was introduced to the realm of foreign language learning. It has been shown to bring a lot of benefits for L2 learners in many respects, and, consequently, it has been implemented in a variety of contexts. However, the implementation of Extensive Reading has sometimes been criticized for not observing the outlined principles, for instance, in the issues of the absence of pleasure in its undertaking and the inclusion of inappropriate post-reading activities.

**KEYWORDS:** Extensive Reading, alternative framework, university student.

### Introduction

It has been obvious whenever one is learning a foreign language, Extensive Reading is important since it is a way to learn (Clarity, 2007). Channuan and Wasanasomsithi also (2013) state that reading is a skill which is vital as it is demanded for successful use of the language as well as for the pursuit of higher education and future career. Susser and Robb (1990) add that reading is the most emphasized skill in traditional FL teaching and has become the pillar of EFL instruction in many countries. Due to the minimum language exposure that foreign language learners have, Extensive Reading is believed to be powerful to promote interest in foreign language reading. Stoller (2015, p. 152) admits that “the best way to help students learn to read and improve their reading skills is through reading itself.” Besides, she claims that giving students’ freedom to choose what they read will empower them and will result in more engagement in reading. This article aims at reconsidering the concepts and principles referring to Extensive Reading. On top of that, it attempts to recommend how supervised ER program, which represents Extensive Reading as the main activity, had been implemented in Uzbek State World Languages university EFL context.

If we look at the term and usage of Extensive reading in education, it goes back to early nineteenth century where it was introduced in ELT context. ER has been outlined by several authors in the fields of education and psychology, especially in language learning. The term Extensive Reading (ER) was originally derived

from Palmer in 1917 (as cited in Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 5). Day et al. (1998) stated that ER is known as reading a large amount of books and lots of other materials that are appropriate to learners' linguistic competence. Richards and Schmidt (2002) defined that ER is the way to read a large amount of reading materials to understand the general content of what is read (p. 193). ER means reading longer text with simple language to "understand overall" of a text than studying linguistic components (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Yamashita, 2004). Similarly, other researchers addressed ER as independent reading with large quantities of book and material to get information or "for pleasure" (Renandya et al., 1999)

Extensive Reading plays an important role as an excellent means of supplying rich target language input, particularly in EFL setting. It deals with reading a lot of self-selected texts which are easy as well as interesting and doing few or no exercise afterwards. It becomes a strategy to promote interest in foreign language reading (Yulia, 2011). Its goal is to promote fluency and enjoyment in the process of reading (Clarity, 2007) as confirmed by Day (2013, pp. 10-11) saying "They read for information and enjoyment, with the primary goal of achieving a general, overall meaning of the reading material." Moreover, Waring (2011) exaggerates, Extensive Reading is done to increase reading speed, general comprehension and reading skill. He argues that reading in this context needs to be relaxing, without any difficulties as well as for pleasure (Waring, 2011, p. 3). Since reading gain should be without pain as Day and Bamford suggest (in Day, 2013), whenever students find reading materials which are not interesting or too difficult, they are encouraged to stop and find another. The underlying reason is that ER tasks should minimize the frequent stopping and restarting that occur whenever students consult dictionaries while working on the task (Stoller, 2015). Nonetheless, they are involved to make their reading comfort zone bigger overtime; that is, to extend the range of materials that they can read easily and confidently (Day, 2013). According to above shown principles of ER, Extensive Reading may be practiced in one of these three forms depending on students' needs and institutional constraints (Bamford & Day, 1997; Day, 2015). First is supervised (or instructed) Extensive Reading. It places Extensive Reading as the main focus of a reading course which is combined with a variety of follow-up activities. Second is blended Extensive and Intensive Reading. It employs Extensive Reading as an addition to an ongoing reading course whereby students read books that they select for homework. Third is independent (= non-instructed) Extensive Reading. In this type, Extensive Reading serves as an extracurricular activity with the teacher guides and encourages students whose fond of reading has been developed and who meet regularly to discuss what they read. Based on Jeon and Day's (2016) study, effective ER programs take place when Extensive Reading is incorporated as part of the curriculum compared to other types of Extensive Reading and when it is held in EFL settings.

Extensive Reading has brought plenty of benefits for L2 learners. Bell (1998) claims that Extensive Reading provides comprehensible input which facilitates acquisition, enhances general language competence, improves vocabulary knowledge and promotes motivation to read. Additionally, Extensive Reading deepens grammar knowledge as readers are confronted with the use of language in context. A number of research has demonstrated the value of Extensive Reading in improving reading fluency (Beglar, Hunt, & Kite, 2012), reading level (Mermelstein, 2014), reading rate gains (Beglar & Hunt, 2014), reading comprehension (Edy, 2014) and writing ability (Mermelstein, 2015). Moreover, it promotes positive attitude toward foreign language reading (Yamashita, 2013; Ro & Chen, 2014; Tien, 2015), increases motivation (Chien & Yu, 2015; De BurghHirabe & Feryok, 2013), reduces anxiety (Ro, 2013) and fosters autonomy which leads to learning success (Channuan & Wasanasomsithi, 2013; Dickinson, 1995; Mede, İnceçay, & İnceçay, 2013). Furthermore, it also builds new vocabulary knowledge and expands students' understanding of words they previously learn (Stoekel, Reagan & Hann, 2012; Waring, 2011). Despite the attested benefits which

Extensive Reading has on language proficiency, some teachers or schools show little commitment to incorporate Extensive Reading and thus make Extensive Reading not widely practiced in either ESL or EFL setting (Jeon & Day, 2016). The reasons, according to Stoller (2015), stem among others from the need for plentiful reading resources, teachers' resistance to change their way of teaching reading, the misunderstanding which views silent reading as no teaching or no learning happening, and instructional time constraints. For these reasons, it is vital that teachers, administrators, and policy makers be informed and educated of the benefits of Extensive Reading over traditional teaching (Jeon & Day, 2015 & 2016). Only by convincing them will ER approach be possibly encouraged and adopted in school settings. According to Macalister (2015), Extensive Reading is in fact an easy concept, but it is often times misunderstood by many teachers and researchers and it results in some confusion about the pertinent literature. Alternatively, he states, it has been over-complicated. It is true that there is no a one-fits-all approach to Extensive Reading practice.

Extensive Reading should be better understood as a continuum, ranging from *pure ER* in which all the principles are observed to *fringe ER* in which Extensive Reading is name only (Day, 2015). Notwithstanding the differences, they share three elements, namely quantity, ease, and choice, which usually exist in some form in any programs (Brown, 2012). In this section, the principles of Extensive Reading will be revisited to find out which principles are obligatory for any ER programs to be successful.

Day and Bamford (1998, 2002 as cited in Day, 2015) outline top ten principles for implementing Extensive Reading. They are: (1) The reading material is easy, (2) A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available, (3) Learners choose what they want to read, (4) Learners read as much as possible, (5) The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding, (6) Reading is its own reward, (7) Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower, (8) Reading is individual and silent, (9) Teachers orient and guide their students, and (10) The teacher is a role model of a reader. The principles, Waring & McLean emphasize (2015), should not be seen as rigid prescription but rather as mere characteristics of successful Extensive Reading programs. Macalister (2015: 123) has the same opinion in that he views the top ten principles as the guidelines rather than commandments. Researchers and teachers have varied views about how Extensive Reading should be run; thus, it would be critical that there are general characteristics that every researcher agrees upon as to what constitutes Extensive Reading and what does not. Waring and McLean (2015) spell out the essential core attributes and variable dimensions of Extensive Reading. According to them (2015, p. 164), the essential core attributes of ER should address "fast, fluent comprehension sustained over extended periods with minimal distractions." They assert further that the focal element to decide whether reading extensively is done is by looking at the way the text is processed and not on the product. Waring and McLean (2015, p. 162) argue that "...the central concern for most researchers when deciding whether their subjects are 'reading extensively' is whether they are fluently comprehending the meanings and ideas in the text, or not. In a broad sense whether the subjects are reading extensively or not, is a matter of how text is processed, i.e. smoothly and with high, fluent comprehension. By contrast, the products of the research – e.g. what is learnt, how much reading is done – serve as the independent variables. Put it another way, reading pains should be minimal; otherwise, the activity stops being Extensive Reading because the focus is more on the language forms rather than ideas and meaning in it." As for the variable dimensions of Extensive Reading, they are influenced by pedagogical aims, research questions, and given practicality within the setting. They among others include "amount of time spent reading, what is read, where it is read, whether the reading is required, and who selects the texts" (Waring & Mclean, 2015, p. 164). Based on these ten principles, Macalister (2015, p. 122) tries to categorize them into four broad categories, namely the nature of reading, the nature of reading material, what the teachers do and what the learners do. The first

category includes principles (5), (6), (7) and (8). The second category comprises principles (1) and (2). The third category contains principles (9) and (10). Meanwhile, the last category consists of principles (3) and (4). Macalister (2015, p. 126) proposes a different idea. Considering the nature of reading, the nature of reading material, what the teachers do and what the learners do, he argues that the top ten principles can be reduced to seven, which are compulsory for Extensive Reading to occur. As these are obligatory, he claims, they are closer to commandments. By this he refers to principles (1), (4), (5), (7), (8), (9) and (10). He also extends one of the seven principles as being “Learners read as much as possible in a regularly scheduled, time-limited period” (2015, p.127). The activity may be carried out in the classroom, as an easier way, or as an out-of-class activity through negotiation with the students, as long as reading activity becomes the daily routine.

In contrast, Jeon and Day (2015, p. 302) state that the key principles to any ER programs aiming at improving L2 reading proficiency are only five. They are:

- (1) The reading material is easy,
- (2) Learners choose what they want to read,
- (3) Learners read as much as possible,
- (4) Reading is individual and silent, and
- (5) Teachers orient and guide their students. They argue that ER programs that use
- (6) the five core principles can work successfully in both n EFL and ESL settings.

### **Applying theory into practice**

#### **How Extensive Reading program was set up with Uzbek Year 1 undergraduate students.**

Extensive Reading should be included in any curriculum designed to foster L2 reading in order that it may yield the expected learning outcomes (Anderson, 2014; Waring, 2011). To set up an ER program, there are some aspects to consider (Day, 2013, pp. 11-17). Such consideration will guarantee that the program is managed in an effective and positive ways in order to be fruitful (Clarity, 2007).

In our Uzbek EFL setting the first thing is introducing and advertising Extensive Reading program so that our students got fulfilling motivation and involvement to start a new module. Besides it guarantees that the program is successful and effective for students. Also it helps to start the program in a positive and fruitful way.(Clarity, 2007)

Once the preparation is done, a teacher starts advertising and makes an introduction to the program with exact scheme of the reading materials and assignments that students would keep submitting throughout the study.

As for materials which are chosen by the staff of teachers who are responsible for the program are selected by different types of texts starting with easy text types to complicated ones so students can straightforwardly get accustomed to what they are going to read. For these reasons, the course content will be explained how to implement Extensive Reading as the main focus of a reading course in Uzbek state world languages university context.( table 1)

### **Selected reading materials for Extensive reading Module**

#### **Brief outline of the Module:**

It includes 15 lessons for per week. Each month students are supposed to read and analyze different content according to given table below monthly.

**Month 1 Month 2 Month 3**  
**Short stories Articles Novel reading**

<b>Week 1.</b> <b>Flying Machine</b> by Rad Bradbury	<b>Week 5.</b> From a pandemic to plastic surgery: how Covid changed the way we see our faces <b>Extra reading article</b> The Coronavirus is Never Going Away	<b>Week 9</b> <b>David</b> <b>Copperfield</b> <b>Chapter 1.2</b>
<b>Week 2.</b> <b>Everyday use</b> by Alice Walker	<b>Week 6</b> Lost in translation? The one-inch truth about Netflix's subtitle problem <b>Extra reading article</b> What do wild animals do in wildfires?	<b>Week 10.</b> <b>David</b> <b>Copperfield</b> <b>Chapter 3.4</b>
<b>Week 3. Cask of</b> <b>Amontillado</b> by Edgar Allan Poe	<b>Week 7</b> No sharks but I've seen porpoises': the rebirth of the River Thames" <b>Extra reading article</b> Why travel should be considered an essential human activity?	<b>Week 11.</b> <b>Chapter 5,6,7</b>
<b>Week 4. Two</b> <b>thanksgiving gentlemen</b> <b>by O. Henry</b>	<b>Week 8</b> Air travel: the shape of things to come <b>Extra reading article</b> The Weirdness of Watching Yourself on Zoom	<b>Week 12.</b> <b>Chapter 8,9,10</b>

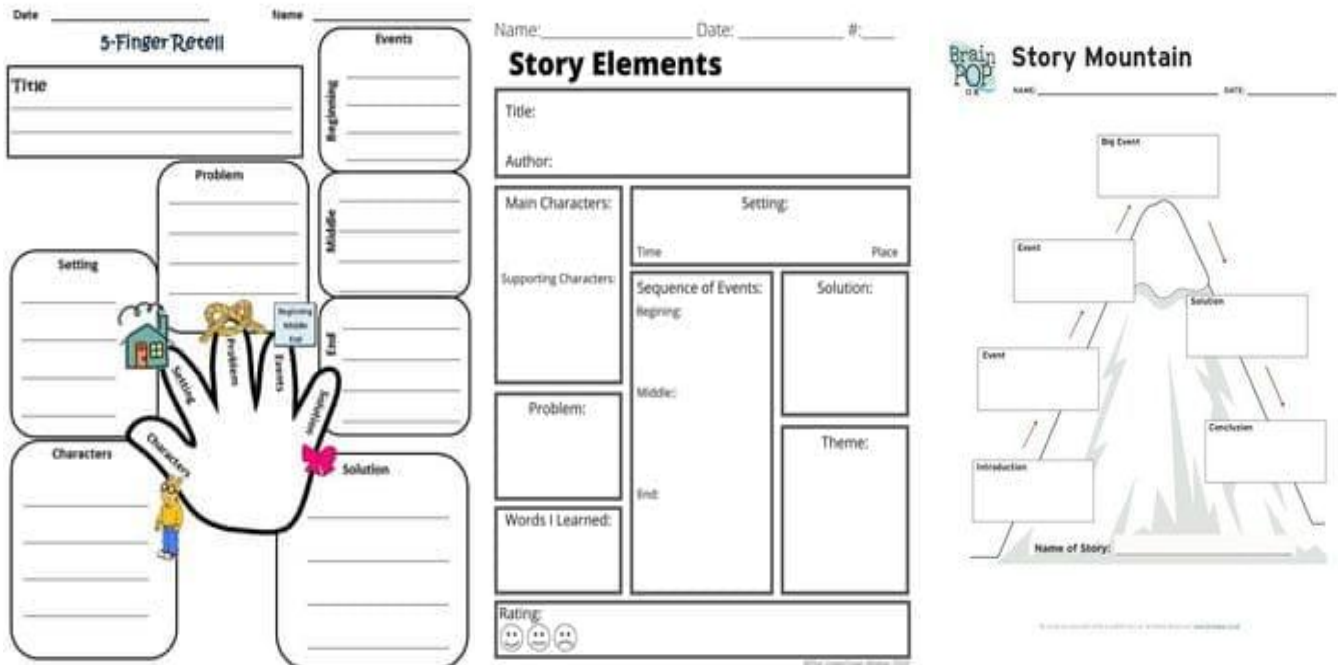
The course is designed for 80 minutes class meeting per week. Before starting the program, for each group of students have Introduction to the course lesson in which teachers should explain what the program will be like so that the students know what is expected of them. Besides, they need to be informed about the benefits that Extensive Reading has in order to make them motivated. The materials needed throughout the course are reading materials which the teaching-staff select the materials for reading that shown in Table 1.

The students may find the materials from the university library, or the teacher provides all of them by sharing online. The students also have ready up loadable content of the course into their devices including mobile phones or laptops so that they will use them any time with full access. Thus there is no need for worrying unavailability of the sources. To follow what literature has suggested, the genre types to be covered throughout the course are narrative and expository texts. As for the place to read, mostly the reading activity will be done out of class. Students will be comprised more time to read longer texts. Class time will be spent on individual reading, monitoring and doing varied post-reading activities. Teacher should determine the target to be achieved for one semester by considering the existing number of classes in that semester. This can be expressed in books, pages, chapters, or amount of time. On top of that, teacher may also create credit system to foster students' external motivation. Teachers need to ascertain that the minimum of five core principles of ER exist in the program. As teachers play a central role in the success of Extensive Reading, they should show high motivation and enthusiasm. Stoller (2015) claims that instructional setting nowadays holds scaffold



sustained reading (ScSR); thus, teachers play the role as guide or facilitator rather than as a model reader. What teachers should do is monitoring students’ engagement and text comprehension. During in-class Extensive Reading, the teachers circulate and interact quietly with individual students to monitor whether the students are on task and that they have understood the text types well and checks whether they comprehend in an appropriate way. If felt necessary, teachers may provide help for students in finding a solution to their misunderstanding at their comfort level. As the program is intended for adult learners, teachers’ role is less domineering. Concerning assessment and grading issues, teachers may employ authentic assessment. The focus of such assessment is more on the process rather than the product. Scoring rubrics as the tool may be used to record and provide score for students. While the students are reading, the teacher will monitor to ensure students have understood at an appropriate level. . The reading process will be continued out-of-class at the students’ own schedule. In the initial step of ER implementation, the time allotted for reading may be four weeks. After the students have adjusted and finished all weekly tasks, they will need to submit a graphic organizer of the story they read throughout the month 1. After the ER task is finished, the following class meeting is used for doing post-reading activities. Such activities are beneficial for the sake of assessment and sustaining students’ interest. The activities selected should be varied and interesting so that students will be challenged and not become bored. Ideally, the post-reading activities are done every other week, after one-week reading. Yet, this can be adapted to suit the class dynamics. Table 2,3,4 present the summary of the assessment. For this task, students will have to organize and create “Analysis of one short story “by choosing one of the given templates given by the teacher. Students should follow the elements of the story.

**Templates of Story analysis Graphic Organizer for Log 1**



**Assessment Criteria for short story analysis:**

Ability to give a brief summary of the plot	3%
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Ability to analyze the elements of the story appropriately	2%
Ability to summarize each story element	3%
Ability to use effective language	2%
Total	10%

## 2. Three-part journal writing (350-400 w)

**Description:** For this assignment, you are expected to complete your assigned readings and write a three-part journal response. This three-part response should be divided into three sections. Together these, three sections should be no longer than two pages and no less than one page. **Section 1** of each response will include a summary of the assigned readings. You will include the most essential arguments and support in a short summary for the article. **Section 2** should be one paragraph where you evaluate the article, explaining your thoughts or opinions in relation to the article. **Section 3** will be one more paragraph where you are expected to write about how these readings connect to your society that you are living and societies in the past.

**Rationale:** this activity was designed to prepare you to 1) summarize key concepts, 2) communicate your perspective, and 3) connect current learning to prior concepts. It likewise develops your writing skills.

You will be assessed using this rubric:

	Excellent (9-10 points)	(7-8 points)	Poor (1-6 points)
Summary	Student has read the assigned texts and has included key information about each assigned article.	Student has read the assigned texts but has included limited information about each assigned article.	Student has read the texts, but student did not include key concepts or principles.
Perspective	Student has included their thoughts and opinions, stating their beliefs clearly and concisely.	Student has included some thoughts and opinions, and they are expressed with some clarity.	Student has not included their thoughts and opinions and/or they are exceptionally unclear.
Connection	Student has connected information presented in readings to the current society he/she is living or current situation he/ she is facing.	Student has connected information somewhat to the current society he/she is living, but there are gaps present in these connections.	Student is unable to interpret their own reading map and/or explain the article to others.

### Assigned Readings

Group A (4 students) – The Coronavirus is Never Going Away

Group B (4 students) – What do wild animals do in wildfires?

Group C (4 students) - Why travel should be considered an essential human activity?

Group D (4 students) - The Weirdness of Watching Yourself on Zoom

### 3. Book review to the readers (200-250 w)

In this task, you are supposed to write an opinion-based book review to show your clear understanding of the novel and to check if you have actually read it. You can analyse the author's ideas, writing techniques, and quality. The book review should include the following parts and subparts:

### I. Introduction

- a) Write title and author of the book
- b) Write about the cover of the book
- c) You can also start the review with a hook (the first one or two sentences of a book that is designed to grab the reader's attention)

### II. Thesis

- a) Write a brief description of the novel.
- b) Avoid mentioning any opinions at this time.

### III. Body

- a) Use about 3 quotations from the author's novel.
- b) Summarise the quotations in your own words.
- c) Mention your own point-of-view of the quotation.

### IV. Conclusion

- a) In brief, summarize the quotations and explanations
- b) Rate the book out of 5 and explain the reason. This can include your final opinion of the book.
- c) Finish with a concluding sentence.

#### Assessment Criteria for Book review on the novel that the student has read:

Summary	Ability to give a brief summary of the novel	2%
Critique	Ability to show overall impression on the work by criticizing (thoughts, responses and reactions)	2%
Format	Organization (Introduction, body and conclusion) Mechanics Spelling	1%
Overall		5%

### 5. Reflective writing

**For this task, write your impressions and opinions reflecting inferences you got. Write at least 300 words. Copied-pasted reflections cannot be accepted.**

**Your reflection should cover all the answers for the following questions:**

1. What is your opinion on extensive-reading?
2. What are the advantages of extensive reading?
3. What would you like to change on this course?
4. Is it better to read stories, articles or novels to improve reading skills?



5. What do you think about the level of stories? Are they easy to understand or have you found any difficulties while reading?
6. Which story was the best for you to understand? Why?
7. Which article was the most interesting one for you? Why?
8. Which story was the most difficult to understand? Why?
9. Have you found any similarities among characters of stories and novel?
10. Would you recommend others to read the novel you have read as extensive-reading?

#### Assessment criteria on Reflective Writing:

Task fulfilment (appropriate writing style, keeping to word limit, degree of frankness)	2%
Adequate support with examples	1%
Quality of reflection (signs of critical thinking, intercultural competence and ability to self-evaluate)	2%

#### Conclusion

Finding out the significant role of reading in foreign language learning, it is high time to integrate Extensive Reading into L2 curriculum as suggested by Anderson (2014) and Tien (2015). Taking account of the literature review and previous research findings, this article attempts to spell out an alternative framework to implement ER as part of the curriculum in Uzbek state world languages university context, whereby it stands as the main activity. It should be noted that the key element of successful ER program is motivation and that the indicator of success may be derived from the high enjoyment that students feel from reading. Besides, to facilitate its execution, teachers and students need to redefine their roles. The article has expectantly given useful insights into alternative implementation of ER in Uzbek state world languages university context. To maintain the program, perseverance is called for since Extensive Reading produces no immediate benefits.

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