

# APPLYING EXTENSIVE READING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING SKILLS FOR SECOND YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS IN HANOI METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** *The present study aims to elucidate whether extensive reading enhances students' reading skills of the second year English majors in Hanoi Metropolitan University. An extensive reading program lasted for ten weeks. The design of the study was experimental research which used quantitative approach. The objective of this research was 62 English major sophomores in HNMU in the academic year 2023-2024. They were assigned to two groups: 31 students in the control group (NNA.D2022.N04) and 31 students in the experimental group (NNA.D2022.N05). The experimental group was applied extensive reading outside reading class during ten weeks, while the control group was given no extensive reading. Pre- and post-test procedure was used to measure the impact of the extensive reading on the students' achievement in term of their reading skills. The findings of this study revealed that there are significant differences in students' reading skills in the extensive reading class, in favor of the experimental group. It can be concluded that an extensive reading programme is indeed feasible. Therefore, it is recommended that extensive reading be integrated into the English reading courses.*

**Keywords:** *Extensive reading, English majors, Hanoi Metropolitan University, reading skills, student.*

Nhận bài ngày 10.03.2024; gửi phản biện, chỉnh sửa và duyệt đăng ngày 30.06.2024

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the prominent skills that should be mastered by learners since it contributes a lot of benefits for them. By reading they can expand their knowledge and open their mind toward knowledge and information around the world. Moreover, reading can also boost such other language skills as listening, speaking and writing at the same time.

Reading is an active process and the readers need to use reading skills to make them attain good reading comprehension. Anderson (1999) said "With strengthened reading skills, ESL/EFL reader will make greater progress and attain greater development" [1, p.1]. Therefore, it can't be denied that reading skills support significantly to readers' reading comprehension. The better the reader uses reading skills, the better he/ she gains reading comprehension. Therefore, how to teach reading skills well and effectively has been the concern of the teachers.

In students' academic lives, reading comprehension is the basis for understanding all the academic content. The importance of reading comprehension increases significantly in all academic subjects as students go ahead through grades. In particular, students need reading comprehension skills to successfully accomplish the educational expectations at school and in the classroom. For example, students are expected to understand what they are reading from multiple sources in order to research topics in different academic areas. Also, being able to understand what they are reading allows students to quickly locate pertinent information, exclude non-relevant information to the present topic, and identify the important information to focus on. Academic success also requires students to be able to understand, analyze, and apply information they gathered through reading. Also, students need reading comprehension skills to be able to understand and perform their academic assignments. In other words, without having reading comprehension skills, students cannot accomplish all of that work [2]. Therefore, reading comprehension skills are so important that students should be taught in their English reading classes.

There are two kinds of teaching reading, they are extensive reading and intensive reading. Extensive reading covers large area, while intensive reading covers narrower area. According to Graham Stanley in Fiprinita (2013), extensive reading involves students reading long texts or large quantities for general understanding, with the intention of enjoying the texts. It means that students have freedom to choose their own topic which they are interested. In this case, the students also have to find supported articles related to the topic in order to give them background knowledge, so that they know more about the topic they have chosen. However, intensive reading does not allow the students to find a topic they like. The topic is given by the teacher, and the topic which is chosen by the teacher is usually short and easy to understand. Both intensive and extensive reading are really significant to prepare students for the tasks and texts they encounter in universities. Intensive reading with a focus on skills/strategies instruction has been seen to provide positive effects on second language reading. At the same time, students need to practise extensive reading in order to apply intensively acquired skills/strategies over the larger texts and multiple reading sources that are required in all academic course work. In fact, intensive reading is more popular in English reading classes than extensive reading. Teachers often give students some English reading passages and ask students to do some given tasks after reading the passages. While, there is a little chance for extensive reading because extensive reading takes much time and effort from both teachers and students.

As for Ng, Renandya & Chong (2019), there are many different terms for extensive reading, including pleasure reading, self-selected reading, free voluntary reading, and wide reading [3]. Extensive reading is a technique in teaching reading which is defined as a situation where students read a lot of materials at their level in a new language; they read for general, overall meaning, and information at once with enjoyment [4]. Furthermore, Richards and Schmidt (2002) state that extensive reading is intended to develop good reading habits, build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure and encourage a liking for reading [5]. Besides improving students' knowledge, McLean et al (2017) also said that extensive reading is an effective and efficient method to improve students' reading rates [6]. According to Nation (2005), during extensive reading, students should be interested in what they are reading and should be reading with their attention on the meaning of the text rather than on learning the language features of the text. In many cases, students tend to read what they like [7]. Thus, it is very important to always motivate them to read more. Extensive reading is projected to expose students to an input-rich and enjoyable environment, with the intention that their language knowledge will improve and their

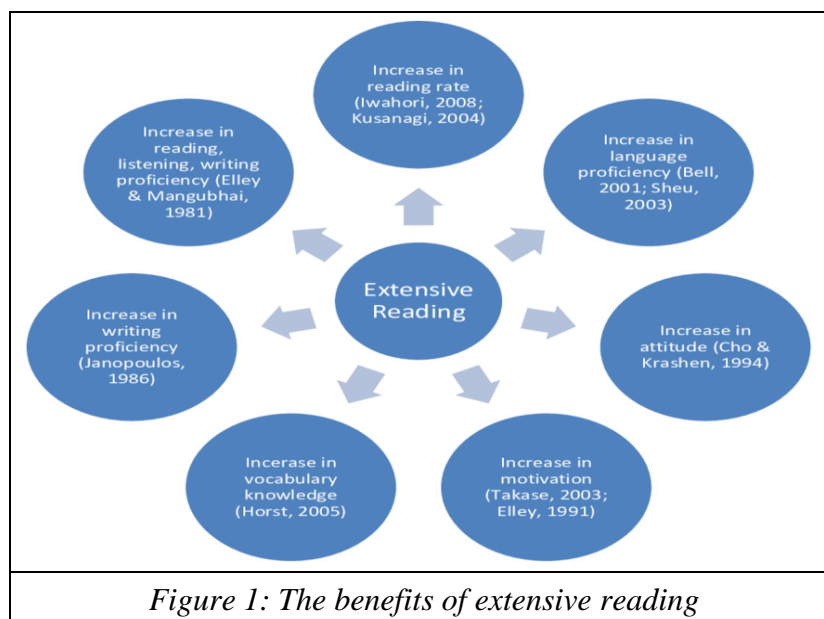
enthusiasm to learn will develop naturally (Hedge, 1985, cited in Sheu, 2003) [8]. Furthermore, Harmer (2002) asserts that extensive reading is an activity that can be applied by teachers to encourage students to choose what they read and to do so for pleasure and general language improvement [9, p.210]. Therefore, extensive reading activity should be supported by various reading materials for enjoyment, enrich their knowledge, and language development.

For the importance of extensive reading, one of direct implication for teaching reading is providing the students with an opportunity to read not only in the classroom but also outside of the classroom. It is also necessary that students are provided with activities or tasks to read outside classroom as a means of practice to develop reading abilities. Students should also be encouraged to read as often as possible. Extensive reading can be conducted in the classroom generally accompanied to an English course (Davis, 1995) or as an after-school activity (Day & Bamford, 1998) [10].

Claims have been made that extensive reading invigorates reading comprehension (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Davis, 1995 [11]), reading rate (Mason & Krashen, 1997 [12]) and positive attitudes toward reading (Dupuy, Tse, & Cook, 1996 [13]) because of the self-selection of reading material and minimal accountability in comparison with traditional assessment (Davis, 1995 [14]; Mason & Krashen, 1997 [12]), and the ultimate aim of ER (like other reading approaches) is to develop grammar knowledge, vocabulary growth, and reading comprehension and speed of language learners (Grabe, 2009; Nakanishi, 2015 [15]).

Also, Nation & Mingtzu (1999) explained that extensive readers help learners with “gaining skills and fluency in reading, establishing previously learned vocabulary and grammar, learning new vocabulary and grammar” (p.356). Besides, the out-of-class pleasure reading has the effect of improving students’ reading skills, their confidence, and self-identification as readers (Kitao, Yamamoto, Kitao and Shimatani, 1990; Stoller, 1994 [16]).

In fact, numerous studies have reported the impact of extensive reading on learners at different age levels and in different contexts. The figure is drawn by some researchers as followed.



It can't be denied that ER brings a lot of benefits to language learners. Extensive reading (ER) has long been advocated and perceived as an effective and stimulating instructional approach to enhance learners' language proficiency. It has been highly valued by numerous scholars and researchers in the language learning field. Nuttall (1982) concludes by citing what other researchers often say when referring to extensive reading, "*The best way to improve one's knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it*" [17, p.168]. Extensive reading will help students to process words faster and they will be better able to read intensively. They will also learn from reading. As students read they are constantly practising the "guessing from context" skill, so vital for work with the difficult texts that appear on tests. Extensive reading is considered to be beneficial to help students acquire a language, especially in university level.

## **2. CONTENT**

### **2.1. Review of Related Studies on Extensive Reading**

Several studies were conducted by many researchers related to extensive reading. The first study is carried out by Levy (2016) entitled *Extensive Reading in English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language Contexts* [18]. This article examined the role of extensive reading in the foreign language and second language context. It covered the usefulness of extensive reading in language acquisition, the effectiveness of extensive reading in language acquisition in specific contexts, and sustained silent reading.

The second study is conducted by Liu and Zhang (2018) with the title *The Effects of Extensive Reading on English Vocabulary Learning: A Meta-analysis*. This paper presented the existence of extensive reading to upgrade students' language proficiency, including grammar awareness, vocabulary mastery and reading proficiency [19]. This study collected the data from 21 empirical studies. The results showed that: (1) extensive reading has a significant effect on English vocabulary learning; (2) one semester (less than three months) is the most appropriate length of extensive reading instruction for vocabulary learning; (3) Graded Readers, comprehension questions and vocabulary exercise play significant roles as reading materials and education methods in promoting the vocabulary learning of EFL learners.

The third study is conducted by Ruzin (2019) entitled *Implementing Extensive Reading to Boost Students' Reading Ability* [20]. The purpose is to review some theories and studies on the use of extensive reading in improving students' reading ability. This paper also discussed students' difficulties in reading, reading materials, extensive reading definition, and the implementation of extensive reading.

Similarly, Kreft and Viebrock (2014) who point out the affective benefits of extensive reading programmes state that extensive reading leads to a significant increase in the amount of foreign or second language materials read by learners through affecting learners' enjoyment of reading [21]. Besides, the autonomy and freedom of learners to choose the reading material at their interests and proficiency levels is considered as a reward to them (Day & Bamford, 1998; Bamford & Day, 2004). Kirchoff (2013) acknowledges extensive reading as "a teaching practice that is likely to positively influence L2 students' reading motivation" [21, p.196]. According to Lee, Schallert and Kim (2015), extensive reading "engenders positive attitudes because reading depends on positive attitudes to become a frequent activity in a language learner's life". Therefore, extensive reading creates positive effects on attitude, and L2 reading motivation of learners (Elley, 1991 [23]; Mason &

Krashen, 1997 [12]; Mikami, 2017 [24]; Takase, 2007 [25]) and it “entails learners reading as much as possible” (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009, [21, p.383].

## 2.2. Methodology

The main purpose of the current study was to find a practical way for improving learners’ reading skills in English language. This study is set out to investigate the effectiveness of extensive reading in developing the reading skills of the second- year English majors in HNMU involved in the treatment of the study. Therefore, the current study addressed the following research question:

*"Whether extensive reading boosts the English reading comprehension skills for the second year English major students in HNMU or not?"*.

### 2.2.1. The Study Sample

The study was carried out in the context of two English classes in the Foreign Language Faculty of the Hanoi Metropolitan University (HNMU). The sample consisted of sixty-two students from two classes selected at random from second year major students of English in HNMU in the academic year 2023-2024. One class was randomly assigned to be the experimental group (NNA.D2022.N05). This class consisted of thirty-one students and they received the treatment based on extensive reading activities designed and taught by the researcher during ten weeks in the first term. The other class was assigned to be the control group (NNA.D2022.N04). It consisted of thirty-one students and this group had the regular English reading lessons with no treatment. Here are the results of Pre-test.

<b>Data</b> <b>Class</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Level of Significance</b>
Control class	31	16.72	1.61	Not significant
Experimental class	31	16.50	1.62	

*Table 1: Results of Pre-test*

Table 1 indicates that the difference between the mean scores of the students in the two groups was only 0.01. This means that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students in the experimental and control groups. Therefore, it can be said that the groups were almost at the same level before the experiment.

### 2.2.2 The Design of the Study

In this study, the experimental group was exposed to the extensive reading to help enhance their reading comprehension skills. The experimental group and the control group were subjected to a pre-post reading comprehension test, prepared by the researcher to validate the effectiveness of the experimental activities. The pre-test was given to both groups to make sure of the equivalence of the level of the students in the two groups.

### 2.2.3. The Instrument

The researcher used a reading test with three passages. All questions are in the form of multiple choice question (MCQ). The reading test is considered as a tool for testing in order to know students’ reading comprehension skill. There are 60 items with four alternative options that are A, B, C, and D in the test. The specific tests of pre-test and post-test were as follows:

### 1. Pre-Test (30 items)

The researcher gave pre-test to the students before giving the treatments in order to know students' reading comprehension skill before the treatment. The test has done by given multiple choice questions. The students answered the questions on the answer-sheets. Then the researcher did the scoring based on their answers on the test

### 2. Post-Test (30 items)

The post-test gave to students after conducting the treatment. It reflected the students' reading comprehension skill by using scaffolding strategy. The researcher gave the students the same test. The students also were asked to answer the reading comprehension test in form to multiple choice question consisting of 30 items.

Here are aspects of Pre-test and Post-test:

Reading Skills	Items	
	Pre-test	Post-test
1. Scanning	4	4
2. Supporting Idea	4	4
3. Main Idea	5	5
4. Vocabulary in context	4	4
5. Expression in context	4	4
6. Reference	3	3
7. Inference	3	3
8. Grammatical features	3	3

*Table 2: Aspects of Pre-test and Post-test Total*

The data obtained from the experimental and control group. Data collected by giving pre-test and post test, then the researcher analyzed the data and compared the mean score of control group and experimental group.

#### **2.2.4. Procedure**

To apply extensive reading program, some sections of experiment were as follows:

The first section, the experimental class were briefed about the goal of the program and the principles of extensive reading. It is essential to encourage to students by explaining the goal and benefit of extensive reading as broadening the knowledge, developing proficiency, enlarging vocabulary, and so on. It helps them to make a good habit to read more and then, their language ability is enhanced through reading a lot.

The second section, the pre-test was conducted in order to know students' ability of reading comprehension skills before the treatment. The pre-test was administrated on August 15th, 2023 for both the experimental class and the control class.

The third section, the students were told to find at least one file of research paper related to the topics they like in the course book Reading Active 2 from various sources. These were mainly taken from the Internet or found in books or others.

Steps are included in the third section as followed:

1. The researcher asked students to share reading materials that they found in the class.

2. The researcher asked students to briefly talk to the class about what they found interested, what they learned from their materials. The students had a chance to share what they had read with other students in such lessons as Review 1, Review 2, Review 3, and Review 4. This sharing session was done biweekly.
3. The researcher controlled “Questions & Answers” activity after each presentation. Each student had nearly 2 minutes to answer the questions from the audiences.
4. The researcher asked students to fill out the reading logs after reading.
5. The researcher gave comments to students’ work and the students’ participation in class.
6. The researcher asked students to continue to search for more reading materials for extensive reading at home.

The fourth section, the post-test was carried out in order to know students’ ability after the treatment. The post-test was administrated on October 26th, 2023 for the experimental class and the control class. This test was designed to measure the students' mastery of reading comprehension skills that are included in the lessons selected from the textbook, Active Reading 2. It was mainly based on the reading skills found in the textbook.

### 2.3. Results and Discussion

The results of the post-test in the experimental class and the control class was as follow:

	<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
<b>Pre-test</b>	experimental	31	16.72	1.61
	control	31	16.50	1.62
<b>Post-test</b>	experimental	31	23.01	2.14
	control	31	20.41	1.80

*Table 3: Comparing the results of Pre-test and Post -test*

Table 3 shows that the difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students in the reading comprehension post-test (as a whole) and their mean scores in the pre-test. This result demonstrates that the level of the reading comprehension skills of the students in the experimental group improved as a result of their exposure to extensive reading activity included in the treatment.

It was found from the finding that there were significant differences between the students who were provided extensive reading program and the students who weren’t used any treatment. It could be seen from the mean score of post-test in the experimental class was 23.01 higher than the mean score of post-test in the control class that was 20.41. The findings indicated that the experimental group predominately benefited from receiving extensive reading program. It showed that the experiment can be declared as successful experiment. It could be stated that students given a treatment by extensive reading program in learning reading showed a higher score than a group of students given only conventional way. That is, “applying extensive reading program” appears to be a practicable instructional device for enhancing reading comprehension skills.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of extensive reading on students’ reading comprehension skills. Based on these results, the following conclusions can be

drawn that there was a significant influence of extensive reading program towards reading comprehension skill of the second year English major students in HNMU. The mean score of post-test in experimental class was 23.01 and the mean score of post-test in control class was 20.41. It revealed that the students' post-test score in experimental class was higher than students' post-test score in control class. This study concluded that comprehension as the main factor in reading is enhanced by using extensive reading. Therefore, the extensive reading was very effective in developing the reading comprehension skills of the second year English major students in HNMU. Also, the extensive reading program can be learned and promoted in English reading lessons.

### **3.1. Limitations of the Study**

The present study was limited to:

Firstly, a sample of 62 second year English major students enrolled in two classes in HNMU. They were assigned to two groups - one class (N.31) as the control group, the other class (N.31) as the experimental group. The extent of contribution that extensive reading program made to reading skills of the second year English major students in HNMU, therefore, it needs to be explored more by other students in HNMU.

Secondly, a limited duration for implementing the proposed activities, it lasted ten weeks in the first term of the school year 2023-2024.

### **3.2. Suggestions**

This paper investigated the benefits of extensive reading in developing the reading skills of the second year English major students in HNMU involved in the treatment of the study.

For the teachers, in teaching English reading lessons, they can conduct extensive reading program and other strategies in teaching reading comprehension. They should be friendly, devoted and be a good motivator for the students. They are able to create an attractive reading environment and an inviting reader community to maintain a life-long reading habit. Therefore, engaging students in extensive reading through integrating some practices into a reading curriculum should be a target for teachers. In university settings, extensive reading activities can be carried out in online classes, libraries, labs, or at home.

In combination with short online reading sessions, a regularly scheduled free-reading time outside the online class (at home) where students can choose their own books should be embedded into the curriculum. After free-reading, a conversation on what students read and what they found interesting can be conducted in the online class.

Teachers should also adjust their teaching methods, use a variety of strategies in accordance with students' English level in order to help them improve their reading comprehension.

With regard to future research, researchers could usefully explore a broader range of English language teachers to shed more lights on how to handle the challenges and reveal best practices of ER around the country in particular, or around the world in general.

For the students, they should motivate themselves, improve their reading comprehension more intensively, and enrich their vocabulary through reading a lot of books. They are encouraged to read materials as much as possible, or read for fun. Also, they should be suggested to maintain a long-life reading habit as well.

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## **ÁP DỤNG ĐỌC MỞ RỘNG ĐỂ NÂNG CAO KỸ NĂNG ĐỌC CHO SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ HAI CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC THỦ ĐÔ HÀ NỘI**

**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu này nhằm điều tra tính hiệu quả của việc đọc mở rộng trong việc nâng cao kỹ năng đọc hiểu của sinh viên năm thứ hai chuyên Anh trường Đại học Thủ đô Hà Nội (ĐHTĐHN). Nghiên cứu kéo dài trong mười tuần. Nghiên cứu thực nghiệm theo phương pháp định lượng được áp dụng trong nghiên cứu này. Chủ thể của nghiên cứu này là 62 sinh viên năm thứ hai chuyên Anh tại ĐHTĐHN trong năm học 2023-2024. Họ được chia thành hai nhóm: 31 học sinh trong nhóm đối chứng (NNA.D2022.N04) và 31 học sinh trong nhóm thực nghiệm (NNA.D2022.N05). Nhóm thử nghiệm được áp dụng chương trình đọc mở rộng ngoài giờ học đọc trên lớp trong 10 tuần, trong khi nhóm đối chứng dạy theo phương pháp truyền thống, không sử dụng chương trình đọc mở rộng. Quy trình trước và sau bài kiểm tra được sử dụng để đo lường tác động của việc đọc rộng đối với thành tích của học sinh đối với mức độ hiểu của sinh viên. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy có sự khác biệt đáng kể trong việc nâng cao kỹ năng đọc hiểu, nghiêng về nhóm thực nghiệm khi áp dụng chương trình đọc mở rộng. Có thể kết luận rằng việc áp dụng chương trình đọc mở rộng thực sự mang tính khả thi. Do đó, chương trình Đọc mở rộng nên được tích hợp vào chương trình giảng dạy Kỹ năng đọc Tiếng Anh.

**Từ khóa:** Đọc mở rộng, chuyên ngành Tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Thủ đô Hà Nội, kỹ năng đọc hiểu, sinh viên.