PHÁT TRIỂN VỐN TỪ VỰNG CHO SINH VIÊN NĂM 3 – KHOA CƠ ĐIỆN – ĐIỆN TỬ, TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC LẠC HỒNG

EXTENSIVE READING IN SUPPORT FOR VOCABULARY IMPROVEMENT FOR THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS OF MECHATRONICS – ELECTRONICS FACULTY, LAC HONG UNIVERSITY

Pham Hong Thai[1], Tran Ho Anh Phong[2], Nguyen Xuan Thom[3]

[1,2,3] *10, Huynh Van Nghe street, Buu Long ward, Bien Hoa city, Dong Nai province, Vietnam*
thaipham@lhu.edu.vn, tranhoanhphong@gmail.com, nguyenxuanthom54@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. This study aims to unearth whether extensive reading can help university students on the development of vocabulary. Two research groups - the experimental group who has read more materials chosen by the researchers apart from in-class readings (95 minutes for class activities and 40 minutes for extensive reading) over the period of 10 weeks and the control group who has absorbed classroom activities only - involved in the experiment. The results, which were collected from three methods of *test, observation and interview* to evaluate the vocabulary gains of the participants, showed that an improvement on vocabulary of the both groups was found but the experimental group performed their use of vocabulary range in reading, writing, and speaking better than that in the control group.

KEYWORDS. *extensive reading, intensive reading, vocabulary improvement, vocabulary acquisition*

TÓM TẮT. Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích tìm hiểu xem việc đọc mở rộng có thể giúp sinh viên đại học phát triển vốn từ vựng hay không. Hai nhóm đối tượng đã tham gia nghiên cứu - nhóm kiểm nghiệm đã đọc nhiều tài liệu thêm bên ngoài được nhóm tác giả lựa chọn cẩn thận (95 phút cho các hoạt động trong lớp và 40 phút để đọc mở rộng) trong khoảng thời gian 10 tuần và nhóm đối chứng chỉ tiếp thu các hoạt động đọc trên lớp. Kết quả nghiên cứu được thu thập từ ba phương pháp: *làm bài kiểm tra, quan sát* và *phỏng vấn* để đánh giá mức độ tăng vốn từ vựng của hai nhóm tham gia và đã cho thấy sự cải thiện về từ vựng của cả hai nhóm. Tuy nhiên, nhóm kiểm nghiệm đã sử dụng được đa dạng vốn từ vựng trong các kỹ năng viết, nói và đọc tốt hơn nhóm đối chứng.

TỪ KHÓA. *đọc mở rộng, đọc chuyên sâu, nâng cao vốn từ vựng, lĩnh hội vốn từ vựng*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching skills in learning the English language is a great art which needs great approaches. It is obvious that gaining a certain amount of vocabulary is the most crucial in foreign language learning in general and in English in particular. In fact, Boutorwick et al. (2019) highlighted that reading and vocabulary are reciprocal.

The author of the article claimed that learners would feel less stressed to comprehend the passages in the texts because of knowing a lot of vocabulary. If not, the learners fail to understand the texts fully.

Actually, it is the authors' contention that the insufficiency of vocabulary leads to bad outcome of all language skills on L2 (second language) learners acceptance of L2, for they fail to create L2 successfully. To deal with the fact of shortage of vocabulary, the researchers came to a daring choice of uniting extensive reading in the current curriculum with the expectation of supporting learners' vocabulary development efficiently, resulting in better communication in four language skills in EFL.

There are abundant amounts of varied explanations of extensive reading (ER) approved by many researchers. However, a stimulating summary of ER made by Waring and McLean (2015) showed that extensive reading involved in the understanding of a large variety of texts with the aim of meaning.

Extensive reading is; moreover, designed to replicate difficulties that students may experience in reading activity and materials together with their attitudes towards the differences between intensive and extensive reading. Furthermore, with extensive reading conducted, it is a substantial chance to explore whether the extensive reading usage can bring excellent outcomes on glossary enhancement to university students. The research is among a minor number of studies of applied extensive reading occurring at the university level.

On deliberation of the abovementioned facts the authors have attempted to deal with answers to the following two research questions:

1. To what extent can extensive reading be regarded as an effective treatment for students' vocabulary enlargement?

2. What remarkable differences, if any, do extensive reading and intensive reading have in the influence on students' vocabulary improvement?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Nation (2015) claims that learners' vocabulary can be absorbed day after day through extensive reading if learners have an opportunity to dive in words in various texts. Undeniably, he confidently assumes that the unfamiliar words become at ease with learners as a result of numerous contacts in simplified materials for ages. Through his study, we have acquired the way to facilitate our learners in indoctrinate tons of words that they have met over and over in their reading.

Hemmati and Asmawi (2015) figured out that the acquisition of vocabulary occurred considerably with the help of reading the graded reader among Iranian EFL learners, *A Little Princess*. These authors unearthed that the participants performed word knowledge of guessing meaning from the contexts well.

Liu and Zhang (2018) concluded that extensive reading and intensive reading groups make the same advancement on the achievement to comprehend, enhance reading promptness and possess essential words. Nevertheless, great interests and enthusiasm toward the extensive reading activities are shown among the extensive reading partakers even though they were required to finish their materials (Graded Readers and story books) under the environments of time constraints (one term) and the absence of reading competences.

Tan (2016) suggests that vocabulary knowledge can be both purposely and incidentally learned via broad reading. This paper is unquestionably true to Vietnamese learning background, in which language learners are often disposed to "engraving" vocabulary by referring to dictionaries deliberately rather than examining words thoroughly.

Chang and Hu (2018) agree that extensive reading permits students at a higher competency to gain more vocabulary scope and depth than intensive reading usage. Learners at minor compacity have a trend to be teacher-dependent in the acquisition of lexical items as a result of intensive reading. This is obvious why the junior students engaged in this research.

To be more specific view of the above discoveries, the authors recognize the common employment of extensive reading in assistance of gaining words among ESL and EFL learners. Although it is quite tough to find some materials for conducting research of reading in Vietnam, the authors fortunately found out two studies from Truong (2018) and Tran (2018) who are additional supplements of our paper. They presume that the terminology development of the learners goes well day after day owing to the application of extensive the process of teaching and learning language skills, especially vocabulary.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Action research

3.1.1 Rationale

The researchers are working as permanent lecturers at Lac Hong, teaching four skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In 2019-2020 academic year, they were appointed to teach four skills of the communicative program for the third-year students of Mechatronics-Electronics Faculty majors and they found that most of students failed to communicate well in English due to vocabulary shortage. It was compulsory for the students to read a remarkable number of English texts from their learning materials, which was estimated as a huge amount of tricky words.

Nonetheless, the students showed serious struggles with technical lexical items because of the shortage of both adequate reading approaches and vocabulary capacity. They passively read as a result of scarceness in technical terms in readings.

3.1.2 Significance of the study

Upon completion, the research is wished to harvest petty paybacks in both the teaching and learning of reading in particular and four skills in general for some reasons:

First, the study will be a model addition to inadequate suggestions on extensive reading in Vietnam, offering those who are concerned with the same zone of extensive reading with a stimulating perception for the sakes of it and considering as a study reference source of reading for interested scholars.

Moreover, the researchers expect to draw attraction from other lecturers and the School Board's consideration to the necessity of some more practical activities given to students outside the classroom, particularly reading. Students are able to be in favor of picking their reading texts, receive more useful approaches on reading and captivate the benefits of extensive reading. The above decisive evidence can grow into good references for the lecturers and the School Board so that a few changes on the current syllabus of courses or at least on some unnecessary contents of reading lessons are officially made.

Lastly, the authors hopefully believe that extensive reading will be a part of learner-centered activity. The success of extensive reading, in fact, must be totally reliant on students who play the most vital role in the extensive additional reading activities due to the fact that they are the ones who select what materials to read and how these materials are going to be read, leading to the self-awareness of prolongation of reading beyon classrooms together with traditional classroom study.

3.1.3 Research procedure

To maintain the objectivity and a multitude of information for analysis, the research was conducted in compliance with the following procedure:

Reading materials for the first cycle of an action research process

In addition to the main *New Cutting-edge* textbook for intermediate students prepared by Sarah and Jonathan (2017), nine out of forty cautiously-selected genuine reading texts extracted from the Vietnam News were used as additional texts. These everyday texts perform to provide to the students a real chance of language use has never been done before, inspiring them to have great enthusiasm in reading the texts.

Research time-frame

The 15-week reading unit per semester was set in the academic year of 2019-2020 in which the first ten weeks was for conducting class research reading sessions; meanwhile, the rest five weeks was for revision and learning with teacher's notes on how the results of the research could be implemented for further study. In other words, the research took place in just 10 weeks of the 15-week course. Details were listed as follows:

Week 1: The pre-test was administered.

Week 2: The first two additional reading resources were put into use.

Week 3: The next two business texts were carried out.

Week 4: The next two business texts were gone through.

Week 5: The researchers analyzed the scores of students after the three-week period through mini exercises related to vocabulary as well as text summarization.

Week 6: The seventh text was read.

Week 7: The eighth text was finished.

Week 8: The last text was completed.

Week 9: The post-test was conducted and the data were projected to analyze.

Week 10: The interview session was conducted and the data from the interview were recorded and analyzed.

3.2 Participants

The setting in which the study was conducted is at Lac Hong University (LHU), the earliest university in Dong Nai Province, Vietnam. In LHU, the non-English major students come across many problems with reading skills due to the insufficiency of indispensable vocabulary. Accordingly, integrating extensive reading in the syllabus serves the purpose of assisting students with the improvement of their lexical items as well as aid them to deal with reading L2 materials in terms of less struggle and triumph.

The participants were 80 third-year non-English major students in the academic year of 2019-2020 at Mechatronics-Electronics Faculty. The participants are all male students aged between 20-22. They were accidentally designated on the basis of obtainability and accessibility with forty partaking in the experimental group and the rest in the control group. No experiential evidence or test results or consciousness of their individual vocabulary improvement will be taken into thought at the beginning of the experiment. All the partakers in the paper are at the intermediate level because they become more flexible and teacher-independent and receive the benefits of intensive and extensive reading (Zimmerman, 1997).

3.3 Data collection instruments

The researchers hold to a strong belief in linking quantitative and qualitative methods to guarantee the validity and reliability of data collection; therefore, triangulation is exploited in action research study because "another way that researchers minimize ambiguity in their findings is by using triangulation" (Hinchey, 2008, p. 76). In fact, the use of triangulation involves in lots of methods to reflect one aspect of the research, leading to deeper and more consistent understanding on the topic.

3.3.1 Tests

The same pre-test and post-test were given out to all partakers in both groups to inspect the enhancement in their vocabulary understanding by paralleling the scores of two groups. The assigned time for the test was 60 minutes and the maximum mark was 10. 50 questions in 4 reading texts were made. And the participants had to choose 1 among the 4 options as the most exact answer to score 0.2 mark. The pre-test was given on week 1 of the extensive reading conduct and the post-test week 9. A large number of difficult words in the nine additional reading texts could be originated in the tests. The first three reading texts of the

tests were taken out from intermediary level materials and the final text was taken from upper-intermediate for the sake of stimulating students' vocabulary.

3.3.2 Observation

Observation is taken into consideration as one of the central methods to see how much growth on vocabulary usage that students attained in essays and sum-ups. Portfolios and essays were electronicalized to detect any significant attainment on vocabulary range of students between two groups. In addition to discovering the answer to research question 1, observation of sum-ups and essays may support the researchers in searching part of the answers to research question 2.

3.3.3 Interview

Eight of the participants (four with good marks and the rest with bad ones) were requested to take part in the interview for the purpose of figuring out the results of research question 2. The interview session was recorded and interpreted.

3.4 Data analysis

In order to discover the differences between the pre-test and post-test scores, a comparison tool is obviously necessary. For a trustworthy analysis of the marks from the data, Microsoft Office Excel 2016 is the selected technique for analyzing. With the hope that the results of the research reveal how differently the student's vocabulary improve thanks to extensive reading, computing descriptive statistics of content and mechanics has to be processed based on mean, standard deviation (SD), t-test. Moreover, the data attained by portfolio observation were investigated in terms of percentage and clearly presented in table below followed by the explanation of the details. Lastly, the data gathered from the interview was transcribed and classified into two categories: students' attitudes and purposes.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

Data from the tests

The results gained from the pre-test and post-test scores were put into comparison through t-test in order to answer research question 1. Table 2 shows the explicit information on scores of both groups.

Table 1. *The results of the pre-test*

Groups	Test	M	SD	df	t-value	P
Control (n=40)	pre-test	5.68	0.15	78	0.05	0.95
Experimental (n=40)		5.67	0.16			

M	= Mean Score
SD	= Standard Deviation
P	= Probability
n	= Number of students
df	= degree of freedom
t-test	= the value of the test statistic

Table 2 demonstrates the mean scores of the pre-test of the control group (5.68 out of 10) and the experimental group (5.67 out of 10) were nearly the same. The value of the test

statistic was t-value = 0.05 which was smaller than t-critical which was 1.99. Furthermore, the p-value = 0.95 was greater than the alpha level α = 0.05 set at the beginning. Therefore, there was no proof to deduce that the assertion was not true. We failed to discard the null hypothesis. Consequently, there was no dissimilarity between these two samples.

Table 2. *The results of the post-test*

Groups	Test	M	SD	df	t-value	P
Control (n=40)	post-test	6.65	0.15	78	2.16	0.03
Experimental (n=40)		7.87	0.13			

At the end of the research, another test named post-test was piloted to find the different performance on the vocabulary rise between the two groups. The mean score of the control group was 6.65, much lower than that of the experimental group (7.87), that is, the mean score of the experimental group was approximately 1.22 scores greater than that of the control group. Furthermore, the test statistic t-value = 2.16 exceeded the t-critical (1.99) and the p-value was 0.03 which was lower than the alpha value α = 0.05. It can be drawn out that an enhancement on lexical items of the experimental group was found when compared to that of the control group through extensive reading treatment. This elucidated the answer to the research question 1 *"To what extent can extensive reading be regarded as an effective treatment for students' vocabulary enlargement"*.

Data from observation

In addition to tests, observations of students' portfolio were used to reveal the variances in the range of vocabulary improvement between the experimental and the control groups. All the students' summaries at the end of the extra reading curricular materials were put into comparison with the short essays of both groups at the beginning of the experiment. The data from the sum-ups and the composition were examined, analyzed, and computerized using Microsoft Office Excel 2016 with respect to the use of vocabulary range. For more handiness, table 3 must be valued.

Table 3. *The differences on the vocabulary span between the experimental and control groups*

Groups	Vocabulary span on essays (% out of 100%)	Vocabulary span on summaries (% out of 100%)
Experimental	35	50
Control	35	70

The application of vocabulary use of both groups on the short compositions gained approximately 35%. During the experiment time, the participants of both groups displayed a better development in the use of word range. Above all, when enlisting the range of vocabulary use in essays with that in summaries between the two groups, the control group reached about 50% of vocabulary range; meanwhile, the experimental group consummated nearly 70%. There was a vivid enhancement of vocabulary range on writing compositions in the experimental group in comparison with that in the control group, leading to uncovering the answer to question 1; that is, extensive reading will help learners advance their vocabulary knowledge, especially their vocabulary range. Also, table 3 assists the researchers to find the discrepancy between extensive and intensive reading on

student's vocabulary enrichment, concluding that the students in the experimental group can accomplish the use of vocabulary range in writing better than those in the control group. This is evidence that helps the researchers answer the research question 2.

Data from students' interview

It was worth noticing that the data attained from the interview offer the researchers another solution tool to the research question 2. Eight students were selected for the interview. Four students were from the low-mark group and the others from the high-mark. The interview questions center on two different categories of attitudes and purposes of students. The first three questions focus on students' attitudes towards and the others belong to students' purposes of intensive and extensive reading.

1. Are you ready and willing to suggest your friends for extensive reading program and share some advantages of extensive reading with them?

With this questions, 4 interviewees who had good scores agreed that extensive reading really assisted them in attainment of better scores in the post-test. They confirmed that they would suggest their friends read extensively for some whys and wherefores such as vocabulary achievement, improvement of comprehension ability in target language, and development of reading skills as well. Nevertheless, the others whose scores were bad paused for a while before giving out the answer, one of whom detailed that *"Actually, I did not have enough time to read a lot of materials, however I thought that extensive reading could help me in improving my language a lot, especially in lexical items field. I would give more thought on its benefits when many friends of mine had better marks after a long practice with extensive reading"*

2. What do you think about this reading program applied in this semester?

All of them wanted to continue to read more and more. They also believed that the use of extensive reading technique for this semester was really a great action. Nonetheless, all of them declared that the lecturers should not ask them to read too much and allow them to pick up reading materials in accordance with their comforts or benefits. And more significantly, Nguyet assumed: *"I think the lecturers should help us to choose or they can recommend reading texts with enough and interesting information to keep us interested in reading more materials in English"*

3. Do you plan to keep reading extensively with other genuine resources like news or magazines at home after the study is finished in order to increase your vocabulary knowledge?

Most of them said "yes". But, Tuan asserted that *"Reading texts in the textbook are enough for me. It is not clear that I'm lazy to read but I prefer paying more emphasis on practicing listening and speaking English rather than reading extensively."*

4. Which one do you prefer, intensive reading or extensive reading?

Six of the partakers agreed both were equally important in increasing vocabulary while two participants indicated that when owning a lot of new lexical items, they were very self-reliant in communicating and reading advanced materials which were essential and beneficial for their majors. They came to the conclusion that extensive reading was much

more supportive than intensive one because it was one of the best methods in practicing and bettering their English language both in their classroom and daily life.

5. Do you think learners of different purposes will lead to different decisions in which method of reading, intensive or extensive?

They all agreed. Four learners with bad scores believed that intensive reading texts in the classroom were just enough in obtaining vocabulary. Nonetheless, four learners with good scores believed they would continue to look for more interesting reading materials to enjoy at home as a study activity or pastime.

To sum up, most of the students revealed optimistic attitudes to extensive reading in comparison with intensive reading. Furthermore, extensive reading also provides assistance to readers in building their specific goals towards reading resources and selecting appropriate materials for them.

4.2 Discussion

Result summaries

The data received from the tests and observations have shown that extensive reading facilitated students in broadening their vocabulary knowledge. It completely interconnected with the research findings revealed by Hemmati and Asmawi (2015), Liu and Zhang (2018), Tan (2016), Chang and Hu (2018), Truong (2018) and Tran (2018).

Likewise, the results from the interview uncovered some substantial dissimilarities between the influence of extensive reading and intensive reading, such as constructive attitudes towards extensive reading as well as specific purposes of the learners towards extensive reading, which contributes to the achievement of the answer to research question 2. This could be similarly done by Liu and Zhang's (2018) study.

Implications

Some strengths of the innovation were found in this study.

First, both the researchers and their students got benefits from the innovation attained by the study. In fact, both the researchers and their learners were in need for a new change that blows away boring reading lessons owing to an obsolete teaching and learning method as well as students' vocabulary shortage.

Second, an outward design and rationale set at the beginning together with a free collection of texts make the partakers available with great opportunities to have the best comparison of intensive reading and extensive reading.

Third, the learners found the summarizing activities valuable for them owing to the fact that this activity increased a big chance of lexical items used in their sum-ups, which obviously helps them instill newly-met vocabulary easily. Furthermore, it abetted them acquire a deeper understanding of their texts as well as progress their writing skills.

Last, the contribution of genuine texts related to the students' everyday circumstances provoked students' curiosities in the reading materials, resulting in the accomplishment of the extensive reading sessions. Besides, students are more probable to be accustomed to genuine words that may be vivacious for them in the future.

In addition to the assets above, some inadequacies were revealed during the period of the study.

Time limitation should be taken into consideration as a problematic issue of the study. The study was carried out over a 10-week period, making the authors stressed to meet the school curriculum and generate more novel ideas for the experiment concurrently. Furthermore, only nine short authentic texts were put into practice for the students due to short length of class study time. Numerous reading texts could have been put into use if the authors had had more time in order to enlarge students' vocabulary knowledge.

The researchers projected that their research was better for a micro study with a definite level (upper-intermediate). It does not apply to macro cases at different levels. In fact, the authors conducted their study on a relatively highly skilled and accomplished learner, not on numerous levels of learners (beginning, pre-intermediate, intermediate, or advanced). Hence, the question to vocabulary expansion on less-skilled readers as well as different levels remains unrequited. Above and beyond, the study addressed a small number of partakers (80), so forthcoming study with a large number of partakers is recommended to authenticate the research discoveries.

Not many references on vocabulary growth via extensive reading were found in Vietnam, creating for the researchers a problem of finding resources supporting their ideas on the thesis. The authors also spent a lot of time on producing and designing extensive reading activities in order to encourage students to enjoy.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Recommendations

Firstly, according to the results received extensive reading better intensive reading in supporting students study vocabulary without struggle. However, it does not mean that extensive reading program is beyond weaknesses. Consequently, the authors have faith in the fact that extensive reading with the blending of traditional instruction (intensive reading) will be more effective in assisting students in widening their vocabulary.

Secondly, lecturers who plan to conduct extensive reading in their classroom should let their students have the right to select extra reading materials in terms of their desires, interests, and heights.

Thirdly, it is not desirable to request students to complete many drills or tests after they finish reading the materials.

Finally, students should be stimulated to read the texts as quickly as possible for over-all understanding as well as speed reading enhancement.

5.2 Conclusion

When learning four skills in English language in general and reading texts in particular at university, the partakers have to indoctrinate plenty of new lexical items, phrases or word structures in texts strongly due to the insufficiency of vocabulary. Furthermore, they knew how much vocabulary effects the reading texts. Nonetheless, an effective way of expanding vocabulary range was not obvious until the extensive reading was put into the university curriculum as an accompanying solution. In short, blending extensive reading conduct with the current communication approach would help learners to improve their comprehension of the reading texts richly and without struggle as well as be tremendously self-confident in interconnecting with others using English.

6. REFERENCES

[1] Boutorwick, TJ.; Macalister, J.; Elgort, I.F. Two Approaches to Extensive Reading and Their Effects on L2 Vocabulary Development. *Foreign Language.* **2019**, *31* (2), 150-172.

[2] Chang, A. C. S; Hu, H. C. M. Learning Vocabulary through Extensive Reading: Word Frequency Levels and L2 Learners' Vocabulary Knowledge Level. *Electronic Journal*. **2018**, *22* (1).

[3] Hemmati, T.; Asmawi, A.B. Incidental Vocabulary Learning and Retention through Reading a Graded Reader among Iranian EFL Learners. *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education–January*, **2015**, *5*(1), 72-86.

[4] Hinchey, P. H. *Action Research;* Peter Lang Publishing: New York, **2008**, 76.

[5] Liu, J.; Zhang, J. The Effects of Extensive Reading on English Vocabulary Learning: A Meta-analysis. *Science and Education*. **2018**, 11 (6), 1-15.

[6] Nation, P. Principles Guiding Vocabulary Learning through Extensive Reading. *Foreign Language*. **2015**, *27* (1), 136-145.

[7] Tan, D. A. L. Investigating Guided Extensive Reading and Vocabulary Knowledge Performance among Remedial ESL Learners in a Public University in Malaysia (Doctoral Dissertation, University Sains Malaysia), **2016**.

[8] Tran, T. N. Y. The Benefits of Extensive Reading for Vietnamese EFL Learners Extensive. *Reading World Congress Proceedings*. **2018**, *4*, 64-72.

[9] Truong, T. P. Using Extensive Reading to Improve Economic Vocabulary for Second-Year Students at the University of Languages and International Studies – Vietnam National University, Hanoi. *Foreign Studies*. **2018**, *34* (4), 164-174.

[10] Waring, R., McLean, S. (2015). Exploration of the Core and Variable Dimensions of Extensive Reading Research and Pedagogy. *Foreign Language*. **2015**, 27, 160–167.

[11] Zimmerman, C. B. Historical Trends in Second Language Vocabulary Instruction. In J. Coady.; T. Huckin (Eds.), *Second Language Vocabulary*. **1997**, 5-19.