



## USING EXTENDED READING MATERIALS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

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**Abstract:** *Extended reading has become an essential component of English language teaching due to its ability to improve both receptive and productive skills. This expanded article explores the role of extended reading in developing students' reading fluency, vocabulary knowledge, oral communication, and overall confidence. It presents theoretical perspectives, practical strategies, classroom applications, and research-based evidence to demonstrate how extended reading can effectively enhance reading and speaking proficiency among learners in secondary and tertiary education.*

### **Introduction**

In modern English language teaching, extended reading—also known as extensive reading—plays a significant role in fostering autonomous learning and language proficiency. Unlike intensive reading, which focuses on analyzing short texts in detail, extended reading encourages students to engage with longer texts for pleasure, general understanding, and language exposure. As students read more, they naturally develop stronger reading comprehension skills and gain the linguistic resources needed to communicate effectively. This article offers an in-depth examination of how extended reading supports the improvement of both reading and speaking skills.



## Concept and Principles of Extended Reading

Extended reading emphasizes reading large amounts of comprehensible texts at a comfortable level. Key principles include:

Reading for general meaning rather than detailed analysis.

Allowing students to choose their own reading materials.

Providing access to a wide variety of texts.

Encouraging reading outside the classroom.

Minimizing formal assessment and focusing on enjoyment.

Fostering learner autonomy.

These principles align with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which asserts that language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input that is slightly above their current level. Extended reading provides exactly this type of rich linguistic environment.

## Benefits of Extended Reading for Improving Reading Skills

Research shows that extended reading significantly improves reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency, and cognitive processing skills.

### *Vocabulary Growth*

Through repeated exposure to words in meaningful contexts, students internalize new vocabulary naturally. Extended reading provides thousands of encounters with target words, which is difficult to achieve through explicit vocabulary instruction alone.

### *Improved Reading Fluency*

Extended reading reduces reliance on dictionary use and word-by-word translation. Students learn to process text faster, leading to improved fluency and automaticity.

### *Increased Reading Speed*

As students engage with longer texts, they read more quickly and efficiently. Faster reading helps them better comprehend academic and real-life materials.

### *Enhanced Critical Thinking*



Longer texts require students to analyze characters, events, and themes, fostering skills such as inference, prediction, and evaluation.

### *Increased Motivation*

When students enjoy reading, they develop positive reading habits. Motivation leads to more reading, which leads to further language development—a cycle supported by extensive reading researchers.

### *Role of Extended Reading in Developing Speaking Skills*

Extended reading indirectly enhances speaking skills by expanding learners' vocabulary, improving grammatical accuracy, and providing models of natural language use.

### *Retelling and Summarization*

Students develop oral fluency when they retell stories, summarize chapters, and express their opinions about the texts.

### *Group Discussions*

Book talks, reading circles, and discussion groups provide opportunities for communicative practice. Students develop confidence speaking about familiar content.

### *Vocabulary for Oral Expression*

Reading exposes students to conversational phrases, idioms, and natural sentence structures, enriching their speaking repertoire.

### *Role-play and Dramatization*

Acting out scenes encourages creativity, improves pronunciation, and helps learners internalize dialogue patterns.

### *Types of Extended Reading Materials*

Extended reading materials should be level-appropriate, interesting, and culturally suitable. Useful materials include:

- Graded readers
- Simplified classics
- Short novels and stories
- Biographies



- Magazines and educational blogs
- Online reading platforms
- Non-fiction texts related to science, culture, or history

Providing a variety of materials ensures that students can choose according to their interests, increasing motivation and engagement.

## Classroom Strategies for Implementing Extended Reading

Teachers can adopt numerous strategies to support extended reading:

*Reading Logs* Students write short reflections on what they read, helping them track progress.

*Weekly Speaking Sessions* Activities such as storytelling, pair discussions, and debates strengthen speaking skills.

*Reading Circles* Each student takes on a role—summarizer, questioner, connector, vocabulary finder—promoting collaborative learning.

*Project-Based Tasks* Students create posters, character maps, book trailers, and presentations.

*Extensive Reading Homework* Encouraging students to read at home helps build reading habits.

*Teacher as a Reading Model* Teachers who read themselves inspire students to develop a love for reading.

## Challenges in Using Extended Reading

Common challenges include:

1. Limited access to reading materials.
2. Students' lack of reading habits.
3. Difficulty selecting level-appropriate texts.
4. Pressure from exam-oriented education systems.
5. Low motivation among reluctant readers.

To address these challenges, teachers should create supportive reading environments, help students select appropriate materials, and integrate enjoyable activities.



### Research-Based Evidence

Multiple studies confirm the positive effects of extended reading. Day & Bamford (2002) highlight improved reading rates and vocabulary growth. Krashen (2004) argues that free voluntary reading is one of the most powerful tools for language acquisition. Studies in Asian and European EFL contexts show significant improvement in students' overall proficiency when extended reading is integrated into the curriculum.

### Conclusion

Extended reading offers immense benefits for improving reading and speaking skills. It exposes learners to authentic language, builds confidence, and enhances fluency. By incorporating extended reading into English language programs, teachers can support students in becoming independent, motivated, and proficient language users. Extended reading not only strengthens academic performance but also cultivates lifelong reading habits and communicative competence.

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