# Extensive Reading and its Impact on Malaysian Undergraduate ESL/EFL Learners' Reading Proficiency and Reading Motivation

## Wan Ker-hsin & Abu Bakar Razali

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, MALAYSIA
Email: kerhsin@hotmail.com & abmr_bakar@upm.edu.my

**Abstract**
English language reading skills are important for tertiary students. In Malaysia, tertiary students are required to master the English academic reading for their tertiary studies. However, Malaysian tertiary students' reading proficiency in English is often found below par, which is attributed to poor reading skills and habits, as well as a lack of motivation to read. The authors believe that extensive reading (ER) should be used to complement intensive reading practiced in tertiary education reading. It is important to learn from past studies the potentials as well as problems with ER, so that teachers and researchers alike can better approach the use of ER in the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) reading. This article reports on the systematic literature review of 32 studies on ER programmes, particularly on its impact on ESL students' reading proficiency and reading motivation, that were published between 2003 and 2019 and obtained through established research databases. The results of the review found that there are positive impacts of ER on ESL reading, particularly on reading rate and reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and reading motivation, as well as the importance of goal setting and monitoring to ensure the success of ER in ESL reading. The authors suggest implications for teacher practitioners, future researchers and course developers to plan how ER would be a valuable addition to their respective programmes and also provide them with ideas in designing their own unique ER programmes to cater to their students' needs.
**Keywords:** ESL/EFL, Extensive Reading, Reading Motivation, Reading Proficiency.

**Introduction**
In the case of Malaysia, reading is deemed the most important skill to master in learning English as a second language, as it acts as a 'bridge to proficiency' (Fatimah & Vishalache, 2006). Reading is one of the most important skills Malaysian ESL students have to master for them to further their tertiary studies. However, in English for academic purposes (EAP) or intensive English Programme (IEP) classes in most Malaysian universities, students do not have adequate opportunity to develop their reading fluency. The type of reading materials is chosen by teachers, and they also dictate when and how students read. These reading periods are focused on intensive reading, in which students spend most of time analysing and

dissecting short and difficult texts, which according to day and Bamford (1998), is not sufficient to produce good, fluent readers. Day and Bamford further argued that this approach will produce *skilled* readers but not skilled *readers*, particularly for the workforce. This is because reading practices of adults is important in job performance and in responding to changes encountered in order to remain competent in their work (Kirsch & Guthrie, 1984).

Malaysian graduates' low reading proficiency in English could stem from poor reading skills and habits, as well as lack of motivation to read. Mullai (2001) identified five key factors that affect reading, which are the education system, method of instruction, beliefs and attitudes of teachers, materials used, and attitude and mindset of students, and these factors have contributed to a literacy that is merely knowing how to read and write. Sidek (2011) further opined that based on the 1995 study by Mustapha, which found that many so called 'fluent' readers at the tertiary level had poor reading comprehension, where these Malaysian tertiary students would not be able to read academically because they are not self-regulated readers. Reading problems faced by undergraduates could be due to their inability to interact with the text, failure to comprehend the text, and low motivation to read (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

Muhammad (2007, as cited in Musa, 2012) found that Malaysian students had limited ability to respond to an academic text in an appropriate manner. Additionally, these students were not ready for the reading demands required of them at university, and were found to have limited vocabulary knowledge (Nambiar, 2007). Zin (2014), whose study was carried out on 295 first and second year ESL learners in a local university, also found that the learners had not acquired the skills required to read a text efficiently and critically for the tertiary level. The researcher further concluded that Malaysian students were not sufficiently prepared for academic reading at tertiary level. Inderjit (2014) highlighted two major concerns; first is that only 20 percent of Malaysians had a regular reading habit, and second, students only read to pass examinations and were reluctant to read for information or pleasure. Citing findings of the National Literacy Survey carried out by the Malaysian National Library in 1982, 1996 and 2005, Inderjit (2014) noted that while the reading habit of Malaysians had improved from two pages a year in 1982 to two books a year in 1996, there had been no further improvement as Malaysians still read an average of two books a year in 2005. Nevertheless, Applegate and Applegate (2004) suggest that it is possible to change the reading habits and attitudes of tertiary students through their college reading experiences.

Developing students' reading comprehension skills can be achieved through being engaged in extensive reading (ER), either through the virtue of their own motivation or even as instructed by their teachers as part of their course requirement. Extensive reading involves students reading a large quantity of interesting and easy materials that are within the students' linguistic competence (Day & Bamford, 2002). Other common terms for ER are pleasure reading, free voluntary reading and sustained silent reading. The purpose of ER is to get learners to read widely and in quantity for pleasure. How extensive reading works can be based on Stephen Krashen's Comprehension Hypothesis, in that language is acquired when we understand messages (meaning, not form) – either what people say or what we read (Krashen, 2004). And for acquisition to be successful, the input needs to be comprehensible, but at a level that is slightly higher than the learner's current level (i+1), and is readily available in abundance. ER, in which reading materials are selected by learners themselves, provides input that is easily understood by the learner as it is within their language competence. As

the aims of ER include building reading fluency, reading speed, and general comprehension of texts (Waring, 2011), it is vastly different compared to intensive reading, which is reading to master a 'particular linguistic structure' or a 'particular reading strategy or skill' (Carrell & Carson, 1997).

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or Intensive English Programme (IEP) classes in most Malaysian universities usually focus on using intensive reading passages in course books or textbooks that are typically short and are used to teach particular vocabulary and language points, and therefore, are usually difficult, which causes reading to be slow and laborious (Waring, 2011). Although intensive reading is predominantly used in the classroom to teach reading, learners can only develop reading fluency through exposure to written text in large quantities (Renandya, 2007). In this regard, the authors believe it is important to explore the potentials and practices of ER in developing reading proficiency and reading performance of ESL learners. Therefore, this article provides the review of literature of past studies on the use of ER in developing reading proficiency and reading performance of ESL learners. The first section of this article describes how the review of these articles were carried out. In the next section, the authors review studies on ER and its impact on ESL reading skills and vocabulary acquisition, as well as studies on ER and its impact on ESL reading motivation. The authors also review studies on ER as a teaching and learning method, particularly the importance of goal-setting and monitoring in ensuring the impact of ER in ESL reading proficiency. From the reviews of the studies, the authors found that the findings from the review of these studies could provide understanding of the impact of ER on reading skills and reading motivation, as well as its results in relation to the different methods of ER implementation. These findings may also provide insights and spark conversations among curriculum developers and teachers/lecturers to incorporate some form of ER into their programmes for students of all proficiency levels to encourage them to be prolific and life-long readers.

## Methodology: Reviewing the Literature

This article presents a review of 32 studies focusing on extensive reading (ER) and its impact on ESL reading and ESL reading motivation, as well as ER as a teaching and learning method, published between 2003 and 2019. The studies were obtained through research databases, such as Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Wiley Online Library, CORE, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and ResearchGate, and academic search engine, Google Scholar. The research articles found were generated using keywords including "extensive reading", "reading skills and vocabulary", "practice of extensive reading", "impact of extensive reading", "second language reading motivation", etc.

The articles selected were published in the following peer-reviewed academic research journals: *Reading Research Quarterly, System, The Reading Matrix, International Journal of Language Education and Applied Linguistics, English Language Teaching, Reading in a Foreign Language, Pertanika Journal of Social Science & Humanities, The Journal of Asia TEFL, CLELE Journal, TESL Reporter, Journal of English for Academic Purposes, English Teaching, Cogent Education, International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature, Juntendo Journal of Global Studies, International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, and International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies.* A paper from an *Extensive Reading World Congress Proceedings* was also included. Of the articles reviewed, eighteen reported studies that used

the quantitative design, five were qualitative in nature, seven used a mixed method design, one was a review article, and one was a meta-analysis. Twenty-two of the reviewed studies focused on ESL/EFL tertiary students, eight research were conducted on secondary level ESL/EFL students, and one focused on ESL/EFL teachers.

**Results from the Review of Studies**
**Impact of Extensive Reading (ER) on ESL Reading**
Previous research on ER has shown that reading large amounts of easy and comprehensible texts promotes fluent reading (Day & Bamford, 2000). It encourages learners to focus on the general meaning of what they read instead of words or details. Repeated exposure to same patterns and combination of words enables learners to develop a sight vocabulary, which in turn increases their reading speed and confidence. Reading large amounts of easy and comprehensible texts promotes fluent reading (Day & Bamford, 2000) and it encourages learners to focus on the general meaning of what they read instead of words or details. Repeated exposure to same patterns and combination of words enables learners to develop a sight vocabulary, which in turn increases their reading speed and confidence. Research on ER has also shown that it provides gains for ESL/EFL learners in a wide range of skills: reading speed (Suk, 2016; Nhapulo et al., 2017; Tran, 2018), reading proficiency and reading habits (Asraf & Ahmad, 2003; Tabata-Sandom & Macalister, 2009) and vocabulary acquisition (Tan et al., 2018; Tan & Kasuma, 2019; Boutorwick et al., 2019; McQuillan, 2019).

**Impact of ER on Reading Rate and Reading Comprehension**
Recent studies have supported ER's positive impact on reading ability, in particular reading rate and reading comprehension. In a study in an EFL setting, Suk (2016) carried out a quasi-experimental study to examine the effects of ER on 171 Korean EFL university students' ESL/EFL learning over a 15-week semester. Students in the control classes received intensive English reading instruction with out-of-class assignments, while the treatment classes received intensive English reading instruction and extensive reading activities during class time, and were encouraged to achieve a goal of 200,000 words by the end of the semester as out-of-class assignments. The findings showed that after the treatment duration, the treatment group outperformed the control group in reading comprehension and reading rate.

Citing research design limitations of previous studies, McLean and Rouault (2017) used an experimental design that was able to ensure equal time spent on extensive reading and grammar-translation treatments to study the impact of these treatments on 50 randomly assigned university students' reading rates. The findings showed that both treatments resulted in higher reading rates but the gains registered by the ER group participants were significantly greater than that experienced by the grammar-translation group. Reading comprehension rates for both groups were maintained above 70% comprehension and there was no significant difference between the two groups. The use of the same three timed-reading passages as instruments for both the pre-test and post-test could be a concern. However, the authors justified their use by pointing out that the participants had no background knowledge of the reading contents and that the tests were given eight months apart.

Furthermore, Tran (2018) investigated whether ER helps to improve reading speed and reading comprehension of EFL learners and conducted the study on 68 Vietnamese university

students. The results showed that the group exposed to ER recorded greater reading speed compared to the control group. Reading comprehension scores for both groups also increased and indicated that the increase in reading speed did not result in a decrease in comprehension.

On the contrary, there have also been studies that suggest ER did not improve students' reading comprehension (Lai, 1993 and Kao, 2004 as cited in Shih, 2015). Shih (2015) used a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test design to investigate whether extensive reading on top of regular reading strategy instruction would improve university students' reading proficiency. Findings revealed that there was no significant difference between the reading scores of the ER group and the non-ER group. As explained by the author, this could be due to the strategy instruction as the control group's performance actually declined. In terms of reading strategy use, the ER group outperformed the control group in this area. Similar findings were recorded by Azmuddin et al (2019) in their experimental study on 215 students in a Malaysian university. There was no significant difference in reading proficiency between the treatment group and the control group, indicating that the treatment (extensive reading) did not have positive effect on reading proficiency.

**Impact of ER on Vocabulary Knowledge**
To study the effectiveness of ER on vocabulary learning, Liu and Zhang (2018) conducted a meta-analysis using data from 21 empirical studies published or conducted between 2007 and 2016. Results showed that ER has positive impact on vocabulary acquisition; and the older the participants, the more effective their vocabulary acquisition through ER.

Recent studies were also in line with Liu and Zhang's (2018) findings that ER helps with vocabulary acquisition. Bautista and Marulanda's (2018) study on university students in two private universities in Colombia revealed that the free voluntary reading programme implemented with vocabulary-learning instruction improved active vocabulary use and retention. Suk (2016) also found that the treatment group that experienced ER performed better than the control group in vocabulary tests. However, the author acknowledged that results for vocabulary gain could be skewed towards the treatment group as the vocabulary test assessed words from the graded readers that the ER students were exposed to. Another limitation of the study is the lack of delayed post-test to determine the retention of vocabulary gains. Thus, it cannot be confirmed whether vocabulary gains through ER would be retained for a longer period of time. McQuillan (2019) compared the relative efficiency of direct instruction of academic vocabulary and free reading, and found that reading is two to six times more efficient in acquiring new academic words than explicit teaching. He adds that reading is more enjoyable for most learners and less work for the teachers.

Boutorwick et al (2019) compared two approaches to ER – ER only and ER-plus, i.e. ER with small group post reading discussions – and their effect on vocabulary development. Sixty-three students in a 12-week EAP programme at a New Zealand university were assigned to the ER only group or the ER-plus group. Findings of the study indicated that gains in word association knowledge was similar for both groups, however, the ER-plus group registered significantly greater gains in word association knowledge of words that were focused on in the group discussion. The researchers claim that the small group discussions reinforced the participants' developing vocabulary knowledge when they engage and interact with each

other. Nonetheless, ER and post-reading activities may not improve vocabulary knowledge if the learner is not interested or engaged. The study provided an example of a student who displayed no learning from reading of the graded readers nor the subsequent post-reading small group discussion.

In Malaysia, two recent studies explored ER's effect on university students' vocabulary gains. Findings from Tan and Kasuma (2019) showed that the treatment group that was exposed to Sustained Independent Reading (SIR) achieved an increase of 21% in vocabulary size. The treatment group's gains were significant as the control group only managed an increase of 7.9% in vocabulary size. The lexical gains were also sustained based on results of the delayed post-test. Similarly, Tan et al (2018) found that ER can effectively contribute to both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge development and the gains were largely sustained over time. In addition, when the ER-based method was combined with intentional vocabulary learning method, the gains were larger and also resistant to decay.

**Impact of Extensive Reading (ER) on ESL Reading Motivation**
Many studies suggest ER has a positive impact on ESL/EFL reading motivation. The following studies highlight these 'unique contributing factors for motivational enhancement' as described by (Ro, 2013). In his 2013 study, Ro found that the ease of engaging in ER created an environment that was convenient for the participant to learn; the satisfaction the participant gained from completing English books compelled her to read more, and at a faster rate; and realising ER's usefulness or value, in relation to language learning and reading proficiency in ESL/EFL, enhanced the participant's motivation. The value that the participant associated with ER and the satisfaction of completing English books appear to be the value and expectancy components that drove her motivation to read.

Among the factors that may contribute to ESL/EFL reading motivation is the compatibility of the text with the participants' ESL/EFL reading proficiency. Findings from Tanaka and Stapleton (2007), who conducted an experimental study among Japanese EFL learners, showed that the experimental group were positive towards ER as they found the graded text used were easier to read than the textbook they were using in class. However, learners have also been known to like books that are more difficult if they find the content more meaningful (Chiu, 2015). The researcher noted that learners may attempt to read books that are above their reading level if they feel there is a reason for them to do so.

Whether graded readers or authentic texts, studies have shown that reading material in ER affects EFL reading motivation. Takase (2007) found that Japanese EFL students' reading motivation was most influenced by the reading materials in the study, in particular the freedom to choose what to read and when to read. EFL learners in Kreft and Viebrock (2014) were found to prefer authentic texts in the form of graphic novels. However, an ER study in Taiwan found that learners who read authentic texts were less motivated than those who read graded readers (Sheu, 2003). The author suggested that the results could be due to several reasons; lack of reading strategies on the learners' part, lack of encouraging activities in the ER programme, or incompatibility between the text difficulty, and the learners' reading proficiency.
Ro (2016) reported that teachers' classroom practices of implementing ER impacts learners' reading motivation and reading amount. Distinct classroom practices, such as implementing

silent reading and ER activities in class, and guiding students to read seemed to have influenced students' intrinsic motivation toward reading. On the other hand, setting a reading goal for students to achieve, and monitoring students' reading with M-readers seemed to influence students' extrinsic motivation to read and also the amount they read.

University students' reluctant attitude toward reading prompted Bautista and Marulanda (2018) to investigate whether a free voluntary reading programme could affect students' interest in reading and reading frequency. Results after the intervention were positive as there was an increase of 62% of students with improved attitude toward voluntary reading. The number of students who read frequently was four times as many compared to before the intervention. Similarly, Tan and Kasuma's (2019) study of remedial English language learners in a Malaysian public university who experienced Sustained Independent Reading (SIR) indicated that they felt more motivated to read in English because the task was not 'too complex' or 'over-whelming' for them. Many participants also indicated that the calm setting of the SIR was also a factor as they felt 'more relaxed when reading', and 92% of them expressed interest to continue reading in English in the future.

Longitudinal studies that investigated ESL/EFL reading motivation change (Nishino, 2007; Judge 2011) found links between ER and motivation to read. Nishino (2007) reported that a sense of achievement, the pleasure and flow of reading, confidence in ESL/EFL reading, and interest in the reading materials enhanced the participants' intrinsic motivation to read. From the two and a half-year multi-case study conducted by Judge (2011) on nine high school students in an ER programme, he found that the two strongest themes that emerged from the data were love of literacy since early youth and the appeal of autonomy. The participants indicated that being able to choose what they read, when, where and how much they read was one of the main reasons they enjoyed the ER programme. Similarly, Takase (2007) emphasized that the choice in reading contributed to the participants' motivation to read and thus enhanced their ER accomplishment. Findings from Tanaka (2017) also showed that learners' perceived autonomy increased intrinsic motivation, and that providing them with choice gave them a sense of control over reading.

While the various aspects of ER have been found to have a positive effect on ESL/EFL motivation in reading, there are external factors that could work against learners' motivation to read. Time constraints due to the demands of homework, study and examinations are known to adversely affect the amount of time learners actually engage in ER. Both Cha (2009) and Huang (2015) found that study and homework pressures limited learners' effort and engagement in ER. In Cha's study, regular performance tests were also a limiting factor, while in Huang's study, the lack of skill or reading habit of the learners' parents failed to support their children's reading habit. Furthermore, while ER can result in improvement of appreciation of English and belief that reading extensively is beneficial, this would not necessarily lead to more reading or independent reading when the ER programme is over (Hagley, 2017).

Tanaka (2015) studied longitudinal changes in motivation of Japanese university EFL learners for short in-class ER over one academic year. The results indicate that the students' motivation for short in-class ER declined sharply over time. The author offers a few possible reasons for the decrease. First, Japanese students may not have a clear objective for learning

English after the university entrance examination, which could translate to a decreasing motivation for ER. Second, students may have been initially excited about pleasure reading, but once the novelty wore off, they may feel bored doing the same thing. Third, as students begin their first semester, they may be mildly anxious about failing courses and this pushes them to be more motivated. As they become more accustomed to the demands of university over the course of the year and gained some course credits, they may experience a decrease in motivation for reading.

**Extensive Reading as a Teaching and Learning Method – Importance of Goal Setting and Monitoring**

From the review of literature, it was also found that different methods were adopted by teachers of English as a second language to implement ER (Chang & Renandya, 2017), and these include in-class reading only, out-of-class reading only, and a combination of both in-class and out-or-class reading. Methods of monitoring of students ranged from writing book reports and answering quizzes to without any kind of post-reading tasks. More importantly, the findings from studies indicate that how ER is implemented in the institution (i.e., the presence or absence or goal setting and monitoring) can affect the results and learning outcomes at the end of the ER programme.

For one, from the review of the studies when there is a structured ER programme with some form of guidance and monitoring system from the teacher, these research tend to find better reading outcomes. In their study on 100 participants from a vocational business junior college in Taiwan in practicing a structured ER programme where they were also required to keep reading diaries that their teacher checked weekly, Shih, Chern and Reynolds (2018) found that the participants exceeded the teacher's recommended reading time of 37.5 hours during 16 weeks. Apart from 7.5 hours of in-class extensive reading over the 16 weeks, the students also enjoyed a positive classroom environment and received encouraging feedback and support regarding graded readers from their classroom teacher. In another instance, in a quasi-experimental study conducted by Tan and Kasuma (2019), Malaysian undergraduates at a public university experienced sustained silent reading (SIR). Participants read their own English reading materials independently for 30 minutes in class every week for 10 weeks. Guidance was given on material selection and observation of participants showed that they were reading during the allocated time. Findings revealed that the participants felt more motivated to read and wanted to continue reading in future.

However, in their study of 215 undergraduates at a Malaysian public university, where Azmuddin, et al (2019) exposed 125 participants to ER for 14 weeks as part of an existing course – but which the students were required to do the reading mostly on their own without the lecturers' help or close guidance or monitoring. In the study, the experimental group read novels outside of class time and spent thirty minutes per week on ER activities from weeks 4 to 12. The reading requirement was at least 4 novels for the duration of the study. The researchers reported that ER did not have positive effect on reading proficiency and that the reading motivation was low. They identified several limitations to how the ER programme was run. Among them were limited time due to embedded ER in an existing course, duration of the study was too short, reading progress was not closely monitored, and limited amount of reading materials for participants to choose from.

Furthermore, when using one particular method of conducting ER called Additive ER, where students read books outside of class time (Robb & Kano, 2013) which was used in Tien (2015) and van Amelsvoort's (2016) studies their findings also seem to yield negative results. Tien's (2015) study involved 5,711 university students from eight colleges in Taiwan, who were required to read eight graded readers for two semesters. There was no mention of any monitoring system for the number of books actually read by the participants. Findings revealed that participants' perception of ER was generally positive, however, only 28% of the participants completed the survey, and it is unclear whether the other participants who did not complete the survey shared similar sentiments. Furthermore, findings from the study also indicated that the majority of the participants were concerned about reading for pleasure as they would rather spend time on reading materials that are relevant to tests. Therefore, it is still a big question mark whether a positive perception of ER would lead to better reading habits.

A liberal ER programme was adopted in van Amelsvoort's (2016) study involving 123 students at a private university in Japan. Students were encouraged (but not required) to read extensive outside of class hours. Student reading was not tracked, reading goals were not set, and ER participation or reading progress was not assessed – in other words, close guidance or monitoring was not given by the lecturers to these students. In the study, the students could record the books they completed in a reading record sheet, but it was not made compulsory for them to do so. The rationale for not monitoring students' reading and not setting a reading goal was for students to cultivate intrinsic motivation for reading in English, and to this end, the programme would seem to have failed. The results were dismal at the end of the first term, where 29.3% of the students did not read any books, and only 5.7% read more than 12 books.

In another study, Chien and Yu (2015) required freshmen at a university in Taiwan, who were mostly reluctant readers, to do extensive reading at home for one academic year. The recommended reading volume was 4 – 5 books per semester, which is around 400 – 500 pages, but it was not a requirement they had to fulfil. Their reading progress was not monitored, and no tests, reading tasks or reading assignments were required, other than a five-minute oral presentation at the end of each semester on the books they had read. Findings indicated that the participants considered reading in English important and that extensive reading benefits them in their studies and future employment. However, they are still not reading extensively on their own and do not feel like spending time reading. It is possible that due to the interval period between the end of the ER programme and the survey, the participants had positive attitudes toward reading in English during the programme, but the effects did not last long.

Findings from the earlier studies indicate that goal setting and monitoring – regardless in any methods of using ER – are very important to ensure the success of ER, and that the lack of goal setting and monitoring of student reading negatively impact student engagement in extensive reading. The review of studies in this section also highlights the importance of a well-implemented ER programme with allocated in-class reading time, interesting reading materials, guidance and monitoring by teachers which result in better reading outcomes for students.

### Implications for Extensive Reading on ESL/EFL Reading Skills and Reading Motivation
### Implications for Practice

In the previous sections, the impact of ER on reading skills and reading motivation in the second language have been discussed. Findings of the studies reviewed suggest that while ER is an approach that could improve reading skills and motivate students to read in some cases, there were also instances where ER did not result in the gains that were expected. For example, in a recent study conducted on Malaysian university students, not only were there no significant gains in reading proficiency after the implementation of the ER programme, but the students motivation for reading remained low (Azmuddin et al., 2019). Even when study results indicate there were gains in reading comprehension and reading speed due to implementation of ER, students' reading motivation did not improve (Nhapulo, 2017). Moreover, the researchers were not able to ascertain whether the reading gains were due to ER or the general ESP classes the students attended.

There is also a need for a better understanding of what drives students to read (or not to read). Hagley (2017) observed an improvement in university students' appreciation of English after implementation of an ER programme. A majority of the students believed that ER improved their understanding of English and was beneficial to their study, however they indicated that they would not continue with ER after the completion of the programme. Although the researcher noted that this is understandable because the students were not English majors, this reluctance to read in English could pose problems in students' future professional development as English is an international language of science and technology (Foyewa, 2015), and it dominates research in other fields as well. In reality, reading in English is not just for students majoring in English, but for all students. Tran (2018) achieved more encouraging results as its findings showed that more than 67% of students in its study claimed they were still reading English books after the treatment was over. The participant in Alsaif and Masrai (2019) developed a more positive attitude towards reading in English and credited his experience in the ER study for developing his vocabulary and reading proficiency. The researchers seemed confident that the participant would most likely continue to read after the study due to his positive views. However, a major limitation of the study was that it started out with 79 participants, and all except one dropped out of it. Understanding why some students continue to read when others give up has never been more important as the knowledge could help educators and other stakeholders with getting reluctant readers to read too.

### Implications for Research

Most of the studies within the past five years reviewed were quantitative studies to measure whether ER has any impact on either reading proficiency or reading motivation. Few actually gathered information directly from participants to understand why they claim to be motivated to read and whether this translates to a robust reading habit where they will continue to read even if it is not a requirement of their respective courses. Remedial language learners in Tan and Kasuma's (2019) study reported that they would increase their reading in English after the ER programme as they enjoyed the reading experience, the task was not too difficult, and they believed that sustained independent reading can improve their English proficiency. The researchers attributed these reasons to components in the Expectancy-Value Theory, but as evidenced by findings of Hagley (2017), students may believe that English is beneficial, yet are still reluctant to read. In addition, results of Tanaka (2015) indicate that

university students' motivation for ER decreased over the course of an academic year, and suggest that the sociocultural environment has a significant impact on students' reading motivation. From the studies reported above, it can be concluded that ER has the potential to improve reading skills and reading motivation. It is also really important to note that to ensure the use of ER is in fact effective or impactful in developing ESL/EFL reading proficiency as well as develop reading motivation, the teachers and lecturers are setting goals and monitoring closely their students' extensive reading practices.

**Conclusion**

This article discussed the use of ER as a teaching and learning method, and its impact on reading proficiency and reading motivation. ER programmes can be conducted in various forms ranging from having a more structured form with set goals and strict monitoring to liberal ones which give students absolute autonomy to read or not to read. Findings from studies that have been discussed seem to indicate that results and learning outcomes would be more positive if the programme was designed and implemented with reading goals, guidance and support from teachers, and monitoring of student reading. The challenge for instructors and programme developers would be to decide how much structure and monitoring is required to motivate students to read without it being seen as another course requirement to fulfil.

Findings from the studies discussed in this paper also revealed mixed results of ER's impact on reading proficiency and vocabulary gains. While some studies reported improved reading rate and reading comprehension (Suk, 2016; McLean & Rouault, 2017; Tran, 2018), others suggest that ER did not improve students' reading comprehension (Shih, 2015; Azmuddin et al., 2019). ER's positive impact on vocabulary gains was more consistently found in studies (Suk, 2016; Bautista & Marulanda, 2018; Tan & Kasuma, 2019; Tan et al., 2018), however, Boutorwick et al (2019) noted that learners need to be interested or engaged for ER to improve their vocabulary knowledge. Studies discussed in this paper also seem to suggest that ER has a positive impact on ESL/EFL reading motivation (Ro, 2013; Bautista & Marulanda, 2018; Tan & Kasuma, 2019). Among the factors that contribute to ESL/EFL reading motivation are the ease of doing ER, satisfaction gained from reading, realising ER's value, compatibility of text with learner's ESL/EFL reading proficiency, freedom to choose reading materials, and teachers' classroom practices. At the same time, external factors from the learner's socio-cultural environment, such as time constraints due to the demands of school or university, have been found to have a negative effect on their motivation to read.

The varied findings from previous research on ER have provided valuable information about tertiary students' motivation to read extensively and that the practice of extensive reading to be done with great planning, goal setting and close monitoring either by the teachers or lecturers, or maybe even amongst the students themselves. That said, previous studies have also shown that learners were still not motivated to read independently once the ER programme is over even when they had achieved gains in reading comprehension and reading speed, and developed an appreciation of English. As such, future research could explore reasons for learners' reluctance to read to obtain a better understanding of this phenomenon. Additionally, research should be undertaken to study learners who are avid readers to obtain a better understanding of what compels them to keep reading, what motivates them to read continuously, and what conditions have to be met for this to happen. These insights would

be valuable to instructors and course developers in the design and implementation of ER programmes that would achieve better outcomes in terms of moulding leaners to be life-long readers.

**Corresponding Author**

Abu Bakar Razali (PhD)
Associate Professor at the Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.
Email: abmr_bakar@upm.edu.my

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