Extensive Reading with an Authentic Text: A Case Study

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Abstract

This paper reports on a single-subject case study that provides a picture of what an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner experienced while reading an authentic English novel in and outside of the classroom. Multiple sources of data including observations, interviews, online reading comprehension quizzes, and a vocabulary test, were collected over a twenty-week period. The results of the study show that the subject used a combination of strategies while reading. These strategies helped the subject better understand the text. The results also suggest that the subject enjoyed the reading and saw the reading comprehension quizzes as incentive to continue reading the text. However, not much vocabulary acquisition was observed at the end of the study. Some pedagogical implications are offered to teachers who may want to implement an extensive reading (ER) approach in their teaching contexts.

Key words: single-subject case study, English novel, strategies, incentive, extensive reading
廣泛閱讀英文小說之個案研究

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摘要
本研究的目的在探討一位中學生在課堂及課後廣泛閱讀英文小說的過程及經驗。研究採用觀察、訪談、閱讀理解測驗以及字彙測驗作為研究工具。研究結果顯示研究對象在閱讀的過程當中懂得使用各種閱讀策略來達到他的閱讀目的。另外，研究結果也顯示研究對象喜歡閱讀英文小說而且把閱讀理解測驗當作是一種閱讀的動力。然而在閱讀的過程中，研究對象並無法從中學習到很多新的單字。最後，本研究對如何在課堂中落實廣泛閱讀提出建議。

關鍵字：個案研究、英文小說、策略、動力、廣泛閱讀
INTRODUCTION

Using extensive reading (ER) as an approach to teaching and learning a language has been a much-debated topic in language education for more than half a century. It is widely accepted that reading extensively is beneficial to language acquisition both in first language (L1) and second language (L2) learners. A review of earlier literature has shown that reading extensively not only improves a language learner’s comprehension and production skills but also develops their word recognition skills, background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and grammar knowledge. In addition, reading extensively can promote language learners’ confidence and motivation to read (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Although some doubts have been raised about the feasibility of an ER approach in the L2 classroom, research in the last decade suggests that the benefits of ER as an approach to language teaching and learning are considerable. If all appropriate conditions are met, an ER approach can be implemented successfully in and outside of the L2 classroom.

Literature Review

Kweon and Kim (2008) investigated incidental vocabulary acquisition in an ER context. 12 Korean college students participating in the study were given three authentic novels, over 100,000 words to read. The participants were tested on their knowledge of vocabulary before the reading, immediately after the reading, and one month after the reading. The results from the tests showed that there was a significant gain in the students’ word knowledge between the pretest and the first posttest. The test found that of all words being tested, nouns were easier to retain than verbs and adjectives. Words that occurred more frequently in the novels were learned more easily than words that occurred less frequently. Kweon and Kim concluded that incidental vocabulary acquisition was possible through an ER approach.
and that most of the words acquired through ER could still be retained one month later.

Iwahori (2008) examined the effects of an ER approach on students’ reading rates and general language proficiency. 33 public high school students in Japan were involved in the study. During a seven-week ER treatment, subjects were able to choose the books they wanted to read from 107 graded readers and 30 comic books. A pre/posttest design of reading rates and language proficiency was used to evaluate the effects of the ER treatment. Results from the tests showed that the students’ reading rates and general language proficiency improved after the ER treatment. Iwahori concluded that ER provided a workable way for students to become more fluent readers and that an ER approach should be incorporated into English class curriculums.

Poulshock (2010) observed how 34 college students at a Tokyo university perceived their experiences while doing ER with traditional graded readers and short graded stories in the liberal arts and sciences (LAS). Over a period of two semesters, the students were required to read an average of four pages each day from the Oxford, Penguin, or Footprint graded reader series. They also read short graded stories in the LAS. In the study, Poulshock found that the students enjoyed extensive graded listening and reading in the LAS and they also recognized benefits from doing ER. In addition, the results from vocabulary tests showed that the students appeared to learn some vocabulary during the reading process. However, the gain in vocabulary learning may not necessarily be incidental because the students were told they would be tested on the words in the stories, as Poulshock noted.

Judge (2011) examined the motivations of nine students in an ER program at a private high school in Osaka, Japan. Within the ER program, the students were encouraged to choose library books on their reading level and read freely. The books they chose included graded readers, Japanese stories in English, and English books for L1 youth. Over the 2.5-year study, data were collected from multiple sources including interviews, questionnaires, and document review. Judge found that the students’ motivations to read changed over time and were
influenced by various factors during the reading process. The author also found that many of the students were fully immersed in what they were reading while reading freely. Judge concluded that “extensive reading provided these nine individual learners with the autonomy, the access to interesting materials, and the positive reinforcement needed for continued L2 acquisition” (p. 178).

Nakanishi and Ueda (2011) conducted a one-year study investigating if ER improved students’ reading comprehension abilities and whether shadowing – a way to train simultaneous interpreters – enhanced the effects of ER. 89 first-year students at a Japanese university participating in the study were divided into four groups – two experimental and two control groups. While students in the two experimental groups were treated with an ER and an ER-plus-shadowing approach respectively, students in the two control groups were taught using a traditional translation method. A pre/posttests design was used to assess the differences among the groups. The results showed that the ER treatment improved the students’ reading comprehension abilities and that shadowing could enhance the effects of ER. However, the results did not show any differences among the four groups, indicating that an ER or an ER-plus-shadowing approach was not necessarily a more effective way to teach reading than other traditional teaching methods.

Robb and Kano (2013) examined the effectiveness of an “additive” ER program, the MoodleReader program, at a university in Japan (p. 234). In their study, the authors compared two groups of students, using a pre/posttest design. After two terms of study, students who were required to do ER outside the classroom in the “additive” ER program performed much better on the post-reading test than students who were not in the program and did no extra reading. Robb and Kano concluded that ER conducted outside the classroom improved the students’ reading abilities. An “additive” ER program completed outside of class hours can be successfully implemented if school administrators support the idea and if the problems of final assessment and book management can be solved.
Ro (2013) conducted a single case study over a period of eight weeks, investigating whether ER reduced an adult learner’s anxiety toward reading in English and motivated the learner to further learn the language. The participant in the study, a 28-year-old Korean female, chose to read children’s books for L1 readers and Japanese comic books in English borrowed from a city library in Hawaii. The results from observations, questionnaires, and interviews showed the participant became less anxious about reading in English because she enjoyed the books she chose for herself and she could read at her own speed. The author also found that with each reading, the participant gained more confidence in her reading abilities. When the participant discovered that her reading abilities were improving, she became motivated to continue reading. As Ro commented in the conclusions of his article, “the ease of doing ER alone, at any place at any time, and at her [the participant’s] own pace played a major role in creating an environment in which she [the participant] was able to more conveniently learn the target language” (p. 226).

A further study that investigated the effects of ER on the reading attitudes of EFL students was conducted by Yamashita (2013). Yamashita worked with 61 undergraduate English learners at a Japanese university to investigate how an ER approach affected language learners’ attitudes toward L2 reading. Over a period of 15 weeks, students chose the books they wanted to read from approximately 500 graded English readers. Reading was done in and outside of the classroom. A book report was a requirement for each book read. A pre/posttest design was used to measure the participants’ attitudinal changes. The results indicated that the ER approach implemented in and outside of the classroom increased the students’ comfort level in and reduced their anxiety toward reading. Yamashita concluded that positive feelings about reading were important because they may encourage language learners to read more and bring about the “virtuous circle of reading” (p. 258).

Kirchhoff (2013) investigated whether language learners perceived a flow experience or a sense of full immersion while reading and whether experiencing flow motivated them to read more. 74 students
in an extensive reading class at a junior college in Japan participated in this study. Over a period of 14 weeks, the participants chose books to read from 200 fiction and non-fiction graded readers. The reading was done in and outside of the classroom. Multiple sources of data, including the participants’ reading speed, the amount of words read, the time spent on reading, and the number of the participants’ flow experiences, were recorded and analyzed. The results demonstrated that most of the participants experienced flow-like engagement while reading graded readers in the classroom. However, the numbers of flow-like experiences were not directly proportional to the time spent on reading. Kirchhoff suggested that ER be used as an L2 learning approach as it improved “teaching effectiveness by including conditions for reading engagement” (p. 207).

From the literature reviewed above, we can see that ER is beneficial to L2 learners. ER as an approach to language teaching and learning can be successfully implemented in and outside of the L2 classroom in a wide variety of ways. An ER approach can be carried out with a large group of learners in a formal educational setting or be undertaken on an individual basis in a private context. Language learners in an ER program can choose what they want to read or they can be provided with pre-selected materials. The reading materials can either be simplified graded readers or un-simplified authentic texts. An ER approach can be conducted over a period of a couple of months or last for a year or more. Whatever approach is taken, there seems to be a consensus among researchers that an ER approach to language teaching and learning should be an indispensable part of any language program.

However, since all of the above-mentioned studies are conducted in foreign contexts with different cultural characteristics, there is a need for more studies to show how an ER approach actually works in EFL settings in Taiwan. The purpose of the present study is to investigate what an EFL learner in Taiwan experienced while he was engaged in ER for a period of four months. The present study attempted to answer the following questions:
1. What strategies were adopted to assist reading during the reading process?
2. How much comprehension was observed during the reading process?
3. How much vocabulary was acquired during the reading process?
4. Was the reading an enjoyable and rewarding experience for the EFL learner?

The answers to these questions will provide pedagogical implications for language practitioners who would like to carry out an ER program in and outside of their classrooms in EFL settings in Taiwan.

**METHOD**

**Subject**

The subject of this study, Vincent, is the son of the author of this paper. Vincent is a pseudonym used in this study. Some researchers may argue that observational data collected from one’s own children are biased and invalid because researcher-parents may not be able to maintain objectivity. However, in the current study it made no sense to bias the interpretation of the observation because any findings from the study would not influence the parent-child relationship between Vincent and the author. Rather, involving Vincent in the study gave the author the advantage to observe closely what a learner actually experienced while doing ER.

Vincent was 15 when the study was conducted. While he was in elementary school, Vincent attended an ESL program at a children’s day
care center in central Taiwan for six years. The program was conducted entirely in English by native English teachers. During the study Vincent was attending a local private high school, which features an intensive English language program. Vincent was placed into the program after he was admitted to this school. Along with regular high school subjects, Vincent studied additional ESL subjects such as English reading and writing, science, social studies, and performing arts for a total of ten hours each week. These subjects were taught in English by native English speakers. In the English reading and writing class, students were required to keep up with assigned readings in and outside of the classroom. The assigned readings included un-simplified authentic novels. Vincent had already finished reading Fantastic Mr. Fox, Number the Stars, Animal Farm, The Maze Runner, and The Outsiders before he began the 9th grade. Although the assigned readings were not aimed at EFL readers, Vincent was not anxious. Vincent was really excited each time he was given a new novel to read at the beginning of a new semester. This may have been because Vincent has been reading children’s books and novels for native English speakers since he was in elementary school. In addition to the reading assignment from the English reading and writing class, Vincent would also read some magazines about commercial flights such as Airways and Air International in his free time. However, it should be noted that most of the time Vincent simply flipped through the pages and looked at the colorful pictures.

**Procedure**

The study was not officially conducted until Vincent’s third year in high school. During this time he was required to read To Kill a Mockingbird in his English reading and writing class. Students in the class had to finish one or two chapters (a total of 31 chapters) of the novel each week. After every chapter, students had to take an online reading comprehension quiz to show their comprehension levels of each chapter. The quizzes are developed by Engrade, an educational
technology company that offers online learning and assessment programs for K-12 students.

Before enrolling Vincent in my study, I talked to him about my study plan and asked if he would like to participate in the study. After I ascertained that Vincent would not feel any pressure to agree to be involved in the study, I explained to him the purpose of the study. I also told him that any findings from the study would not be reported to his school teacher or influence his course grade. Rather, the findings from the study would help him understand more about his reading comprehension skills.

Following the schedule set by Vincent’s reading and writing class teacher, I was granted permission to sit by him and quietly take notes of what I observed as he read. While Vincent was reading, I asked him to underline all the words and phrases that he did not understand. This was done to observe how much vocabulary learning took place during the semester. I observed how he read, recorded the time he spent on each reading, and kept a reading journal. The observations primarily focused around the cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies that Vincent used. Cognitive reading strategies include strategies such as using context clues, using prior knowledge, inferencing, predicting, summarizing, and note-taking. Metacognitive reading strategies are strategies that involve self-monitoring or self-evaluation of strategy use (Oxford, 1990). The time Vincent spent on each reading was not easy to accurately track because Vincent would sometimes stop to look up words in a dictionary or relax for a while before he resumed reading. Still, it was interesting to find that Vincent was generally a fair reader who could read about 210 words per minute (see Bell, 2001). This average was measured by dividing the total number of words in the first seven pages of To Kill a Mockingbird (2,493 words) by the number of minutes it took Vincent to read them. After each reading, Vincent was asked some questions such as what he thought of the story, which part of the story interested him the best, and how he dealt with the difficult parts in the reading. For the reason that Vincent would read only one book during the entire span of the study, one may easily argue that the study cannot be categorized as an “extensive reading” study. However,
because a large amount of reading would be completed (a total of 99,121 words) in four months and the purpose of the reading was related to general understanding and information, it may be justifiable to see the reading as a variant of ER.

Data were collected throughout the 20-week period. Observations, interviews, and reading comprehension quizzes (see Appendix) were conducted once a week. The whole novel was computerized and word frequency was counted, using the word frequency counter online. Finally, a vocabulary test created by the author of the study was administered at the end of the semester. To create the test, 50 words were randomly selected from the words underlined by Vincent while he was reading. Some words occurred more frequently than others and most words occurred less than ten times in the novel (see Table 1).

Table 1: Word frequency counts of the words on the vocabulary test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency counts in the novel</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency counts in the novel</th>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>genuine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>tranquil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>hearty</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>trot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>infuriate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>verge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>jubilee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>wriggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>meddle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>acquire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>summon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>antagonize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>trudge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>turnip</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>devoid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>vapid</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>entailment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>vigil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>hardware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>viscous</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>intention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency counts in the novel</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency counts in the novel</th>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>waxy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>melancholy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>wrathful</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>oath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>wrench</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>pitcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>amiable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>blink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>brook</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>shutter</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>flare</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>fade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>formidable</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>morbid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>sensation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>finch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>shudder</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>tribune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>smack</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>mutter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>snuff</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>hush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>tedious</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>sheriff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>thereafter</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>heck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>torment</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>nigger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the test, each word was scored, using Paribakht and Wesche’s (1997) 0-4 scale below:

0=I don’t remember having seen this word before.
1=I have seen this word before, but can’t remember the meaning/give an incorrect meaning.
2=I know the meaning and provide the correct translation of the word.
3=I provide the correct translation of the word and am able to use it.
with semantic appropriateness in a sentence.
4=I provide the correct translation of the word and am able to use it with semantic appropriateness and grammatical accuracy in a sentence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What strategies were adopted to assist reading during the reading process?

Although most of Vincent’s reading was done in a silent way, findings from the observations and interviews suggested that Vincent used a combination of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to attempt to understand what he was reading. For example, while he was reading, Vincent would always circle a capitalized word. When asked in the later interview why he was doing this, Vincent replied that the capitalized words were the main characters or important places which all play an important role in the story. Circling the capitalized words helped Vincent to trace information later and follow the story line.

Vincent also did a lot of rereading during the reading process. When asked why, he stated that there seemed to be context clues that implied the meanings of the unknown parts of text. He explained how he tried to weave ideas together when he was not quite sure about what to say nothing of her having command of two languages meant in chapter 12.

That Calpurnia led a modest double life never dawned on me. The idea that she had a separate existence outside our household was a novel one, to say nothing of her having command of two languages. “Cal,” I asked, “why do you talk niggertalk to the—to your folks when you know it’s not right?” “Well, in the first place
I’m black—” “That doesn’t mean you hafta talk that way when you know better,” said Jem. (p. 167)

Even though reading back and forth did not always help Vincent to clarify the meanings of unknown parts, he appeared to feel comfortable with what he was doing.

Identifying word parts was shown to be another recurring strategy used by Vincent to deal with the unknown words although the employment of this strategy was not as noticeable as other strategies noted in the observations. Vincent explained in the later interview that he had been introduced to some of the prefixes and suffixes in the novel while he was attending the children’s day care center. However, just as reading back and forth did not achieve the desired results all the time, breaking the unknown words down into meaningful parts did not invariably serve his purposes, either. As Vincent mentioned in the interview after one reading, he was still unsure about the meaning of “dismemberment” even though he had tried to decipher how the meaning of dis- and -member related to each other and what role the word “dismemberment” played in the sentence.

Another strategy that was noted in the observations was Vincent’s dictionary use. Although Vincent was generally a fluent reader who was able to read at the speed of approximately 210 words per minute and rarely relied on the use of a dictionary, sometimes he would feel like looking up definitions in a dictionary when he came across unknown words. Oftentimes he would use a monolingual dictionary like Collins Pocket Thesaurus and create his own marginal glosses in the novel he was reading. Vincent stated in the interview that an English definition or a simple synonym was sometimes clearer than a translated definition. Vincent probably felt this because he had been taught to learn new word meanings in the same way while he was in the children’s day care center. Creating marginal glosses in his own style also gave him a sense of security and correctness, as Vincent stated.

One final strategy that was used by Vincent was skipping; this was
especially noted at the later stages of observation. As mentioned above, Vincent underlined all the words and phrases that he did not understand every time he read. However, in the last few weeks of the semester Vincent did not look up words in the dictionary as frequently as in the first half of the semester. There were also fewer words in his marginal glosses in the last few chapters. While he was reading, he appeared to skip some lines and flip the pages back and forth, trying to finish the story as soon as possible. What concerned Vincent the most, he said in the later interview, was whether he could find the answers to the questions on the online comprehension quizzes. The reading assignment obviously took up some of his time and attention which could have been used to study other high school subjects for the final.

To conclude, Vincent showed himself to be a strategic reader, who effectively combined various cognitive and metacognitive strategies to accomplish his reading task. He knew why and what he was reading from the very beginning. He knew how to use different kinds of strategies to approach his reading assignment, such as highlighting, using context clues, identifying word parts, checking dictionaries, and creating glosses. He even knew when and how to adjust his strategies when he had to cope with other subjects in school.

Research Question 2: How much comprehension did we observe during the reading process?

At the beginning of the study, Vincent was instructed to read the first seven pages (2,493 words) of the novel and underline all the words he did not understand. It was found that Vincent initially knew 94.2% of the words in the reading passages. This number was much lower than 98% – a number which Hu and Nation (2000) thought to be linguistically appropriate for unassisted reading. In other words, the novel could have been beyond Vincent’s grasping power. However, since the purpose of the reading was for general understanding and the reading was usually done with the teacher’s help in the classroom, it was assumed that Vincent could still understand most of the content and enjoy the reading. In fact, if we looked at the results of the quizzes
that Vincent had taken (Vincent had already taken 15 quizzes online by the end of the semester), we could see that Vincent had got at least 80% of the answers correct on each quiz (see Table 2). This indicated that Vincent appeared to be able to follow the story’s progress and grasp the majority of the content. Although the novel was initially thought to be beyond Vincent’s reading ability, the book proved readable for him with the teacher’s help in the classroom.

Table 2: To Kill A Mockingbird Quizzes and Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter tested</th>
<th>Quiz Score</th>
<th>Chapter tested</th>
<th>Quiz Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chap 1</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
<td>Chap 11</td>
<td>9/10 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap 2</td>
<td>9/10 (90%)</td>
<td>Chap 12</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap 3-4</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
<td>Chap 13-14</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap 5-6</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
<td>Chap 15</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap 7</td>
<td>8/10 (80%)</td>
<td>Chap 16-17</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap 8</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
<td>Chap 18</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap 9</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
<td>Chap 19</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap 10</td>
<td>10/10 (100%)</td>
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Note: Each quiz had 10 multiple-choice questions. The best possible score was 100.

Vincent’s scores on the quizzes were satisfactory if the purpose of the reading was for general understanding rather than for one hundred percent comprehension. However, it should be noted that since most of the reading Vincent finished at home was done in a silent way, there was no immediate way to confirm if some kind of misunderstanding took place throughout the reading. Also, because Vincent tended to use the strategy of skipping during the later stages of reading, there was no way to know if some information in the story was missing or misinterpreted. This echoed the claims made by Hedgcock and Ferris
(2009) that reading comprehension is a complex construct that involves the interaction of a number of psycholinguistic processes. It goes far beyond the ability to state the main idea of a text in one sentence, answer questions about details, define vocabulary, accurately read the text aloud and so forth. (p. 210)

Research Question 3: How much vocabulary were learned during the reading process?

As mentioned above, Vincent underlined all the words he did not know in order to be tested on them later to see if there was any vocabulary learning taking place during the reading process. The vocabulary test contained 50 words randomly selected by the author of the study from the underlined words in the novel. Each word was given a score from 0 to 4 according to how Vincent responded to it. The test was administered at home at the end of the semester when Vincent had finished reading chapter 19. Results from the test were shown below (see Table 3).

Table 3: Vocabulary Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of words</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The test was made up of 50 words. Each word was scored based on a 0-4 scale. (0=unknown; 1=seen/unknown; 2=known/meaning; 3=known/semantic; 4=known/semantic and grammatical)

Of all the 50 words being tested, the number of words that were scored 0 was 42. Vincent did not remember seeing 84% of the words he had underlined in the story. Six out of the fifty words were scored 1.
In other words, Vincent remembered seeing 12% of the words he had underlined, but still couldn’t understand their meaning and/or give a correct meaning. The number of words that were scored 2, 3, and 4 was two, which meant that the new vocabulary Vincent acquired during the reading process accounted for approximately 4% of all the unknown words he had underlined. Of the two words Vincent learnt, he could use only one with semantic appropriateness in a sentence. The test results were not unexpected because the purpose of the reading was for general understanding, not deliberate vocabulary learning. Besides, the majority of the words Vincent underlined occurred less than ten times in the story and many of them only occurred once or twice (see Table 1). Furthermore, the vocabulary test designed by the author was a very tough one because all the vocabulary words on the test were tested out of the context in which they originally appeared. Undoubtedly, more encounters with the words that Vincent had underlined were needed for him to remember their meanings. Again, the results were in accordance with earlier findings that only a small number of words can be acquired incidentally through ER (Brown, Waring, & Donkaewbua, 2008; Hayashi, 1999; Waring & Takaki, 2003).

Research Question 4: Was the assigned reading an enjoyable and rewarding experience for the EFL learner?

As mentioned above, if the purpose of the reading assignment was for pleasure and general understanding, then Vincent and his classmates were supposed to enjoy the novel more than the traditional textbooks used in the regular high school English class. Results from the observations and interviews with Vincent proved this assumption to be true.

From the very beginning, Vincent seemed excited about the reading material he was given. One day he blithely showed me a book with a nicely illustrated jacket. He told me that the book was scheduled to be finished by the end of the semester. Mostly, Vincent would read in the evenings and on weekends so I could make some observations beside him. While he was reading, I tried not to interrupt
him too often although he sometimes wanted to ask me to explain some points in the book that confused him. Vincent loved to share what he had learned from the story with me or other family members. He would also discuss the characters and plots in the story:

Journal entry, Week 13
The debate in the courthouse is interesting to me. Atticus is a lawyer. He defends Negroes. Everyone says he is a Nigger-lover. I think Atticus is a humble guy. People are talking about him behind his back, but he doesn’t seem to care. He is a reasonable person who can always make correct judgment.

Journal entry, Week 14
I really don’t like Mr. Ewell. He falsely accuses Tom Robinson of raping his daughter, but actually it is Ewell himself that beats his own daughter. I think he is really a jerk. How can he be so cold-blooded?

Although the reading assignment was usually followed by an online reading comprehension quiz (see Appendix), Vincent seemed not to worry about it too much. On the contrary, he could not wait to take the quiz to see how much he had learned from the story. For him, it was always exhilarating to see the quiz score jump out at him after he had submitted his test answers. As I recorded in my journal:

Journal entry, Week 8
Oh, yeah, another 100 on my test. That’s cool. I wonder how many of my classmates get a 100. The test is not so hard as I expected. So far I’ve got six 100s.

Journal entry, Week 9
Only 90 on the test! I can’t believe it! I don’t think the questions are difficult to answer. But I’ve got only a 90 on the
test. I hope I can get 100 on the test next time.

Luckily enough, Vincent’s scores on the quizzes were always inspiring to him. They appeared to be incentive that kept Vincent interested and enthusiastic and encouraged him to read on. The more Vincent read, the more pleased he became with his work. One time he cheerfully told me he had almost finished the book when he flipped over the pages before me. Noticeably, finishing reading a novel of hundreds of pages proved to be not so laborious a task to Vincent at all. Rather, it seemed to give him a sense of achievement that kept him enthusiastic about further reading. When asked in the last interviews if reading the novel was more engrossing than reading his regular English textbooks, Vincent gave me a definite yes:

Journal entry, Week 18
Reading the novel is definitely much more interesting. I hate those Chinese grammatical terms and rules in the English textbooks. That’s not how I learned English before. There’re words I don’t know in the story, but it’s OK. I’d rather read more novels like this one in the class.

In short, the reading assignment seemed to provide Vincent with a pleasant and rewarding reading experience. Although reading was always followed by an online comprehension quiz, this did not make Vincent shy away from reading for leisure. Rather, the results from the comprehension quizzes might have prompted him to keep on reading.

CONCLUSION

This single-subject case study provided an up-close view of what an EFL learner experienced while reading an authentic novel in and outside of the classroom. The study intended to answer the following
questions: 1) What strategies did the subject adopt to assist his reading during the reading process? 2) How much of the reading did the subject comprehend? 3) To what extent did the subject acquire new vocabulary during the reading process? 4) Did the reading provide an enjoyable learning experience for the EFL learner?

Through the observations and interviews, the subject showed himself to be an experienced, confident, and self-motivated reader. He knew the purpose of his reading and what he was going to read, and he approached his reading in a strategic way. While reading, he highlighted what he thought was important in the story, used context clues to understand the meaning of the unknown parts, and identified word parts to tackle the unknown words. He also checked dictionaries to learn new word meanings, created his own marginal glosses for reference, and adjusted his strategies at later stages when time was restricted for his reading. All of these strategies proved sufficient and effective when he had to take the online reading comprehension quizzes at the end of each chapter to fulfill his class requirement.

Despite the subject’s great reading comprehension ability as shown in his reading comprehension quizzes, the study did not show any evidence that the subject had learned a substantial amount of vocabulary from the reading. This result was expected since the subject was reading the novel for general understanding rather than for deliberate vocabulary learning. However, it was without a doubt that reading a novel of around 99,121 words gave the subject an opportunity to encounter a large number of known and unknown vocabulary in contexts—a process which has been recognized essential for vocabulary knowledge build up. In addition, instead of feelings of stress and anxiety, which usually go with reading a large book, reading large amounts of text was shown to bring the subject more confidence in his comprehension and a sense of achievement—an inner drive that may keep the subject interested and enthusiastic about reading in English in the future.

Although findings from this single-subject case study suffer from a loss of external validity, there are some pedagogical implications that
language teachers may want to consider. Based on the results of this study, it is concluded that an ER activity can be implemented successfully in a regular classroom setting. Therefore, it is recommended that language teachers include an ER activity in their existing language curriculum. As we can see from the study, there are many ways an ER activity can be implemented. The reading activity can be a part of an existing language classroom. Reading can be done both in the classroom and at home. Classroom work allows language teachers to offer students help and support (e.g., checking to see if the students get at the meaning of what they are reading). Simple online reading comprehension activities can help teachers to ensure that all students catch up on the reading assignments. Reading assignments at home can provide students with opportunities to practice all kinds of reading strategies they have learned in the classroom and develop good reading habits. Reading materials for ER activities are readily available these days, and they can be paper copy or electronic. Both graded readers and un-simplified authentic texts can work fine if they are linguistically appropriate for the students. Testing students to determine if more than 2% or 5% of the words in the reading material are unknown can be a good way to decide whether the reading material is appropriate for the ability of the students. Time for an ER activity can always be found if teachers understand the benefits of ER and if teachers support the notion that good reading skills are important for the students to succeed in school and at work.
References


Appendix

**Quiz on To Kill A Mockingbird** (Developed by Engrade, Inc.)

1. What did Mr. Dolphus Raymond pretend to be drunk?
   A. It helps white people have an excuse to why he likes to be with black people.
   B. He does not like to talk to small children and being drunk makes him evil so children don't talk to him.
   C. He is embarrassed that he drinks so much Coca-Cola.
   D. He did not want the black people to bother him.

2. What did Atticus say about equality?
   A. not all men are created equal but they are equal in court
   B. all men are created equal is an absolute true saying
   C. not all men are created equal so we don't have to be fair
   D. all men are created equal in America but not in other countries

3. What was Mr. Raymond's answer to why Dill was crying?
   A. Dill did not understand the truth of what was happening in court.
   B. Dill liked black people more than whites.
   C. Dill hated seeing how black people were treated wrongly by whites.
   D. Dill ate something bad for lunch and his stomach hurt.

4. What is Jem confident about?
   A. that Calpurnia will never find them in the balcony of the courthouse
   B. that Dill is a baby for crying so much
C. that Scout does not understand anything about rape
D. that Atticus has won and Tom Robinson will go home

5. What did Mayella do that was unacceptable to her society?
A. she was raped by her father
B. she stole money to buy her brothers and sisters ice cream
C. she kissed a black man
D. she lied about what really happened

6. What did Atticus do so he could talk to the jury in a less formal manner?
A. He looked out the window instead of straight at the jury.
B. He took off his jacket and watch.
C. He listened to what the jury had to say about the case.
D. He sat down when he started to talk.

7. What did Atticus say Mr. Ewell did when he saw Mayella tempt a black man?
A. Mr. Ewell raped her.
B. Mr. Ewell kicked her out of the house.
C. Mr. Ewell beat up Tom Robinson.
D. Mr. Ewell beat her up.

8. What did Mr. Ewell and Mayella believe which they hope the jury will also believe?
A. that Tom Robinson was left handed
B. that women are always weaker than men
C. that all white men do not rape their children  
D. that all blacks are bad

9. Atticus said the court is equal
A. only if the witnesses say the truth  
B. only if the defendant is not guilty of his crime  
C. only if the lawyers are willing to help their clients  
D. only if the jury is willing to make the right decision

10. Why did Mayella want Tom Robinson to be executed (killed)?  
A. He raped her.  
B. She was scared of him.  
C. He hit her.  
D. She felt guilty.