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THE BENEFITS OF EXTENSIVE READING IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Soliyeva Muqaddas
Buxoro davlat pedagogika institute
2XTA-24 guruhi talabasi
+998931414615
nurnazarovna08@gmail.com

Abstract: Extensive Reading (ER) is an effective approach to second language acquisition that promotes learners' overall language development. Unlike intensive reading, ER encourages learners to read large amounts of easy and engaging texts for general understanding. This article examines the role of extensive reading in improving vocabulary development, reading fluency, grammatical competence, learner autonomy, and cultural awareness. Based on previous studies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the paper emphasizes that regular reading contributes to both linguistic and cognitive development. The findings indicate that integrating extensive reading into English language teaching can significantly improve learners' language proficiency and communicative competence.

Keywords: Extensive Reading, Second Language Acquisition, EFL, vocabulary development, reading fluency, learner autonomy.

Annotatsiya: Ekstensiv o‘qish (Extensive Reading, ER) ikkinchi tilni o‘zlashtirishda samarali yondashuvlardan biri hisoblanadi. Intensiv o‘qishdan farqli ravishda, u o‘quvchilarni oson va qiziqarli matnlarni umumiy mazmunni tushunish maqsadida ko‘p o‘qishga undaydi. Mazkur maqolada ekstensiv o‘qishning lug‘at boyligini rivojlantirish, o‘qish ravonligini oshirish, grammatik kompetensiyani shakllantirish, o‘quvchi mustaqilligi va madaniy xabardorlikni rivojlantirishdagi o‘rni tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalari ekstensiv o‘qishni ingliz tilini o‘qitish jarayoniga joriy etish o‘quvchilarning til kompetensiyasi va kommunikativ ko‘nikmalarini sezilarli darajada rivojlantirishini ko‘rsatadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: ekstensiv o‘qish, ikkinchi tilni o‘zlashtirish, EFL, lug‘at boyligi, o‘qish ravonligi, o‘quvchi mustaqilligi.

Аннотация: Экстенсивное чтение (Extensive Reading, ER) является эффективным подходом к овладению вторым языком. В отличие от интенсивного чтения, оно предполагает чтение большого количества доступных и интересных текстов для общего понимания содержания. В статье рассматривается влияние экстенсивного чтения на развитие словарного запаса, беглости чтения, грамматической компетенции, автономности обучающихся и культурной осведомлённости. Результаты исследования показывают, что использование экстенсивного чтения в процессе обучения английскому языку способствует повышению уровня языковой подготовки и коммуникативной компетенции обучающихся.

Ключевые слова: экстенсивное чтение, овладение вторым языком, EFL, словарный запас, беглость чтения, автономность обучающихся.

Language acquisition is a gradual process that requires continuous exposure to meaningful language input and regular practice. Developing proficiency in a second language involves more than learning grammar rules and memorizing vocabulary; learners also need opportunities to encounter language in authentic and meaningful contexts. As English has become an international language of communication, education, and professional development, identifying effective approaches to language learning has become an important concern for both researchers and educators.

Traditionally, English language instruction has relied heavily on grammar-focused teaching and intensive reading activities. While these methods help learners understand language structures, they may not always provide sufficient exposure to natural language use. Consequently, many researchers have explored alternative approaches that support more meaningful and engaging language learning experiences.

One such approach is Extensive Reading (ER), which encourages learners to read a large amount of easy and interesting material for general understanding and enjoyment. Due to its learner-centered nature, extensive reading has attracted considerable attention in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). This article aims to examine the importance of extensive reading in language acquisition and discuss its role in supporting learners' overall English language development.

Vocabulary development is widely recognized as one of the most significant outcomes of extensive reading. Unlike traditional vocabulary instruction, which often requires learners to memorize isolated word lists or dictionary definitions, extensive reading provides repeated exposure to lexical items in meaningful and authentic contexts. This process enables learners to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words through contextual clues rather than direct translation. Such incidental vocabulary acquisition is considered more effective because learners encounter words in realistic communicative situations, making them easier to understand and remember (Nation, 2001).

Repeated encounters with the same lexical items play a crucial role in strengthening vocabulary knowledge. A learner who comes across a new word only once is unlikely to retain it for a long period. However, when the same word appears in different texts and contexts, learners gradually become familiar with its meaning, pronunciation, grammatical behavior, collocations, and stylistic use. This repeated contextual exposure contributes to deeper lexical processing, allowing vocabulary to move from passive recognition to active production. Consequently, learners become more capable of using newly acquired words accurately in speaking and writing activities rather than merely recognizing them while reading.

Another important advantage of extensive reading is that it exposes learners to a wide variety of vocabulary that may not appear in textbooks or classroom materials. Literary works, graded readers, newspapers, magazines, blogs, and online articles introduce learners to both high-frequency and low-frequency words, idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, and authentic language patterns. Such exposure enriches learners' lexical repertoire and helps them understand how words function in different communicative situations. As learners read across multiple genres, they also develop awareness of register, tone, and stylistic variation, which are essential components of communicative competence.

Furthermore, vocabulary acquired through extensive reading is often retained longer because learning occurs naturally and repeatedly rather than through mechanical memorization. Cognitive research suggests that meaningful exposure enhances long-term memory by creating multiple semantic connections between words and their contexts. Instead of remembering vocabulary as isolated items,

learners associate words with characters, events, emotions, and situations described in the texts. These associations facilitate retrieval and make vocabulary more readily available during communication.

Recent studies continue to support the effectiveness of extensive reading for vocabulary development. Research has consistently shown that learners who regularly engage in extensive reading demonstrate greater vocabulary growth than those who rely exclusively on traditional classroom instruction. In addition to increasing vocabulary size, extensive reading improves learners' depth of vocabulary knowledge, including collocations, word associations, and appropriate contextual use. Therefore, incorporating extensive reading into language learning programs provides learners with a practical and sustainable means of expanding their vocabulary while simultaneously improving other aspects of language proficiency.

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