

# EXTENSIVE READING AND VOCABULARY TEACHING

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## ملخص :

تعتبر القراءة واحدة من أهم المهارات اللغوية الواجب التركيز على فهم أسسها وقواعدها لتعلم اللغات الأجنبية وذلك لكونها وسيلة أساسية لتعزيز كفاءات القارئ المعرفية والثقافية واثراء رصيده اللغوي. وقد كانت القراءة ولا تزال تشغل حيزا كبيرا من الاهتمام وذلك لما يعانيه الطلبة من مشاكل عويصة في فهم مبادئ، أسس وكذا متطلبات هذه الأخيرة والتي من شأنها التأثير على عملية الفهم القرائي والتحصيل العلمي للطالب. ومن هذا المنطلق يندرج مضمون هذه الورقة في سلسلة الدراسات التي تطمح إلى إدخال التحسينات الضرورية على تعليم اللغات الأجنبية وفي مقدمتها اللغة الإنجليزية ومن ثم تحبيب هذه اللغة وقراءتها للنشء وتيسير التحصيل بشقيه الشفهي (العلمي) والكتابي (اللغوي).

## RESUME :

La lecture est l'une des aptitudes les plus importantes dans toute classe de langue, pas seulement comme une source d'informations et d'une activité agréable, mais aussi comme un moyen de consolider ses connaissances de la langue et du monde. Ce document est basé sur l'hypothèse que la lecture est une tâche difficile pour les étudiants algériens. Il essaie d'analyser les lacunes de ces derniers et d'enquêter sur les causes de leur faible performance en lecture. Il tente également de donner un aperçu de nos apprenants source de difficultés en vue de proposer éventuellement des mesures correctives appropriées et de proposer des solutions alternatives qui sont à espérer pour atténuer le problème.

## 1. Introduction

Clearly, extensive reading practice has grown in popularity in recent years following decades of research detailing their powerful effects on language acquisition, particularly in an EFL environment such as Algeria. This presentation will introduce the practice of extensive reading and give a brief overview of why extensive reading is crucial for developing fundamental reading skills and vocabulary which traditional practices fail to achieve, in addition to how extensive reading also simultaneously develops general language skills and vocabulary knowledge in an enjoyable way.

Thus, the present work will shed light on one of the most exiting linguistic skills, namely «extensive reading» which is judged to be the most difficult skill to teach, for it involves so many different operations such as : mechanical eye movement, vocabulary, grammar and intellectual comprehension. We find it then necessary to identify extensive reading definitions and the major parameters for material selection as far as this fruitful skill is concerned. The

way in which an extensive reading lesson is prepared and taught will also be emphasized in this chapter. Then, a major attention will be attributed to the close relationship between extensive reading and vocabulary knowledge. Thus vocabulary definition and the way each of vocabulary knowledge, automaticity as well as reading fluency are easily developed through the power of reading extensively is also included within this paper. Focus will also be put on the importance of promoting extensive reading (both inside and outside the EFL reading classroom) as a crucial tool for vocabulary building and instruction for university learners especially first-year students.

## 2. Reading Defined

To acquire a language, four skills are needed : listening, speaking, reading and writing, ordered in the way they are acquired and taught. Reading is one of the most important skills in language and further a key to research as it is widely recognized today. We need to define what reading is before moving to what it implies to teach it.

Defining reading is not an easy task since it involves the interaction of various components and aspects used in different ways, by different readers. Reading is part of our daily life. We read for information and survival as we read for study and pleasure, and to read is to grasp language patterns from their written presentation, i.e. recognizing and understanding written language in the form of graphic signs and its transformation in meaningful speech.

Reading as a skill is a complex process involving the interaction of various cognitive, metacognitive, linguistic and sociolinguistic elements. Accordingly, several researchers recognize the complex nature of reading. In this respect Dubin states that : "Reading is a multifaceted, complex skill made up of a number of psychological, physical and social elements. Just as there are many aspects to effective mature reading" (Dubin, 1982 : 125). Therefore, reading is not an individual act dissociated from other facts, but it involves the interaction of the reader's general information, linguistic competence, visual and mental means, as well as socio-cultural references. Goodman claims that : "Reading is a long distance discussion between a reader and an author... there is an essential interaction between language and thought in reading... the writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought". (Goodman, 1988 : 12). Widdowson shares the same opinion with Goodman and defines the Reading act as : "...not a reaction to a text, but an interaction between writer and reader mediated through the text." (Widdowson, 1980 : 174).

Far from being passive, reading is an active process. It is an active skill which requires from the reader to go through various processes to get at meaning, interpret and extract information. Moreover, for Davies : "Reading is private. It is a mental or a cognitive process which involves a reader in trying to follow and respond to a message from a writer who is distant in space and time." (Davies, 1995 : 01). Reading is commonly viewed as the process of looking at and understanding what the written words mean so that comprehension takes place when the eyes see the words. Lado defines the reading act as follows : "It consists of grasping meaning in a language through its written representation. This definition is intended to emphasize the language itself and the graphic symbolization that represents it." (Lado, 1962 : 62).

Indeed, the above definition illustrates the view of the reading act as a process of decoding print, where language, rather than meaning is emphasized. In

fact reading is a deeper skill than simply a decoding operation. It is a key to language acquisition, a key to learning and, more than that, a key to information.

"The reader as a user of language interacts with the graphic input, as he seeks to reconstruct a message encoded by the writer. Concentrates his total prior experience and learning on the task, drawing on his experiences and concepts he has attained as well as the language competence he has achieved." (Goodman, 1973 : 162).

Clearly, reading is the most important activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity, but as a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language and its related aspects such as culture, civilization, and history. Furthermore, reading has a role to play in language teaching, and can be considered as a skill in its own right. It is also an occasion of individualized work in large classes; through reading, pupils can evaluate their own achievements. It is widely agreed that reading is a skill which must be learnt because of its importance as a communicative and as a learning tool .For this purpose, learners generally go through two main types in their reading : intensive reading and extensive reading.

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### 2.1. Intensive Reading

It refers to the kind of work done in the reading class under the teacher's supervision. It is also the kind of careful work a pupil may do when studying for an exam. Intensive reading tends to be more concentrated, less relaxed, and often dedicated not so much to pleasure as to the achievement of a study goal. It is also related to further progress in language learning, and designed to enable learners to develop specific receptive skills and strategies. Thus, "the intensive reading lesson is intended primarily to train students in reading strategies." (Nuttall, 1982 : 23).

Intensive reading involves reading a text in details under the teacher's guidance, to arrive at a profound understanding, i.e. to take a text, study it line by line, referring at every moment to our dictionary and our grammar, comparing, analyzing, translating, and retaining every expression that it contains.

Consequently, teachers need to find some accommodation between their desire to have pupils develop particular reading skills (such as the ability to understand the general message without understanding every detail) and their natural urge to understand the meaning of every single word. In this respect Walker points out: "it seems contradictory to insist that students read for meaning while simultaneously discouraging them from trying to understand the text at a deeper level than merely gist." (Walker, 1998 : 172).

Thus, teachers must encourage pupils to read for general comprehension without understanding every word on a first or a second read through. But, then, depending on what else is going to be done, they can give them a chance to ask questions about individual words. That is way, both parts in the teaching/learning transaction have their needs met. In addition, lessons should be planned so that intensive reading is alternated with a variety of reading related activities and skills such as developing strategies of expectations and guessing meaning from context, etc.

On the other hand, the major objective of intensive reading is developing the ability to decode messages by drawing on syntactic and lexical clues, and the emphasis, as in all reading, is on skills for recognition rather than for production of language features. However, to improve the love for reading acquired in intensive reading, pupils need to read extensively.

## 2.2. Extensive Reading

It simply refers to the outside reading pupils do on their own, with no help or guidance from the teacher, it means : "rapidly, reading book after book". Extensive reading plays an important role in FLL. It is an activity that can be carried out by the learner on his own outside the classroom. Furthermore, it may be the only way a learner can keep contact with English outside the classroom sessions. It also provides valuable reinforcement of language and structures already presented in the classroom. An extensive reading suggests reading for general language improvement and pleasure on topics that interest the learner. It increases his motivation and gives him a

more positive attitude towards the target language. As the learner is reading for pleasure, he will be eager to see what happens next and will therefore try to read more rapidly, i.e. the more a learner reads extensively, the faster he learns to read.

Undoubtedly, the main way in which the teacher can help the pupils to read extensively is by directing their attention towards reading material they find interesting. Most pupils will not do a lot of extensive reading by themselves unless they are encouraged to do so by their teachers. It is therefore important to convince learners of the value of extensive reading.

Thus, the learner should be encouraged to read extensively outside the classroom. He does this kind of reading, not to remember details for an exam, but for general information and ideas as well as for pleasure. He may even become so absorbed in the material that he actually loses awareness of the fact he is reading. Extensive reading, especially where learners are reading material written at their level has a number of benefits for the development of a learner's language. Davies suggests that : "Any classroom will be the poorer for lack of an extensive reading programme, and will be unable to promote its pupils' language development in all aspects as effectively as if such a programme were present" (Davies, 1995 : 335). Davies also claims that such a programme will make learners more positive about reading, improving their overall comprehension skills, and give them a wider passive and active vocabulary. Day and Bamford (1998) agreed when citing two of the many goals of extensive reading which are : enabling students to read without constantly stopping and providing an increased word.

Extensive reading is therefore, the best possible way for learners to develop automaticity that is the automatic recognition of words when they see them. It is, by far, the best way to improve their English when reading. Grabe discusses some of the benefits of extensive reading and notes that "Longer concentrated periods of silent reading build vocabulary and structural awareness, develop automaticity, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence and motivation". (Grabe, 1991 : 396).

## 3. The Educational Context

The present research work is concerned with a case study carried out at the Department of Foreign

Languages, for EFL students at Hassiba Benbouali University in Chlef. This university was founded twenty years ago. The English language Section, however, was founded ten years ago. It has as a main objective is to train students to become future English teachers or graduates in English. The «Licence» of the English language is accomplished through a four-year curriculum which comprises language skills (oral and written expressions), literature, civilization and pedagogy; which help students, after graduation, teach the English language appropriately and efficiently. The existing academic modular division for first-year falls into the following :

- Linguistics.(1h/30)
- Phonetics.(02h)
- Written Expression.(4h/30)
- Oral Expression.(3h)
- Grammar.(3h)
- General Culture.(1h/30)

#### 4. The Reading Comprehension Module and its Status in the English Language Department

It has often been said that one foreign language skill that students retain through their lives is reading. Indeed, learning English to be able to read interesting subject matter in English and to cope with the English references is a major goal of the majority of EFL students. Therefore, the Reading Comprehension course is considered as being one of the most important components of the English curriculum. This module is scheduled for students in the first year only, once a week. Therefore, it is practiced in short period of time : To be precise, for one hour and a half. The coefficient of the module is equal with that of oral and written expression as well as grammar, i.e., 3 points.

The English students are trained throughout a four-year programme in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, it must be stated from the outset that reading is of paramount importance. It is not only important for students, but for everyone who speaks and uses English for communication as well as for other purposes (EAP or ESP). Therefore, learners of English should first learn to read in order to be able to read to learn. In other words, reading is a necessary tool for language acquisition. It facilitates, without any doubt, the access to foreign language learning; an access that requires, especially, the reading skill which is the bridge to the bulk of literature and knowledge of the

language. Indeed, reading gives learners an ability to master the remaining skills and to do better in the other modules.

The objective of teaching reading, as stated by the Ministry of Higher Education is to make learners able to read any piece of written English discourse, without giving directions about its teaching and without emphasizing reading sub-skills. Some teachers argued that students have already acquired the reading skills and sub-skills while reading in their native or even second language, but it is essential to mention at this level, that students who are efficient readers in their native language are not necessary efficient foreign language readers. Therefore, one of the major roles of the teacher is to show his students the flexibility of reading. This lead us to open a discussion on the teacher's methodology for the teaching of reading comprehension.

#### 5. EFL Teachers 'Profile and Methodology

Among teachers of reading, there is a common belief that reading is considered as the easiest skill in the teaching since it requires them to select any text and have students read and answer comprehension questions about the content. In addition, the foreign language teacher often assumes that because his students have already acquired reading skills in their native language, reading in the foreign language should not be difficult for them.

Moreover the selection of topics, the content of the course or even the kind of exercises are given to learners without taking into account their preferences and interests for learning one thing or another, accordingly, no space is opened for the raising of their awareness and interaction which will certainly decrease. In this way, the teaching of reading, in this situation, is too much monopolized by the teacher and the content. The reading course is most of the time geared towards teaching foreign culture idioms, and proverbs, without any reference to the communicative nature of the reading process. Nevertheless, it is often assumed by specialists such as Swain, that the acquisition of a skill results from productive practice of this skill : "... ( Frank) Smith... has argued that one learns to read by reading, and to write by writing. Similarity, it can be argued that one learns to speak by speaking". (Swain, 1985 : 248).

In other words, "The point of the reading course should be reading". (Eskey, 1983 : 130). So, instead

of encouraging learners to concentrate on this skill and take the responsibility to be autonomous learners, teachers emphasize grammar as a key to linguistic difficulties. According to (Feitlson, 1973), success in learning to read clearly requires careful «mapping» from the beginning and an attempt to co-ordinate materials, methods, and procedures, and suits them to the special requirements of each reading course. The teacher's role is, therefore, to help the student identify his or her reading purposes and the source of the difficulties encountered, and to monitor the strategies available for overcoming difficulties. Students are likely to develop no awareness of the reading process or their reading styles and strategies. All this makes it necessary to analyse the learners' profile, to identify their needs and to shed light on their interests as well as learning styles. This what is intended to be tackled in the following section.

## 6. Learners' Profile and Needs Analysis

In its broadest sense, learning can be defined as a process of progressive change from indifference to understanding. In other words and according to contemporary dictionaries, learning is the acquisition and getting of knowledge of a subject or a skill by study, experience, or instruction. A more specialized definition might be read as follows "learning is relatively permanent change in behavioural tendency and is the result of reinforced practice" (Kinble and Garmezy, 1963 : 133). Seen from this perspective, researchers assume that the main purpose of learning is to incorporate new skills into the learner's existing knowledge structure and to make that knowledge accessible, because a key to learning is connecting what we know to what is being learned. The learners are therefore effective participants in the process of learners and responsible for its outcomes.

In the last two decades or so, there has been a great emphasize on the learner as the centre of the teaching/ learning process. This orientation can be seen in the shift from cognitive and Transformational Generative Grammar approaches to the communicative view of learning. Learners, who were formerly, viewed as stimulus response mechanism are nowadays regarded as individuals who should have a say in the educational process.

The focus of the present work is on first-year English university learners. In our attempt to gain useful insights into the various factors that are responsible for learners learning, we will take account of some

main areas of investigation such as : learners' profile and needs analysis.

### 6.1. Learners' Profile

Successful language learning depends on an elaborate interaction of the characteristics of the learner and other variables such as learning background, needs level, expectation, motivation, interest and the circumstances in which the learning takes place. This is why we find it necessary at this level of the study to shed light on the learners' profile.

The learners are the centre of the teaching, learning process, and they represent a significant factor in the FL classroom. Therefore, the informants chosen for this investigation are advanced learners coming from different schools, and their age ranges between eighteen and twenty-two. They have studied the English language for 5 to 10 years. The majority of learners belong to the literary stream (the coefficient of English in this stream is two), and some of them were in scientific section (whose coefficient for English is also two).

It should be noted at this level that although these learners have undergone the same formation in secondary education (i.e., formal instruction), they differ greatly in many respects. In this context, Wilkins admits that : "Getting educated is a personal matter; in contrast, providing education is a social enterprise". (Wilkins, 1972 : 149). Learners, therefore, vary from one another because of their differences in motivation, attitudes, learning aptitudes, language anxiety and learning strategies. Despite all these differences, the majority of students opted for «Licence» as a first choice. However, for the rest, it was either a third or a fourth choice. As for the learners' reading background, some learners used to read in Arabic and French since their childhood : a fact which is said to be a determinant contributor in developing good reading habits, styles and strategies in learners. Indeed, and in most adults reading situations in English as a foreign language, most purposeful reading is for information rather than enjoyment.

### 6.2. Learners' Needs Analysis

For many teachers and researchers, a first priority in designing a reading programme, a training or a reading course is to get information about the different perceptions students bring to the learning

task according to their language background, interests, and about their needs, expectations and strategies for learning in general and reading in particular. Thus, it is generally desirable to collect and interpret data about learners and the institutional context in which they learn.

It has been also agreed, among specialists, such as West (1997) that a wide range of information can be collected through needs analysis procedures. Nunan and Lamb, for example, claim that : “Needs analysis provides a basis for setting goals and objectives. Goals and objective setting are important tasks in most educational contexts, because they provide a rationale for selecting and integrating pedagogical tasks, as well providing a point of reference for the decision making process”. (Nunan and Lamb, 1996 : 27).

On the whole, the subjects selected for this investigative study are skill aware of the importance of the reading skill. In fact, what they call 'needs' are the learning of vocabulary and grammar, in addition to being able to read any material in English since for the students in a non-English speaking environment, the only practical reason for studying English is to gain the ability to read materials in that language. The fact that English is the key to much of the world's knowledge; knowledge that is required to keep informed with the up-to-date development in the world. For students, by learning how to read effectively, they will be able to speak, write and understand the target language in a better manner.

This awareness of the importance of extensive reading to their future needs will certainly increase the student's motivation, on the one hand, and on the other, it will help in having them interested in reading courses and strategies training. What is more is that students' contact with the English language is limited and sometimes inexistent beyond the threshold of the language classroom. Besides, they do not see any immediate use in speaking or reading in the target language. Therefore, first-year EFL university students seem to have neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation to read the English material even in holidays. They perceive no necessity to in devoting much effort for such a long- term need as learning to read in English. They are rather interested in the oral skill and other modules. It should be noted that most students show little competence in the Reading Comprehension module compared to the other modular courses.

These students conceive reading as the most difficult skill. What is more, many learners do not submit their

reading homework, or are reluctant to do the reading activities in class. And even if they do, the results are unsatisfactory. An alarming situation that appeals to careful thinking and investigation about the source of the problem in the reading skill low achievement so as to arrive at satisfactory results.

## 7. Types of Reading Difficulties with a Focus on Vocabulary Knowledge

Saville-Troike summarizes an affective way to teach EFL reading when she says that : «Improving the reading skill of any student begins with identifying his weaknesses and then implementing appropriating methods for strengthening these skills». (Saville-Troike, 1979 : 103). Thus, the first thing for the teachers of EFL reading to do is to find out the weaknesses or difficulties of their students through questionnaires, diagnostic tests, classroom observations and other related aspects. First- year EFL university students at the university of Hassiba Benbouali (Chlef) face three major kinds of reading problems : these are classified from the less to the important difficulty :

1. Structural problem.
2. Content (especially cultural) problem.
3. Vocabulary problem.

The first type of problem has received a good deal of attention. The second type, which of course varies from one kind of reading material to another, often involves a cultural mismatch between the reader and the writer. It is this area of difficulty, i.e, vocabulary problem, that has received the least attention. The research, therefore, will focus on identifying some reading difficulties related to vocabulary knowledge, and then try to propose some solutions and strategies to overcome these problems.

It is worth noting that advanced readers think they do not know the foreign language well enough to read efficiently in it. They start reading a text or a passage with the fear they are going to have problems with vocabulary and unfamiliar words.

The vocabulary and syntax of new magazines, novels and nonfiction books seem quite beyond the reach of most foreign language readers since they all too frequently believe that to comprehend the text , they must first understand every single word in the text. Obviously, “For many third word students, the syntax, general vocabulary, and sub-technical vocabulary are a sufficient hurdle to reading fluency”. (Walch 1981, cited in English Teaching Forum. July 1982. p.28.)

Therefore, if the vocabulary is complicated and esoteric with too many new items per page, students will feel swamped. They will lose confidence in their ability to read a text directly without the support of the teacher or a dictionary, and will often fall back on translation instead. Indeed, the major problem for most second language readers, even when the interest level is high, is the lack of a solid language base and consistent vocabulary stock. In this context, Laufer 1992 argues that there is a lexical threshold for reading comprehension consisting of about 3,000 word families (approximately 5,000 words). She claims that even highly skilled readers cannot read on task at the criterion of 70% comprehension unless they have such high academic ability, and who are good readers in their native language cannot read well in their L2 if their vocabulary is below the threshold. What has been said in this section confirms the interwoven relationship that exists between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. This is why; a major attention should be attributed to the notion of vocabulary in general and the process of teaching new items in particular.

## 8. Vocabulary Defined

Vocabulary is the name for words one must know in order to listen, speak, read, and write effectively. According to Hatch and Brown : "Vocabulary refers to a list or set of words that individual speakers of a language might use". (Hatch & Brown, 1995 : 01). Accordingly, vocabulary is the most amounts of words that characterize a given language. Without this vocabulary, the learner would be unable to use and comprehend the target language. Time and again, researches have found strong connections between the sizes of learners' vocabularies, how well they comprehend what they read, and how well they perform in learning. Wilkins summarizes his views of the role of vocabulary in language instruction by noting that : "knowledge of a language demands mastery of its vocabulary as much as of its grammar..." (Wilkins, 1983 : 155). He suggests that the learner must experience considerable exposure to the language. Therefore, vocabulary, as a bearer of meaning, is considered to be very important in the language acquisition process. "Acquisition will not take place without comprehension of vocabulary». (Krashen & Tenell , 1983 : 155).

In the same context, Lewis asserts that : « Language is not words and grammar; it is essentially lexical ». (Lewis,

1993 : 196). It is becoming increasingly apparent that teachers must enable students to learn and acquire a lexical base in order to achieve success in language learning in general and reading in particular.

## 9. Teaching Vocabulary through Extensive Reading

There are numerous types of approaches, techniques, exercises and practice that can be used to teach vocabulary. The dilemma teachers often face is in deciding which among these numerous types would be best for their students and their circumstances since not all students learn vocabulary in the same way , and nor does the lexis to one ; method of acquisition. Levine and Reves (1990, cited in Anderson, 1999 : 35) support this idea by advising that teachers should not impose any method on the learners. Vocabulary should be presented by a variety of techniques : methods should be varied and combined according to the learner's individual needs and preferences.

Christen and Murphy (1991) contend that research clearly emphasizes that for learning to occur, new information must be integrated with what the learner already knows. They feel that teaching vocabulary, as a pre-reading step is an instructional intervention that should be considered when readers lack the prior or background knowledge to read a specific English text. Kueker (1990) also argues that pre-reading activities help enormously in reading comprehension.

Another technique to help students see a word in a broader context is to have them answer the following question : (1) what is it ? (2) what is it like ?, (3) what are some examples? Schwatz and Raphael (1985) believed that this list of three questions helps students see relationships between familiar and less familiar terms and also brings the meaning of an unknown term into focus by requiring analogies and examples.

Nowadays, it is widely accepted that vocabulary teaching should be part of the syllabus, and taught in a well-planned and regular basis. Lewis (1993) argues that vocabulary should be at the centre of language teaching, because language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalized grammar.

## 10. The Relationship between Vocabulary and Reading

The important role of vocabulary and background knowledge in reading and comprehending text has

long been recognized by educationalists for some time. Lewis, (1993 : 196) asserts that :

“Language is not words and grammar ; it is essentially lexical”. (Cited in Coady et al, 1997 : 235). Indeed, it is becoming increasingly apparent that teachers must enable students to learn and acquire a lexical base in order to achieve success in language in general and reading in particular. Some scholars argue that there is a need for students to quickly acquire a sizable basic vocabulary in order to comprehend successfully in reading. It is then, suggested that this vocabulary base could be acquired more efficiently through some type of direct instruction.

A wealth of research has documented the strength of the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension. The proportion of difficult words in a text is the single most powerful predictor of text difficulty, and a reader’s general vocabulary knowledge is the single best predictor of how well that reader can understand text, it is also argued that no text comprehension is possible either in one’s native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text vocabulary. It is clear, therefore, that a lack of adequate vocabulary knowledge is already an obvious serious obstacle for university student in the reading comprehension module. In this context, Grabe and Stoller argue that : “There is a need for students to quickly acquire a sizable basic vocabulary in order to comprehend successfully in reading”. (Cited in Coady and Huckin, 1997 : 283).

In other words, reading is normally the major vehicle for continued vocabulary acquisition. Indeed, studies of the relationship between second/foreign language reading practice and vocabulary gains indicate that increasing the amount of reading where learners are motivated and focused on meaning leads to vocabulary acquisition. Hence, advanced ability in reading English as a foreign language requires Improvement in reading speed, vocabulary recognition and comprehension .These are not exclusive needs of the foreign language learners of English, obviously; they are the skills that native speakers must also develop in order to become efficient readers.

At last, it is nice to be able to report that reading improves vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary knowledge supports reading development. In other words, “vocabulary knowledge is normally the major vehicle for successful reading”. (Coady & Huckin, 1997 : 119).

## 11. Selection of Appropriate EFL Extensive Reading Materials

For the purpose of developing reading fluency and confidence, EFL learners need to read interesting, understandable materials that are basically at the  $i+one$  (input +1) level (Dulay et al 1982 ; Krashen 1985), i.e. at their linguistic ability. Most EFL reading materials including text available in the textbooks are however, difficult for learners to understand because those learners have generally a limited linguistic and background knowledge. The logical solution would appear to be to provide texts for EFL Learners that take into account their lack of linguistic ability and background knowledge. Such a selection is possible if reading materials can combine the best features of both authentic and simplified material.

In spite of the widespread acceptance of the use of authentic materials, there is no consensus as to the meaning of “authentic”. Longman Dictionary (1985) of language and applied linguistics provides the following definition of “authenticity”. “The degree to which language teaching materials have the qualities of natural speech or writing” (Richards, et al 1992 : 27) .In other terms, Widdowson argues that authenticity is not a quality of text at all; instead, “authenticity... is achieved when the reader realizes the intentions of the writer”. (Widdowson, 1976 : 264). Authentic texts, however defined are used in language teaching because they are considered interesting engaging, culturally enlightening, relevant and motivating. In addition and as specialists put it, authentic materials have become “almost a categorical imperative, a moral sine-qua-non of the language classroom.”

Thus, it is important to use authentic texts whenever possible. Because for language learners difficult language is the problem with authentic texts; simple language is most of the times preferable. Therefore it is first necessary to be clear about what is meant by simplified texts, as the product of simplification goes by many names : simplified, graded, abridged, adapted and pedagogical. Nuttall writes : “authentic material is the ideal, but if you cannot find enough at the right level, you will have to use simplified or specially written materials to begin with”. (Nuttall, 1996 : 178).

The idea that simplified texts are to be avoided and that difficult texts are prestigious is equally pernicious in terms of attitude toward reading. In effect, it associates reading itself with difficulty. Pupils will always be able to find texts that are difficult for them,

and they are liable to equate reading and learning to read with struggling through these texts. This is not the way to instill an appreciation for reading

Furthermore, the teacher must keep a close eye on pupils' reading habits and emerging attitudes and offer guidance as necessary. Therefore, the essential point is that teachers need to give explicit, systematic, and persistent attention to help novice readers- mainly by setting aside sufficient time and providing guidance in selection of appropriate materials to attain fluency/automaticity. For all the same reasons : entertainment, information, learning to read, EFL learners need a variety of relevant material written especially for them. Because of its communicative intent, such material would be authentic and appropriately simple in language and concept.

In fact, the selection of appropriate reading materials in terms of authenticity and simplification of both form and content is not sufficient. Teachers have to take into account other cultural aspects when doing such a selection, mainly the cultural mismatch between the learner and the content of the reading material.

## **12. Extensive Reading : A way to Increase Vocabulary Size**

Extensive reading is arguably the primary way that EFL students can build reading vocabulary to an advanced level. Expert in the field of language development, agree that the main vehicle for instruction should be to encourage students to read extensively. Accordingly, Day and Bamford (1998), claim that extensive reading is the possible way for students to develop automaticity-that is, the automatic recognition of words when they see them. It is by far the best way to improve their reading skills and to gain enough exposures to vocabulary item.

In extensive reading, learners select and read large amounts of materials that interest them and that are within their level of comprehension. Research studies as those initiated by Day and Bamford (1998) credit extensive reading with improvements in motivation, reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary growth and reading fluency. Because of these benefits, extensive reading should be implemented early in EFL programmes, for the purpose of increasing vocabulary size and developing fluency with familiar vocabulary, (Nation and Wang, 1999) ; and for the sake of fulfilling the following objectives :

– To make learners practice some word-attack skills

and reading strategies learned in the reading course;

- to strengthen learners' reading ability and develop it ;
- to help them become more autonomous readers, and
- to develop learners' vocabulary stock and make them experience the language in several forms and contexts.

What is suggested is to use the extensive reading at the end of the course. In other terms, after learners show mastery and command of both linguistic forms, reading sub-skills and vocabulary strategies. The extensive reading task may be followed by an oral presentation of the work. Thus, the language skills may be integrated too. Therefore, reading the material- which has to be a selection of authentic texts- should be chosen according to students' needs, interests and preferences, writing a small report about it, exposing it orally, and giving the opportunity for others to listen and ask questions.

## **13. Supporting Extensive Reading**

Reading is the instrument for acquiring life long learning skills. Success in reading can be achieved if the extensive reading tool is used and promoted as affective means of including and building reading habits and sustaining creativity and critical thinking about the material to be read. A major question is raised in this context : What should students read? Often, students with very low stock of vocabulary do not understand many of the words they read. The important idea is to find things that are interesting for the students; and to read as much as possible with the idea of learning new words always in mind. Even the student with limited reading and comprehension skills build up vocabulary and thinking skills through reading.

## **14. Igniting Interest and Curiosity for Reading**

First and foremost, the teacher needs to read the materials, so that he can grade them according to difficulty, and provide guidance to pupils on what to read (at least at first) according to their different abilities. Both of these considerations are important, because, as with any learning, there must be a sense of achievement. Success will encourage pupils to read more. If a poor learner takes a book that is too difficult, he is likely to be frustrated to read and not improve his language skills, and therefore read even less (Nuttall, 1982).

One way of igniting interest and curiosity is to read interesting bits of the library books to the pupils. Bits that contain interesting and novel information or have humour or interesting uses of language are very good. Short questions and discussions can be encouraged about the pieces, but these do not eat into lessons. Proverbs, idioms and quotations can all be used and discussed during the pre-reading phase. Secondly, if the teacher notices pupils reading interesting texts, they can be asked to tell the class about what they have been told. Thus, they will be listening for a purpose. Newspaper, too, proved useful, because they provided springboards for lively discussion over social, political, and economic events. But perhaps the most important function of these extracts is the learners' realization that through reading one is able to gather a lot of interesting and useful information about history, science, technology, etc...

### 15. Policies that Promote Learning to Read :

Schools, colleges, universities, governmental and non-governmental agencies promote reading achievement in different ways (Freire, 1983). One of the various ways is to protect teachers as professionals, value their knowledge of the learners and community they serve and encourage them to develop and adjust lessons according to the instructional needs of their learners. They can also establish and maintain an instructional materials selection policy through which educators with knowledge of the reading process and effective literacy instruction guide the selection of reading instructional materials, including scientific resources for the schools for which they are responsible. Learners should also be provided with a wide variety of engaging, age appropriate reading materials, compatible with community values, to read for pleasure and information. In addition, a rich curriculum in scientific studies and other subjects' matters should be provided to learners so that they can comprehend reading materials on an over-expanding variety of topics. In addition, some opportunities may be offered to teachers, parents and mainly learners to continue growing in their understanding of how to read, how to learn to read, and effective reading instruction.

### 16. Conclusion

The present work attempted to give a systematic description of the educational context, with a

close reference to the EFL extensive reading at the university level, and more specifically to first-year English students. It has tried to cover the vast area on extensive reading stressing its crucial role in language learning and teaching. It is in fact, an essential skill for success in today's world and its experience provides us with ample opportunities to explore and relate to a wider world than one's own. It strived to give some definitions of extensive reading as a language skill with reference to its role in developing reading fluency, automaticity, and mainly in increasing vocabulary acquisition. The work focused also on vocabulary definitions and the way it can be taught and developed within extensive reading since it has been consistently demonstrated by a wealth of research that reading is strongly related to vocabulary. Therefore, the relationship between extensive reading and vocabulary was also studied.

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