

Research Article:

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students' Engagement, Reading Habits, and Learning Outcomes: A Comparative Study of Extensive and Intensive Reading

Afif Ikhwanul Muslimin

English Language Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram, Jalan Gajahmada 100 Jempong Baru, Mataram 83116, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

*E-mail: afifikhwanulm@uinmataram.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study explores English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' engagement, reading habits, and language development in extensive reading (ER) and intensive reading (IR) classrooms at an Indonesian Islamic university. Using a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data were collected from 143 students via a structured questionnaire, while qualitative insights were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that ER fosters higher engagement ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.40$) and stronger reading habits ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.65$) compared to IR, which, despite its benefits in comprehension ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.35$), showed lower engagement levels ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.99$). Students reported that ER's flexibility and autonomy increased their motivation, while IR's structured approach supported deep textual analysis but often felt cognitively demanding. These findings suggest that integrating ER's engaging, student-centred approach with IR's analytical rigour could enhance reading instruction in EFL settings. The study contributes to existing literature by highlighting the need for a blended reading strategy that balances fluency development and comprehension skills. Pedagogically, it underscores the importance of interactive and student-driven activities in IR to sustain motivation. Future research should explore digital tools and adaptive strategies to optimise reading engagement and skill acquisition in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, EFL, engagement, extensive reading, intensive reading, reading habit

Published: 30 September 2025

To cite this article: Muslimin, A. I. (2025). English as a foreign language (EFL) students' engagement, reading habits, and learning outcomes: A comparative study of extensive and intensive reading. *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education*, 40(2), 337–355. <https://doi.org/10.21315/apjee2025.40.2.16>

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a cornerstone of language acquisition, providing learners with exposure to the target language in contexts that introduce new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and discourse patterns (Pellicer-sánchez, 2020). Studies have demonstrated that reading not only enhances linguistic competence but also fosters the development of complementary skills like writing and speaking (Putra et al., 2023). By engaging in frequent reading, learners encounter a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures, which strengthens their understanding of grammar, sentence construction and word usage. This, in turn, improves their ability to express themselves effectively in both written and spoken forms. Moreover, meaningful engagement with English texts, such as online discussions or social media content, builds confidence in language use. Exposure to natural sentence patterns, idiomatic expressions, and diverse linguistic contexts equips learners to communicate more effectively and participate actively in written and spoken interactions (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, reading is especially valuable as it offers access to authentic materials that reflect real-world language use, which is often challenging to replicate in traditional language instruction. Additionally, reading allows learners to process language at their own pace, providing a more personalised approach to language acquisition compared to speaking or listening activities (Daskalovska, 2018). Therefore, reading serves as an indispensable tool for language learners, fostering both linguistic proficiency and the confidence to engage meaningfully in real-world communication.

In EFL settings, reading is not only a tool for language learning but also an essential component of academic success (Loi et al., 2022). Students are often required to engage with complex academic texts in English, whether for literature courses, research purposes, or general education requirements. Therefore, developing strong reading skills is critical for students to succeed in both their language studies and broader academic pursuits (Barber & Klauda, 2020). However, the challenge lies in finding the most effective approach to reading instruction that will motivate students, foster long-term reading habits, and cater to their diverse learning needs (van der Sande et al., 2023). Given these challenges, intensive reading (IR) has emerged as a widely used method in EFL classrooms, particularly for students who need to develop precise language skills for academic or professional contexts.

IR is a common approach in EFL classrooms, particularly in settings where students need to develop precise language skills for academic or professional purposes (Ali et al., 2022). In an IR class, students are typically guided by the teacher through a careful, line-by-line analysis of a text. This approach emphasises understanding complex language features, such as unfamiliar vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and sentence structures. IR can be highly effective for developing reading comprehension, especially when the texts are closely aligned with the student's language proficiency level (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). By breaking down the text into smaller, manageable parts, students can gain a deeper understanding of the language and its usage.

However, IR also has its limitations (Jungang et al., 2020). Due to its focus on detailed analysis, students may experience slower progress in reading fluency and may become less motivated to engage with the material over time. The close scrutiny of texts, while beneficial for linguistic analysis, can also reduce the enjoyment of reading, making it feel more like a chore than a pleasurable activity. Additionally, the highly structured nature of intensive reading lessons often leaves little room for students to explore texts that align

with their personal interests. This lack of autonomy can hinder their intrinsic motivation to read independently outside the classroom. To address this, educators can incorporate strategies such as providing a variety of texts, encouraging student choice within structured frameworks, and fostering a more interactive and engaging classroom environment (Kabilan & Fadzliyati, 2010). These adjustments can help balance the rigorous demands of IR with opportunities for students to connect with the material on a personal level.

In universities, where students may come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, IR may present unique challenges (Diallo & Maizonniaux, 2016). Some students may struggle with the dense language and complex grammar of the texts used in intensive reading lessons, particularly if they are not familiar with the cultural or contextual references in the material. This can lead to frustration and disengagement, as students may feel overwhelmed by the difficulty of the texts and the pressure to understand every detail (Sweileh et al., 2016). To mitigate these challenges, instructors can provide additional scaffolding, such as pre-reading activities to build background knowledge, glossaries for unfamiliar terms, and opportunities for collaborative discussions to clarify meaning (Atta & Safein, 2017). By adapting IR practices to better accommodate diverse learners, educators can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that enhances both comprehension and engagement.

In contrast to intensive reading, extensive reading (ER) encourages students to read large amounts of text with the primary goal of building reading fluency and promoting a positive attitude toward reading (Daskalovska, 2018). In an ER class, students are often given the freedom to choose their reading materials, which can range from graded readers to authentic texts, depending on their language proficiency level (Guo, 2012). This autonomy allows students to explore texts that align with their interests, making reading a more enjoyable and meaningful activity (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2021). ER has been shown to improve not only reading fluency but also vocabulary acquisition, language comprehension and overall language proficiency (Masrai, 2019). Thus, ER offers a holistic approach to language learning by cultivating both reading skills and a positive reading habit.

One of the key advantages of ER is its ability to foster intrinsic motivation (Oktarin et al., 2018). When students are allowed to choose texts that they find interesting, they are more likely to engage with the material and develop a habit of reading regularly, elevating the language learning progress (Shakfa & Kabilan, 2017). ER also encourages students to read for meaning, rather than focusing on the language itself, which can help reduce anxiety and build confidence in their language skills (Yamashita, 2013). This approach is particularly beneficial in an EFL context, where students may feel intimidated by the complexities of the English language and need opportunities to practice reading in a low-pressure environment. Therefore, ER, by prioritising student choice and reading for meaning, creates a supportive environment for EFL students to build confidence and a genuine love for reading.

Despite its many benefits, ER is not without its challenges. One of the main difficulties in implementing ER is ensuring that students are reading texts that are appropriate for their language proficiency level (Renandya et al., 2021). If the texts are too difficult, students may become frustrated and lose interest in reading; if the texts are too easy, they may not feel challenged enough to make meaningful progress. Additionally, ER requires a significant investment of time and resources, as teachers must provide students with access to a wide range of reading materials and monitor their progress over time (Ng et al., 2019). Without

proper support, students may struggle to develop reading habits, reducing the long-term benefits of the approach (Bamford & Day, 2004).

By examining EFL students' reflections on their experiences with IR and ER, this study aims to provide insights into how these two reading strategies influence student engagement, reading habits, and overall language development in an Indonesian Islamic university context. While previous research has highlighted the benefits and limitations of each approach (Daskalovska, 2018; Masrai, 2019; Oktarin et al., 2018), limited attention has been given to how students navigate between them and how these strategies shape long-term reading engagement and skill transfer beyond the classroom. Understanding these dynamics will help educators make informed decisions on structuring reading instruction to accommodate diverse learning needs, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of EFL teaching in Indonesian Islamic educational settings. Hence, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do EFL students reflect on their engagement in IR versus ER classrooms at an Indonesian university?
2. How do IR and ER classrooms influence EFL students' reading habits at an Indonesian university?
3. How do IR and ER classrooms affect EFL students' overall language learning at an Indonesian university?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Reading in EFL Contexts

Reading is a fundamental skill in EFL learning, providing exposure to authentic language use and serving as a bridge to developing other language competencies. It plays a crucial role in vocabulary acquisition, grammatical awareness and overall language proficiency (Habók & Magyar, 2019; Nation, 2001). In EFL settings, where learners have limited direct exposure to English outside the classroom, reading becomes an essential tool for language input, enabling students to interact with diverse text types and linguistic structures.

Intensive vs. Extensive Reading in EFL Classrooms

Reading instruction in EFL classrooms typically follows two main approaches: intensive reading (IR) and extensive reading (ER). IR focuses on close analysis of short, complex texts, emphasising comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). It is commonly used in academic settings to improve reading accuracy and analytical skills. However, its structured and detail-oriented nature can sometimes limit students' engagement and reading enjoyment (Jungang et al., 2020).

Conversely, ER promotes reading fluency and motivation by encouraging students to read large amounts of text at their level, often with self-selected materials (Bamford & Day, 2004). This approach has been linked to improvements in vocabulary acquisition, reading speed, and overall language confidence (Ng et al., 2019). Unlike intensive reading, ER allows learners to develop a habit of reading for pleasure, which fosters long-term engagement with the language (Yamashita, 2013).

The Importance of Engagement and Reading Habits in Language Learning

Student engagement and reading habits significantly influence the effectiveness of reading instruction. Engaged readers are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation, leading to better comprehension and retention of language structures (Barber & Klauda, 2020; Kabilan & Fadzliyati, 2010). In IR, engagement is often driven by structured tasks and teacher guidance, while extensive reading relies on student autonomy and interest-driven reading choices (Guo, 2012). Studies have shown that students who develop strong reading habits through ER not only improve their language skills but also demonstrate greater confidence in writing and speaking (Masrai, 2019).

Given these differences, understanding how IR and ER impact student engagement, reading habits and overall language learning is crucial for designing effective EFL curricula. This study explores how EFL students at an Indonesian Islamic university reflect on their experiences with both reading approaches, highlighting their contributions to language proficiency and engagement in learning.

METHODOLOGY

Approach and Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach to examine EFL students' engagement, reading habits, and overall language learning in both IR and ER classrooms at an Islamic university in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The rationale for employing a mixed-methods approach was to address methodological gaps found in previous research, which often relied solely on either quantitative or qualitative methods (Creswell & Plano, 2017). By integrating both, this study aimed to provide a more holistic understanding of the impact of different reading strategies on student engagement and learning. An explanatory sequential design was implemented, where the research began with quantitative data collection through a questionnaire survey, followed by qualitative data collection via semi-structured interviews (Toyon, 2021). The survey measured students' reflection of engagement, reading habits and language learning experiences in IR and ER classes, while the interviews were conducted to explore these reflections in greater depth. This approach enabled data triangulation, enhancing the validity and depth of the study findings (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012).

Population and Sample

This study involved 143 EFL students from the English Education Department at an Islamic public university in Indonesia, all of whom had completed both IR and ER classes during their fifth semester in the 2024–2025 academic year. They were purposively selected to ensure they had firsthand experience with both reading strategies, making them well-suited for examining how these approaches influenced their engagement, reading habits, and overall language learning. Selecting students with relevant experience allowed the study to gather more accurate and meaningful reflections. For the qualitative phase, 15 students were chosen from the larger participant pool based on their willingness voluntarily by selecting the consent option in the questionnaire (Taherdoost, 2022). Their insights provided a deeper understanding of their learning experiences, enriching the exploration of key research themes.

Instruments

Two main instruments were used for data collection: a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire measured students’ engagement, reading habits, and perceptions of language learning in both IR and ER classes. It included 20 Likert-scale items covering engagement levels, motivation, participation, material preferences and perceived improvements in reading fluency and comprehension. Additional questions explored changes in reading habits, preferences for reading enjoyment or information and overall reflections on both reading approaches. To ensure clarity and reliability, the questionnaire was validated by an ELT professor and piloted with ten seventh-semester students who had completed both reading courses.

The semi-structured interviews provided deeper insights into students’ experiences with IR and ER. The questions encouraged them to reflect on which reading approach made them feel more engaged, which had a greater impact on their reading habits, and which contributed more to their overall language learning. These questions were developed based on relevant literature and research objectives, then validated by an ELT professor. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, multiple measures were taken. The questionnaire was validated through expert review and piloted with a small group of students before full-scale data collection. The results of the pilot study were tested for reliability using Cronbach’s alpha, which produced a score of 0.993, indicating a high level of internal consistency (see Table 1). This result suggests that the survey items were measuring the intended constructs consistently. For the qualitative phase, member checking was conducted, where the researcher shared key themes and findings with a subset of participants to confirm their accuracy. This step helped refine the interpretations and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Table 1. The reliability test results

Cronbach’s alpha	<i>N</i>
0.993	20

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection occurred in two phases. The first phase involved administering the online questionnaire, which captured students’ engagement levels, reading habits, and perceptions of IR and ER strategies. The responses provided a broad overview of trends in student engagement and reading behaviour. The second phase involved semi-structured interviews with selected participants to gain deeper insights into their reflections on the two reading strategies. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

For data analysis, the quantitative survey responses were analysed descriptively using SPSS (statistics tool) and presented using statistical tables to highlight key trends. The qualitative interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis in this study followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) framework to systematically examine students’

reflections on their engagement, reading habits and overall language learning in ER and IR classrooms. The process involved six key stages: Data familiarisation, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition and final analysis.

First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, ensuring that students' reflections were accurately captured. The researcher repeatedly read through the transcripts to identify recurring patterns and initial impressions. During this phase, students consistently described ER as "more engaging and enjoyable" while IR was seen as "structured but demanding." Notes were taken on emerging concepts related to motivation, autonomy, and cognitive load.

In the coding phase, meaningful phrases were identified and categorised. For example, a student remarked, "I feel more engaged in extensive reading because..." which was coded under "Engagement in ER". Meanwhile, another student noted, "In intensive reading, we have to break down every sentence, which helps me understand the text better, but it can also be exhausting," highlighting both the benefits and challenges of IR. These responses were categorised under "Cognitive Load and Engagement in IR."

As coding progressed, patterns were grouped into preliminary themes. Comments about students feeling motivated due to ER's interactive nature and choice-driven approach were consolidated under "Engagement in ER." Then, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence. Overlapping themes were merged, and those lacking sufficient supporting data were revised. For example, students' reflections on how ER encouraged more voluntary reading outside the classroom were consolidated into the broader theme "Developing Reading Habits through ER." Similarly, the role of IR in strengthening comprehension and analytical reading skills was refined in "Impact of IR on Academic Reading." Finally, three major themes were established: (1) Engagement in IR and ER, (2) Reading Habits and (3) Impact on Overall Learning.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were prioritised throughout the study (Newman et al., 2021). All participants provided informed consent before completing the online survey, with assurances that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing academic consequences. The researcher also obtained ethics approval from the Head of the English Education Department, ensuring compliance with institutional ethical guidelines. Additionally, during the qualitative phase, participants were reminded that their interview recordings would only be used for research purposes and that their identities would remain anonymous in any published findings.

RESULTS

The findings of this study align with its objectives to comprehend the influence of IR and ER strategies on students' engagement, reading habits, and overall language learning based on the students' reflections. Then, the results of the survey are presented in accordance with the objectives.

EFL Students’ Engagement During the IR and ER Classes

The first research objective is to find the impact of IR and ER strategies on students’ engagement based on the students’ reflections. Then, the survey results related to the students’ engagement in extensive reading classes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation of the student’s engagement in the extensive reading class

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Section 1: Engagement in Extensive Reading Class							
I feel highly engaged during the extensive reading class.	0(0)	5(3.5)	18(12.6)	87(60.8)	33(23.1)	4.03	0.4
The reading assignments in the extensive reading class motivate me to read more.	0(0)	2(1.4)	3(2.1)	98(68.5)	40(28)	4.23	0.25
I actively participate in class discussions during extensive reading classes.	0(0)	0(0)	16(11.2)	109(76.2)	18(12.6)	4.01	0.19
I enjoy the materials used in the extensive reading class.	0(0)	5(3.5)	10(6.99)	111(77.6)	17(11.9)	3.98	0.27
The extensive reading class helps me improve my reading fluency.	0(0)	10(6.99)	20(14)	102(71.3)	11(7.69)	3.80	0.37

Table 2 highlights a strong positive engagement in ER classes. Most students reported feeling engaged, with 60.8% agreeing and 23.1% strongly agreeing, while only 3.5% disagreed. The mean score of 4.03 and a low standard deviation of 0.4 suggest that engagement levels were consistently high across participants.

Similarly, reading assignments in ER were a strong motivator, with 68.5% agreeing and 28% strongly agreeing (M = 4.23, SD = 0.25). This finding indicates that the tasks effectively

encouraged students to read more. Class discussions also saw active participation, as 76.2% agreed and 12.6% strongly agreed ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.19$), suggesting a high level of involvement in interactive activities.

Enjoyment of materials received positive responses, with 77.6% agreeing and 11.9% strongly agreeing ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.27$). However, fluency improvement had the lowest mean ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.37$), with 71.3% agreeing but 14% remaining neutral. While students generally felt that ER helped their fluency, this area showed slightly more variation.

Overall, the data reveal a clear trend that ER fosters high engagement, motivation, and participation, with relatively low disagreement. The consistently low standard deviations indicate that most students shared similar positive experiences.

In contrast, some different responses are shown in Table 3 as the EFL students' reflections on their engagement in the IR class. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation of the student's engagement in the intensive reading class

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Section 2: Engagement in Intensive Reading Class							
I feel highly engaged during the intensive reading class.	3(2.09)	37(25.9)	24(16.8)	70(49)	9(6.29)	3.31	0.99
The reading assignments in the intensive reading class motivated me to improve my comprehension skills.	9(6.29)	29(20.3)	40(28)	62(43.4)	3(2.1)	3.15	0.97
I actively participate in class discussions during intensive reading classes.	0(0)	5(3.5)	17(11.9)	120(83.9)	1(0.7)	3.82	0.48
I enjoy the materials used in the intensive reading class.	2(1.39)	23(16.1)	58(40.6)	54(37.8)	6(4.2)	3.27	0.83
The intensive reading class helps me improve my understanding of detailed texts.	0(0)	1(0.7)	16(11.2)	126(88.1)	0(0)	3.87	0.35

The descriptive statistics in Table 3 reveal mixed levels of engagement in the IR class. While 49% of students agreed and 6.29% strongly agreed that they felt engaged, a significant portion—25.9%—disagreed, leading to a lower mean score of 3.31 and a relatively high standard deviation of 0.99. This finding suggests a wider range of student experiences, with some finding IR engaging while others struggled to stay involved.

Motivation to improve comprehension skills showed a similar pattern, with 43.4% agreeing and 2.1% strongly agreeing, but 20.3% disagreeing and 6.29% strongly disagreeing ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.97$). This finding indicates that while many students recognised its benefits, a considerable number did not find it particularly motivating.

Participation in discussions, however, was notably high, with 83.9% agreeing and 0.7% strongly agreeing ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.48$). This finding suggests that structured discussions were an effective aspect of the class. Enjoyment of materials, on the other hand, received more neutral responses, with 40.6% selecting neutral, 16.1% disagreeing, and only 4.2% strongly agreeing ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.83$). This finding indicates that the materials used in IR were not as widely enjoyed as other aspects of the course.

The strongest area in IR was its role in improving understanding of detailed texts, with 88.1% agreeing and none strongly disagreeing ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.35$). This finding suggests that despite varying engagement levels, students generally acknowledged the value of intensive reading for comprehension. Overall, the data show that while IR effectively supports comprehension and discussion participation, it does not engage all students equally, with notable variation in motivation and enjoyment.

The above key findings are also confirmed by the EFL students' responses in the interview. The first question discusses which strategy (intensive or extensive) makes them engage more in learning.

I feel more engaged in the extensive reading class. The teacher is creative with the activities, like when we have to reflect on our readings through various activities such as peer sharing, drama performance, novel review vlogging, illustrating, and self-story reflection. It's more interactive, and I feel like I have a say in what I'm reading, which makes me more interested in the process. In the intensive reading class, we focus so much on analysing every sentence that it feels a bit heavy, and sometimes it's hard to stay motivated. But in extensive reading, I can enjoy the stories or articles and still learn a lot. (S1)

For me, the extensive reading strategy is much more engaging. The teacher often brings in different kinds of texts, like short stories, articles, or even blogs, and we sometimes do fun activities like book clubs or debates. These make the class feel more dynamic and enjoyable. In the intensive reading class, it's more about breaking down texts, which can get repetitive. I think I engage more when I have the freedom to explore different topics and not feel pressured to understand every single word in a text. (S6)

I feel more connected to the learning process in extensive reading because of how the teacher structures the class. We're encouraged to pick texts that interest us, and there are creative follow-up tasks, like making posters or

summarising for classmates. It's not just about reading—it's about sharing and discussing. In intensive reading, I sometimes get bored because the focus is too much on detailed analysis, which can be draining. Extensive reading feels more alive and keeps me more engaged with the material. (S7)

In conclusion, both reading strategies are beneficial for student engagement and learning, but they have different strengths. ER appears to be more effective in maintaining overall engagement and motivation, as well as in providing enjoyable materials. On the other hand, intensive reading classes seem to foster higher participation in discussions and significantly aid in improving comprehension of detailed texts. The choice between these two approaches may therefore depend on the specific learning goals: fluency and enjoyment through ER, or comprehension and active discussion through IR.

EFL Students' Reading Habits During the IR and ER Classes

The second research objective is to investigate the influence of IR and ER strategies on students' reading habits. Then, the results of the survey are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation of the student's reading habits

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Section 3: Reading Habits							
My reading habits have improved since joining the extensive reading class.	0(0)	2(1.4)	9(6.29)	75(52.4)	57(39.9)	4.31	0.65
My reading habits have improved since joining the intensive reading class.	12(8.39)	34(23.8)	29(20.3)	68(47.6)	0(0)	3.07	1.02
I frequently read English books or articles outside of class.	0(0)	4(2.8)	27(18.9)	109(76.2)	3(2.1)	3.78	0.52
I prefer reading for enjoyment over reading for information.	0(0)	2(1.4)	8(5.59)	118(82.5)	15(10.5)	4.02	0.47
I prefer reading for information over reading for enjoyment.	13(9.09)	24(16.8)	30(21)	72(50.3)	4(2.8)	3.21	1.05

Table 4 shows a strong positive trend in students' reading habits, particularly in ER. A majority of students (52.4% agreed, 39.9% strongly agreed) felt their reading habits improved due to ER, resulting in a high mean score of 4.31 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.65. This finding indicates a consistent and widely shared perception that ER fosters better reading habits.

In contrast, the impact of IR on reading habits was less pronounced. While 47.6% agreed, 20.3% remained neutral, and a notable 23.8% disagreed ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.02$). The higher standard deviation suggests more variation in students' experiences, with some benefiting while others saw little change. Students also reported reading English books or articles outside class, with 76.2% agreeing and 2.1% strongly agreeing ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.52$). This finding suggests that reading habits extend beyond the classroom, likely influenced by ER activities.

Regarding reading preferences, 82.5% agreed and 10.5% strongly agreed that they preferred reading for enjoyment over reading for information ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.47$). However, when asked if they preferred reading for information over enjoyment, responses were more divided—50.3% agreed, but 16.8% disagreed, and 9.09% strongly disagreed ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.05$). This finding indicates that while many students value informational reading, enjoyment remains a stronger motivator. Hence, the data suggest that ER plays a crucial role in improving reading habits and fostering a preference for reading enjoyment. Meanwhile, intensive reading's impact on reading habits is more varied, and students generally lean toward reading for pleasure rather than strictly for information.

Then, the quantitative data presented in Table 4 are also supported by the EFL students' responses in the interview. Their excerpts are presented as follows.

I think the extensive reading approach has been more beneficial for my reading habits. Over time, I've found myself reading more regularly and enjoying it more. At first, I read maybe one book every couple of months, but now I'm up to a book or two a month. The variety and choice in extensive reading keep me engaged, and it feels less pressured than intensive reading. (S7)

For me, extensive reading has had a greater impact. When I started, I was reading maybe one or two articles a week. Now, I'm reading different genres and formats almost daily. The freedom to choose what interests me has motivated me to read more often and for longer periods. Intensive reading was helpful, but it felt more like a chore. (S10)

In summary, Table 4 suggests that students generally perceive greater improvements in their reading habits in the ER class compared to the intensive reading class. Additionally, most students prefer reading for enjoyment, though a substantial number also value reading for information. These findings provide important insights into how different reading approaches impact students' habits and preferences, reflecting a more enjoyable and habit-forming experience in ER classrooms.

EFL Students' Perception of The Impacts of Intensive and Extensive Reading Strategies on Their Overall Language Learning

The third research objective is to investigate the influence of IR and ER strategies on students' overall language learning. Then, the results of the survey are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation of EFL students' reflections on the impacts of reading strategies on their overall language learning

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Section 4: General Reflection							
The extensive reading class has been beneficial for my overall language learning.	0(0)	9(6.29)	21(14.7)	97(67.8)	16(11.2)	3.84	0.70
The intensive reading class has been beneficial for my overall language learning.	0(0)	13(9.09)	34(23.8)	96(67.1)	0(0)	3.58	0.65
The extensive reading class management is more dynamic or not monotonous.	0(0)	1(0.7)	3(2.1)	89(62.2)	50(35)	4.31	0.55
The intensive reading class management is more dynamic or not monotonous.	5(3.49)	23(16.1)	20(14)	95(66.4)	0(0)	3.43	0.88
I find both types of reading (extensive and intensive) equally important for my learning.	0(0)	12(8.39)	17(11.9)	114(79.7)	0(0)	3.71	0.61

Table 5 showcases students' reflections on the overall impact of IR and ER on their language learning. Extensive reading was perceived as highly beneficial, with 67.8% agreeing and 11.2% strongly agreeing ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.70$). In contrast, IR was also seen as helpful but received slightly lower agreement, with 67.1% agreeing and no strong agreement, while 23.8% remained neutral ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.65$). This finding suggests that while both approaches contribute to language learning, ER was viewed as slightly more effective.

Students also rated classroom management in ER as more dynamic, with 62.2% agreeing and 35% strongly agreeing ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.55$). IR, however, was perceived as less dynamic, with 66.4% agreeing but 16.1% disagreeing ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.88$), indicating a

more structured and possibly rigid classroom experience.

When asked whether both reading types were equally important for learning, 79.7% agreed, but 11.9% remained neutral ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.61$). This finding suggests that while students recognised the strengths of both methods, ER had a slightly stronger impact on engagement and overall language development. So, the data indicate that ER was perceived as more engaging and beneficial for language learning, while IR was valued for its structured approach. The preference for ER suggests that students respond better to flexible, dynamic learning environments that promote enjoyment and autonomy.

Then, the data demonstrates that both IR and ER strategies are perceived to be beneficial for students' language learning, with a slight preference for ER in terms of perceived effectiveness and classroom dynamics. This result is also supported by the participants' responses, which are presented in the following excerpts.

I believe extensive reading has contributed more to my overall language development. It exposed me to a wide range of vocabulary and different writing styles, which has really improved my understanding and use of the language. By reading a variety of materials, I've become more comfortable with different contexts and expressions, which has enhanced my overall fluency. (S7)

For me, intensive reading has been more impactful on my language development. It allowed me to dive deep into grammar, vocabulary, and text analysis. By focusing on complex texts and dissecting them in detail, I've developed a stronger grasp of the language rules and nuances, which has helped me use the language more accurately and effectively. (S2)

So, some students believe that a combination of both approaches is essential for their language development, highlighting the complementary nature of IR and ER in EFL classrooms.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of how extensive reading (ER) and intensive reading (IR) influence EFL students' engagement, reading habits, and overall language development. While previous research has largely examined ER and IR separately (Daskalovska, 2018; Masrai, 2019), this study highlights their complementary roles and the need for a more integrated approach in EFL instruction. The results reveal that ER fosters higher engagement and long-term reading habits, whereas IR plays a crucial role in developing comprehension and analytical skills. However, the mixed responses in IR-related engagement suggest that while it benefits academic literacy, it may require pedagogical adjustments to maintain student motivation.

Quantitative results indicate that students experienced significantly greater engagement in ER classes, with a mean score of 4.03 ($SD = 0.4$) compared to 3.31 ($SD = 0.99$) in IR. The majority (60.8%) agreed that ER kept them engaged, while IR received a wider range of responses, with 25.9% of students expressing disengagement. These quantitative responses highlight the effectiveness of engagement-driven instructional strategies in extensive

reading, where reflective activities like peer sharing, drama performance, novel review vlogging, illustrating and self-story reflection provide multiple entry points for interaction and comprehension. This finding aligns with previous findings that ER's autonomy-driven nature enhances student motivation and encourages a positive reading experience (Guo, 2012; Kabilan & Fadzliyati, 2010; Yamashita, 2013). Interviews with S1, S6, and S7 further reinforced this trend, with students emphasising that ER's flexibility, varied activities and freedom in material selection made reading enjoyable. Conversely, IR was described as cognitively demanding, leading to occasional disengagement, particularly when the focus on linguistic accuracy overshadowed reading enjoyment. This finding supports Jungang et al. (2020), who argue that while IR strengthens comprehension, it may reduce intrinsic motivation due to its structured and often rigid instructional approach.

In terms of reading habits, ER demonstrated a stronger influence on fostering independent reading. A majority of students (52.4% agreed, 39.9% strongly agreed) reported that ER significantly improved their reading habits ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.65$), whereas IR's impact was more varied, with a lower mean ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.02$) and 23.8% disagreeing that it contributed to their reading behaviour. This finding aligns with Ng et al. (2019), who emphasise that ER promotes sustainable reading habits due to its emphasis on fluency rather than intensive text analysis. Interviews with S7 and S10 data support this conclusion, with students noting that ER encouraged them to read regularly, whereas IR felt more like an academic requirement than an activity they would pursue voluntarily.

Despite the differences in engagement and reading habits, both ER and IR contributed positively to students' overall language learning. The mean score for ER's perceived impact on language development was slightly higher ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.70$) than IR ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.65$). ER was valued for exposing students to varied linguistic structures and improving fluency, supporting previous findings that extensive exposure to authentic materials enhances language acquisition (Putra et al., 2023). Meanwhile, IR was seen as essential for refining grammar and vocabulary accuracy, a perspective echoed in Elleman and Oslund (2019), who highlight IR's role in linguistic precision and academic literacy. The qualitative data reinforced this, with students acknowledging that while ER made them more confident in using English naturally, IR helped them process complex academic texts with greater accuracy.

Furthermore, this study extends existing research by demonstrating that the rigid separation between ER and IR in EFL instruction may not effectively support holistic language development. While prior studies have largely treated ER and IR as distinct strategies (Daskalovska, 2018; Yamashita, 2013), the findings suggest that their combined use could optimise reading instruction. The disengagement reported in IR classes suggests that incorporating ER principles—such as student choice in reading materials (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2021), discussion-based activities, and a reduction in excessive linguistic analysis (Renandya et al., 2021)—could enhance motivation while preserving IR's analytical benefits.

A significant contribution of this study is its contextual focus on an Islamic university setting, where academic reading expectations are often structured around formal literacy practices. The results indicate that ER's flexibility aligns well with students' intrinsic motivation (Permatasari & Wienanda, 2023), while IR remains crucial for developing academic reading competencies (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). By highlighting the need for

an integrated approach, this study provides practical insights for educators aiming to create balanced reading curricula that cater to both engagement and comprehension needs.

As a reflection of the findings, it suggests that while ER is more effective in maintaining engagement, developing reading habits and promoting fluency (Ali et al., 2022; Bamford & Day, 2004; Renandya et al., 2021; Robb & Ewert, 2024), IR remains essential for analytical skill development and comprehension of complex texts (Elleman & Oslund, 2019; Jungang et al., 2020). However, the lower engagement in IR raises questions about its traditional implementation in EFL settings. To maximise its effectiveness, IR instruction may need to incorporate more interactive and student-centred approaches, such as integrating collaborative discussions, providing contextualised reading tasks, and allowing greater flexibility in text selection.

Conversely, while ER is highly effective in fostering engagement and voluntary reading habits, it may lack the depth of textual analysis required for academic literacy. This finding suggests that ER programs should not entirely remove structured comprehension tasks but rather incorporate them in a way that does not diminish student motivation. A balanced approach—where ER is used to build fluency and motivation and IR is structured to reinforce comprehension skills without excessive cognitive strain—could provide a more effective reading curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insights into the impact of extensive reading (ER) and intensive reading (IR) on EFL students' engagement, reading habits, and overall language development in an Islamic university setting. The findings reveal that ER fosters higher engagement and reading enjoyment, leading to more sustainable reading habits, while IR remains essential for developing deep comprehension and analytical reading skills. However, the study also highlights gaps in IR's ability to maintain motivation, suggesting that a more balanced approach may be necessary to maximise its effectiveness.

Theoretically, these findings support previous research on the benefits of ER in fostering motivation and fluency (Renandya et al., 2021; Yamashita, 2013) and IR's role in improving comprehension and linguistic accuracy (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). However, this study contributes new knowledge by demonstrating that the rigid separation of ER and IR may not be the most effective instructional strategy. Instead, integrating ER's engaging and student-centred approach with IR's structured analytical focus could provide a more comprehensive reading curriculum.

Pedagogically, the study underscores the need for EFL instructors to rethink how ER and IR are implemented in the classroom. While ER effectively promotes student engagement and independent reading habits, its lack of focus on detailed analysis may limit deep comprehension. Conversely, IR, while beneficial for text analysis, requires more interactive and student-centred activities to sustain engagement. Educators could benefit from adopting a hybrid reading model that combines ER's motivational aspects with IR's structured approach, creating a learning environment that balances fluency development with critical reading skills.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The sample size was limited to one university, which may affect the generalisability of the findings. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported reflections, which may introduce subjectivity in students' responses. Future research should expand the participant pool across diverse educational settings and incorporate longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of ER and IR on language acquisition. Exploring the integration of digital reading platforms and technology-enhanced ER and IR activities could also provide further insights into improving reading engagement in EFL contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author utilised digital tools to enhance clarity and coherence while ensuring originality and academic integrity. Special thanks to the Head of the English Education Department at Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram for supporting empirical classroom research, which made this study possible.

REFERENCES

- Ali, Z., Palpanadan, S. T., Asad, M. M., & Churi, P. (2022). Reading approaches practiced in EFL classrooms: A narrative review and research agenda. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 7, 28. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-022-00155-4>
- Atta, A., & Safein, M. (2017). Scaffolding reading comprehension skills. *English Language Teaching*, 10(1), 97–111. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v10n1p97>
- Bamford, J., & Day, R. R. (Eds.) (2004). *Extensive reading activities for teaching language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barber, A. T., & Klauda, S. L. (2020). How reading motivation and engagement enable reading achievement: Policy implications. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 7(1), 27–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732219893385>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano, C. V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Daskalovska, N. (2018). Extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition. In R. J. Ponniah, & S. Venkatesan (Eds.) *The idea and practice of reading* (pp. 25–40). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-8572-7_3
- Diallo, I., & Maizonniaux, C. (2016). Policies and pedagogies for students of diverse backgrounds. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 11(3), 201–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22040552.2016.1279526>
- Elleman, A. M., & Oslund, E. L. (2019). Reading comprehension research: Implications for practice and policy. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 6(1), 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732218816339>
- Guo, S. (2012). Using authentic materials for extensive reading to promote English proficiency. *English Language Teaching*, 5(8), 196–206. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n8p196>

- Habók, A., & Magyar, A. (2019). The effects of EFL reading comprehension and certain learning-related factors on EFL learners' reading strategy use. *Cogent Education*, 6(1), 1616522. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2019.1616522>
- Jungang, C., High, G., Korea, S., & Park, A. Y. (2020). A comparison of the impact of extensive and intensive reading approaches on the reading attitudes of secondary EFL learners. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 10(2), 337–358. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2020.10.2.6>
- Kabilan, M. K., & Fadzliyati, K. (2010). Engaging learners' comprehension, interest and motivation to learn literature using the reader's theatre. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 9(3), 132–159.
- Kabilan, M. K., & Veratharaju, K. (2013). Professional development needs of primary school English-language teachers in Malaysia. *Professional Development in Education*, 39(3), 330–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.762418>
- Loi, N. Van, Thi, D., Thanh, K., & Education, I. (2022). Engaging EFL learners in reading: A text-driven approach to improve reading performance. *TESL-EJ: The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language*, 26(2), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.26102a5>
- Masrai, A. (2019). Vocabulary and reading comprehension revisited: evidence for high-, mid-, and low-frequency vocabulary knowledge. *SAGE Open*, 9(2), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019845182>
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139858656>
- Newman, P. A., Guta, A., & Black, T. (2021). Ethical considerations for qualitative research methods during the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergency situations: Navigating the virtual field. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211047823>
- Ng, Q. R., Renandya, W. A., & Chong, M. Y. C. (2019). Extensive reading: Theory, research and implementation. *TEFLIN Journal*, 30(2), 171–186. <https://doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v30i2/171-186>
- Octaberlina, L. R., & Muslimin, A. I. (2021). Online learning: Students' autonomy and attitudes. *Xlinguae*, 14(1), 49–61. <https://doi.org/10.18355/XL.2021.14.01.04>
- Oktarin, S., Auliandari, L., & Wijayanti, T. F. (2018). Analisis kemandirian belajar siswa pada mata pelajaran biologi Kelas X SMA YKPP Pendopo. *BIOEDUSCIENCE*, 2(2), 104–115. <https://doi.org/10.29405/j.bes/22104-1152493>
- Pellicer-sánchez, A. (2020). Expanding English vocabulary knowledge through reading: Insights from eye-tracking studies. *RELC Journal*, 51(1), 134–146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220906904>
- Permatasari, A. N., & Wienanda, W. K. (2023). Extensive reading in improving reading motivation: A students' perspective. *Eraalingua: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Asing dan Sastra*, 7(2), 220–232. <https://doi.org/10.26858/eralingua.v7i2.45638>
- Putra, J. I., Halilurrahman, L. M., Jaelani, S. R., & Hamzanwadi, U. (2023). Enhancing English language proficiency: Strategies for improving student skills. *Journal of Scientific Research, Education, and Technology*, 2(3), 1118–1123. <https://doi.org/10.58526/jsret.v2i3.205>
- Renandya, W. A., Maria Hidayati, & Ivone, F. M. & Francisca, M. (2021). Extensive reading: Top ten implementation issues. *JACET Journal*, 65, 11–21. https://doi.org/10.32234/jacetjournal.65.0_11

- Robb, T. N., & Ewert, D. (2024). Classroom-based extensive reading: A review of recent research. *Language Teaching*, 57(3), 295–324. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444823000319>
- Shakfa, M. D., & Kabilan, M. K. (2017). The role of motivation in enhancing the Palestinian students' English language learning. *INSANCITA: Journal of Islamic Studies in Indonesia and Southeast Asia*, 2(1), 1–16.
- Sweileh, W. M., Abutaha, A. S., Sawalha, A. F., Al-khalil, S., Al-jabi, S. W., & Zyoud, S. H. (2016). Bibliometric analysis of worldwide publications on multi-, extensively, and totally drug-resistant tuberculosis (2006–2015). *Multidisciplinary Respiratory Medicine*, 11, 45. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40248-016-0081-0>
- Taherdoost, H. (2022). How to conduct an effective interview: A guide to interview design in research study. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 11(1), 39–51.
- Toyon, M. A. S. (2021). Explanatory sequential design of mixed methods research: Phases and challenges. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 10(5), 253–260. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v10i5.1262>
- van der Sande, L., van Steensel, R., & Wevers, S. F. (2023). Effectiveness of interventions that foster reading motivation: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-023-09719-3>
- Yamashita, J. (2013). Effects of extensive reading on reading attitudes in a foreign language. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 25(2), 248–263.
- Yasmin, S., & Rahman, K. F. (2012). “Triangulation” research method as the tool of social science research. *BUP Journal*, 1(1), 154–163.