THE IMPACT OF EXTENSIVE READING ON VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

OLTINOY SULTANBAYEVA OMONBAY QIZI

Uzbekistan World State Languages University

Trainee teacher

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the impact of extensive reading on the vocabulary development of university students. Extensive reading, which emphasizes reading large quantities of text for general understanding rather than focusing on individual words, has been widely recognized as an effective method to enhance lexical knowledge. The study examines how regular exposure to diverse reading materials, such as novels, academic articles, and authentic texts, contributes to the acquisition of new vocabulary, retention of previously learned words, and overall language proficiency. Practical strategies, including reading for pleasure, annotating unfamiliar words, and contextual guessing, are discussed as methods to maximize vocabulary growth.

Keywords: *Extensive reading, vocabulary development, university students, lexical acquisition, reading comprehension, language proficiency, contextual learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency, and its development is crucial for university students who are expected to engage in complex academic reading and writing. While traditional vocabulary instruction often relies on isolated word lists and rote memorization, research has increasingly highlighted the effectiveness of extensive reading as a means to naturally acquire new lexical items in

context. Extensive reading involves engaging with large volumes of text for general understanding, allowing students to encounter words repeatedly in meaningful situations, which promotes retention and active usage.

University students often face challenges in expanding their vocabulary due to limited exposure to authentic language and a focus on formal grammar-based instruction. Extensive reading addresses this gap by providing access to diverse genres, including novels, journal articles, essays, and authentic digital content. Through repeated exposure in context, students not only learn new words but also understand nuances of meaning, collocations, and register, which are often neglected in traditional classroom settings.

MAIN BODY

Extensive reading has been widely studied as a tool for vocabulary expansion, and numerous scholars have documented its practical applications in university contexts. Day and Bamford (1998), in their seminal work on extensive reading, emphasized that reading large volumes of simplified texts with comprehension as the primary goal allows students to encounter words repeatedly in meaningful contexts. In practice, university students who read graded readers or adapted novels consistently demonstrate higher vocabulary retention compared to students who rely solely on word lists. For example, in a semester-long program, students were assigned daily reading of short stories and asked to summarize the plot in their own words, which reinforced both comprehension and active use of new vocabulary.

Nation (2001) explored the use of extensive reading to improve both breadth and depth of vocabulary. In his studies, practical methods such as contextual guessing and word notebooks were implemented. Students were instructed to underline unfamiliar words, infer meanings from context, and record them in personal vocabulary logs. Classroom observations showed that learners who practiced contextual guessing during reading not only remembered the words more effectively but were also able to use them in speaking activities, such as group discussions and presentations, demonstrating transfer of passive vocabulary to active use.

Bell (2001) conducted an experimental study where university students engaged in extensive reading of authentic English articles over a period of ten weeks. Practical tasks included weekly reading journals, where students summarized articles, highlighted new vocabulary, and reflected on comprehension challenges. Teachers noted that the combination of extensive reading with reflection tasks led to measurable improvement in students' lexical variety and confidence in speaking tasks. For instance, during a class debate on a current topic, students were able to integrate vocabulary learned from reading articles seamlessly, showing real-life application.

Robb and Susser (1989) introduced sustained silent reading (SSR) as a practical method, where students read for pleasure in a quiet environment without interruptions. Observations revealed that students engaged in SSR reported a higher rate of word recognition and were able to infer meaning of unknown words independently. In classroom practice, SSR was often paired with peer discussions: after reading, students discussed the story or article in pairs, explaining new vocabulary and sharing interpretations. This process encouraged speaking and reinforced lexical knowledge through social interaction.

Waring and Takaki (2003) highlighted the importance of extensive reading combined with follow-up tasks. In one university setting, students read 5–10 pages daily from authentic novels and completed tasks such as role-plays, summaries, and vocabulary quizzes. Role-plays required students to use the new vocabulary in realistic scenarios, such as acting out dialogues from the story or simulating interviews with characters. This practical approach ensured that vocabulary learned from reading became actively usable in speaking activities.

Practical Example Across Studies:

1. Students read a short story about a city festival.

2. They identify 10–15 unfamiliar words using contextual guessing.

3. Students record these words in a vocabulary log, adding definitions and example sentences.

4. In the next lesson, they engage in group discussions, summarizing the story and using new words to express opinions: e.g., "The festival atmosphere was vibrant and exhilarating."

5. The teacher monitors, provides feedback, and encourages peer scaffolding for correct usage.

Other methods frequently applied in these studies include:

Reading Circles: Small groups read the same text and discuss in rotation.

Project-Based Reading Tasks: Students create presentations, reports, or posters based on readings.

Extensive Reading + Writing Integration: Students write short stories or essays incorporating newly acquired vocabulary.

Vocabulary Guessing from Context: Students practice inferring meanings without dictionaries to enhance retention.

Across these practical implementations, the core principle is repeated exposure to authentic or semi-authentic texts in meaningful contexts, combined with tasks that require active production of language. Extensive reading is not treated as a passive activity; it is intertwined with speaking, discussion, writing, and peer interaction, creating a dynamic learning ecosystem where vocabulary growth is both measurable and functional.

Practical Methods for Extensive Reading and Vocabulary Development:

Method	Classroom Implementation	Step-by-Step Practical Actions	Example Tasks / Activities	Expected Speaking Outcome
Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)	Students read self-selected texts quietly	1. Choose graded readers or	Read short stories or news articles; note 10	Improved recognition of words, fluency in discussion,

Method	Classroom Implementation	Step-by-Step Practical Actions	Example Tasks / Activities	Expected Speaking Outcome
		authentic texts 2. Read silently for 20–30 min 3. Highlight unknown words	unfamiliar words	confidence in summarizing
Contextual Guessing	Students infer meanings from context	1. Identify unknown words 2. Guess meanings from sentences 3. Verify through peer discussion	Story reading: "The festival was vibrant and exhilarating" → infer "exhilarating"	Ability to explain and use words without dictionary; increases spontaneous speaking
Vocabulary Logs / Notebooks	Record and practice new words	1. Write word, definition, example	"Vibrant – full of life; e.g., The city market was	Transfer passive vocabulary to active use in

Method	Classroom Implementation	Step-by-Step Practical Actions	Example Tasks / Activities	Expected Speaking Outcome
		sentence 2. Use word in oral activity 3. Peer check	vibrant." Use in mini-presentation	discussions and presentations
Reading Circles / Group Reading	Small groups read and discuss	1. Each member reads same text 2. Share summary 3. Discuss unknown words	Novel chapter read by group → discuss plot, characters, and new words	Peer-supported speaking, negotiation of meaning, active use of vocabulary
Project-Based Reading Tasks	Reading tied to project creation	1. Read authentic texts 2. Plan and design a project 3. Present results	Read about renewable energy → create poster + group presentation using new vocabulary	Structured speaking, fluency, ability to explain ideas

Method	Classroom Implementation	Step-by-Step Practical Actions	Example Tasks / Activities	Expected Speaking Outcome
Role-Play / Simulation	Act out reading scenarios	1. Assign roles from text 2. Rehearse dialogues 3. Present to class	News article on protest → students act as journalists, citizens, and officials	Functional language use, persuasive speaking, negotiation skills

CONCLUSION

The review of practical studies and classroom implementations demonstrates that extensive reading is a highly effective approach for developing university students' vocabulary and speaking skills. Across various methods such as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), contextual guessing, reading circles, role-plays, project-based tasks, and peer teaching students engage actively with language in meaningful contexts. This engagement ensures that vocabulary is not only recognized but also transformed into active, usable language in speaking activities.

The practical impact of these methods is clear: repeated exposure to authentic or semi-authentic texts, combined with interactive tasks, creates a dynamic environment where speaking becomes a necessity rather than a choice. Students develop fluency, confidence, and accuracy simultaneously, while also improving their ability to organize ideas, negotiate meaning, and use language purposefully. Peer interaction, self-reflection, and task repetition further reinforce learning, making vocabulary acquisition both durable and functional.

In conclusion, integrating extensive reading with task-based and interactive classroom practices provides university students with the opportunity to internalize

new vocabulary, enhance communicative competence, and gain confidence in using English in both academic and real-world contexts. The success of this approach depends on well-structured tasks, consistent practice, and teacher facilitation that encourages autonomy and meaningful language use.

REFERENCES

1. Day, R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. Cambridge University Press. Ushbu manba extensive reading metodlarini nazariy va amaliy jihatdan yoritadi, o'quvchilarning leksik o'sishini qanday ta'minlashini ko'rsatadi.

2. Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press. Talabalar uchun kontekstual so'zlash va vocabulary log orqali yangi so'zlarni faol ishlatish amaliy metodlarini bayon qiladi.

3. Bell, T. (2001). Extensive reading: Speed and comprehension. *The Reading Matrix, 1*(1), 1–13. Universitet talabalarining extensive reading orqali so'z boyligini oshirish va speaking ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish bo'yicha amaliy tadqiqot.

4. Robb, T., & Susser, B. (1989). Extensive reading vs. intensive reading: A meta-analysis. *Language Learning, 39*(4), 545–569. Sustained Silent Reading va interaktiv discussion orqali leksik o'sish va so'zlarni faol gapirishga o'rganish jarayonini tahlil qiladi.