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ENHANCING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH THE EXTENSIVE READING APPROACH IN PRE-INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

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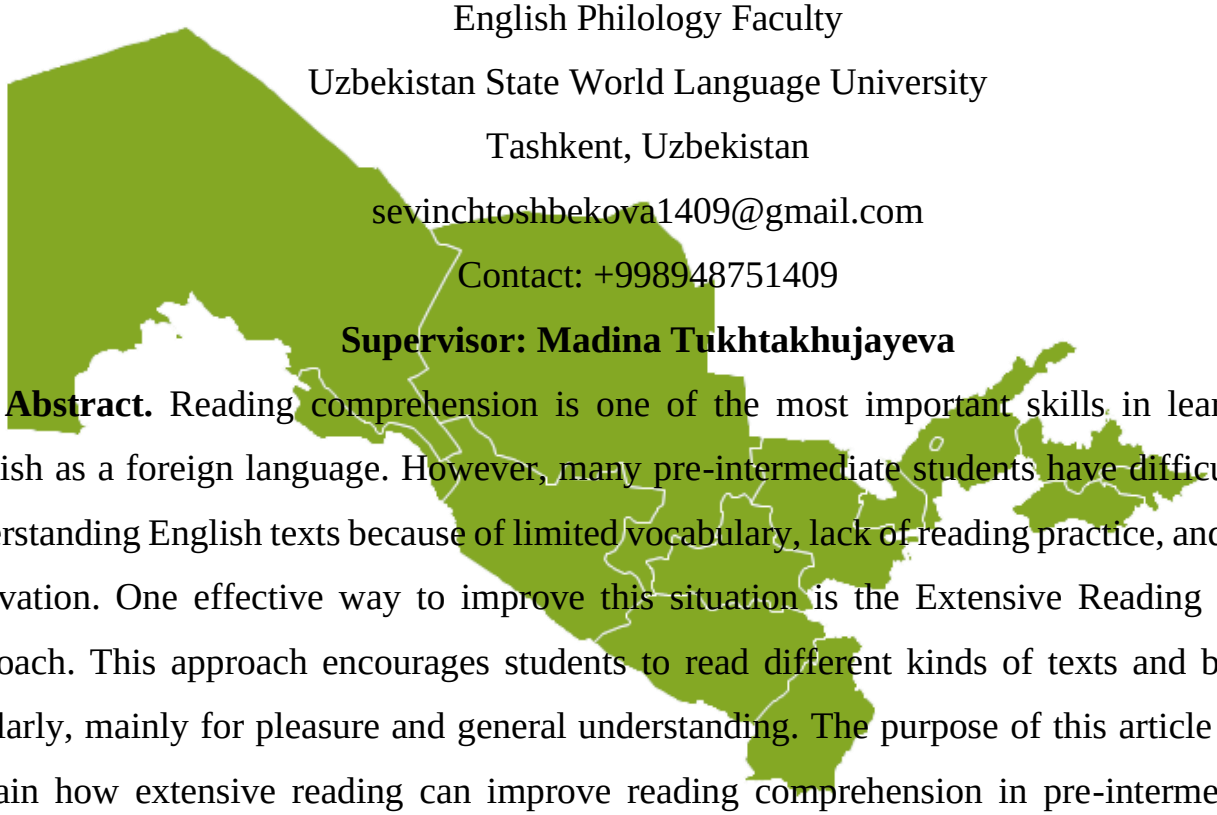
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Abstract. Reading comprehension is one of the most important skills in learning English as a foreign language. However, many pre-intermediate students have difficulties understanding English texts because of limited vocabulary, lack of reading practice, and low motivation. One effective way to improve this situation is the Extensive Reading (ER) approach. This approach encourages students to read different kinds of texts and books regularly, mainly for pleasure and general understanding. The purpose of this article is to explain how extensive reading can improve reading comprehension in pre-intermediate classes. It focuses on three important questions: who to teach, what to teach, and how to teach. It also discusses suitable reading materials, classroom activities, and the teacher’s role in the learning process. Previous research shows that extensive reading can have a positive effect on students’ reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and motivation.

Keywords: Extensive reading, reading comprehension, pre-intermediate students, english language teaching, reading skills.

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the most widely used languages in the world. Learning English requires the development of four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Among these skills, reading plays an important role because it helps learners improve their vocabulary, grammar knowledge, and general understanding of the language. Reading comprehension means understanding the information, ideas, and messages presented in a written text. It is not simply reading words or translating sentences. Students should understand the main idea, find specific information, recognize important details, and sometimes understand meanings that are not directly expressed. However, reading English texts can be difficult for pre-intermediate students. They may not know enough words, understand long sentences, or follow the main idea of a text. Some students also lose interest when teachers always use the same textbook passages and ask them to translate every sentence. To solve these problems, teachers can use the Extensive Reading approach. Extensive reading means reading a large amount of relatively easy and interesting material. Students read different books, stories, articles, and other texts according to their language level and personal interests. According to Day and Bamford (1998), extensive reading gives learners opportunities to read large quantities of language materials and develop their reading abilities through regular practice. The main purpose is to help students become confident and independent readers. This article discusses how extensive reading can be used in pre-intermediate English classes and how it can improve students’ reading comprehension.

The importance of reading comprehension in pre-intermediate classes

Reading comprehension is important because students need to understand written information in both their academic and everyday lives. Through reading, they can learn new vocabulary, become familiar with sentence structures, and develop their ability to express ideas. At the pre-intermediate level, students usually have basic knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. They can understand simple texts, but they may still have problems with longer passages and unfamiliar expressions.

Some common difficulties include:

• Limited vocabulary and difficulty understanding new words.

• Problems identifying the main idea of a text.

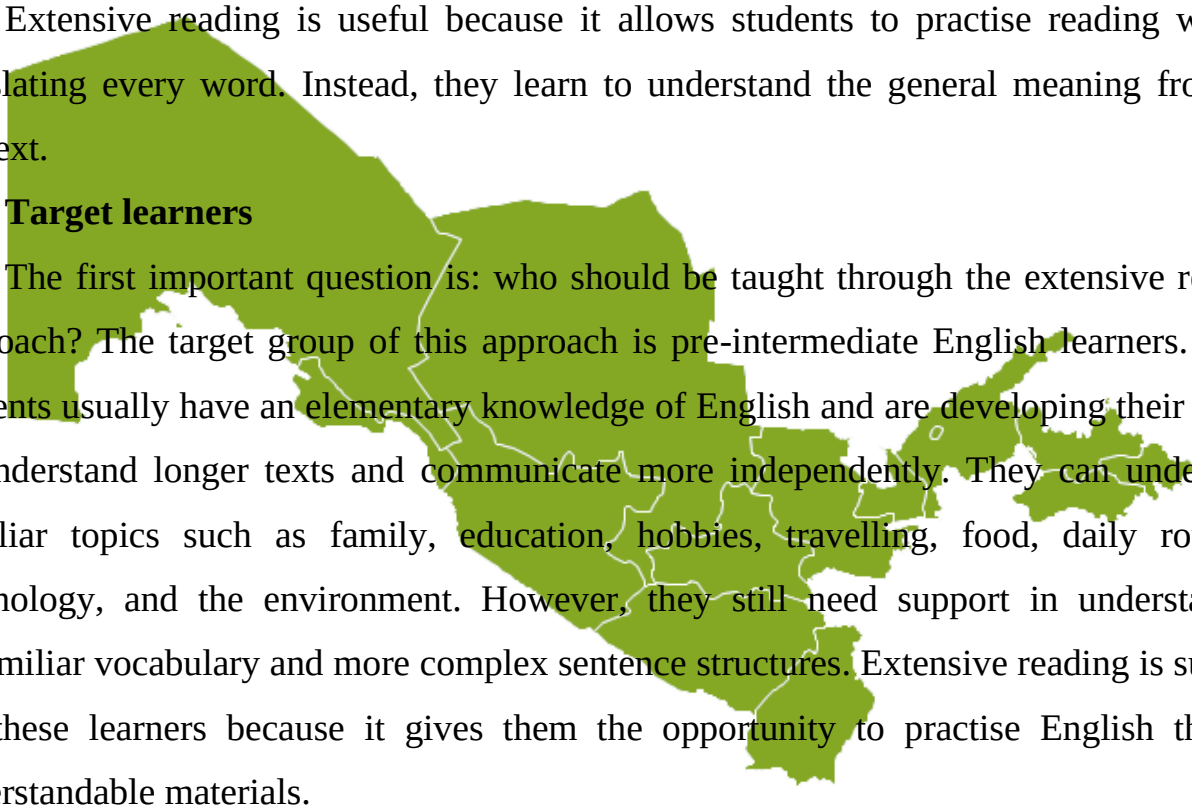
• Difficulty finding specific information.

• Lack of confidence when reading longer passages.

• Low motivation and limited reading habits.

Teachers should create interesting and supportive learning environments to overcome these difficulties. Students need regular opportunities to read texts that are suitable for their level.

Extensive reading is useful because it allows students to practise reading without translating every word. Instead, they learn to understand the general meaning from the context.



Target learners

The first important question is: who should be taught through the extensive reading approach? The target group of this approach is pre-intermediate English learners. These students usually have an elementary knowledge of English and are developing their ability to understand longer texts and communicate more independently. They can understand familiar topics such as family, education, hobbies, travelling, food, daily routines, technology, and the environment. However, they still need support in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. Extensive reading is suitable for these learners because it gives them the opportunity to practise English through understandable materials.

Characteristics of pre-intermediate students

First, they have basic vocabulary knowledge. They know common English words but need to increase their vocabulary through regular reading. Second, they can understand simple sentences and short paragraphs. However, they may have difficulties understanding longer stories or articles. Third, their reading speed is sometimes slow because they try to translate every word into their mother tongue. Finally, their motivation can be different. Some students enjoy reading, while others prefer videos, games, or interactive classroom activities. For this reason, teachers should consider students’ interests, language levels, and learning needs when selecting reading materials. The teacher should not give the same

difficult book to every student. Instead, learners should have opportunities to choose materials that they can understand and enjoy.

Content and learning objectives

The main aim is to develop students’ reading comprehension. However, students can also improve several other language skills through regular reading.

1. Understanding the main idea

Students should learn how to identify the central idea of a text. They do not need to understand every single word to understand what the text is about. For example, after reading a short story about a family trip, students should be able to explain where the family went and what happened during the journey.

2. Finding specific information

Students should practise finding important details in a text. These may include names, dates, places, numbers, and events. For example, after reading a text about a famous person, students can find information about the person’s birthplace, profession, and achievements.

3. Vocabulary development

Vocabulary is an important part of reading comprehension. Through extensive reading, students meet familiar words repeatedly and discover new words in different contexts. Teachers should encourage learners to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words instead of immediately translating them. For example, if students read the sentence “She was exhausted after working all day,” they may understand the meaning of “exhausted” from the situation.

4. Understanding the sequence of events

Students should learn how to recognize the order of events in stories and other texts. They can use expressions such as:

- First
- Then
- After that
- Later

• Finally

This activity helps students understand how information is organized in a text.

5. Making inferences

Another important objective is teaching students to understand information that is not directly stated. For example, if a story says that a person is carrying an umbrella and wearing a raincoat, students may guess that the weather is rainy.

6. Developing critical thinking

Students should also learn to express simple opinions about what they read.

They can answer questions such as:

• Do you agree with the main character?

• What would you do in this situation?

• What is the main lesson of the story?

These activities help students connect reading with their own experiences. Therefore, extensive reading does not only improve reading skills. It also supports vocabulary development, critical thinking, and communication.

Applying the extensive reading approach

How can teachers use extensive reading effectively in pre-intermediate classes? Teachers should organize reading activities step by step. The materials must be interesting, understandable, and appropriate for students’ language levels.

1. Selecting appropriate reading materials

The first step is choosing suitable materials. Teachers can use graded readers, short stories, simple novels, online articles, short biographies, and interesting factual texts. Graded readers are especially useful because they are written or adapted for learners at different English levels. For pre-intermediate students, suitable topics include:

• Interesting travel stories.

• Famous people and their lives.

• Friendship and family.

• Nature and animals.

• Everyday situations.

• Adventure and short mystery stories.

The texts should not contain too many unfamiliar words. Students should be able to understand most of the content without using a dictionary all the time.

2. Pre-reading activities

Before reading, teachers should prepare students for the topic. These activities help learners become interested and activate their background knowledge. For example, before reading a story about travelling, the teacher can ask:

• Do you like travelling?

• Which country would you like to visit?

• What do you usually take when you travel?

The teacher can also show pictures, introduce the topic, or ask students to predict what the text will be about. These activities make reading more interesting and meaningful.

3. While-reading activities

During reading, students should focus mainly on understanding the general meaning. Teachers can encourage students to read silently and independently. They should not stop after every unfamiliar word. Some useful activities are:

A. Choose the best title

Students read a short text and choose the most suitable title from three or four options.

B. True or false

Students read the passage and decide whether the given statements are true or false.

C. Match the headings

Students match different paragraphs with suitable headings.

E. Find the main idea

Students read a passage and write one or two sentences explaining its main idea.

4. Guess the meaning

Students try to understand unfamiliar words using the information around them. These activities help learners develop different reading comprehension skills.

5. Post-reading activities

After reading, students can share their ideas and discuss the information they have understood. For example, teachers can organize the following activities:

Book review: Students write a short review about the book they have read. They mention the title, characters, main events, and their opinions.

Retelling the Story: Students explain the story in their own words. They can work individually or in pairs.

Group discussion: Students discuss the main topic and share their opinions with classmates.

Reading diary: Students write down the title of each text, the date, a short summary, and new words they have learned.

These activities help students remember information and develop their speaking and writing skills.

6. Creating a regular reading habit

Extensive reading should not be used only once or twice. It should become a regular part of students’ learning process. Teachers can organize 10–15 minutes of reading during some English lessons and encourage students to read independently at home. For example, students can read one short story every week and share their experiences in the next lesson. Teachers can also create a small classroom library where students can borrow books and exchange reading materials. The most important point is that reading should be an enjoyable activity, not only a task for getting marks.

7. The role of the teacher and students

In extensive reading, the teacher and students have different but equally important responsibilities. The teacher is not only a person who explains difficult words and checks answers. The teacher also works as a guide and supporter.

The teacher should:

• Select and recommend appropriate reading materials.

• Explain the aims of extensive reading.

• Encourage students to read regularly.

• Give students opportunities to choose their own books.

• Help learners when they have difficulties.

• Create a positive reading environment.

• Monitor students’ progress.

Students should also take responsibility for their learning. They should choose interesting texts, read regularly, complete reading diaries, and share their opinions about the materials. This approach helps students become more independent and confident learners.

8. Benefits and possible challenges of extensive reading

Extensive reading has several benefits for pre-intermediate students. First, it improves reading comprehension because students practise understanding different texts regularly. Second, it develops vocabulary. When students meet words several times in different contexts, they gradually remember their meanings and use them more confidently. Third, it increases reading fluency. Regular reading helps students read faster and understand information more easily. Fourth, it improves motivation. When students read interesting stories and choose their own materials, they may develop a more positive attitude towards English. Research also supports these benefits. Rasmin (2021) investigated the effects of extensive reading on students’ reading comprehension. The results showed improvement in literal, inferential, and critical comprehension. The students also had positive opinions about the approach. Similarly, Muhriza, Trisno, and Yunita (2023) conducted classroom action research with senior high school students. Their findings showed that students’ reading comprehension improved after extensive reading activities. Students also became more interested and active in reading. However, teachers may face some challenges when using this approach. Some students may not have enough time to read outside the classroom. Others may choose books that are too difficult or may not be interested in reading. To overcome these problems, teachers should provide different types of materials, allow students to choose according to their level, and give regular encouragement. Digital stories and free online reading resources can also be useful.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, extensive reading is an effective approach that can help improve reading comprehension in pre-intermediate English classes. It gives students opportunities to read different types of interesting and understandable materials regularly.

This article has answered three main questions: who to teach, what to teach, and how to teach. The target learners are pre-intermediate students who need to develop their reading abilities and become more confident readers. The main teaching content includes understanding the main idea, finding specific information, learning vocabulary, recognizing the sequence of events, and making inferences. Teachers can use pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities to make the learning process more effective. The teacher’s role is to guide, encourage, and support students, while learners should develop independent reading habits. Finally, reading should not always be connected with tests and difficult exercises. Students need to enjoy what they read. If teachers provide suitable materials and create a positive reading environment, extensive reading can become a useful way to improve students’ English language skills and their interest in learning English.

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