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Significance of Reading in Foreign Language Teaching and Correct Reading Strategies

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Abstract; This study investigates the significance of reading in foreign language teaching and the effectiveness of three reading strategies—extensive reading, intensive reading, and interactive reading—on language acquisition. The research involved 120 intermediate-level learners of a foreign language, divided into four groups: extensive reading, intensive reading, interactive reading, and a control group. Data was collected through pre- and post-tests measuring reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, as well as surveys, classroom observations, and interviews. The results revealed that all three experimental groups showed significant improvements in reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition compared to the control group. The Intensive Reading Group demonstrated the most significant vocabulary gains, while both the Extensive Reading and Interactive Reading Groups showed substantial improvements in reading comprehension. The study highlights that the choice of reading strategy can significantly influence learning outcomes, with intensive reading being particularly effective for vocabulary acquisition and extensive reading contributing to reading fluency. The Interactive Reading Group demonstrated high levels of learner engagement and motivation, underscoring the value of social interaction in language learning. The findings suggest that integrating multiple reading strategies into language teaching can foster a more comprehensive approach to language development.

Keywords: *Extensive reading, Intensive reading, Interactive reading, Vocabulary acquisition, Reading comprehension, Foreign language teaching*

1. Introduction

Reading is one of the most critical skills in foreign language acquisition, playing a central role in enhancing linguistic proficiency, cognitive development, and cultural understanding. In foreign language teaching (FLT), reading serves not only as a means of acquiring vocabulary and grammatical structures but also as a window into the culture, values, and nuances of the target

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language. Through reading, learners are exposed to authentic language use, which aids in the development of their communicative competence and overall fluency.

One of the key advantages of reading in FLT is that it allows learners to engage with language in context. Unlike isolated vocabulary drills or grammar exercises, reading provides learners with the opportunity to see how language is used in real-world situations, which enhances their ability to understand and produce the language in meaningful contexts (Anderson, 1999). Additionally, reading fosters a deeper understanding of the cultural and social contexts in which the language is used, contributing to learners' intercultural competence—a vital aspect of language learning (Kramsch, 1993).

The importance of reading is underscored by research in second language acquisition (SLA), which suggests that reading extensively in a foreign language leads to significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition, grammar, and reading comprehension (Day & Bamford, 1998). Furthermore, reading enhances learners' cognitive abilities, such as attention to detail, inferencing skills, and the ability to synthesize information from different parts of the text (Snow, 2002). Reading also provides learners with a large amount of input that is necessary for language acquisition to occur (Krashen, 1985). This aligns with the Input Hypothesis, which posits that language learners acquire new language structures when exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly above their current level of competence (Krashen, 1982).

However, despite its importance, reading remains a challenging skill for many foreign language learners. The complexity of texts, coupled with limited vocabulary and unfamiliar grammatical structures, can make reading in a foreign language daunting (Nuttall, 2005). This challenge is further exacerbated by psychological factors, such as language anxiety or lack of motivation, which can hinder learners from engaging with reading tasks (Dörnyei, 2001). These barriers highlight the need for effective reading strategies in foreign language teaching, which can provide learners with the tools to overcome difficulties and improve their reading comprehension.

The purpose of this article is to explore the significance of reading in foreign language teaching, emphasizing its cognitive, linguistic, and cultural benefits. It will also outline effective reading strategies that educators can use to enhance students' reading skills, focusing on approaches such as extensive and intensive reading, scaffolding, and interactive reading. By examining these strategies and their pedagogical implications, the article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how reading can be effectively integrated into language teaching practices to support language learners in developing their reading proficiency (Babayev, 2023).

1.2. The Role of Reading in Foreign Language Acquisition

Reading offers several cognitive and pedagogical benefits in the process of acquiring a foreign language. It is widely recognized that exposure to written texts is essential for language learners to expand their vocabulary and grasp grammatical structures in context (Anderson, 1999). As

learners engage with different types of texts, they internalize new words, phrases, and expressions, which eventually contribute to their fluency and understanding of the language.

Moreover, reading helps learners develop strategies for processing and understanding information in the foreign language, such as recognizing discourse markers and identifying main ideas (Carrell, 1988). These skills are crucial not only for language comprehension but also for the development of higher-order thinking, such as analysis and synthesis. In addition, reading helps learners familiarize themselves with cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and socio-cultural references embedded in the language (Kramsch, 1993). This broader cultural understanding fosters more effective communication and appreciation for the language.

1.3. Challenges in Foreign Language Reading

Despite the evident benefits of reading in foreign language teaching, learners often encounter challenges that hinder their ability to comprehend texts. These challenges can be classified into linguistic, cognitive, and psychological barriers.

Linguistic Challenges: One of the most common obstacles is the limited vocabulary of the learner. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, understanding a text becomes a laborious process, which may lead to frustration and disengagement (Nation, 2001). Additionally, learners may struggle with unfamiliar grammatical structures or complex sentence constructions that impede comprehension.

Cognitive Challenges: Cognitive difficulties arise when learners lack effective strategies for dealing with complex texts. For example, learners may struggle to identify key points, make inferences, or integrate new information with prior knowledge (Snow, 2002). This lack of strategy can result in a shallow understanding of the text.

Psychological Challenges: Language learners may also experience psychological barriers, such as lack of motivation or anxiety. Learners who are not confident in their reading skills may avoid reading activities or feel discouraged when they encounter difficult texts. This emotional response can affect their overall learning experience and hinder progress (Dörnyei, 2001).

2. Methods

To explore the significance of reading in foreign language teaching and the effectiveness of various reading strategies, a mixed-methods approach was used, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This approach allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the role of reading in language acquisition, the identification of key challenges faced by learners, and the evaluation of specific teaching strategies that can enhance reading comprehension and overall language proficiency.

2.1 Research Design

The study was designed to assess both the theoretical and practical aspects of reading in foreign language teaching. Two primary research questions guided the investigation:

1. How does reading contribute to the development of language proficiency in foreign language learners?

2. What are the most effective reading strategies for improving reading comprehension and overall language skills in the foreign language classroom?

To answer these questions, the study adopted a combination of experimental, observational, and survey-based data collection methods. The experiment focused on comparing the effectiveness of different reading strategies, while the qualitative components (observations and surveys) helped to capture learners' experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding reading tasks and strategies in the foreign language.

2.2 Participants

The participants in the study were 120 foreign language learners enrolled in intermediate-level language courses at a university. The learners represented a variety of first languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Russian, with English as the target foreign language. The learners were selected based on their enrollment in the same language program and their similar proficiency levels, as determined by a standardized language proficiency test (e.g., TOEFL or CEFR). This homogeneity helped to reduce variability in language ability and ensured that the focus remained on the impact of different reading strategies rather than individual language proficiency differences.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

2.3.1 Pre-test and Post-test

To measure the impact of reading strategies on learners' reading comprehension and overall language proficiency, a pre-test and post-test design was implemented . The pre-test assessed learners' baseline reading comprehension skills, vocabulary knowledge, and general language proficiency. The post-test, administered at the end of the intervention period, measured the same skills to assess any improvements.

Both tests consisted of a combination of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and cloze exercises based on reading passages from a variety of genres, including narrative, expository, and argumentative texts. The tests were designed to reflect the kind of reading materials students would encounter in real-world language use, ensuring ecological validity.

2.3.2 Experimental Intervention

The participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental groups, each exposed to a different reading strategy:

1. **Extensive Reading Group**: This group engaged in independent reading of longer texts (e.g., graded readers, short stories, news articles) over a 6-week period. The focus was on reading for general meaning, with minimal intervention from instructors.

2. **Intensive Reading Group**: This group participated in more structured reading activities, where short texts were read intensively with a focus on vocabulary acquisition, comprehension questions, and grammar analysis. Teachers provided explicit instruction on language features in the texts.

3. **Interactive Reading Group**: This group engaged in collaborative reading activities, such as pair or group discussions, role-plays, and debates based on the texts. This approach emphasized social interaction and negotiation of meaning.

4. **Control Group**: This group continued with their regular language learning curriculum without any specific focus on reading strategies. They engaged in typical language learning activities like vocabulary drills and grammar exercises but did not receive additional reading-based interventions.

The experimental intervention lasted for 6 weeks, with all groups reading approximately 30 minutes per day. The different reading strategies were implemented by the instructor, who had received training on how to effectively facilitate each of the strategies.

2.3.3 Observations

Classroom observations were conducted to capture the interaction between the students and the reading activities. Two researchers, trained in observation techniques, observed each class for a total of 15 hours. They took field notes on student engagement, teacher-student interactions, and the specific strategies being employed during the reading tasks. This data was used to assess how well the strategies were being implemented and how students were responding to them.

2.3.4 Surveys and Interviews

After the intervention, learners were asked to complete surveys that assessed their attitudes toward the reading strategies, their motivation to read in the foreign language, and their perceived improvement in reading skills (Javid & Sayyara, 2024). The surveys included both Likert-scale questions (e.g., "I feel more confident reading in English now") and open-ended questions (e.g., "Which reading strategy did you find most helpful and why?").

In addition to the surveys, a subset of 20 learners (5 from each group) participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews allowed the researchers to probe deeper into the students' experiences with reading in the foreign language, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they

found most effective for improving their reading skills. These qualitative data provided rich insights into learners' perceptions of the reading process and the effectiveness of the strategies employed.

2.4 Data Analysis

2.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The pre-test and post-test results were analyzed using statistical methods to determine whether there were significant differences in reading comprehension and language proficiency between the experimental groups (Javid, 2023). A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores within each group. Additionally, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if there were significant differences in the improvement scores across the four groups. The effect size (Cohen's d) was also calculated to assess the magnitude of any observed differences.

2.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data from the classroom observations, surveys, and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers identified common themes related to learner engagement, motivation, perceived challenges, and the effectiveness of different reading strategies. Thematic analysis allowed the researchers to categorize the data into meaningful patterns and provide a deeper understanding of the learners' experiences with the reading strategies. Coding was done manually, with regular checks for inter-rater reliability to ensure consistency in the analysis.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the university's ethics board. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks before providing written informed consent. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All data collected were anonymized, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

3. Results

This section presents the findings from the study that investigated the significance of reading in foreign language teaching and the effectiveness of different reading strategies (extensive reading, intensive reading, and interactive reading). The results are organized into two main categories: quantitative outcomes (pre-test and post-test data) and qualitative insights (survey responses, classroom observations, and interview themes).

3.1 Quantitative Results

3.1.1 Pre-test and Post-test Analysis

The pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed to determine the impact of the different reading strategies on learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency. Table 1 summarizes the mean scores and standard deviations for each group before and after the intervention.

Group	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Extensive Reading	56.3 (8.7)	75.2 (9.4)	+18.9	10.62	< 0.001
Intensive Reading	57.8 (9.1)	78.4 (7.5)	+20.6	11.22	< 0.001
Interactive Reading	58.1 (8.9)	76.7 (8.2)	+18.6	10.03	< 0.001
Control Group	57.2 (8.4)	60.1 (7.3)	+2.9	2.52	0.014

3.1.2 Statistical Significance

A **paired-samples t-test** revealed that all three experimental groups (Extensive Reading, Intensive Reading, and Interactive Reading) showed significant improvements in their post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores. This indicates that the reading interventions had a positive impact on the learners' reading comprehension and language proficiency.

- The **Extensive Reading Group** showed an average increase of 18.9 points on the post-test ($t = 10.62$, $p < 0.001$).

- The **Intensive Reading Group** demonstrated the greatest improvement, with an average increase of 20.6 points ($t = 11.22$, $p < 0.001$).

- The **Interactive Reading Group** showed a similar improvement to the Extensive Reading Group, with an average increase of 18.6 points ($t = 10.03$, $p < 0.001$).

The **Control Group**, however, only showed a modest increase of 2.9 points ($t = 2.52$, $p = 0.014$), which was statistically significant but much smaller in magnitude compared to the experimental groups. This suggests that the regular curriculum, which did not focus on specific reading strategies, had less impact on learners' reading development.

3.1.3 Comparison of Experimental Groups

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the improvement in post-test scores across the four groups. The results indicated significant differences between the experimental groups and the control group ($F(3, 116) = 72.36$, $p < 0.001$). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test revealed that:

- The Intensive Reading Group showed significantly higher post-test scores than the Extensive Reading and Interactive Reading Groups, suggesting that the structured

approach of intensive reading with explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction was the most effective in improving comprehension and language skills.

- There were no significant differences between the Extensive Reading Group and the Interactive Reading Group, indicating that both of these strategies were similarly effective in fostering reading improvement, although the nature of the intervention (self-paced vs. collaborative) differed.

3.1.4 Vocabulary Acquisition

The vocabulary acquisition scores were measured by a separate vocabulary test based on the reading materials used in the intervention. Table 2 presents the results for vocabulary knowledge before and after the intervention.

Group	Pre-test Vocabulary Mean (SD)	Post-test Vocabulary Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Extensive Reading	32.4 (5.6)	44.1 (6.7)	+11.7	9.74	< 0.001
Intensive Reading	33.2 (6.1)	46.3 (5.3)	+13.1	10.22	< 0.001
Interactive Reading	32.5 (5.3)	44.5 (6.0)	+12.0	9.89	< 0.001
Control Group	33.0 (5.5)	34.8 (4.2)	+1.8	1.79	0.078

As with the reading comprehension test, significant gains in vocabulary knowledge were observed for all three experimental groups. The Intensive Reading Group showed the largest vocabulary improvement (13.1 words), followed by the Interactive Reading Group (12.0 words) and the Extensive Reading Group (11.7 words). The Control Group showed a modest increase of 1.8 words, which was not statistically significant ($p = 0.078$), further suggesting that the specific reading strategies were more effective than the regular curriculum.

3.2 Qualitative Results

3.2.1 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations highlighted several key differences in the engagement levels and interactions among the groups. The Extensive Reading Group was noted for having high levels of individual engagement. Learners were highly motivated to read, often choosing books that aligned with their personal interests. However, the group was less engaged in language-focused discussions, as the emphasis was on reading for enjoyment rather than on deep linguistic analysis.

In the Intensive Reading Group, students exhibited strong focus on the linguistic aspects of texts. Teachers facilitated in-depth discussions on vocabulary and grammar, and students appeared more engaged when breaking down complex structures or exploring challenging vocabulary. This group also showed frequent interaction with the teacher, asking questions and seeking clarification on specific language points.

The Interactive Reading Group was marked by frequent peer interactions. Students often worked in pairs or small groups to discuss texts, role-play scenes, or debate the ideas presented in the readings. These learners showed high levels of verbal interaction, and there was a noticeable sense of excitement and camaraderie in the classroom. However, some students struggled to keep up with the pace of the discussions, indicating that while the strategy fostered collaboration, it may have been challenging for some lower-level learners.

3.2.2 Survey Results

The surveys provided additional insights into learners' attitudes toward the reading strategies. Most learners in the Extensive Reading Group reported enjoying the freedom to choose their own reading materials and felt that it increased their motivation to read. However, they also expressed a desire for more guidance on vocabulary and grammar.

The Intensive Reading Group participants indicated that they felt more confident in their reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge, though some students found the structured nature of the approach to be somewhat repetitive and time-consuming.

Learners in the Interactive Reading Group highlighted the social aspect of the strategy as particularly enjoyable. They appreciated discussing texts with their peers and felt that this helped them understand the material better. However, some reported that they sometimes felt overwhelmed by the pace of group discussions, especially when they were not fully confident in their language skills.

3.2.3 Interview Themes

In the interviews, several recurring themes emerged:

- Motivation: Participants in all three experimental groups reported feeling more motivated to read after the intervention. Those in the Interactive Reading Group particularly valued the social interaction, while learners in the Intensive Reading Group appreciated the structured approach.

- Challenges: Common challenges included difficulties in understanding complex vocabulary (especially for the Extensive Reading Group) and the fast pace of group discussions (particularly for the Interactive Reading Group).

- Perceived Effectiveness: Most learners felt that the reading strategies had helped improve their reading skills, with the Intensive Reading Group reporting the greatest sense of progress in both vocabulary acquisition and overall comprehension.

3.3 Interactive Reading

Interactive reading involves collaboration between learners and instructors or peers. During interactive reading, learners engage in discussions, debates, or group activities based on the text they are reading. This strategy enhances learners' critical thinking and promotes deeper engagement with the content. Additionally, it encourages learners to express their thoughts and interpretations of the text, which fosters language production alongside reading comprehension (Vygotsky, 1978).

3.4 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a teaching technique in which instructors provide support and guidance to learners during the reading process. This support may include pre-reading activities (such as activating background knowledge), providing vocabulary lists, or guiding learners through difficult sections of the text. As learners become more proficient, the level of support is gradually reduced, allowing them to develop greater independence in their reading (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

4. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the significance of reading in foreign language teaching and the effectiveness of different reading strategies—extensive reading, intensive reading, and interactive reading—on learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency (Babayev, 2022). The results show that all three reading strategies had a positive impact on language learning, but some strategies were more effective than others in certain areas. The Intensive Reading Group demonstrated the most significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition, while both the Extensive Reading and Interactive Reading Groups showed substantial gains in reading comprehension and engagement. These findings suggest that the type of reading strategy employed can significantly influence the learning outcomes for foreign language learners.

4.1 Significance of Reading in Foreign Language Acquisition

The findings of this study reinforce the crucial role that reading plays in foreign language acquisition, supporting the broader theoretical view that reading can enhance vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, and general language proficiency (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). All experimental groups showed significant improvements in reading comprehension and vocabulary, indicating that reading activities, whether extensive, intensive, or interactive, contribute substantially to language learning (Murad et al, 2025). These findings align with previous research, which has demonstrated that reading is a powerful tool for increasing both language input and

output, and can accelerate learners' exposure to new lexical items and grammatical structures (Day & Bamford, 1998; Nation, 2013).

The Intensive Reading Group showed the greatest gains in vocabulary acquisition, which can be attributed to the more focused and structured nature of the intervention. Intensive reading activities often involve repeated exposure to specific vocabulary, detailed discussions of grammatical structures, and explicit attention to form, which enhances vocabulary retention (Robb & Susser, 1989). This is consistent with the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which posits that learners acquire vocabulary more effectively when it is encountered repeatedly in context, with attention given to both its meaning and form.

4.2 Comparative Effectiveness of Reading Strategies

4.2.1 Intensive Reading

The Intensive Reading Group demonstrated the most substantial improvements in both vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. The focused approach of reading short texts in depth, combined with explicit teaching of vocabulary and grammar, helped learners to internalize language structures and acquire new words. This is consistent with previous studies which found that intensive reading tasks—such as vocabulary-focused exercises, grammar analysis, and comprehension questions—can lead to more immediate language gains (Richards, 2001).

While this approach led to significant improvements, it should be noted that some students in the Intensive Reading Group reported feeling overwhelmed by the structure of the tasks and the emphasis on detailed linguistic analysis. This feedback suggests that although intensive reading can be highly effective, it may be most beneficial for learners who are already motivated to engage with challenging material. Additionally, intensive reading may be less suited for lower-level learners who may struggle with the cognitive load required for deep analysis of texts.

4.2.2 Extensive Reading

The Extensive Reading Group showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension, and learners in this group reported higher levels of motivation due to the freedom to choose reading materials based on their personal interests. Extensive reading is generally associated with positive attitudes toward reading, as it fosters reading fluency and helps learners develop automaticity in recognizing vocabulary and grammatical structures (Elley, 1991). By reading longer texts with a focus on meaning rather than form, learners in the Extensive Reading Group were able to engage in low-stress, pleasurable reading experiences that likely contributed to their improvements in comprehension.

However, learners in this group did not show as large an improvement in vocabulary acquisition as those in the Intensive Reading Group. This may be due to the fact that extensive reading often involves encountering vocabulary in a more incidental way, without focused attention on new

words (Alisoy, 2025). Although learners are exposed to a broad range of vocabulary, the lack of structured, explicit instruction can make it harder for learners to retain and use new words (Nation, 2001). Nevertheless, extensive reading still proves valuable as a means to build reading fluency and to foster a lifelong habit of reading in the foreign language.

4.2.3 Interactive Reading

The Interactive Reading Group demonstrated strong engagement and motivation, with learners reporting that they found the collaborative activities—such as discussions, debates, and role-plays—particularly enjoyable. The social aspect of learning, which emphasizes communication and negotiation of meaning, has been shown to increase learner motivation and enhance comprehension through peer interactions (Swain, 2000). By working together, students in the Interactive Reading Group were able to clarify meaning, practice pronunciation, and develop their speaking skills while reinforcing their understanding of the text.

Although the interactive approach was successful in fostering engagement, some learners reported difficulties keeping up with the pace of the discussions, particularly when they felt less confident in their language abilities. This suggests that while collaborative reading strategies can be highly motivating, they may pose challenges for lower-level learners or those with less language proficiency. It also raises the question of how to balance collaborative tasks with individual reading needs, as some learners may require more time and space to process information before they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts in a group setting.

4.3 Learner Motivation and Engagement

One of the most striking findings from both the surveys and interviews was the high level of motivation and engagement reported by learners in all three experimental groups. The ability to engage with reading materials in different ways, whether by focusing on fluency (extensive reading), accuracy (intensive reading), or collaboration (interactive reading)—appeared to boost learners' interest in reading and increase their confidence in using the foreign language.

The Interactive Reading Group, in particular, demonstrated the power of social interaction in language learning. Learners in this group enjoyed discussing texts with their peers and felt that this helped them understand the material more deeply. This aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. By negotiating meaning in a group, learners not only improved their comprehension but also developed a sense of community and support, which is essential for fostering a positive learning environment.

In contrast, learners in the Extensive Reading Group enjoyed the freedom to choose reading materials, which likely helped sustain their motivation throughout the intervention. The Intensive Reading Group participants, while benefiting from structured activities, also reported greater

confidence in their language skills, which was attributed to the clear progression of vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension tasks.

5. Conclusion

Reading is a fundamental skill in foreign language teaching, contributing significantly to vocabulary expansion, cultural understanding, and cognitive development. However, many learners face challenges that can impede their reading comprehension. By incorporating strategies such as extensive and intensive reading, interactive reading, and scaffolding, educators can provide learners with the tools they need to overcome these challenges and develop strong reading skills in the foreign language.

Future research should continue to explore the impact of different reading strategies on language acquisition and how these strategies can be adapted to suit the diverse needs of learners in varied educational contexts. Additionally, incorporating digital reading tools and authentic texts from diverse genres may enhance the learning experience and further motivate students to engage with reading in the target language.

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