



## **“The More I Read, The More I Want To Read”: Extending Reading With Reading Logs**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This action research aims to extend English as a foreign language (EFL) learners’ reading practices through the use of reading logs beyond the classroom. Accordingly, EFL students in an English reading course are encouraged by their teacher, the researcher, to keep weekly reading logs for three semesters. Later, 38 students’ viewpoints are collected through a survey. The results show that students favor reading online materials using their smartphones and laptops and use language learning and news websites extensively to source reading materials. Additionally, it is found that updated reading log activity carries the characteristics of successful extensive reading practices. Students agree that they could read a large volume of texts. The practice is regarded as easy and mainly for pleasure. Students have a choice of selection in content and individualized learning. Despite some complaints, such as boredom or perceiving the task as regular schoolwork, the majority of students believe the reading log improved not only their reading comprehension skills, but other language skills. The task kept them consistently busy with English and encouraged them to explore different websites and various reading texts. The research findings offer implications for language teachers who aim to extend language learning beyond the class.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

*“Good things happen to students who read a great deal in the new language.”*  
(Bamford & Day, 2004, p. 1)

With the widespread use of technology and digital tools in this era, reading is undergoing a dramatic transition from print into the digital realm (Bromley, 2010). Time spent on digital practices, such as surfing on social media platforms, displaces the time spent on reading older forms of media (Purchase, 2019). The average weekly time spent reading in a native language is gradually decreasing and new generations tend to read less and less as they become older (Watson, 2019). These statistical results and diminishing trends of reading in mother tongues around the world might challenge language teachers to create reading habits for foreign language learners, due to the fact that reading in another language is perceived as a laborious and unpleasant exercise for a high number of language learners (Arnold, 2009; Day & Bamford, 2002). As a result, language teachers search for innovative approaches to help students read for pleasure and become avid readers by way of extracurricular activities.

Extensive reading (ER) is “an approach to the teaching and learning of second language reading in which learners read large quantities of books and other materials that are well within their linguistic competence” (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 9). Extensive reading is a self-selected voluntary reading practice to gain the general meaning of the reading text (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002), whereby students choose and read various materials independently of the language teacher (Bamford & Day, 2004). This practice provides vast linguistic input for language learners and engages learners’ authentic language (Bochner & Bochner, 2009; Nakanishi, 2015; Yang, 2001). Learners are able to gain reading fluency, comprehension skills and expand their vocabulary and other language competencies (Bell, 2001; Elley, 1991; Hayashi, 1999; Hitosugi & Day, 2004; Lyutaya, 2011; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Nation, 2015; Sakurai, 2017). Extensive reading not only has linguistic benefits, but is useful for positive attitudes toward reading, creating reading habits and motivating learners to the long term study of language (Bamford & Day, 2004; Powell, 2005; Yamashita, 2013). Therefore, ER is more effective than intensive reading (i.e., reading for detail) (Beglar, Hunt, & Kite, 2012).

The valuable results obtained from the extant literature on ER has provided robust insights for language teachers to implement ER practices into their in-class teaching. Some essential characteristics to implement ER in language classrooms and increase the effectiveness of the practices were determined by Day and Bamford (1998, 2002). The 10 principles the authors determined were as follows (Day & Bamford, 2002, pp. 137–140): 1- The reading material is easy; 2- A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available; 3- Learners choose what they want to read; 4- Learners read as much as possible; 5- The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding; 6- Reading is its own reward; 7- Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower; 8- Reading is individual and silent; 9- Teachers orient and guide their students; 10- The teacher is a role model of a reader. These 10 principles have been widely accepted in ER literature and language teachers apply them to examine ER practices (e.g., Aliponga, 2013; Day & Bamford, 2002). In later research, Day (2015) re-examined practices of the 10 principles and the nature of ER based on document analysis. He found that six of the outlined principles of ER are most frequently used in ER programs. These six core principles, in terms of frequency, rank as follows (Day, 2015, p. 298): 1- Learners read as much as possible; 2- Learners choose what they want to read; 3- A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available; 4- The reading material is easy; 5- The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding; 6- Reading is individual and silent. Day concluded that there is no single most effective way of practicing ER projects.

Despite its gains for language development, ER has not received the deserved support in language education programs (Milliner, 2017; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). ER is still unpopular in formal education institutions, as they demand easily observable and attainable achievement in the short term (Renandya & Jacobs, 2016; Takase, 2007; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007). It follows then, that a limited number of teachers implement ER in their language education programs. Though ER is not restricted to reading print books, the teacher generally implements ER with graded readers as the most frequent ER resource in ER projects (Aliponga, 2013; Cheetham, Harper, Elliott, & Ito, 2016; Nation, 2009; Robb, 2018; Tagane, Naganuma, & Dougherty, 2018; Villas, 2016). Due to the well-documented affordances for language learners in graded readers, teachers encourage their students to read these books (Villas, 2016), however, there exists a problem with graded readers: cost. As an average graded reader costs approximately \$10, it can be challenging to build a private collection (Hinkelmann, 2013; Milliner, 2017). Consequently, ER is half-jokingly called “expensive reading” (Robb, 2018).

The greatest challenge of ER projects is keeping track of learners' out-of-class reading practices, as what students read beyond the classroom is unobservable (Campbell & Weatherford, 2013; McBridge & Milliner, 2016; Robb & Kano, 2013). The relevant literature suggests two common approaches to check and record students' practices: reading logs/journals and online compression quizzes (Tagane et al., 2018). Reading logs, as a tool of integrating reading with writing, represent a widespread ER practice conducted mostly using graded readers and book reports (Lyutaya, 2011; Tagane et al., 2018; Villas, 2016). Reading logs have various benefits as ER activity, while promoting learner autonomy and reflection on his/her own progress (Course, 2017; Day, 2018; Lyutaya, 2011). Despite the additional work entailed and the tiresome process of preparation, students enjoy keeping a record of their reading and reading logs are one of the most effective ways to teach students of all levels to engage in reading, thinking and discussing freely (Rubert & Brueggeman, 1986; Youngblood, 1985). However, there are concerns about keeping reading logs and assigning writing summaries. Some studies have shown that mandating students to read outside the classroom makes them less motivated to read and might result in students plagiarizing their responses, as they can easily be found on the Internet (Pak & Weseley, 2012; Weatherford & Campbell, 2015). There are also drawbacks on the teachers' side, for example, in a crowded classroom it might be time-consuming to check and give feedback on the reading logs because of teachers' responsibilities to follow textbook requirements and prepare students for standardized tests (Milliner, 2017; Weatherford & Campbell, 2015). Careful planning, based on the goals and objectives of the course, is needed to avoid disrupting and interrupting language learners' attention in reading log projects (Lyutaya, 2011).

In today's digitalized era, it is necessary to bridge in-class language learning with out-of-class language learning, in order to provide a more authentic language learning experience (Lai, 2017). As an umbrella term, out-of-class language encompasses any kind of activity, including online practices, undertaken beyond the classroom for language learning (Benson, 2011). Despite well-documented positive gains of ER for language development, less is known regarding what language learners read beyond the classroom, except for hard copy books and e-books, due to the widespread use of the Internet and digital technologies today. There is a call for research to understand language learners' online ER practices (Arnold, 2009; Cote & Milliner, 2015; Pino-Silva, 2006). Considering the benefits of ER, this study aims to test the effectiveness of strengthening reading logs with online ER reading practices to create a reading habit. This study presents the results of action research, which adopted reading logs for tracking language learners' out-of-class language learning experiences.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Research design**

Action research (AR) was adopted as the research design of this study. AR allows researchers to collect data about a particular activity in education, analyze it, reflect on the practice and develop alternatives (Burns, 2009). It is a less predictable type of research in comparison with traditional quantitative and qualitative methods. The main idea for applying this type of design is to make deliberate interventions for a problematic situation in the class in order to fix the issue and bring about improvements in practice (Burns, 2009). Typical AR encompasses four broad steps

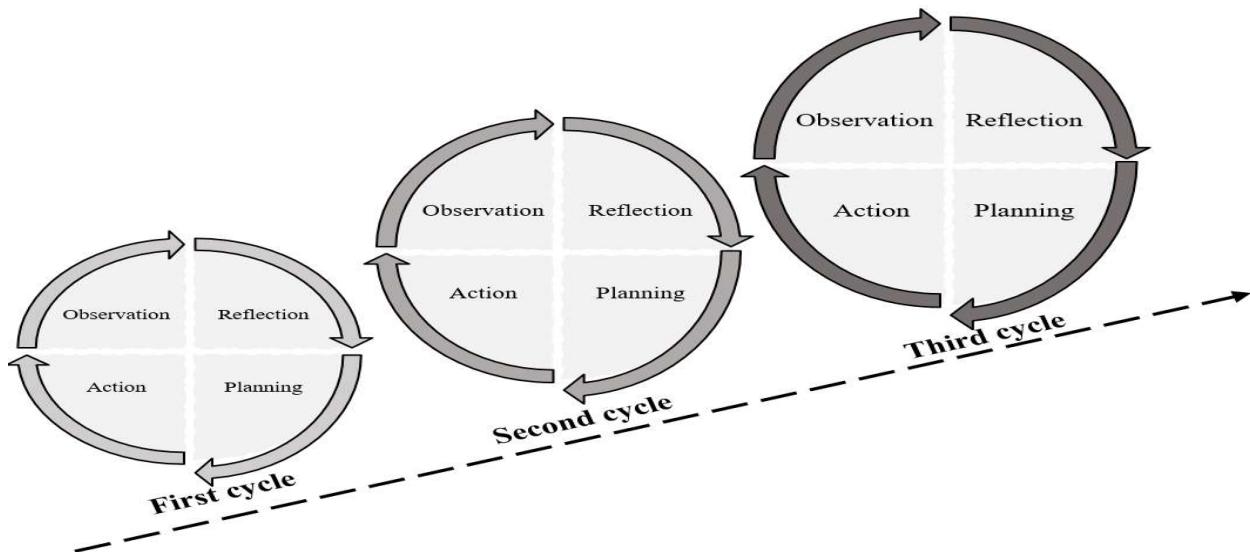
(i.e., *Planning, Action, Observation, Reflection*; see Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013). The teacher, as the researcher of the study, followed all the steps in the intervention of the practice.

## Study context

The study context was a classroom of a major English department (English Language Teaching) in a higher education institution in an EFL setting, Turkey. The research was conducted with students in preparatory and first-year English reading courses in the department. Although students attend the university after passing an English proficiency test, they were further tested for all language skills at the beginning of the term. If they could obtain a score of 70 and over on the proficiency test of English, including four language skills and grammar, they would move directly to the first-year education. Students completed 20 hours of the English language course per week for two terms, with a minimum of 12 weeks in each term (fall and spring). The reading course was five hours per week in each term. An English reading book was used as the main textbook (i.e., Inside Reading Level 2 by Zwier, 2013) in the fall semester. Overall in that term, students' English proficiency levels were somewhere between A2 and B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001). In the spring semester, another book (i.e., Inside Reading Level 3 by Rubin, 2013) was used as the main textbook. According to CEFR, students are expected to start the term at the B1 level and graduate from the preparatory class at a minimum of B2. At the end of the second term, students undertook another proficiency test. The students whose composite score of the mid-term and the proficiency exam was over 70 gained a right to start the English major education. In the first year of study, students undertook eight hours of skill-based language courses, including reading skills and other field-based courses, in each term. The reading course was two hours per week and aimed to teach reading skills using a wide range of texts. To expand students' reading skills and strategies, different coursebook materials and texts from various resources were used in the class. According to CEFR, the students' level is somewhere between B2 and C1 level at that time in their academic career.

## AR intervention

Based on the relevant literature, teacher observation and students' suggestions, the teacher introduced a reading log activity to 48 students in the preparatory class at the beginning of the fall semester of the 2018-2019 academic year. First, an online Google Docs link, including reading log and details, was shared with students. Students were subsequently trained on how to complete the logs. Following technological problems (uploading a document, not following the template procedures or extensive use of cellphones with the forms) for a number of the students, after the third week of the term, the process was transitioned to paper form because of the ease of writing by hand. After this pilot-testing step, the first cycle of the study was initiated. The intervention cycles, including steps of successful action research, are summarized in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Action Research Intervention

### First cycle

*Planning:* The teacher planned the reading self-log based on the literature, observation, students' needs and preference analysis using an open-ended question.

*Act:* Students started writing their ideas and summaries for the reading self-log practice, with a word limit between 100-150 words. The student noted the resource (e.g., book title or website name) and answered questions such as:

- What was the reading about?
- How did it help you to improve your skills?
- Which new words did you learn from this text?

Each week, the students read two of the latest news stories from the provided website (<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/>) at levels three and four out of seven levels available (equivalence of A2 and B1), as well as one text from the coursebook (second reading in each unit) and another from any resource they wanted. Subsequently, each week they wrote reflections for four different texts and noted new words with a sample sentence in context. Students were advised about the importance of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and provided with listening audio files of the reading texts by the teacher.

*Observation:* The teacher opened discussions concerning the news on the website, randomly checked each week, and sometimes gave a chance for students to read aloud and have in-class discussions. The teacher provided written feedback to all students every fifth and 10th week.

*Reflection:* Students anonymously provided their feedback and responded to four questions in any language they wished (Turkish, English). The four questions focused on general ideas regarding the activity, pros, cons and further initiatives for the improvement of the activity.

## **Second cycle**

*Planning:* Based on the feedback from the reflection step in the first cycle, some modifications were made. First, students complained about the coursebook reading section and the use of words in the context section. These sections were removed. In accordance with students' suggestions, the stage book collection of the university was expanded with teacher-initiated activities, and free access for the online book collection was provided to students. A list of 20 reading websites was shared with the students at the beginning of the spring semester of the 2018-2019 academic year.

*Act:* Students wrote three summaries for the reading self-log practice. They read news from the provided website (<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/>) at a minimum level of five and six out of seven levels on the website (equivalence of B1 and B2). Additionally, they read a minimum of three pages from any book they wanted and any English text from any website. Self-logs were accompanied by a vocabulary exercise: unknown words with IPA and definitions. They were also encouraged to read texts using audio file options and listen to the texts.

*Observation:* The teacher opened discussions about the recent news that students read, randomly checked self-logs, asked students to provide oral summarize in the class and shared their thoughts about interesting points. Individual feedback was given in the fifth and 10th weeks of the term.

*Reflection:* Students answered an open-ended question (what are your thoughts about reading self-log practice?) and anonymously wrote their comments in Turkish or English, free in choice for language.

## **Third cycle**

*Planning:* Based on students' feedback, the teacher gave increased freedom in the modified version of the reading log. A list of online websites was provided to students. As new students participated in the group, the self-log practice was introduced to all students, and they were trained on how to keep their self-logs at the beginning of the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. A sample reading log practice sheet was distributed to the students.

*Act:* Students kept reading self-logs. They visited the provided website (<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/>) to follow the news (equivalence of B2 and C1) and two other summaries from any resource they wished. They also wrote the definitions and IPA of the words in the reading section.

*Observation:* The teacher asked students to voluntarily share their experiences at certain times and let students discuss with their peers. Feedback was given at the end of the term, when students submitted 10 reading self-logs.

*Reflection:* Students provided anonymous feedback by answering the open-ended question with their general thoughts on this experience.

After this final step, following one month of intervention, the students completed an online questionnaire. As the teacher believed saturation was reached and a reading habit was created, the teacher introduced a wider variety of reading activities, including reading self-log practice (e.g., read aloud, MReader online platform, short story analysis). This study shares the results of the third cycle. Some of the students were first-time students who were introduced to the reading self-log practice. Students who wrote more than 10 reading logs were familiar with the activity for three academic semesters.

### **Study group**

The study group was composed of 38 English major university-level language learner ( $n = 27$ ; 71.1% female) whose ages ranged from 18 to 26 ( $M = 20.05$ ;  $SD = 1.74$ ). Twenty-seven of the students participated in three cycles of the study and were trained in both the preparatory class and the first year of their major. Eleven students participated in the third cycle of the study and the first year of their major. These students were called novice reading self-log keepers. The remaining students became familiar with the logs over an extended period of time and were consequently referred to as expert reading self-log keepers. The students' reading log numbers ranged from 10 to 30 ( $M = 22.76$ ;  $SD = 8.88$ ). A high majority of the students kept reading logs for 30 weeks ( $n = 21$ ; 55.3%) and all first-year students maintained 10 reading logs. At the time of the study, based on the English proficiency test results, students' English proficiency levels were somewhere between B2 and C1, in accordance with the CEFR proficiency matrix.

### **Instruments**

An online survey form including demographic details (i.e., age, gender, reading log number) and questions regarding the reading log keeping process were used as the data collection instruments. Details are provided in the following section.

**Reading tool use.** The questionnaire included five provided lists of tools that students might use while reading (i.e., smartphone, tablet, e-book reader, PC/laptop; print materials). It had a five-point frequency-of-use scale (1 = Never, 2 = Almost never, 3 = Occasionally/Sometimes, 4 = Almost every time, 5 = Every time).

**ER evaluation.** The questionnaire consisted of six questions regarding ER principles, as suggested by Day (2015). The questionnaire comprised a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). It had a higher reliability score ( $\alpha = .84$ ). An example of an item on the questionnaire is: "By keeping reading logs, I could choose what I want to read."

**Open-ended questions.** Three open-ended questions (i.e., most frequently visited websites, the effectiveness of reading log practice in terms of reading comprehension and encouragement) were asked to students. The questions were as follows:

- What are your top three most frequently visited websites in your reading practice?
- How effective was the reading self-log practice for developing your reading comprehension skills?
- How effective was the reading self-log practice in terms of encouraging you to read more?

## **Data collection and analysis**

The data in this study were collected after the third cycle of the intervention by way of an online survey. The students were invited with the class WhatsApp group to complete the survey during their break. They voluntarily completed the form and answered the questionnaire.

The survey data was screened for analysis, and there was no missing data in either the questionnaire items or the open-ended questions. Some of the answers in the open-ended questions were very short, without extra clarification, but their number was relatively low ( $n = 7$ ; 18.4%). Both quantitative and qualitative data were descriptively analyzed, and findings were presented with tables of frequencies with means and percentages. The SPSS 22.0 packet program and NVivo12 were used for the data analysis. The qualitative findings were supported by students' excerpts, with a capital letter indicating their level of expertise and a data identification number (i.e., N1P = Novice reading self-log keeper one with positive thoughts; E2N = Expert reading self-log keeper two with negative thoughts).

## **RESULTS**

### **Tool use for reading English beyond the classroom**

Students were asked what kinds of tools they use while reading in English for reading log practice. The descriptives of device use are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptives of Device Use in Reading English

| <b>Tools</b>                  | <b>Min.</b> | <b>Max.</b> | <b>M</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| 1. I used my smartphone.      | 1.00        | 5.00        | 4.29     | 1.11      |
| 2. I used my PC/laptop.       | 1.00        | 5.00        | 2.82     | 1.75      |
| 3. I used my print materials. | 1.00        | 5.00        | 2.50     | 1.25      |
| 4. I used my e-book reader.   | 1.00        | 4.00        | 1.34     | .78       |
| 5. I used my tablet.          | 1.00        | 3.00        | 1.11     | .39       |

As shown in Table 1, the most extensively used device was the smartphone, which means students use smartphones almost every time they practice reading in English ( $M = 4.29$ ;  $SD = 1.11$ ). The other tools had low means. E-readers and tablets were the least used tools, with barely any students using these devices.

### **Most frequently visited websites for reading English beyond the classroom**

Students were asked to share their top three websites visited for reading practice. Three students provided only two websites, and two other students listed smartphone applications (i.e., Shortly: Read Short Stories App [<https://shortlyread.com/>] and Audio Books-1001 English Stories [[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.awabe.englishstory&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.awabe.englishstory&hl=en_US)]), which do not have specific website names. The remaining 34 students each listed three websites. After standardizing the names of websites (e.g., [www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish) = BBC Learning English, Learning English BBC), a list of 28 different websites remained. The details on the most frequent websites are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Frequency of Visited Websites for Reading English

| Websites                                    | <i>f</i> | %    | Websites                               | <i>f</i> | %  |
|---|----------|------|--|----------|----|
| 1. https://learningenglish.voanews.com/     | 30       | 27.5 | 15. www.englishin10minutes.com/        | 1        | .9 |
| 2. www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/           | 19       | 17.4 | 16. www.washingtonpost.com/            | 1        | .9 |
| 3. https://breakingnewsenglish.com/         | 9        | 8.3  | 17. www.popularmechanics.com/          | 1        | .9 |
| 4. https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/ | 6        | 5.5  | 18. www.popsci.com/                    | 1        | .9 |
| 5. www.reddit.com/                          | 6        | 5.5  | 19. https://artsandculture.google.com/ | 1        | .9 |
| 6. www.manythings.org/                      | 4        | 3.7  | 20. www.nbcnews.com/                   | 1        | .9 |
| 7. https://ed.ted.com/                      | 3        | 2.8  | 21. www.linguapress.com/               | 1        | .9 |
| 8. www.bbc.com/                             | 3        | 2.8  | 22. www.npr.org/                       | 1        | .9 |
| 9. www.bbc.com/news/                        | 3        | 2.8  | 23. www.usatoday.com/                  | 1        | .9 |
| 10. www.wikipedia.org/                      | 3        | 2.8  | 24. www.kotaku.com/                    | 1        | .9 |
| 11. www.gutenberg.org/                      | 3        | 2.8  | 25. www.yourstoryclub.com/             | 1        | .9 |
| 12. www.nationalgeographic.org/             | 2        | 1.8  | 26. www.science.nasa.gov/              | 1        | .9 |
| 13. www.newsinslevels.com/                  | 2        | 1.8  | 27. https://www.discovery.com/         | 1        | .9 |
| 14. www.edition.cnn.com/                    | 2        | 1.8  | 28. www.eslfast.com/                   | 1        | .9 |

According to the provided website lists, language learning, international news, social media, e-books, popular culture and science websites were used. The most frequently used were English-learning websites that provide content according to students' proficiency levels.

### Evaluation of reading log practice

The students also evaluated the reading log practice in terms of six major principles of ER activity. The average score of the six principles was 4.16 ( $SD = .74$ ), which indicates that the students agreed with the items. Descriptives of the six ranked principles are outlined in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Descriptives of Six Principles of Extensive Reading

| Principles  | <i>Min.</i> | <i>Max.</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---|-------------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| 1. In the reading log practice, reading was individual and silent.  | 2.00        | 5.00        | 4.53     | .86       |
| 2. By keeping reading logs, I could choose what I want to read.   | 2.00        | 5.00        | 4.23     | 1.05      |
| 3. In the reading log practice, a variety of reading material on a wide range of topics was available.                          | 2.00        | 5.00        | 4.21     | 1.02      |
| 4. By keeping reading logs, I could read as much as possible.   | 2.00        | 5.00        | 4.16     | 1.03      |
| 5. In the reading log practice, the purpose of reading was usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding. | 1.00        | 5.00        | 4.08     | 1.10      |
| 6. In the reading log practice, the reading material was easy.  | 2.00        | 5.00        | 3.71     | .90       |

Table 3 shows that modified reading log practice meets the principles of successful ER practice. Students strongly agreed that reading practice is individual and silent. Ease of the reading material had the lowest mean score among the principles.

In addition to quantitative results, students' written responses were descriptively analyzed to provide much data about the reading log implementation. The students answered two open-ended questions about the effectiveness of reading log practice for developing reading comprehension skills and reading encouragement. The students (i.e., Expert and Novice reading

self-log keepers) were grouped under two categories: (a) students with positive thoughts and (b) students with negative thoughts. The descriptives of students' responses are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Descriptives of Students' Responses to Open-ended Questions

| Questions                    | Students | Positive (f) | %     | Negative (f) | %     |
|------------------------------|----------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| 1. Reading skill development | Expert   | 25           | 65.79 | 2            | 5.26  |
|                              | Novice   | 9            | 23.68 | 2            | 5.26  |
| 2. Reading encouragement     | Expert   | 24           | 63.16 | 3            | 7.89  |
|                              | Novice   | 7            | 18.42 | 4            | 10.53 |

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

According to the provided responses, a high majority of the students agreed that reading logs are effective for reading skill enhancement and expressed positive thoughts about the practice ( $n = 34$ ; 89.47%). A majority of the students said that keeping reading log encouraged and motivated them to read more ( $n = 31$ ; 81.58%). Detailed responses to each question are given under two sub-headings: reading skill development and reading encouragement.

### Reading skill development

A high majority of the students said reading log practice yielded many positive gains, such as language development, aside from reading, writing and listening skills. Students said the practice expanded their vocabulary and grammar knowledge, as well as reinforcing their note-taking and summarizing and pronunciation skills. On this issue, E15P wrote: "Reading self-log practice developed my reading, writing, and listening ability a lot. Because I usually choose text which have audio recording, so I could listen to the text." Furthermore, students agreed that maintaining reading logs forced them to read regularly, read a variety of text and read for pleasure at their own pace. On this issue, E29P said: "I got used to reading the texts and I realized my reading comprehension skill has developed with different levels with self-logs." In addition, some students said that, although it is time-consuming and tiresome, they find the practice informative. E12P said: "It was very good for my understanding skills, but it is also tiring because I have too many responsibilities and assignments for other lessons."

Only four students had negative thoughts about the effectiveness of the tool. Two of them wrote short answers and did not provide any reason (e.g., I do not think reading logs improved my reading skills at all; Not very well.) One student (N2N) stated it did not improve his vocabulary knowledge as he read at his own pace, and the other (E12N) said: "I did the reading self-logs with a conscious of homework not based on pleasure. So I do not think it's efficient."

### Reading encouragement

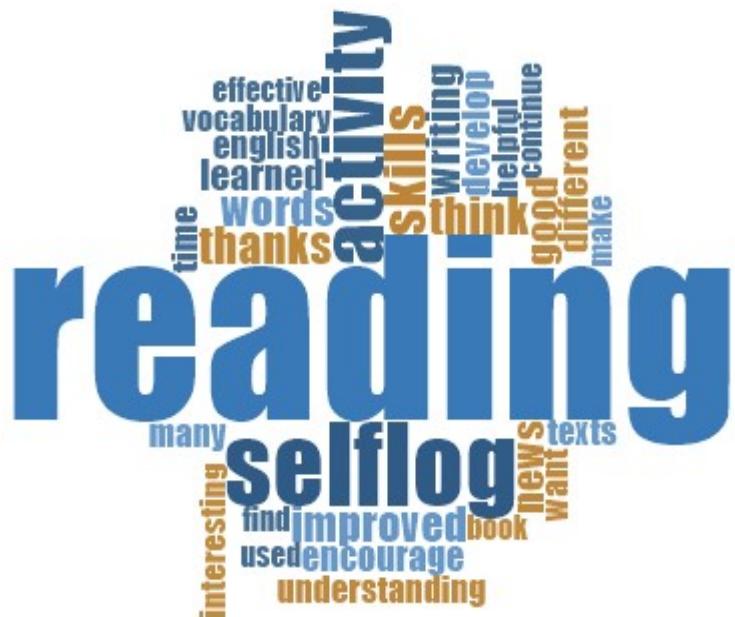
Most students agreed that they could read more with the reading log practice. On this issue, N4P said: "I read lots of articles and books. When I saw my reading progress, I had a chance to read more and effectively." E9P added: "The more I read, the more I want to read." The students freely chose the content, discovered a variety of content, expanded general culture knowledge, and had a chance to read according to their interests. Emphasizing the benefits of following the agenda on the news, E25P added: "I read more. This was not about politics, but about health, the future, fashion, travel, or entertainment. There were times when I was reading somewhere, wondering,

and reading another news. After a while, I started to read the news, thereby following the sites I visited on social media.” Similar to skill development, when students experience the joy of learning in other language skills, they became motivated to read. On this issue, E23P said: “...when I learn a new expression and I absorb it and use it for my writing lessons. For example, I can say daunting instead of difficult. Now I started to apply not only for my writing, but also my daily life [oral conversation in the department]. It is a great experience.”

Although a large majority of the students agreed with the increasing motivation to read a variety of texts in English, seven students (including four novice self-log keepers) did not have the same idea. Three students wrote very short answers (e.g., Not effective.) The others said that, as this was an assignment in the course class that needed to be completed each week, they could not enjoy the reading much. N2N added: “It didn’t encourage me to read more. I was reading because it was my duty.” Similarly, E7N said: “It wasn’t interesting and appealing enough for me.”

It should be noted that some students gave additional comments on another question: “anything to add to your teacher,” which was a voluntary option to answer. Fifteen students wrote a comment about self-log practice. While three students found the activity tiring and boring, the rest said they liked the activity and were in favor of continuum of the practice. Three students asked for teacher recommendations of websites for reading. On this issue, one (E34P) said: “I will only have one request. Would you recommend more websites or resources where we can access more news and article resources? I find it difficult to find proper websites.”

Last, in order to provide a clearer picture of the gains and complaints about the activity, the researcher determined the most frequently used words in the feedback. Then, a word cloud was drawn with a restriction of the 30 most frequently used words with a minimum of four letters from students’ written responses. The word cloud is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Word Cloud

The word cloud formed from three open-ended questions verified the qualitative results and indicated that reading log practice is associated with language development. Words with

positive associations, such as encourage, continue, useful, helpful, develop, thanks and improve, were the most frequently used.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This AR study presented the experience of the teacher as the researcher in a reading course. With the aim of creating a reading habit in language learners, a three-semester ER project with a reading self-log was implemented in an English reading course. After each term of reading, the self-log practice was modified and a new version of the activity introduced to students. The study shared the results of data gathered after the third implementation of keeping reading logs and provided insights about the nature of reading beyond the classroom and the effectivity of maintaining reading logs.

Findings related to the nature of reading beyond the classroom showed that smartphones and laptops are the top-ranked tools for reading in English, and students significantly prefer reading digital materials to hardcopy. The findings signal that e-material is more fashionable in reading English and creating reading habits in the target language. As Cote and Milliner (2015) outlined, online materials are easy to carry with smartphones and students do not need to physically visit the library. Additionally, online materials are preferred because of their low cost (Purchase, 2019). According to the provided list of websites, students visit various websites for reading English. Among the tools, English-learning websites are the most popular websites, as they provide materials adjusted to different reader levels. The Extensive Reading Foundation webpage (*i.e.*, <https://erfoundation.org/wordpress/>) and Robb (2018) have suggested some of these websites as highly effective tools in encouraging reading beyond the classroom. It was expected to see two language learning websites being frequently used in the practice, as those websites were provided by the teacher and used in the logs. These websites were used by the teacher to ease control and encourage a classroom discussion. Aside from those websites, students visited various other language learning websites. These websites provide readers with graded reading materials so that they can freely choose based on their level. News websites were found to be another popular online material, while the website Reddit is a popular social media platform for reading online. It appears that e-book reading websites are not very popular, which was also shown by Akarsu and Dariyemez (2014). Further, the findings indicated that readers visit websites related to science, technology and daily life. These findings are in parallel to previous research (Akarsu & Dariyemez, 2014; Arnold, 2009), which has indicated that students read a great deal of news and websites according to their needs and interests.

Findings related to the effectiveness of self-log practice, in terms of the six major principles of successful ER, showed that the new version of the reading log addresses these principles. Students enjoyed that the reading material was individualized, they could choose and read whatever they wanted for pleasure and information gathering. Some students thought that the reading material was not easy. As Lai and Gu (2011) indicated, there might be a mismatch between learners' proficiency levels and reading materials on online websites, as readings provided on social media are generally perceived as difficult to understand. This finding might be related to the study group: English major students who have a high level of language competence. Although advanced level language learners feel more secure and less anxious while reading in another language (Brantmeier, 2005), these learners might have higher expectations and prefer to choose texts above their actual levels because of perfectionism or overestimating their language skills. As

making selections above the level of proficiency might be demotivating and harm students' desire to read, language teachers should carefully design their ER practices (Nation, 2009).

The qualitative data supported the quantitative findings and indicated that reading logs were not only effective for reading comprehension and writing skill development, but promoted other micro and macro skills, for example, listening, grammar and vocabulary. These findings are consistent with various studies (e.g., Bell, 2001; Hitosugi & Day, 2004; Lyutaya, 2011; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Nation, 2015; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). Although preparing is time-consuming, the students tend to like keeping self-logs and hence continue activities with successful ER practices (Youngblood, 1985). In the practice, students noted unknown words and listened to audio materials, finding these exercises useful. Students were exposed to different subjects and had a chance to expand their horizons. In agreement with the findings of Renandya and Jacobs (2016), students connected reading practices with listening practices and improved their general culture by reading divergent subjects with ER projects. In addition to these linguistic benefits, the modified reading log helped meaningful engagement in reading practice and motivated learners to read and study language (Aliponga, 2013; Bamford & Day, 2004; Yamashita, 2013).

In spite of strong empirical support of ER and the benefits of the modified version of reading log practice for language development, some students complained about the practice. As the teachers encouraged learners to keep reading logs and have open discussions in certain weeks of the class, some students felt under pressure to maintain their self-logs and perceived it as an extra burden of the course. ER promotes no testing and no extra exercises for creating a reading habit (Bambord & Day, 2004). By bridging reading beyond the class experience with in-class exercises, the teacher aimed to participate in the process, monitor students and identify reluctant readers. With experience sharing discussions and peer-checking in class, a community of readers was created among the students. These acts have been recommended in the extant literature (Bambord & Day, 2004; Lyutaya, 2011; Renandya, 2007). The benefits of ER are noticeable only after students become more enthusiastic about engaging in the projects and reading for a long period (Grabe, 2009; Nakashini, 2015; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016).

This study is not without limitations, having two in general. The first is regarding the research methodology. This was an action research study and the findings are based on the experiences of the teacher in an English major context as the researcher. One should be cautious while interpreting the results and applying similar reading log projects in his/her own context. As Day (2015) said, there is no clear way and guideline for an ER reading practice and each practice is unique in its context. Then, future research might aim for context-specific ER projects to create reading habits in language learners. The second concern is regarding the nature of online reading practices in the study. Although the findings of the top-ranked online websites for reading are consistent with ER literature, the readers should bear in mind that it is challenging to rank those websites based on the real practices of online reading exercises. The majority of websites provide a wide range of reading materials – not only news or learning language content – and support smartphone applications. As students used smartphones extensively, it was quite normal to read some materials from smartphone applications designed for reading. This issue was proven by two students, as they listed two smartphone applications for reading. Therefore, investigating smartphone application use for online ER purposes might be a new avenue for research.

Despite the listed limitations and some students' concerns about the self-log practice, keeping reading logs contributed to learners' language development, encouraged learners to read pleasurable and motivated them to read more. Therefore, language teachers and instructors who are eager to implement reading log projects in their classrooms should carefully design these

projects to maintain their students' motivation to read extensively beyond the classroom. They should often consider the six principles of ER while implementing similar ER projects. They should regularly ask students for feedback about the reading log practice and update it when needed. They should monitor students' ER practices and provide constructive feedback to students regarding their reading comprehension skills development. ER practitioners should bear in mind that reading log is not the sole factor in successful ER projects or a panacea to students' problems in reading in the target language. This process highly depends on many factors, such as institutional support, intensive reading practices, providing interesting reading materials and teachers' enthusiasm to implement such activities (Grabe, 2009; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). Various methods for successful ER projects were provided in the literature (Bambord & Day, 2004; Forster & Poulshock, 2013). Online quiz programs and mobile-assisted extensive reading programs have also been gaining popularity regarding tracking learners' progress (Cheetham et al., 2016; Lin, 2014; Milliner, 2019; Robb, 2015; Tagane et al., 2018). As today's learners are so much more involved in technological improvements than before, it is expected that many ER projects integrated with technology or the Internet will be published in the ER research domain in the coming years.

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