



Integrating Extensive Reading into School Curriculum: A Veteran EFL Teacher's Perspective

Xiaomei Sun

University of Edinburgh

ABSTRACT

Numerous studies have tested the effects of extensive reading (ER) on L2 acquisition, while limited research has investigated the implementation of ER, especially in secondary L2 teaching contexts. In line with the advocacy of integrating ER into L2 curriculum, this qualitative case study explores a veteran EFL teacher's perceptions of ER implementation and his practice of integrating ER into the school curriculum. As the English department leader of a middle school in downtown Beijing, the teacher participant, with rich experience in EFL teaching and ER implementation, initiated the compilation of several textbooks and study guides as part of the school curriculum, accompanied by in-class activities and after-class assignments. Data were collected from three in-depth interviews with the teacher participant, respectively at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the school year. Other sources of data include related study materials and students' assignments. Findings of this study indicate that school-based textbooks, complemented with in-class activities and reinforced by assignments, contribute to school curriculum development and ER implementation. Based on the results of the study, an ER-curriculum integration model was proposed for further discussion and exploration.

INTRODUCTION

The benefits of extensive reading (ER) on L2 acquisition have been investigated and confirmed by myriad studies in the past few decades (Nation & Waring, 2019). In recent years, with the shift of research focus from testing the efficacy of ER to effective ER implementation, many researchers in this field have realised the importance of exploring how to do it rather than why to do it. Among the exponential number of studies in this respect, two meta-analysis articles stood out. Based on findings of 34 empirical studies, Nakanishi's (2015) analysis reached the conclusion that ER should be an integral part of L2 curriculum to achieve its optimum effects. Likewise, Jeon and Day (2016) reviewed 44 primary studies and found that effective and successful ER programmes were mostly integrated into L2 curriculum. Despite the increasing acknowledgment of integrating ER into L2 curriculum, very limited research has investigated the practicality of the integration or explored effective methods for the actual implementation,

¹ L2 refers to "second language" and "foreign language" in this article.

particularly in secondary L2 teaching contexts in which teachers and students bear considerable stress deriving from performance accountability or entrance examination (Huang, 2015).

In the limited literature regarding ER implementation in secondary schools, the majority of reading programmes under investigation were carried out either as after-school clubs (e.g., Lee, 2013; Yeom, 2019) or as experimental projects which supplemented L2 curriculum rather than being a part of it (e.g., Xia, 2019; Zhang, 2018). Compared with higher education curricula in some of which ER is an integral component (e.g., Arnold, 2009; Ramonda, 2020), secondary school curriculum is more compulsory and rigid, leaving relatively less room for teachers' professional agency to come to play (Ye, 2018). In some contexts, however, the ongoing curriculum reform is oriented to teacher empowerment and context-sensitive pedagogy. For example, the reform of the national English curriculum in China encourages pedagogical innovation based on contextual features (Tan, 2016). With regard to ER, its integration into school curriculum could assumably enhance its legitimacy and credibility, therefore facilitating the implementation of it. Nevertheless, up to date, almost no empirical research has investigated the feasibility and efficacy of the integration. The present study aims to fill this gap by exploring a veteran EFL teacher's practice in ER-curriculum integration in a secondary school in Beijing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Integrating ER into L2 curriculum

As aforementioned, in view of the beneficial effects of ER and the difficulty of its implementation, an increasing number of scholars propose integrating ER into L2 curriculum to achieve the optimal effect of the reading approach. Davis (1995) pointed out that a successful ER programme needs curriculum time for the reading and related activities, which could be a problem because school authorities might not be supportive of this seemingly time-consuming pedagogical approach and therefore unwilling to allocate time for it. Davis's worry is not groundless. In effect, the hindrance to ER implementation is not just from school authorities, it is also from students and teachers (Elturki & Harmon, 2020; Suk, 2017). One major reason for its unpopularity is that ER is regarded, particularly in exam-oriented contexts, as hardly conducive to students' immediate improvements in grades (Huang, 2015; Lee, Schallert, & Kim, 2015).

In the seminal book, *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom* (Day & Bamford, 1998), "integration of ER into L2 curriculum" is introduced in a general sense, including ER programmes operated as a separate course, part of the existing course, a noncredit addition to an existing course, or an extracurricular activity (p. 41). Different from this classification, Jeon and Day (2016) in their report of a meta-analysis study, categorising ER implementation into an independent reading course (Type A), a part of reading course (Type B); a part of curriculum (Type C); an extracurricular activity (Type D) (p. 250). It is conspicuous that in the updated categorisation of ER implementation, "integration of ER into L2 curriculum" is no longer used as an umbrella term, but a specific type of implementation. Without providing detailed explanation for "ER implementation as a part of curriculum" (Type C), the research yielded the result: Type C "showed the highest mean effect among four different ER types" (p. 260). Echoing this result, another meta-analysis, based on the findings of 34 empirical studies, reached the

conclusion that “extensive reading improves students’ reading proficiency and should be a part of language learning curricula” (Nakanishi, 2015, p. 6).

In congruence with the advocacy of integrating ER into L2 curriculum, Elturki and Harmon (2020) put forward the notion of systematic integration with planning-implementing-reflecting procedures. In this three-step cycle, teachers first carry out the preparatory work, including deciding on the length of the programme, reading materials, and measures to monitor and motivate student reading. Following that, teachers implement the plans. Preferably, some class time is allocated for discussion and other activities associated with the reading. After the implementation, teachers, together with students, reflect on what they have done and how they can improve it. The systematic integration, supplemented with a 16-week implementation calendar, seems to be workable. While acknowledging the value of this scheme, ER practitioners might need more concrete and tangible methods to help them get to grips with the pedagogical approach. In this regard, the current study adds to the existing literature by providing a veteran EFL teacher’s classroom practice and his reflections, from which a tentative model is proposed for ER-curriculum integration.

Teachers’ roles in ER implementation

According to the Ten Principles of ER in L2, teachers are supposed to act as “a role model of reader”, in addition to providing guidance on the “individual and silent” reading (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 8). Assumably, once ER is integrated into L2 curriculum, teachers will play a more significant role than what the initial principles indicate, and ER may no longer be regarded as a purely individual activity. As Author (2020a) discovered from a two-year reading programme, teachers’ guidance (embodied in instructions about reading strategies and activity design), supervision (including setting assignments and assessment), and encouragement (mainly through students’ reading logs) are of considerable importance for secondary students’ sustained reading. The results of this qualitative study corroborate a quantitative study whose findings also highlight teachers’ roles in organising related activities (teachers’ guidance), monitoring students’ reading progress (supervision), and setting specific reading goals (encouragement) (Suk, 2017).

Whether or not teachers should select reading materials for students is a contentious topic. According to the Ten Principles, students select their own reading materials to ensure the pleasure of reading (Day & Bamford, 1998). However, evidence from empirical research shows that teachers’ involvement in material selection may alleviate some students’ difficulty in finding suitable books, and facilitate organising related activities (Author, 2020a; Ramonda, 2020). Although violating the principle of student selecting their own reading, using class readers might be inevitable in the integration of ER into L2 curriculum. As Ramonda (2020) concluded from her study, “a class reader read by everyone is the most straightforward way to create a unified curriculum” (p. 278). Alternatively, a combination of teachers’ preselection and students’ final selection of reading materials is also worth consideration (Jacobs & Farrell, 2012). To be specific, teachers first select some books from which students choose what they are interested in (Huang, 2015; Johan, 2013; Smadi & Zawahreh, 2013; Xia, 2019), or teachers first learn about students’ needs and interests (e.g., through a questionnaire survey) based on which teachers select books for the class or individual students to read (Tian, 2015).

School-based curriculum

In this article, school-based curriculum (SBC), or school curriculum, refers to “plans and designs for learning and the implementation of these plans and designs in school environments” (Skilbeck, 1984, p. 21). SBC on the one hand enhances school autonomy, on the other hand reflects receptiveness and responsiveness to students’ particular needs within a given context. Meanwhile, responsibility and ownership are shifted to the teacher in the process of devising and implementing school curriculum, therefore enhancing teacher agency (Keiny, 1993). Compared with the top-down and centralised model of curriculum making, in which teachers act as technicians carrying out instructions, SBC empowers teachers as professionals to make legitimate pedagogical decisions well-suited to their students’ needs (Morris, 1998). For instance, in the context of Chinese New Curriculum Reform that started in 2001, characterised by quality-oriented education, teachers are encouraged to utilise local knowledge and synthesise it with the national and local curricula to best benefit students (Tan, 2016).

With the features of flexibility and specificity, SBC lends itself to ER implementation. First and foremost, SBC legitimises teachers’ tailored implementation strategies based on students’ needs and expectations (Duncan & Paran, 2018). Besides, SBC enables teachers to allocate time for ER activities, in-class and after-class alike (Jeon & Day, 2016). Furthermore, SBC serves as a platform for a systematic integration of ER into L2 curriculum (Elturki & Harmon, 2020). Nevertheless, scarce research has investigated the practicality and efficacy of integrating ER into SBC thus far.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The school where the teacher participant (under the pseudonym Peter) was working is a key middle school (coded as No. X Middle School) in downtown Beijing, including six grades of students (aged 12 to 18), from Junior One to Senior Three. With a history of almost 100 years, No. X Middle School has cultivated numerous students most of whom attended various universities after graduation from this school.

Peter has 28 years of EFL teaching experience in secondary schools. He has been the leader of the English department of No. X Middle School for over ten years. As a senior and leading EFL teacher in Beijing, Peter has delivered many lectures and speeches to fellow teachers, and has been the mentor of many first-year EFL teachers. Peter himself feels that he considerably benefited from ER as a student, and therefore had the awareness of teaching ER ever since he became an EFL teacher. In the past few years, Peter has been advocating the integration of ER into school curriculum, and he himself took the lead in this respect. When the researcher learned about Peter’s intention and orientation, she contacted Peter and asked whether he had the interest in participating in the study, and Peter gave his consent.

During the period of data collection, Peter was teaching two Junior One English Project classes (aged 12). Compared with other classes of Junior One, English Project classes, also known as English experimental classes, are more competent in the English language. Students of these two classes were selected among many applicants through written exams and interviews to ensure their English was proficient enough to get into the experimental classes. According to Peter, the majority of the students were lower-intermediate or intermediate EFL learners, equivalent to B1 or B2 of CEFR levels.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected from three in-depth interviews with the teacher participant, conducted at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the school year (2018-2019) respectively. The first interview focused on the teacher participant's perceptions of ER and its implementation in secondary schools, his personal history as an EFL teacher, and his plan for the integration of ER into school curriculum. Half a year later, in the second interview, the participant introduced what he did regarding ER implementation in the past semester and his reflections on his practice. Similar to the second interview, in the third interview, Peter provided updated information about his practice, followed by his reflections on the whole year's implementation. In each interview, the researcher asked the main question and then acted as an attentive listener, only stopping the participant when she had follow-up questions or questions for clarification (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Each interview lasted for more than one hour, conducted in Chinese, the mother tongue of both the participant and the researcher (Dörnyei, 2007). Interviews were audio recorded with the participant's permission and transcribed by the researcher to familiarise herself with the data. Following the six steps of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the researcher interpreted all the qualitative data from interview transcripts and other related documents provided by the teacher participant, including school-based textbooks and study guides Peter and his colleagues compiled, and students' assignments related to ER.

To enhance the credibility of this qualitative case study, triangulation and member checking were employed (Creswell, 2007). As stated above, data were collected from multiple sources: three interviews which cover a time span of one year; various related documents, including school-based learning materials, teaching plans and students' assignments. To detect any discrepancy of understanding, after finishing the Findings section, the researcher asked the teacher participant to check for any misinterpretation of the data. Further discussion was held to reach agreements on these points. During the course of data collection, the researcher took the position of an outsider, trying to achieve empathic neutrality, understanding and interpreting the participant's perceptions with little influence of personal bias or preferences (Patton, 2014).

Research questions

The objective of this exploratory case study aims to gain a better insight into the integration of ER into L2 curriculum. Collecting data from a veteran EFL teacher's practice, exploring his intentions, perceptions and reflections in relation to ER implementation, the current study aims to answer the following two questions:

- 1 What are a veteran EFL teacher's perceptions of ER implementation in a secondary school?
- 2 What roles could L2 teachers play in integrating ER into school-based curriculum?

FINDINGS

ER implementation in a secondary school: Difficulties and measures taken

To identify students' needs in relation to ER, at the beginning of the school year, the EFL teachers of Senior One in No. X Middle School conducted a survey about students' previous experience in ER and the difficulties they encountered. Peter summarised the results of the survey into three aspects "no time, no interest, and no

guidance”. The results were not surprising for Peter, as he explained, “These problems are always there. Every year, students reported similar difficulties that are indeed thorny to solve.” (Interview 1) Partly due to these long-existing problems, Peter had been conceiving the idea of integrating ER into school curriculum, which he believed could solve or alleviate these problems as a top-down approach.

Peter interpreted “having no time to read” as students’ lack of understanding of the rationale for ER. He said, “Students indeed have a lot of assignments to do, but still they can manage the time for something if they think it’s really important.” (Interview 1) To make students aware of the values of ER, Peter wrote in the preface of English Extensive Reading (No. X Middle School, 2018), “All language teachers are always being asked, “How can I learn English well?” Actually, it is a big question and there might be various answers, yet the most efficient answer is: Do more reading!” (p. 1) To consolidate this message, Peter stressed the importance of reading again in Guidance on English Novel Reading (No. X Middle School, 2018), “Reading is the most important method of language leaning. Reading could help learners accumulate vocabulary, enhance their feeling for the language, learn the culture of the target language, and improve their academic performances.” (p. 1). Another measure Peter took to tackle the problem of “having no time for reading” was giving project assignments rather than daily assignments. He explained, “Usually I informed students of the assignments at the beginning of each week, allowing them to allocate time more flexibly.” (Interview 2)

Regarding the problem of “having no interest in ER”, Peter thought the best solution was finding compelling materials, but “it’s hard indeed” (Interview 1). On the one hand, Peter recommended a variety of reading materials to cater to different tastes and interests of students. In Guidance on English Reading During the Holiday (No. X Middle School, 2019), three categories of English novels were recommended: for beginner readers (e.g., *Alice’s Adventure in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll), for intermediate readers (e.g., *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini), and for advanced readers (e.g., *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain). Students could choose one book from the recommendation list or read any English novels they were interest in. After the holiday, students introduced the book they read to the whole class in a sharing activity. On the other hand, Peter recognised the benefits of using class readers: “In order to give students’ guidance and supervision, sometimes, using a class reader is necessary.” (Interview 2) Meanwhile, Peter highlighted the caution he exerted in compiling the school-based textbooks used as class readers:

We need to be very careful when selecting a book for the whole class to read. I chose this short novel (*A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens) for the following reasons: First, it is a classic which is worth close reading. Second, it is not linguistically difficult for my students. Third, it is suitable for boys and girls alike. (Interview 3)

Another approach to boosting students’ interest in reading is diversifying post-reading activities. For instance, in English Extensive Reading (No. X Middle School, 2019), three short stories of O. Henry were selected: *The Last Leaf*, *The Gift of the Magi*, and *The Cop and the Anthem*, coupled with reading tasks such as analysing characters, writing summaries, decoding quotes, answering questions, and retelling the story. Students did not need to complete all the tasks; rather, they could choose some to finish with interest. Another post-reading activity that Peter occasionally organised was the reading club in which students introduced the book they were reading and gave reasons why they liked it. The fun element involved in the activity was that students competed in

talking peers into reading the book they introduced, and the one who got the most followers was the winner.

To solve the problem of “lack of guidance on ER”, Peter provided students with concrete and easy-to-follow instructions related to ER in school-based textbooks. For example, in *Guidance on English Novel Reading* (No. X Middle School, 2018), when introducing the term extensive reading, a calculation was made, “If you read ten pages every day, then in a semester (18 weeks), you could finish reading 10 medium thickness books (approximately 120 pages each).” (p. 1) Detailed guidance was also given on how to deal with unknown words in this book:

Try to guess the meanings of new words rather than looking up each one. On one page, you’d better not look up more than five new words, otherwise this book might be too difficult for you. In that case, you need to select an easier one. (p. 1)

To assist students in literature reading, brief introductions to some literary devices were presented in *English Extensive Reading* (No. X Middle School, 2019), including simile, metaphor, personification, and irony, followed by cohesive devices illustrated with concrete examples. These components of school-based textbooks corroborate what Peter stressed in the interview, “In addition to understanding some essential literary devices, analysis of the structure and logic of the reading also helps student understanding and writing, therefore should be addressed in the guidance on ER.” (Interview 2)

In conjunction with the specific guidance Peter gave students, he theorised his practice of teaching literature into Four Steps: pre-reading (introducing background knowledge), while-reading (focus on meaning), re-reading (focus on form), and reading-analysis (literary analysis, e.g., theme and character analysis). Although these terms did not appear in any of the school-based textbooks, Peter introduced their impact, “When giving students guidance, teachers incline to do it in segments, which reduces its effects as a whole. When I compiled the school-based textbooks, I embedded the Four Steps as a framework for the guidance, underpinning the detailed instructions.” (Interview 3)

Integration of school-based textbooks, in-class activities, and after-school assignments

Peter perceived integrating ER into school curriculum as “a systematic process” with three basic components: “It starts with the reading from or beyond school-based textbooks, scaffolded by post-reading activities in class, and consolidated by assignments after class.” (Interview 2) Data from related materials mirror the three-step process Peter outlined. The following pedagogical activities carried out in Peter’s practice demonstrate one process cycle of the integration.

Step 1: Guidance in school-based textbooks

In *Guidance on English Novel Reading* (No. X Middle School, 2018), as stated above, guidance was given on word-attack strategies. Since reading speed is closely related to word-attack strategies, guidance on timed-reading was also included in this study guide: “Five to ten minutes is enough for timed reading, otherwise you will get tired because of the intense concentration. Note down the starting time and the finishing time, and you can calculate your reading speed with the word count.” (p. 1)

Step 2: In-class activities

Corresponding with the guidance mentioned above, related activities were provided in Reading Speed (No. X Middle School, 2018). For example, a passage of 503 words (see Figure 1), followed by two activities (see Figure 2), was included to practise students' speed-reading and word-attack strategies in class.

Reading is a great way to improve your English. You'll learn new words, revise previously-taught structures and absorb thousands of useful expressions and phrases... without any effort. By reading, you are receiving valuable language input. And this is how you learn! Remember, language learning is a combination of input + practice. As you're reading, you're taking in language naturally, and you're seeing how it all fits together. This is crucial to your learning.

The great thing about reading is that learning takes place subconsciously (非有意识地). There are no exercises to do, no grammar rules to learn, no tasks to complete... its all natural. The language flows in through your eyes, and gets registered (登记) in your brain. What could be easier?

The key to effective (有效的) reading is to read things that you want to read. There are millions of books, magazines and websites out there. You couldn't possibly read them all. So, the important thing is to find things that you like reading. Then, you'll be motivated (激发) to read. And then the reading won't be difficult. It'll be easy! And then you'll learn. It's simple.

Remember: read what you want to read. What you like reading. What motivates and inspires you. But where can you start? Well, you could read a book that you've already read in your own language. Simply find a translated version of a book that you have read and enjoyed. This will make processing the content in the target language much easier as you'll already know what the book is about! You could also read the news. This is great as you can read the news in your own language first, then in English. You'll see that it won't be too difficult as you'll be familiar with the topics and stories. Magazines are also great. Find one that covers a topic you're interested in: business, clothing, guns, horses, houses, housekeeping, stocks and shares, sports, computers, electronics, designing, cooking... you name it, they'll have it. If not, look for information on the internet. There are also websites for every topic under the sun! Why not join a forum (论坛)? They're a great source of English input as the language is often written in a simple, spoken style. Go to website forums, which has discussion groups based on common interests. Just type in the topic that interests you and join the chat.

Finally, how you read is also important. The best thing is to read without using a dictionary. Let the words flow over you. Just skip the parts you don't understand. If you make your reading feel too much like work, it'll stop being fun. Of course, you could make a note of any new words and phrases that you like or see repeated frequently, but try not to break your concentration too much. Also, set yourself mini-objectives. For example, if you're reading a novel, read 20 pages a day. Very soon, you'll have been exposed (接触) to thousands of useful phrases and words. Have fun reading! You'll learn so much! (503words) 32132

Figure 1. Reading Material for Speed-Reading and Word-Attack Strategy Training

Reading Skills Training

- ✓ For the whole passage we have 503words. Read the passage as quickly as you can and count how many minutes it takes you to complete going through it.
 Minutes. Your reading speed is _____ per minute
- ✓ How much can you understand the passage?
 A. Less than 50%; B. About 70%; C. Over 70%
- ✓ What most influence your understanding?
 A. New words B. Names of people in the passage
 C. Sentence structures D. Other elements _____
- ✓ Read the passage again and find which words hinder your understanding most. List them and check them in the dictionary and copy the necessary English Explanation.

WORDS	EXPLANATIONS	EXAMPLE SENTENCES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

- ✓ Discuss with your partner to see the reason why those words influence your reading. And consider how you can eliminate the influence of the new words. Are there any words in the passage that you don't know but not hinder your reading? List some.


Words that you do not know but do not matter	The meaning you guess
8.	
9.	
10.	

Figure 2. Activities for Speed-Reading and Word-Attack Strategy Training

Step 3: After-class assignments

To consolidate the strategies practised in class, Peter gave students relevant assignments to finish after class. From sources such as China Daily, Wikipedia and The New York Times, Peter selected materials for students to read and report their application of the strategies highlighted in class. In one assignment, the student guessed the meaning of “troupe” by getting clues from the picture, the definite article “the”, and the surrounding words “orchestra” and “consider” (see Figure 3). Another student gave a summary of a piece of news, with explanations how he/she drew on the picture and contextual clues to guess the meanings of “enclosure” and “giant” (see Figure 4).

Top Dutch orchestra to perform in Shanghai



The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra from the Netherlands will perform at the Oriental Art Center in Shanghai on Wednesday and Thursday. The troupe is considered one of the leading orchestras in the world. In 2013, the orchestra toured the world to mark its 125th anniversary.


When I see this picture, I know it's showing us a concert. I want to guess the meaning of "troupe".

At first, I think it's a noun because there is a "The" before it. But I don't know what "orchestras" and "considere" mean, so I look at my dictionary and get the meaning: orchestra is 管弦乐队 and considere is 认为. So I guess "troupe" is some big team which some people play instruments together and make the performances in the concert.

Figure 3. One Student's Assignment Demonstrating Word-Attack Strategies

NEWS

o In
"Madrid
zoo's baby
panda now
has home"
It say
about
a panda
has a
name
now.
It's
name is
Chulina.



Chulina, a female baby panda born last August, rests inside her indoor enclosure during her public presentation at the zoo in Madrid, Spain, on Thursday. SERGIO PEREZ/REUTERS

Madrid zoo's baby panda now has name

By ASSOCIATED PRESS
in Madrid

Madrid's zoo has named its latest baby panda, Chulina, meaning Little Cutie. The name pays homage to Chulin, the first panda born at the zoo 96 years ago.


The nearly 8-month-old female is the fifth giant panda to be born at Madrid's zoo. Her name also refers to bamboo, the staple of pandas' diet, which in Chinese is *shulin*.

Chulina was conceived naturally by two pandas that the Madrid zoo has leased from China since 2007. She is the first female panda born at the zoo.

The panda was considered to be in danger of extinction, but there are now 1,864 giant pandas in the wild in China.

China's ambassador to Spain, Lya Pan, said at the zoo on Thursday that Chulina was the fruit of both countries' friendship and research into pandas.

enclosure 笼子
First I think this is a place about animal. And then I think maybe it means "age"



giant 第...个
Because there is "fifth" before "giant", so I think maybe it means Chulina is the fifth panda, born in Madrid's zoo.

research 研究
I think for the words to change.

Figure 4. One Student's News Summary Facilitated by Word-Attack Strategies

DISCUSSION

ER implementation in secondary schools

Challenges facing secondary EFL teachers and students in relation to ER implementation could be summarised in the following aspects: First and foremost, ER is commonly regarded by students as "time-consuming and not efficient enough to boost their exam scores", especially in exam-oriented contexts (Huang, 2015, p. 1). With this conception, students may report difficulties such as "lack of time" and "lack of interest", as is the case in the current study. Second, how to select reading materials is still a contentious issue. Essentially, three opinions coexist: students select their own books to ensure reading for pleasure (Day & Bamford, 1998); teachers select class readers to facilitate in-class activities and peer discussion (Ramonda, 2020); both teachers and students get involved in the material selection to derive benefits from each of both (Jacob & Farrell, 2012). In the present study, all the three modes of material selection could be identified. During school days, teachers mainly used school-based textbooks as class readers in which teachers selected short stories that they thought might interest students. For winter and summer holidays, teachers gave students the freedom to select their favourite books whether from the recommended list or beyond it. Another prominent difficulty confronting secondary EFL teachers is the multiple roles they need to play in

ER implementation, considering the age and learning abilities of secondary students (Author, 2020a; Suk, 2017). The current study provides further evidence about the difficulty: from compiling school-based textbooks, to organising various post-reading activities, to giving assignments aligned with in-class activities. All these responsibilities, in addition to literature teaching (as appropriate), shed light on why secondary teachers expressed their need for related training (Author, 2020a). Last but not least, it is difficult for some teachers to add to or go beyond the existing curriculum due to various constraints (e.g., the heavy workload, requirements of textbooks and exams) (Akbari, 2008; Rajabieslami, 2016). In such contexts, ER has little chance of being incorporated into EFL teaching.

Overlapping or reflecting these challenges, the current study reported some difficulties Senior One students encountered—lack of time, interest, and guidance—and the teacher’s overall solution: integrating ER into the school curriculum. The teacher interpreted “lack of time” as a manifestation of students’ attitudes towards ER. Therefore, he emphasised in different school-based textbooks the importance and values of ER. In the existing literature, the emphasis was usually stated orally by practitioners (Smadi & Al-Zawahreh, 2013; Yan, 2016; Zhang, 2018). Assumably, the written form of emphasis (repeated in different books) may exert greater influence on students’ attitudes towards ER. As to the problem of lack of interest in reading, in line with the understanding that providing students with compelling materials is the best solution (Krashen & Bland, 2014), the teacher participant used school-based textbooks to provide or recommend an array of materials (including class readers). Another factor that affects students’ interest in L2 reading is “too many new words” and lack of strategy to deal with them (Author, 2020b, p. 7). The teacher participant in the current study gave students detailed and step-by-step guidance, accompanied by follow-up activities and assignments in school-based textbooks and study guides. Such guidance was not only provided, but also in a systematic manner: almost all the guidance stressed in class was incorporated in the school-based materials; thus, students were able to have a bird’s-eye view of related guidance and review it if necessary. Compared with orally-delivered guidance (Tian, 2015; Xia, 2019; Yan, 2016), instructions in print may have a better chance of gaining students’ attention and retention.

Teachers’ roles in integrating ER into school curriculum

Considering all the challenges and difficulties presented above, a growing number of researchers in this field have realised and advocated the integration of ER into L2 curriculum (Davis, 1995; Day & Bamford, 1998; Jeon & Day, 2016; Nakanishi, 2015). Responding to this advocacy, Elturki and Harmon (2020) proposed the notion of systematic integration consisting of planning, implementing, and reflecting. Compared with this three-step procedure, the current study provides a more specific and classroom-oriented approach: ER-curriculum integration, or specifically, the integration of ER into school curriculum. This integration encompasses three steps: curriculum design, classroom implementation, and after-school reinforcement. Each step was respectively facilitated by school-based textbooks (or study guides), in-class activities, and follow-up assignments (see Figure 5). Taking school curriculum as a medium for ER implementation, this model has the following strengths: First, it demonstrates that school-based curriculum is multiple-dimensional, subsuming teaching/learning materials (i.e., school-based textbooks and study guides), in-class activities, and after-class assignments. Second, this integration builds up a cycle of systematic and interrelated procedures which corroborate and consolidate each other. Third, teachers’ common roles in ER

implementation (e.g., giving guidance, organising activities, and providing supervision) are embedded or embodied in each step of the cycle (Author, 2020a; Suk, 2017).

However, this three-step ER-curriculum integration model has its limitations. One possible criticism against it is the practicality of teacher involvement in school curriculum development. In the current study, the teacher participant is the head of English department, which might make the involvement easier than teachers who are not in such a position. This being the case, it can be expected that teachers take initiative to do what is possible within their capacity to propel the integration. For instance, in Johan's (2013) study, the teacher researcher realised that students liked reading literature (the need) and the official curriculum encouraged 'more creative' activities (the chance) (p. 45). With the need and the chance, the teacher revealed to the principal his intention of integrating ER into the school curriculum as a one-year project, and permission was granted. Another possible critique of the proposed model is the expertise needed to fulfil this seemingly grand plan. Admittedly, some teaching experience may be necessary to compile a textbook-like teaching/learning material with multiple and interrelated elements embedded. However, even for the veteran teacher in the present study, all the school-based materials were not completed simultaneously. Rather, the teacher, together with his colleagues, kept the compiling work ongoing and their reflections on the practice fed into the subsequent design of the school-based materials. The most strident criticism this model might receive is that various constraints teachers are confronted with make it theoretically sensible but practically invalid (Akbari, 2008; Rajabieslami, 2016). While this potential scepticism is hard to respond to, the concept of school-based curriculum per se is oriented to promoting teacher agency and professionalism (Keiny, 1993). By engaging with SBC, teachers may remove some of the constraints and find more possibilities available.

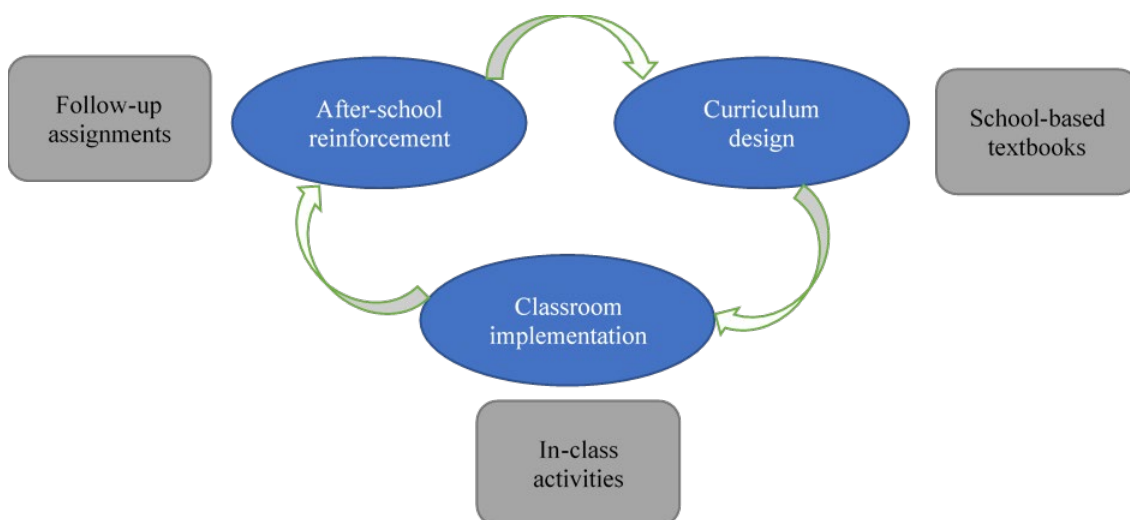


Figure 5. The Process Cycle of Integrating ER into School Curriculum

CONCLUSION

Integrating ER into L2 curriculum has been under active discussion in recent years. However, limited research has explored how to put this advocacy into practice, especially in secondary EFL teaching contexts. This study draws on a veteran EFL teacher's experience and reflections on his integration of ER into the school curriculum, and proposes an ER-curriculum integration model to promote future discussion and research. This three-step model provides an alternative option for ER practitioners who

are confronted with problems such as students' lack of time, interest or guidance for the reading. Essentially, these problems are interrelated and therefore require a systematic organism to accommodate the conflicts or deficiencies involved. To be specific, the problem of having "no time" is related to students' motivation or attitudes (similar to the problem of "no interest"), which indicates "lack of guidance" on the significance of this pedagogical approach. By compiling school-based textbooks and other study materials, teachers are able to propagate the values of ER, give overarching guidance, and provide or recommend various reading materials. All these aspects are supported or related to in-class activities, and consolidated by follow-up assignments that students finish after class. Framed within the school curriculum, elements of this cycle are tightly linked and feed into one another. Teachers, especially new teachers, may have conservations about the feasibility of compiling school-based textbooks. Regarding this concern, it is legitimate to presume that compared with experience, overall planning, actual implementation, and ongoing adjustment and improvement are more important for ER to be integrated into L2 curriculum.

One limitation of this study is the lack of students' perspective and feedback on this pedagogical approach. It is hoped that future research could explore how students respond to the integration of ER into school curriculum. Another limitation that may affect the transferability of this study is the rich experience of the teacher participant. While admittedly teaching experience influences ER implementation, it is possible that professionalism and teacher agency, if fully exerted, could compensate for the lack of experience. Further research may be carried out, though, to investigate what difficulties inexperienced teachers encounter in their practice of integrating ER into L2 curriculum.

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Xiaomei Sun is a PhD candidate at the University of Edinburgh, where she also teaches research methods and education policy courses. Her research interests include extensive reading in L2, children's literature, teacher training and development, and L2 pedagogy. Her recent research has appeared in TESOL Journal, The Reading Matrix, and ELTED Journal.

Email: s1601243@ed.ac.uk