

# Extensive Reading Using Authentic Materials with Elementary and Secondary EFL Students

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## Abstract

The benefits of Extensive Reading (ER) have been demonstrated by many research studies. Two outcomes are generally supported: 1) ER is effective for students beyond the beginning level of language proficiency, and 2) Graded Readers are critical to providing books that are comprehensible. The present studies ask the following questions: 1) Can ER be effective for students at the beginning level of language proficiency, and 2) Can authentic books be used in lieu of graded readers? Support for the present studies comes from Bahmani & Farvadin (2017) which reveals that students' comprehension improved when they read just above ( $i+1$ ) and just below ( $i-1$ ). Having enough books was critical to both studies. There needed to be enough books on enough topics at enough reading levels so that the participants not only *could* but *wanted* to read a lot. Participants also needed access to the books in and out of school, on and offline. As a result, authentic digital books were used. During the two studies, 2000 students in grades 2-9 averaged 10- and 42minutes reading per week. Participants' baseline reading level was used to match them with books just above and below their reading level. Results from study 1 showed that 8 weeks with authentic digital books made up for nearly an entire year of English study in the classroom in reading, while the results from study 2 showed a one-half year gain in reading compared to native speakers of English. Details of the studies will be discussed.

**Keywords:** authentic books, CEFR A1-A2, comprehensible input, elementary EFL, reading