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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Attitudes and Barriers to Extensive Reading at Red Sea University in Sudan

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| ABSTRACT

This study is theoretical in nature and aims to examine the distinction between extensive reading and intensive reading. It also explores the potential role of extensive reading in supporting foreign language acquisition. The study also shows attitudes and barriers to extensive reading among undergraduate students of English at Red Sea University in Sudan. The descriptive method was employed to carry out this study where a questionnaire for a random sample of (70) undergraduate students of English at the Red Sea University was designed. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Packages of Social Sciences. Besides positive attitudes of the students to extensive reading, the study has revealed various barriers to extensive reading. Among others, the participants have shown that they are not motivated to do extensive reading in English, and they lack the appropriate extensive reading materials. They also have revealed that they are busy with their university language courses and lack time to practice extensive reading. The study recommends the use of extensive reading as a means of improving the overall language proficiency of EFL learners at Red Sea University.

| KEYWORDS

extensive reading, comprehensible input, target language, intensive reading, language proficiency

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### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Reading Issues at Red Sea University

Reading is defined by Flynn and Stainthrop (2006) as interpreting language and understanding its meaning. It is expected that in countries where English is taught as a foreign language as in Sudan, reading acquires even greater importance. This view is also confirmed by Murcia and Olshtain (2000) who stress the importance of reading in foreign language contexts, where reading is seen as the only available way for learners to be exposed to the target language. This view also reveals that reading is one of the main sources of linguistic input for learners of English as a foreign language as in Sudan. The present paper primarily builds upon established perspectives on the linguistic benefits of extensive reading as evidenced by empirical studies conducted in both second and foreign language contexts. Accordingly, the authors of this paper think that undergraduate students of English at Red Sea University are requested to do extensive reading in order not only to retain the linguistic input they had obtained from university courses but also to enhance their language proficiency even after completing their language courses at university. For this purpose, Anderson (1984) confirms the need for reasonable reading knowledge that guarantees professional success and personal development. All in all, doing extensive reading seems to be highly significant for learners of English at Red Sea University.

The importance of reading as a cornerstone of foreign language learning cannot be overlooked. However, in many parts of the Arab world, reading for pleasure and knowledge outside classrooms has been widely neglected. This widespread issue is thought to be deeply rooted in cultural, educational, and societal factors that fail to prioritize reading as a lifelong habit. Sudan, as part of the Arab world, reflects this larger phenomenon, and the situation at Red Sea University serves as an example of this trend.

At Red Sea University, extensive reading, which involves reading a larger amount of material for general understanding and

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enjoyment, has not received the attention it deserves. Students of English at Red Sea University often face numerous barriers that prevent them from engaging in extensive reading. The current paper aims to identify the factors that hinder students at Red Sea University from engaging in this practice. By examining the underlying reasons behind the negligence of extensive reading, the paper sheds light on the systematic challenges that hinder the promotion of reading in foreign language contexts, particularly in educational institutions like Red Sea University. Addressing these challenges is highly significant as it plays a vital role in cultivating a generation of language learners who are competent enough to advance language learning and teaching within their local communities and on a global scale.

Grabe (2006) who attempts to differentiate between the acquisition of speaking and reading, argues that while speaking in the first language is acquired naturally, reading in first or foreign languages is an ability that requires time and effort to be acquired. Based on Grabe's view learners of English at Red Sea University need effective approaches to teaching reading that guarantee better improvement of reading skills. Learners also need to practice reading appropriate materials that suit their linguistic competence. Another interesting perspective on reading is the one introduced by Benettayeb (2010) who thinks of reading as an interactive activity that involves the reader's linguistic competence, general information, and sociocultural reference alongside visual and mental means.

### *1.2 The Situation of English in Sudan*

In this section, the authors seek to briefly illuminate literature on the history and current state of English in Sudan to understand how these factors might influence learners' attitudes toward reading in English.

Tracing the history of English in Sudan the authors observe that Sudan as a former British colony has utilized English as the primary language of instruction in its educational institution. Since that time, English has held a distinct role in Sudan, a country characterized by its diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. The British colonial administration emphasized English as the language of government and secondary education, particularly in urban areas. After Sudan gained independence in 1956, the new government sought to promote Arabic as the national language. Arabicization policies were introduced in schools, particularly primary education, to assert Sudan's Arab and Islamic identity. English, however, retained its importance in secondary schools and higher education. In 1964, Sudan underwent a lengthy process of Arabisation, which impacted the education system from primary to secondary schools. As a result, the teaching of English has deteriorated, shifting from being a medium of instruction to merely a subject within the school curriculum- a situation that persists to this day (Nur, 2014). The authors assert that, in this context, where Arabic is dominating the whole education system in Sudan the need to engage in extensive reading as an individual activity that better aids in acquiring a foreign language is increasingly urgent.

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1 Intensive and Extensive Reading*

Before presenting the potential learning benefits of extensive reading, this paper aims to trace the differences between two extremes: extensive and intensive reading. This distinction is very important as some researchers see the need for combining intensive and extensive reading to achieve better language learning outcomes (Carrell & Carson, 1997, Nuttal 1982, Tuğrul 2015). Some go even more to maintain that sufficient proficiency in the target language cannot be gained through extensive reading only (Paran, 2003).

Among other names, extensive reading is described by Hunt (1967) as an uninterrupted silent reading. Thus, extensive reading could be understood as a continuous activity that aims at reading large amounts of language materials. What is different in doing extensive reading, the authors notice in the literature, is that it is a free language task activity that focuses only on meaning rather than formal features of the target language. Carrell and Carson (1997) who were calling for the need for both intensive and extensive reading in an EPA reading curriculum conceive extensive reading as reading for general understanding. Another distinguishing feature of extensive reading that could be observed in the literature lies in the reading materials. For instance, Park (2017: 131) who was studying the impact of extensive and intensive reading approaches on the reading rate and reading comprehension development, describes extensive reading materials as "enjoyable for language learners." It is this entertaining aspect of extensive reading materials, the authors believe, that motivates learners and guarantees their progress in doing extensive reading.

Intensive reading, on the other hand, is seen by Carrell and Carson (1997) as an approach to reading that aims at a detailed understanding of the text through close analysis led by the teacher. The main focus of this close analysis of the text in an intensive reading approach as Tuğrul (2015) clarifies is on grammar and vocabulary. Thus, it is very obvious that the concern of intensive reading is to understand the meaning and grammar of written texts. Commenting on the purpose of intensive reading Andrés (2020:71) points out that it "is to focus on content and grammatical structures."

### *2.2 The Learning Benefits of Extensive Reading*

Studies that introduce the effectiveness of extensive reading in the overall process of language learning are a lot (Azizi et al, 2020;

Jacobs, 2014; Pigada and Schmitt, 2006; Umam, 2013; Waring 2011). These studies were undertaken in different settings of both second and foreign-language contexts. The studies examined the effect of extensive reading on the acquisition and improvement of various aspects of the target language ranging from the acquisition of vocabulary to the improvement in meaning, spelling, and grammar knowledge. However, they do not address all areas of writing skills. In some studies improvements have been made in run-on sentences, vocabulary errors (word choice and word form), and overall accuracy (Azizi, et al. 2020). Other studies have shown improvements in spelling, meaning, and grammar knowledge (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006).

It is also observed that the use of extensive reading as a means of language improvement for EFL learners is highlighted by many researchers. Nation (2001) for instance, considers extensive reading as the only available input source for EFL learners. This view is highly significant as it reflects the real situations of learning English in Sudan where there are limited chances for real interactions with native speakers of English. Accordingly, extensive reading remains the only possible option of comprehensible input that enhances language acquisition in Sudan.

The literature on extensive reading also highlights a general agreement among researchers regarding its significant role in language learning. Studies that call for the adoption of extensive reading as a source of comprehensible input are a lot. To begin with, Waring (2011: 3) who compares extensive and intensive reading, sees extensive reading as a way of building language fluency since the learner's primary goal in doing extensive reading is to understand the linguistic message of a given text. Waring who used the term "reading a lot" to describe extensive reading, goes even more to stress the role of extensive reading in enhancing learners' reading speed and the general understanding of the text. Moreover, Krashen (1993) calls for using extensive reading as part of the overall L2 development program.

To further one's understanding of the nature and role of extensive reading in foreign language acquisition, Lalinska et al (2020) consider extensive reading as an approach to teaching reading for EFL and ESL learners rather than a sub-skill or style of reading. This view gains special importance as it recommends the adoption of using extensive reading as an instructional approach to teaching reading rather than a free-time, personal activity. It is highly significant to draw the attention of readers to the fact that the current study considers extensive reading as a voluntary, out-of-class activity rather than an approach to teaching reading as suggested by Lalinska et al. Other studies have also confirmed the role of extensive reading in acquiring more vocabulary items in the target language. Karimpour and Aidinlou (2016) for instance, argue that extensive reading enhances the knowledge of vocabulary of the target language. However, to what extent extensive reading helps with the acquisition of the target language words is still controversial. The study of Dupuy and Krashen (1993) for instance, estimates that only 25% of the target words were acquired through extensive reading. This percentage, is considered as relatively low. Again going back to the study of Waring (2011) it is evident that the study attributes the acquisition of new words in a target language to the frequency the learner may encounter these words. In Waring's view, if a word appears many times in different contexts the learner is expected to understand the meaning of that word. However, the authors observe that there is no consensus in the literature as to the number of times a word must be met in the reading materials to be acquired. Nation and Wang (1999) studied vocabulary learning by examining the frequency of words and concluded that graded readers are an important source for learning words. However, their interesting conclusion was drawn from participants living in SL environments where chances for using the target language in everyday life situations are relatively high. This shouldn't be compared to the language learning situations in Sudan where the participants of this study have no or very limited chances of out-class use of the foreign language. Waring and Takaki (2003) suggest (25) encounters for a word to be understood and not to impede the comprehension process. Apart from the number of encounters, the authors of this paper recommend materials with a high frequency of words to be used in extensive reading programs if the objective of the program is to help learners acquire target language words.

Similar to the findings of Waring and Takaki as to the acquisition of target language words through extensive reading, the study of Pigada and Schmitt (2006) has shown a detailed description of the effect of extensive reading in improving the three aspects of word knowledge. That is, spelling, meaning, and word grammar behavior. The study shows great improvements in the acquisition of target words' spelling even for words with a very limited number of encounters in the reading materials. Thus, this finding of spelling improvement via extensive reading confirms the earlier view of Day and Swan (1998) who examined the relationship between reading and spelling. Improvements in understanding word meaning and word grammar behaviour were also noticed in Pigada and Schmitt's study but not in the same way as that of spelling.

In summary, the literature indicates that although extensive reading can lead to gains in word acquisition, these gains are not uniform across all aspects of word knowledge. This conclusion leads to the next step of considering studies that favor the use of extensive reading as a tool for improving the written works of EFL learners.

### *2.3 Extensive Reading and Writing Skills*

The discussion now shifts to focus on the studies that show the positive effects of extensive reading on the written performance of language learners in EFL contexts. There is a considerable number of experimental studies that show a positive relationship between reading extensively in a foreign language and improvements in some aspects of writing skills (Aida and Widiyati 2020, Ahmed and Rajab 2015, Al-Mansour 2014). As stated earlier in this paper, English is taught as a foreign language in Sudan. Accordingly and to have findings reached in similar language contexts, the discussion in this paper is confined only to the studies undertaken in EFL settings excluding studies conducted in other language learning settings.

In their book, Bamford & Day (2004) discuss the use of extensive reading as an approach to language teaching where learners read a lot in the target language. They set up more than (100) extensive reading activities to be used in the classroom. These activities give suggestions on the language aspect being taught in the classroom (grammar, listening, reading, speaking, or writing). According to Bamford and Day, it is this process of reading a lot in a new language that improves, among others, the writing ability of the learner. This conclusion is supported by Fitriansyah and Miftah's study which found a positive correlation between extensive reading and writing fluency of EFL learners (Fitriansyah & Miftah, 2020). This study made available extensive reading materials for (32) students who chose comics, novels and e-books, articles, magazines, and newspapers as their reading materials. Students spent different amounts of time doing extensive reading ranging from less than an hour to 3 hours a day. Scores on the writing fluency test showed "a moderate positive correlation" between students' reading and writing fluency. The authors would like to highlight a significant remark about this study: the reading materials made available in English and another language called Bahasa Indonesia. Only less than a quarter of the sample 22% preferred materials in English as their extensive reading materials. Moreover, the improvement in writing fluency is not separately stated for students who selected materials in English.

Using language knowledge gained from extensive reading, Taha and Al Sukhon's (2023) experimental study showed the positive effects of extensive reading on the written performance of freshmen students. It's worth mentioning, however, that the participants of this study are not majoring in English. Further, the study didn't show what aspects of writing have greatly improved and which have not. Instead, the authors argue for a significant effect of extensive reading on the written works of freshmen learners. The same finding was reached by Ouafi (2019). In a three-month experiment, Quafi (2019, p. 121) adds more empirical evidence as to the positive effects of extensive reading on the writing skills of EFL students. A more interesting point of Quafi's study was the positive attitude of the participants toward extensive reading as a way of improving "reading habits." This conclusion is very significant as the paper tries to find out what attitudes EFL learners at Red Sea University have toward extensive reading as a means of foreign language acquisition.

The studies discussed in this paper show that the practice of extensive reading has promising effects on the writing skills of EFL learners in varying degrees. Accordingly, the authors of this article strongly believe that obstacles to extensive reading can lead to limited or poor written performance of EFL learners at Red Sea University. Therefore, learners are requested to engage in extensive reading in their leisure time to reach better performance in writing activities.

Reaching a completely different conclusion, this paper presents one of the most interesting studies that run counter to the findings of the studies discussed in this section. The study was conducted by Kirin (2010) which examined the effects of extensive reading on students' writing ability in EFL class. Kirin's study concluded that reading extensively over four months didn't improve the writing ability of students. It's worth mentioning, however, that the participants of Kirin's study are students who are not majoring in English.

Again the authors would like to point out that the objective of this article is mainly to trace the literature pertaining to the promising effects of extensive reading on foreign language acquisition. The paper focuses less on the few studies that show little or no effect, or even a decline, in language learning through extensive reading.

#### *2.4 Extensive Reading and Learners' Motivation*

Given that extensive reading brings about positive improvements in writing skills, studies show no changes in learners' reading motivation. In her study, Hanslo (2016) concludes that exposing learners to extensive reading regularly improves the reading proficiency of the learners. However, the study also shows that it takes longer to change learners' attitudes and motivation for reading. It is almost the same thing as motivating students to speak the target language. The same conclusion was reached by Rahmany et al (2013) who indicated that doing extensive reading does not motivate learners to speak. Though the participants did extensive reading for two semesters: reading three books a week, their speaking motivation didn't change. Based on the conclusion of these two studies, it seems that motivation has nothing to do with extensive reading. The authors suggest that in foreign language contexts where extensive reading programs are organized the top priority must be to motivate students to continue reading to reach the level where extensive reading is just part of their everyday life activities. Teachers and parents can be good sources of motivation too. Further, choosing pleasurable extensive reading materials can increase learners' motivation to continue reading and be confident readers. The hard fact which is very evident in the literature is that employing extensive reading helps learners become more confident readers (Asraf and Ahmed, 2003)

### **3. Problem Statement**

The use of extensive reading as a source of comprehensible input was confirmed in literature. As a way of improving learners' knowledge of the target language, Nuttal (1982) for instance, sees extensive reading as an alternative way of living among native speakers. However, previous studies indicate that many university EFL learners have weak reading habits and low motivation to read in English, which often leads to the neglect of extensive reading practice (Ker – hsin & Razil, 2023).

At Red Sea University, it is noticed that negligence of extensive reading which is due to some obstacles is one of the serious

problems that undergraduate students of English suffer from. The practice of this sub-skill promises success in acquiring the target language as opportunities for language learning are unlimited.

Undergraduate students of English at Red Sea University, and to various barriers, neglect the practice of extensive reading which plays an important part in learning a foreign language. Reading is an individual activity and therefore learners of English at Red Sea University are expected to read at their level without being locked into certain classroom programs.

Unfortunately, most learners of English at Red Sea University consider reading as a means to an end, i.e. reading is only done to meet the requirements of examinations. Thus, students read only the courses on which they expect to be questioned in examinations and ignore the value of reading in the overall process of foreign language learning. Thus, the current paper tries to investigate the attitudes of foreign language learners at Red Sea University toward extensive reading as well as the possible barriers to extensive reading.

#### **4. Research Objectives**

The current paper aims to:

Examine the attitudes of learners of English at Red Sea University toward extensive reading.

Identify the barriers that hinder extensive reading among learners of English at Red Sea University.

#### **5. Research Questions**

The present study is based on the following questions

What are English language learners' attitudes toward extensive reading?

What are the possible barriers that might hinder extensive reading among students of English at Red Sea University?

#### **6. Research Hypotheses**

Learners of English at Red Sea University generally have positive attitudes toward extensive reading.

At Red Sea University, potential barriers to extensive reading include, among others, limited access to suitable reading materials, insufficient time due to heavy academic workloads, and a lack of focus on extensive reading in the curriculum.

#### **7. Methodology**

The methods employed in this study depend on the nature of the study and the type of the required data. To reach valid data the descriptive method was selected as appropriate in this study. The correlational research was also used by the authors to establish the existence of a relationship between barriers to and negligence of extensive reading.

##### *7.1 Participants*

The sample of this study consists of (70) undergraduate students of English at Red Sea University, Sudan. The participants were chosen on the basis that the topic being investigated is a source of great concern for them and also the researchers wanted to have an idea about the previous experience the respondents had with extensive reading.

##### *7.2 Instrument Validity*

The main tool used by the researchers to collect data was researchers-prepared questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of twenty (20) items. The items were divided into two sections. The first section was composed of ten (10) items and allowed the respondents to express their attitudes toward extensive reading as a means of language learning. Section two was also composed of ten (10) items that gathered students' opinions on the potential barriers to extensive reading.

As for the face validity of the instrument, the teachers of English at Red Sea University emphasized that the questionnaire is valid since the statements have a direct link to the objectives of the study. The various statements of the questionnaire were closely connected to the researchers' aim.

With regard to the content validity of the questionnaire teachers of English at Red Sea University also confirmed that the statements of the questionnaire represent the most important opinions on extensive reading as well as the barriers that are expected to lead to negligence of extensive reading. Thus, the content validity of the questionnaire was ensured.

##### *7.3 Data Collection Procedure*

For collecting data, the researchers distributed the questionnaires among undergraduate students of English at Red Sea University, Faculty of Education, and Faculty of Arts and Humanities. The participants gave their responses to the questionnaire during class time. To ensure valid responses the researchers were present to provide assistance, clarify, and explain any statement that the participants couldn't understand. The answered questionnaires were collected by the researchers and the respondents' information was kept highly confidential.

##### *7.4 Data Analysis*

The descriptive statistics were applied to data using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

To capture the respondents' attitudes toward extensive reading and to reach the barriers to extensive reading the researchers employed a Likert scale where respondents are presented with statements and a range of response options, "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree." Responses to the questionnaires were organized into two sections: attitudes of students toward extensive reading and barriers to extensive reading. The researcher used percentages to interpret the responses of the sample to the questionnaires.

**8. Results**

Shown in Table 1 are numbers and percentages of responses of undergraduate students of English at Red Sea University. The data show the attitudes of students to extensive reading at Red Sea University.

Table 1. Students Attitudes to Extensive Reading

Statements	Number/ Percentages	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I like reading extensively in English	Number	50	20	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	71.43%	28.57%	0%	0%	0%
Reading extensively in English helps me understand the target language culture	Number	35	35	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Extensive reading helps me learn the target language	Number	50	20	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	71.43%	28.57%	0%	0%	0%
Reading extensively in English is boring	Number	0.0	5	0.0	20	45
	Percentage	0%	7.14%	0%	28.57%	64.29%
Extensive reading helps me become a confident reader in the target language	Number	65	5	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	92.86%	7.14%	0%	0%	0%
Doing extensive reading helps me with my English courses	Number	49	20	1	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	70%	28.57%	1.43%	0%	0%
Reading extensively in English helps me become a lifelong learner	Number	50	18	2	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	71.43%	25.71%	2.86%	0%	0%
I like extensive reading because it gives me the chance to read materials of my interest.	Number	62	8	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	88.57%	11.43%	0%	0%	0%
Extensive reading is a relaxing and stress-relieving activity	Number	43	22	5	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	61.43%	31.43%	7.14%	0%	0%
I believe that extensive reading is not as effective as other study methods.	Number	10	5	0.0	5	50
	Percentage	14.29%	7.14%	0%	7.14%	71.43%

In light of the given responses and after analyzing the collected data, most of the respondents show positive attitudes towards extensive reading as a tool of language acquisition. Respondents agree that they enjoy extensive reading. They reported a strong preference for extensive reading, indicating it is an activity they like the most. Respondents have also reported that extensive reading may help a lot with learning the target language as well as learning the target culture. At this point, the authors wish to highlight the suggestion that exposure to a variety of texts in the target language via extensive reading might provide learners with valuable insights into cultural practices (Uemura, 2019).

Further, the respondents have noted that extensive reading is not a boring activity. It is an activity that can help them become more confident readers in English as well as support their performance in other language courses. This help assistance from extensive reading, the authors believe, is likely due to improved reading skills and great exposure to various writing styles and content relevant to their courses.

Responses also show that learners think of extensive reading as a way to become lifelong learners. This could be attributed to the continuous engagement with new and diverse texts of their own interests and choices that foster a habit of reading that extends beyond their formal education, encouraging ongoing personal growth. This personalized approach to reading makes the experience more enjoyable.

Respondents also agree that extensive reading can be a relaxing and stress-relieving activity but they do not perceive extensive reading as less effective than other study methods. Here the authors would like to call for the adoption of extensive reading as a complementary and beneficial approach rather than a replacement to other learning methods.

Captured in Table 2 below are percentages and numbers of results showing barriers to extensive reading.

Table 2: Barriers to Extensive Reading

Statement	Number/ Percentage	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I'm not familiar with the benefits of Extensive reading	Number	60	10	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	85.71%	14.29%	0%	0%	0%
The overemphasis on intensive reading for exams is one barrier to extensive reading.	Number	65	5	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	92.86%	7.14%	0%	0%	0%
I don't have time to read extensively in English due to my academic workload.	Number	55	15	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	78.57%	21.43%	0%	0%	0%
Limited access to appropriate reading materials for extensive reading is one factor for neglecting extensive reading.	Number	50	15	5	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	71.43%	21.43%	7.14%	0%	0%
I don't have previous reading experience on extensive reading.	Number	45	20	5	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	64.29%	28.57%	7.14%	0%	0%
I am not motivated to do extensive reading in English.	Number	18	45	0.0	7	0.0
	Percentage	25.71%	64.29%	0%	10%	0%
I find difficulty in understanding the content of extensive reading materials as my vocabulary falls short.	Number	20	55	5	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	28.57%	78.57%	7.14%	0%	0%
I don't read extensively in English as I prefer digital content to printed extensive reading materials.	Number	40	25	0.0	1	4
	Percentage	57.14%	35.71%	0%	1.43%	5.71%
I don't have an interest to do extensive reading in English	Number	58	10	2	0.0	0.0
	Percentage	82.86%	14.29%	2.86%	0%	0%
I feel that extensive reading is not given enough importance in my curriculum.	Number	60	5	0.0	5	0.0
	Percentage	85.71%	7.14%	0%	7.14	0%

In this part, ten significant obstacles based on students' responses to the questionnaire on barriers to extensive reading are outlined. Firstly, responses show that many students are not familiar with the learning benefits of extensive reading. Without a clear understanding of how extensive reading can enhance their language skills and language performance, the authors believe that students are not expected to prioritize it.

Another major barrier is the overemphasis on intensive reading for exams. This is a general tendency in the educational system in Sudan where there is a strong focus on reading for specific, test-related purposes. The authors of this paper think that this trend can highly marginalize the value of extensive reading and limit students' opportunities to engage in more leisurely and varied reading activities.

Further, responses also reveal that the students are also frequently burdened by their academic workload. With heavy schedules filled with lectures, assignments, and extracurricular activities, students are not expected to find enough time for extensive reading. Thus, the demanding nature of academic life can make it challenging for students to incorporate extensive reading into their routines.

Access to extensive reading materials can be another significant obstacle. Many students face difficulties in obtaining a variety of reading materials that are both engaging and appropriate for their reading level. Consequently, their ability to practice extensive reading is greatly hindered.

Another related issue that the students' responses disclose is the lack of previous extensive reading experience. Generally speaking, the authors think that students who have not been exposed to or have not engaged in extensive reading in the past may lack the necessary skills and habits to start. This lack of reading experience can make it difficult for them to maintain the practice of extensive reading.

Motivation is another critical factor. The responses have revealed that students struggle with a lack of motivation to engage in extensive reading. Without sufficient motivation, the authors stress, it could be challenging for students to commit to regular and enjoyable reading habits.

Understanding the content of extensive reading materials can also be problematic for students at Red Sea University due to their insufficient vocabulary. Thus, students are discouraged from doing extensive reading as they may find the process frustrating rather than enjoyable.

Responses to the questionnaire have also shown that the preference for digital content over printed materials represents another barrier. This reflects that with the rise of digital media, students may favor electronic content over traditional printed texts, which potentially reduces their engagement with printed extensive reading materials.

Interest in extensive reading varies among students. As the students' responses show, some students lack the interest required to sustain a habit of reading broadly, which can significantly impact their engagement with extensive reading.

Lastly, the lack of emphasis on extensive reading in the curriculum constitutes another important barrier. When the curriculum does not integrate extensive reading into their programs, students may not see its value.

All in all, the authors think that addressing these barriers is crucial for promoting extensive reading among students. By increasing awareness of its benefits, balancing intensive and extensive reading, managing appropriate academic workloads, improving access to reading materials, and increasing motivation, the teachers of English at Red Sea University can help students overcome these challenges and encourage effective engagement with extensive reading.

### *7.1 Discussion of Results in Relation to Hypotheses*

To discuss the findings in terms of the hypotheses, it is worth emphasizing that the findings presented in this paper almost confirm the hypotheses set out by the authors.

Regarding the first hypothesis, the analysis of the responses from students regarding their attitudes toward extensive reading revealed several key factors that enhance their positive attitudes toward extensive reading. The enjoyment element of extensive reading reported by the students suggests that extensive reading is a motivating activity that is crucial for sustained learning. The link between extensive reading and cultural understanding also indicates that extensive reading helps learners gain a deeper understanding of the target language culture by exposing them to a variety of texts. This cultural insight, in turn, contributes to their overall language proficiency.

Further, students' confidence in their reading abilities which is supported by extensive reading underscores its role in improving essential language skills. The positive effect of extensive reading on academic performance reflects how it can reinforce learning across different subjects.

Besides, the student's perception of extensive reading as a pathway to lifelong learning indicates that extensive reading fosters a habit of reading that extends beyond formal college study, and promotes continuous intellectual engagement. Besides, the personalized nature of extensive reading which allows students to choose materials of their interest can highly contribute to its effectiveness.

With the students' responses that view extensive reading as a relaxing activity, it could be argued that extensive reading is an activity that addresses both cognitive and emotional needs. Finally, the majority of the respondents recognize extensive reading as effective as other study methods. This suggests that they appreciate its value in their learning process as well as see it as a complementary approach that enhances their general study effectiveness.

On the other hand, the findings on barriers to extensive reading among students show complex factors that hinder the practice of extensive reading. The lack of awareness regarding the benefits of extensive reading, for instance, is a foundational factor. The authors believe that learners are more likely to engage in activities they understand as beneficial. Consequently, teachers at Red

Sea University need to enlighten students as to the benefits of extensive reading. In this regard, programs that explicitly outline how extensive reading can improve learners' language proficiency are highly essential.

The dominance of intensive reading for exam purposes is also a significant challenge. The current trend of preparing students for exams at Red Sea University poses a major challenge, as it often diminishes the importance of reading for enjoyment. To mitigate this, the authors suggest that extensive reading could be integrated into the curriculum as a complementary approach which allows students to balance the demands of intensive reading for exams with enjoyable experience of extensive reading.

Responses also indicate that the student's academic workloads are another barrier. The schedule filled with lectures, assignments, and extracurricular commitments leaves little time for extensive reading. Teachers at Red Sea University then need to promote a balanced approach that manages students' workload and encourages them to have time for extensive reading. Furthermore, the limited access to different reading materials complicates the situation. To enhance reading resource availability, the authors suggest collaboration with local libraries in Port Sudan City which can provide students with a wide range of choices in reading materials that can significantly increase their engagement in extensive reading.

To overcome the problem of the lack of previous extensive reading experience, the authors suggest, among other ideas, that teachers of English at Red Sea University can introduce extensive reading materials in engaging ways, such as reading clubs that integrate the use of digital resources which students prefer and capture their interests. These reading clubs bring students together in a shared space, where the influence of their peers also becomes a source of motivation.

Problems of comprehension difficulties caused by limited vocabulary must also be addressed. In this regard, the authors propose that teachers of English at Red Sea University can support students who join the previously proposed reading clubs by offering reading materials that start simple and progressively become more complex. This approach will help students build confidence over time and enhance their vocabulary.

Finally, a significant reform must also be made as to the integration of extensive reading within the curricula. The authors strongly recommend that the Department of English at the Red Sea University should actively promote the inclusion of extensive reading as a fundamental part of the curriculum. This can be accomplished by defining specific goals and outcomes related to extensive reading and creating an environment that encourages and supports reading for pleasure.

## 8. Conclusion

To conclude the discussion the findings presented in this paper underscore the various benefits of extensive reading, highlighting the positive attitudes of students of English at Red Sea University toward extensive reading as well as emphasizing its role in enhancing language learning, cultural understanding, and overall academic performance. The freedom to choose materials that align with personal interests fosters a deeper connection to reading.

Based on the previous discussion of results presented in this article, it can also be concluded that the research findings highlight a range of barriers that hinder students' engagement in extensive reading at Red Sea University.

In the theoretical aspect, the authors hope that the article makes a significant contribution to the existing body of literature on extensive reading. The findings on the barriers to extensive reading among undergraduate students of English at Red Sea University can contribute to the theoretical framework that shapes language teaching at Red Sea University. By identifying these barriers, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors that negatively impact students reading behavior and engagement.

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