

**A Study of the Effectiveness of Extensive Reading in  
Developing the Second Language Vocabulary of the Level 2  
Students in the Faculty of Arts in the University of Colombo.**



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## Abstract

Acquisition of vocabulary has been a major concern in the field of second language research recently. Numerous research has been carried out in different parts of the world to explore the most effective ways of teaching vocabulary to second language learners and the different strategies employed by second language learners in acquiring vocabulary in the second language.

The vocabulary level of the undergraduates of the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, who get selected to lower intermediate classes of English (Level 2) from the New Admissions Test conducted by the English Language Teaching Unit, is highly unsatisfactory and it is a large barrier for them to express their ideas effectively in English. This is a problem that the language lecturers have to face constantly in teaching in the Proficiency courses in English. It is quite apparent that developing the vocabulary level of these undergraduates is an essential task in developing their second language proficiency.

The main objective of this research is to explore the effectiveness of extensive reading as a means of developing the vocabulary of the students of lower intermediate level in the Faculty of Arts in the University of Colombo. Extensive reading is an approach to the teaching and learning of second language reading in which learners read large quantities of books and other material well within their linguistic capacity. It was Richard Day, Julian Bamford and Kreshan who are pioneers in dealing with extensive reading. However it was Harold Palmer (1968) who first applied the term extensive reading in foreign language pedagogy.

The sample for the present study was 30 students in the lower intermediate level of English from the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. The study was carried out

as a mixed method research using a pre-test and a post-test, two questionnaires and semi structured interviews as research instruments. The pre-test and the post-test were used to gather the quantitative data while the questionnaires and interviews were used to gather the qualitative data related to the background of the students.

The data analysis clearly indicated that there are considerable gains in the vocabulary of the students after the extensive reading programme. Therefore it is recommended that an extensive reading time slot be included in all the proficiency levels of English in the university.

Key words – vocabulary, extensive reading, lower intermediate level, second language, proficiency level.