

Extensive Reading: A study of Its Effects on Turkish EFL Learners'
General Language Proficiency in an Input-Based Setting

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Abstract

This study explored the nature of the relationship between extensive reading and the improvements shown on the general proficiency level of learners of English as a foreign language. For this purpose, 60 college students were recruited whose proficiency levels were A1 according to CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment) or Novice according to the proficiency guidelines established by ACTFL (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages). They were given a standardized pre-test at the beginning of the Fall 2015 semester as part of the institutional requirement. Then, the participants were provided with a large amount of written resources and asked to choose materials for extensive reading. At various degrees, all the participants did extensive reading activities throughout the experiment time. In the meantime, they received formal input-based instruction. The extensive reading activities took place outside of the class, during leisure times. The experiment took almost nine months. At the end of the experiment, they were given a post-test, which was the same as the pre-test, and completed a reading habits questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of items seeking information about how much time they spent doing extensive reading, what materials were chosen in this process, how many pages were read on a daily basis, and so forth. The findings provided supporting evidence for extensive reading and pointed out that extensive reading activities can positively influence the improvements of learners' global proficiency level. The results also indicated that there is a linear relationship between extensive reading and proficiency levels, namely, the more learners do extensive reading and the longer the length of the extensive reading program, the higher their proficiency level will be. All in all, this study revealed that extensive reading is an effective way to improve global target language skills.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

ELT: English Language Teaching

ER: Extensive Reading

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

ALM: Audio-Lingual Method

USSR: Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading

SSR: Sustained Silent Reading

SURF: Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun

DEAR: Drop Everything and Read

IH: Input Hypothesis

KET: Key English Test

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development Theory

LAD: Language Acquisition Device

OOPT: Oxford Online Placement Test

CEFR: Common European Framework of References for Languages

ACTFL: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

CAT: Computer-Adaptive Test

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

PET: Preliminary English Test

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the current study. It begins with providing some brief information about background of the study, then statement of the problem, and the rationale and main aim of this study. It proceeds with the hypotheses and questions that this study aims to find out. The chapter ends with a list of terms that needs to be highlighted before describing the context in the next chapter. This chapter, in brief, tries to create a holistic picture of the theme, before elaborating the research in the following chapters.

1.2 Background of the Study

There is a widespread appreciation of the effectiveness of reading when it comes to language learning or teaching both in the first language (L1) and second language (L2). As skills dealing with written language, both reading and writing represent the two aspects of literacy. Through reading and comprehending, people acquire knowledge and get to know the world around them. Likewise, reading plays an important role in understanding the road signs in the process of language learning. Those signs can be any form of written information. It can be said that reading is one of the heavy cornerstones of literacy. A considerable number of studies examined the effectiveness of reading over language proficiency and its components. (Iwahori, 2008; Nishono, 2007; Horst, 2005; Kusanagi, 2004; Taguchi et al, 2004; Sheu, 2003; Asraf & Ahmad, 2003, Takase, 2003; Bell, 2001; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Tsang, 1996; Masuhara et al, 1996; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Lai, 1993; Elley, 1991; Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Robb & Susser, 1989; Pitts, White & Krashen, 1989; Janopoulos, 1986, Elley & Mangubhai, 1981). Aside from

some techniques, major reading techniques can be itemized as skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading. At this point, it is required to highlight the difference between intensive and extensive reading. Intensive reading (IR) often refers to translation or careful reading of short and difficult foreign language material with an aim of complete and detailed understanding and to a purpose like obtaining specific information. It usually requires follow-up activities for which the information in the text is needed (Bamford & Day, 1997). Yet, extensive reading (ER) is defined as “the reading of a large amount of material in the second language (L2) over time for personal pleasure or interest, and without the addition of productive tasks or follow-up language work” (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989). In short, intensive reading is for getting every bit of information in a specific text, whereas extensive reading is for getting the gist, a general understanding of a specific text. From a classroom perspective, in intensive reading a text can be read many times, while in extensive reading many texts can be read just once.

Extensive reading comes under different labels, including Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun (SURF), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), and the Book Flood program (Elley and Mangubhai, 1983), all having the same purpose: that learners read a large amount of written material (e.g., books, magazines, novels) for pleasure, in doing so they develop lifelong reading habits. Those programs also share a common belief: the ability to read fluently in the target language is best achieved by reading extensively (Renandya, 2007).

It has been posited that learners acquire a language when they understand what they hear and what they read (Krashen, 1981, 1982). Krashen posits in his Input Hypothesis (IH) (1985, 1991) that in order for language acquisition to take place, input should be comprehensible. This indicates that readers ought to have a large amount of vocabulary knowledge to comprehend

non-mediated L2 texts. In parallel with Krashen, McQuillan (2016) posits that “texts that can be read at 98% coverage at a given 1,000 word family level are used to help readers acquire words in the next 1,000 word level. It implies that lexical acquisition is a necessity in a second language learning process. Accordingly, it can be deduced that with an inadequate word bank in the mind, readers may not have a chance to comprehend the texts they are encountering. With regard to this information, Cook (2013) claims that “no amount of grammatical or other type of linguistic knowledge can be employed in communication or discourse without the mediation of vocabulary”. A number of studies also emphasize that learners can augment their word knowledge when they engage in ER (Pitts, White, & Krashen, 1989; Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Lai 1993a, 1993b; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Horst, 2005). Considering the effects on reading ability with developing the vocabulary knowledge of the learners, there has been several other studies that show signs of improvements in the other skills.

A number of studies found out that learners’ writing ability is improved by reading extensively (Janopoulos, 1986; Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Tsang, 1996; Mason & Krashen, 1997). Only a few studies examined the possible effect of extensive reading on spelling, though (Pfau, 1967; Collins, 1980; Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Elley, 1991). With the exception of Pfau- they all noted that reading extensively affects spelling as well. With the help of increased word knowledge, learners improve their writing as a result of enhanced word recognition and symbol decoding abilities improved by extensive reading.

Extensive reading might also have an overall positive impact on L2 acquisition in the long term, but it would be too optimistic to expect that all skills may show equal improvements over a limited period of time (Yamashita, 2008). Yet, Krashen (1995a) claims that ER has a

facilitative effect on diverse abilities including reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and writing style.

Elley (1991, 1998) also shows that free voluntary reading¹ has an absolute effect on language learners' proficiency tests of reading comprehension, vocabulary, oral language, grammar, listening comprehension and writing. This indicates that ER has an impact on numerous measures of literacy.

All the evidence from empirical studies presented above indicates that Extensive Reading has various benefits for both L1 and L2 learners. Yet, this does not imply that Intensive Reading, the traditional approach, is totally useless. In their study, Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009) investigated the reading speed improvement of two groups in two different learning settings: an IR versus an ER program. Both groups improved significantly in their reading speed. However, the extensive reading subjects showed a larger improvement than those in the intensive reading program. As this study explores the effects of ER in an EFL context, the rationale of the study will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In spite of the above, today's Turkish education system does not give the needed attention and care for reading in the target language, even though its benefits are commonly recognized by teachers, lecturers and even students. As mentioned earlier, extensive reading -per se- can facilitate the process of second/ foreign language acquisition to some extent. However, in Turkey's schools reading in the target language is limited to course requirements. Students are

¹ Stephan D. Krashen uses this term instead of extensive reading, but the same idea is intended in the background (reading large quantities of texts voluntarily for pleasure).

not inclined to read for pleasure during their leisure times, nor do instructors promote it. In such cases, as stated above, reading activities do not go beyond the level of intensive reading, as a consequence of which, the input that comes from reading remains limited as well.

Given the significance and effectiveness of extensive reading with respect to language learning, even if there has been some studies covering this phenomenon, the scarcity of empirical evidence provided by empirical studies in the field creates the need for such a study. In addition, this study aims to find out the possible effects of extensive reading in an input-based setting. Consequently, this study will examine the relationship between reading for pleasure or extensive reading, and general language proficiency development.

1.4 The Study: Rationale, research questions, and hypotheses

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of the relationship between ER and the proficiency level of Turkish EFL students who are enrolled in an Input-Based Setting that is directly aligned with Natural Approach. In the Natural Approach, students are expected to show progress in the target language as they did in their native language. For this purpose, they are provided with a number of resources which are aimed to sustain the need for comprehensible input. In order to procure empirical evidence from this study, the researcher recruited 60 college students and implemented a quantitative experimental design.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. Does Extensive Reading improve Turkish EFL learners' general language proficiency?

To what extent can a nine-month Extensive Reading program improve general English proficiency of Turkish EFL learners?

2. What is the relationship between frequency and quantity of ER and general language proficiency test scores?

To what extent can the frequency and the abundance of extensive reading improve general English proficiency test scores of Turkish EFL learners?

The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- I. It is anticipated that the short-term Extensive Reading program implemented in this study will improve learners' general language proficiency.
- II. It is expected that the more learners do reading extensively, the higher their general language proficiency test scores will be.

1.5 Significance of the Study

There are a number of important aspects which may contribute to the significance of this study. Yet, the main area of significance is its aim to investigate the effects of ER on Turkish EFL learners in an input-based setting. Reading extensively particularly in an input-based setting has not yet received sufficient attention in the Turkish education system. Hence, this study will fill in a significant gap in the field of Turkey's foreign language education philosophy. The findings of the research will shed some light on issue of whether reading for pleasure improves the general language proficiency of EFL learners in Turkey. Therefore, it is expected that the current study will improve the state of English language teaching and learning in Turkish schools. According to Carbery and Yoshida (2003), an eclectic method, both intensive and extensive reading, should be implemented in schools for EFL learners to obtain the maximum gain from reading. As stated earlier, reading in the target language in Turkey is limited to course requirements, which indicates that the foreign language teaching philosophy in Turkey mostly

benefit intensive reading. Thus, the integration of ER into the curriculum might contribute to the improvement of present situation of foreign language teaching and learning in Turkey.

Several studies examining the effects of extensive reading found either negative results or no differences in the effect of reading programs that lasted less than seven months. This study, on the other hand, will cover a period of nine months. As a result, the findings of the research will also shed some light on the hypothesis that it is unlikely to observe positive results of reading extensively in a short term (Bell, 2001). Programs that last longer (over a year) find out more consistently positive results, in other words, the longer the program, the more effective it will be (Krashen, 2004).

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a unified review of the literature linked to this study. This review of literature will shed light on relevant subsets of the main subject, Extensive Reading. In order to obtain ample amount of knowledge about these subsets, numerous existing publications in the area of SLA will be reviewed. It will also present a review of the literature pertinent to Extensive Reading, including its underpinning theory, principles and its advantages and drawbacks.

2.2 What is Extensive Reading (ER)?

Day and Bamford (2002) was the first paper that provided a list of key features of ER. After its complementation of Prowse (2002), Day and Bamford (2004) revised the list and gave it the final touch (cited in Shaffer, 2012). The following list provides a detailed compilation of these features:

- Students read often and read a lot.
- They are provided with a wide variety of text types and topics to select from.
- Those texts are not only interesting but also, challenging and engaging.
- Students are free to choose what to read.
- Reading purposes are focusing on: getting the gist and a general information, and reading for pleasure.
- No compensation offered, reading is the reward itself.
- The emphasis is not on follow-up tasks, or tests, or exercises, or questions or dictionary use.

- Materials are within the language competence of the readers.
- Reading process takes place individually and silently.
- Reading does not occur deliberately or slowly, it is fast.
- Teachers define the goals, explains the procedures clearly, guides the students and monitors the whole process.
- The teacher is a role model, takes part in the program as a reader along with the students.

As presented above, Extensive Reading, contrary to Intensive Reading, refers to a program that facilitates and motivates the students to choose what to read on their own from a wide variety of text types which are either at or slightly above the current proficiency levels (Dupuy & Krashen, 1993; Day & Bamford, 1998; Nation, 2001). Intensive Reading programs, on the other hand, offer a relatively teacher-centered process in which students read short texts that precede a follow-up task and the teacher's role is to assist and lead them to gather the detailed meaning of the text so that they can perform some subsequent vocabulary and grammar learning exercises that aimed to develop their reading comprehension skills. Davies (1995) offers a more expanded definition of ER as follows:

“An extensive reading program is a supplementary class library scheme, attached to an English course, in which pupils are given the time, encouragement, and materials to read pleasurable, at their own level, as many books as they can, without the pressures of testing or marks. Thus, pupils are competing only against themselves, and it is up to the teacher to provide the motivation and monitoring to ensure that the maximum number of books is being read in the time available. The watchwords are quantity and variety, rather than quality, so that books are selected for their attractiveness and relevance to the pupils' lives, rather than for literary merit” (1995, p. 329).

A general picture emerges from the above definitions that puts forward a definitive list of key features when attention is given to ER: quantity, reading for the gist and/ or general information, reading fast and for pleasure. These readings take place during the leisure times of the students and of the texts of their personal choices. Established upon these key features, researchers have put forward different labels to refer to ER. For instance, Mason and Krashen (1997) prefer to use the terms ‘free reading’ or ‘free voluntary reading’ (Krashen, 1993), whereas Grabe (1991) calls it ‘sustained silent reading’, Mikulecky (1990) names it ‘pleasure reading’ and Elley and Mangubhai (1981) call it ‘book flood’. Those terms are generally used interchangeably across the whole L1 and L2 reading literature. While these scholars use different terms for ER, the main idea behind all given terms is that students read for pleasure in large quantities from a wide variety of self-selected interesting, pleasurable and challenging materials.

2.2.1 Extensive Reading vs. Intensive Reading

As briefly presented above, ER differs from the more traditional intensive reading approach. There are major differences with regards to the level of difficulty, the amount of material to be read, by whom it is selected, where and how it is read, how the comprehension is checked, and what the linguistic focus is (Shaffer, 2012). These differences are presented in tabular form below.

TABLE 1: Differences between Intensive Reading and Extensive Reading Approaches (Shaffer, 2012)

Item	Intensive Reading	Extensive Reading
Linguistic Focus	Analysis of the Language, Skill Formation and Development	Fluency, Further Skill Development and Improvement
Level of Difficulty	Often difficult	Relatively Easier
Quantity Read	Little at a time	Much (e.g. a book in a week)
Material Selection	By instructor	By learners
Material Read	Same material for whole class	Different materials (based on learner interest)
Where Read	In class	Out of class (mostly at home)
Comprehension Check	Usually by discrete- point questions	By summaries, reports, diaries

As seen from the Table 1, while extensive reading emphasizes getting the gist, a general understanding of the text, improving fluency and skill development, intensive reading clearly focuses on the details of the texts via analyzing the language used in the texts. One remarkable point to be focused on is the materials used in ER programs should be challenging, comprehensible but not too difficult. In order not to bore the learners, materials should be gathered according to their proficiency level and slightly challenging, which is stated as *i+1* in Krashen's Input Hypothesis. In ER programs, teachers act like a friend, s/he is a reader as well. Learners do the material selection on their own. Whereas, in intensive reading programs, material selection is made by instructors. Lastly, ER is not followed by follow-up tasks. As

pointed in Table 1, summaries, reports, and diaries are used for checking the comprehension. Yet, in intensive reading programs, a follow-up task, including a discrete-point test has to be implemented to measure the comprehension level of the learners.

2.2.2 The Benefits of Extensive Reading

This study was conducted to verify whether the great benefits of extensive reading that have been observed in a number of studies both in L1 and L2 would also be observed in a Turkish student population who received formal input-based instruction. Krashen (1994) proposed in his Pleasure Hypothesis² that pedagogical activities that promote language acquisition are enjoyable. Even if, enjoyment does not guarantee the acquisition, there is abundant evidence that ER is enjoyable. Haugaard (1973) explains the case of her son, a reluctant and unmotivated reader until he discovered the comic books:

“He devoured what seemed to be tons of the things... The motivation these comics provided was absolutely phenomenal and a little bit frightening. My son would snatch up a new one and, with feverish and ravenous eyes, start gobbling it wherever he was - in the car on the way to home from market, in the middle of the yard, walking down the street, at the dinner table. All his senses seemed to shut down and he became a simple visual pipeline (1993: 85).”

This deduction can be inferred directly from the program’s procedure. Learners are expected to choose whichever material they want to read. Besides, they do not have to finish it, they can pick another one if they feel bored. After all, ER is also known as reading for pleasure.

² Pleasure Hypothesis asserts that those activities that are really beneficial for language acquisition are usually considered by acquirers as pleasant, while those activities that are not good for language acquisition are not consistently perceived as pleasant, in fact, perceived as painful for some (Krashen, 1994).

ER is seen as a beneficial means for enhancing the skills of reading comprehension, reading speed, and word meaning guessing (Bamford & Day, 1997). Another benefit of free reading is that it allows learners to develop a deep interaction with the material (Day & Bamford, 2002), which can increase their confidence in their ability to individually read and comprehend (Hopkins, 1997).

As language learning occurs while the learners are engaged in two processes: reading and acquisition, Huckin and Coady (1999) depict ER as a “pedagogically efficient” approach to L2 learning. Nation (1997) mentions three simple reasons that make ER an effective way of learning. First, in ER learners read according to their will, reading takes place without the support of the teacher, they read independently and they pick the material at their own level. Second, since they choose what to read on their own, without any kind of imposition, their motivation on reading will increase gradually. Third, ER offers a great deal of opportunities for language learning to occur out of school. This makes it appropriate for learners who have limited target language input outside of the class, such as most EFL contexts, as in Turkey, Japan, and S. Korea etc.

Numerous empirical studies have indicated that ER has an undeniable impact on second language learning (Robb and Susser, 1989; Lai, 1993; Cho and Krashen, 1994; Masuhara et al, 1996; Mason and Krashen, 1997; Kusanagi, 2004; Taguchi et al, 2004; Iwahori, 2008; Yamashita, 2008; Al-Homoud and Schmitt, 2009; Robb and Kano, 2013; Mason, 2013; Mason and Krashen, 2015; Teng, 2015). In particular, findings from the aforementioned studies support the idea that like first language learners, second language learners can also learn to read by reading (Nuttall, 1996). In parallel, the ability to read proficiently is best accomplished through reading extensively (Day and Bamford, 1998; Renandya, 2007; cited in Teng, 2015).

When it comes to getting the most out of reading large quantities of texts, as stated in Hafiz & Tudor (1989) above, having fun while reading ought not to be a priority for a minority. In that sense, Nation (2001) notes that the more learners read appropriate, pleasurable, and interesting texts, the greater the benefits will be (2001).

Although, it is stated above that ER occurs out of school, in some cases the effects of in-school free reading were also measured. According to Hafiz and Tudor (1990), the learners who participated in a sustained silent reading program made better progress compared to the ones who were in a traditional IR program. Elley (1991) posits that free voluntary reading had a profound effect on second language learners in Singapore. Three different longitudinal studies (three years) with approximately 3000 students showed that children who were in book-flood program outperformed traditionally taught students on tests of vocabulary, reading comprehension, oral language, grammar, listening, comprehension, and writing. This link between ER and other skills (e.g. writing) will be examined in detail in a later section of this chapter.

2.2.3 Drawbacks of Extensive Reading

Cobb (2008) claims that learners do not read enough, by themselves, to get sufficient amount of comprehensible input for language acquisition to occur, therefore, they need to be taught through direct instruction. This is mainly because learners who want to improve their L2 reading skills do not usually have an easy access to a sufficiently large amount of interesting, pleasurable and motivating resources. This issue is one of the main drawbacks of implementing an ER program.

Once teachers, institutions, or investigators intend to start an ER program, they have to consider the fact that the learners are going to need abundant resources. However, as highlighted by Davis (1995), the process of the preparation of an ER program requires a large budget for purchasing books, newspapers, magazines and other relevant materials. Unfortunately, many teachers and institutions might not be able to afford such a high cost, which might be the reason why ER is an underused approach in many ESL and EFL classrooms. Moreover, teachers might not have the chance to implement such a program in addition to the curriculum. In order to overcome this limitation, Davis (1995) suggests that first organizations, institutions and teachers must become convinced of the effectiveness of the ER approach in L2 teaching and learning. Moreover regardless of the amount of resources allocated specifically for such a program, teachers should implement an ER program tailored to their students' needs.

The primary feature of extensive reading is, as easily inferred from the name, reading quite a lot more than other known reading programs (e.g. intensive reading). However, there is no certain criterion for determining the ultimate level regarded as “extensive”. In other words, how much reading must be done before it can be addressed as "extensive"? As the following Table 2 shows, there is no agreement on this phenomenon.

TABLE 2: The Minimum Amount of Reading to be Considered Extensive Reading

Author(s)	Minimum amount of reading to be considered ER
Nation and Wang (1999); cited in Yamashita, (2008)	One book per week
Ferris, Kiyochi, and Kowal (1988); cited in Susses & Robb, (1990)	A novel
Hafiz and Tudor (1989)	60 hours over three months
Hill and Thomas (1988)	Thirty pages an hour

Dalle (1988)	Thirty minutes per day for five stories per week
Matsumura (1987)	Three pages an hour
Williams (1986)	One hour of extensive for every hour of intensive reading
Stoller, (1986); Eskey, (1973); Brumfit, (1979); cited in Bamford, (1984)	One reader per week
Hansen (1985)	One chapter per week
Brown et al. (1985)	Five hours by a specified date
Hill (1983)	A minimum of 36 simplified readers per year
Krashen (1981)	One hour per evening
Paulston and Bruder (1976)	At least 50 pages of reading per week
Carroll (1972)	At least two books a week
Newmark (1971)	Two hours per week of texts 10-20 pages in length
Bright & McGregor (1970)	60 books a year

As seen above, the amount of reading to be considered ER is not absolute, yet it depends on teachers' and researchers' perception of what extensive mean. The reason to regard this ambiguity as a drawback is learners who assume they did enough ER might end up not doing enough, which will result in a failure to improve their reading skills in the target language.

2.2.4 The Effects of Extensive Reading on Other Skills

Elley and Mangubhai (1983) proved that reading for pleasure has a dramatic and profound influence on second language learners. They recruited fourth- and fifth-grader EFL students and divided them into three groups for their 30-minute daily English class. The first group was instructed according to the traditional audio-lingual method (ALM)³, second group's

³ ALM is based on Skinner's Behaviorism theory. It assumed that a human being can be trained using a system of reinforcement. Correct behavior receives positive feedback, while errors receive negative feedback. It was widely

instruction was based on only the implementation of ER, and the third group did shared reading⁴. After two years, the second and the third groups, ER and shared reading groups respectively, were far superior to the first group with regard to the results of reading comprehension, writing, and grammar test results.

Another study of Elley (1998) was administered in South Africa and Sri Lanka. In the study, learners were encouraged to read for pleasure. Those learners, who lived in print-poor environments, were granted access to sets of 60 supposedly interesting and pleasurable books that were placed in classroom libraries. The books were used for shared reading and read-aloud activities by the teacher and as well as for silent reading. In all cases, the readers outperformed those traditionally taught -no focus on reading- in comparison classes on standardized tests of reading comprehension and other measures of literacy (i.e. writing, listening, and speaking). The gap between the groups widened with each year of reading (cited in Krashen, 2004).

In his study, Sari (2013) sought an answer to the question “is it possible to improve writing without writing practice?” (p. 6). In this 28-week long study, 40 Turkish EFL high school students were recruited. Prior to the study, they were receiving instruction in accordance with an intensive English language teaching program (vocabulary and grammar) of about 20 to 30 hours a week. They were divided into two groups, each with 20 subjects. The experimental group received an input-based instruction full of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) with a minimum amount of grammar instruction. The participants did not receive any formal or informal writing

used in the 1950s and 1960s, focusing on listening and speaking drills and pattern practice only in English. Its emphasis was on the acquisition of patterns in common everyday dialogues.

⁴ “This is a method of sharing a good book with a class, several times, in such a way that the students are read to by the teacher, as in a bedtime story. They then talk about the book they it read together, they act out the story, they draw parts of it and write their own caption, they rewrite the story with different characters or events” (Elley, 1998; cited in Krashen, 2004).

instruction, follow-up tasks, or homework. At the end of the experiment, one speaking test, two writing tests, a picture-story writing test and a Preliminary English Test (PET) and a C-test, an adaptation of the cloze test technique in which the second half of every second word is deleted, beginning with the second word, were applied to both groups. According to the results, the experimental group showed significantly more improvement than the control group on the speaking test, the PET writing test, and the C-Test. Both groups scored equally well on the picture-story writing test. This indicates that without writing practice, writing accuracy improves as well as other components of language competence as a result of ER. This result conflicts with the validity of spending a great amount of time in writing activities to improve it. Yet, it proves the validity of reading extensively to improve target language skills.

Yamashita (2013) conducted a study with 61 undergraduate students in Japan. The main aim of the study was to determine the impact of ER on the students' attitudes to reading in a foreign language (herein English). The participants were asked to read in English in their one and only compulsory EFL class during the 15-week class time. They had access to approximately 500 graded readers, including famous series such as *Penguin Oxford*, *Cambridge*, and *Heinemann*. A pre-test and post-test design were employed in the study. The data was collected via a 22-item reading attitude questionnaire with six items for Comfort (items 3, 9, 13, 16, 18, and 21), four for Anxiety (5, 10, 17, and 20), five for Intellectual Value (1, 2, 8, 14, and 22), four for Practical Value (4, 7, 12, and 19), and three for Linguistic Value (6, 11, and 15). The results suggest that ER increased subjects' feeling of comfort, while reducing anxiety toward reading in the target language. It also affected the intellectual value that subjects attached to reading in a positive manner. Yet, in spite of the fact that the subjects knew that the amount of reading they did would affect positively their class grades, ER did not increase perceived practical value.

Thus, these results prove that ER increases intrinsic motivation toward reading in the target language.

2.3 The Effects of Extensive Reading on General Language Proficiency

Iwahori (2008) administered a study measuring the effects of extensive reading on reading rate and general language proficiency. In the study, 33 Japanese beginner level high school students were recruited. They were assigned 28 graded readers including Macmillan, Oxford University Press, and Pearson Longman, with a range of basic vocabulary from 200–1,000 words, and were asked to read as their homework for 7 weeks. In addition, the subjects were provided with comic books such as *Archie*, *Richie Rich*, and *Casper*. For measuring the reading rate, the researcher used a 1-minute reading probe. For the measuring of general language proficiency, the subjects took a C-test created by Klein-Braley and Raatz (1983). The C-tests are regarded as an effective measure of overall language proficiency (Dörnyei & Katona, 1992; Eckes & Grotjahn, 2006; Grotjahn, 1986; Klein-Braley, 1997). The results showed that reading rate of the high school students improved after a 7-week long ER program. The differences in the results between the pre- and the post-C- tests were statistically significant. This indicates that ER influenced not only reading rate but also overall language proficiency of Japanese high school students. The limitation of the study was that there was no control group which affects the validity of the observed effects.

Sheu (2003) conducted a study to measure the impact of extensive reading on vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, reading speed, learner attitude, and motivation. In fact, this study is very significant in terms of measuring the effects of free voluntary reading on general language proficiency of junior high school students. In the study, three classes of Taiwanese

junior high school students were recruited and divided into two groups: experimental and control group. Two classes participated in the study as the experimental group and the other class was in the study as the control group. The experimental groups were provided with 57 graded readers in addition to 55 books for native English-speaking children in their class libraries. For measurement, the Cambridge Key English Test (KET), Nuttall's (1996) assessment test, an attitude questionnaire, a book report writing, and a reflection paper writing were used as measuring tools. The experimental classes received two different inputs; graded readers and native English-speaking children books. The control group students received revised materials to memorize vocabulary, grammatical rules, exercises in the reading textbook or self-study and practice books. According to the results of the study, the experimental groups showed statistically significant levels of improvement with regard to grammar, speed, reading comprehension, and language proficiency tests; whereas the control group showed no improvements whatsoever. Indeed, their post-scores were lower than the pre-scores. In terms of the reading speed test results, both groups, all three classes, showed statistically significant positive results. This proved that both ER and intensive reading instruction were effective on the matter of reading speed. All the classes expressed that they enjoyed the reading program. However, one-way ANOVA results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the three groups with regard to their attitudes toward the treatment. When they were asked to assess their own improvement after the study, all three groups expressed an improvement in vocabulary. Only two experimental groups posited that their reading ability improved. One of the experimental classes reported an improvement regarding grammar. It is important to mention that the experimental classes stated that they felt more confident in reading in the target language. The results of the book records show that most of the students in all

classes chose the books they thought interesting relying on the cover of the book or teacher's and/or classmates' recommendations. The material selection shows different effects on the learners. For instance, the significant improvement in vocabulary proficiency shown in the graded reader group. This helps to indicate the success of the natural exposure and repetitive vocabulary items that contained in graded readers in learners vocabulary acquisition. All in all, these results indicate that ER has a profound impact on the overall language proficiency level of high school student in Taiwan.

Constantino et al. (1997) found that free voluntary reading was a predictor of TOEFL scores. In their study, 43 international students from 14 different countries were recruited. The subjects were university students in the US, and they were asked to fill out a 13-item questionnaire, which included questions about their TOEFL scores, the amount of reading and its frequency both in the first language and in English, the number of books in English they read before taking the TOEFL test, TV viewing in English, the frequency of library or bookstore visits. Results indicated that the years of study English in the home country and length of residence in the US showed impact in predicting the TOEFL scores. In addition, years of study in English and free reading played a significant predictor role in the study according to the results. As posited by Gradman and Hanania (1991), "extracurricular reading" showed very positive effects on TOEFL scores playing the best predictor role in this study, too. However, reading in the first language showed no effects on the examination scores.

2.4 Input-Based Instruction Setting

The input-based instruction referred to in this study aims to implement teaching in accordance with the comprehensible input theory, based on Krashen's and Terrell's (1983)

Natural Approach. The following section will be about The Natural Approach, Krashen's second language theory, and its five sub-hypotheses.

2.4.1 The Natural Approach and Input Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) claims that language acquisition process takes place if a natural environment in which learners should get the chance to obtain comprehensible input is created. Krashen's emphasis is on the meaning for communication rather than the form (i.e. grammar). This focus is represented in the differences between extensive and intensive reading respectively, as highlighted above. One unique aspect of Natural Approach is the language allowed in class. Terrell (1977) posits that student should be allowed to use their L1 when they have difficulty in using the target language. In fact, if necessary, teachers should also momentarily switch to the students' L1 to convey a difficult concept more meaningfully. Krashen (1982) notes that acquisition requires a meaningful interaction in the target language (i.e. natural communication) when speakers are not concerned with the form of their utterances, but with the meaning of the messages they are receiving and conveying, and when they are off defensive (low affective filter).

The Input Hypothesis is also known for the concept of "comprehensible input". Comprehensible input is one of the key requisites to acquire a language, but not sufficient per se. Other conditions have to be met, such as having an open attitude, a low affective filter, and the presence of the input that the learner has not yet acquired or is not developmentally ready to acquire by himself/ herself which is expressed by the formula " $i+1$ ".

This formula represents a keystone in this hypothesis. If i refers to the previously acquired linguistic competence, $i+1$ refers to input that slightly above the current competence

level of the learner. This hypothesis claim that learners move from i to $i+1$ by being exposed to input that contains $i+1$. Krashen (1982) states that acquisition takes place only if the learners understand the language that contains $i+1$. The input in $i+1$ should then be comprehensible to the learner.

Krashen also posits that the more learners are exposed to comprehensible input, the more and faster they will acquire a language. He also claims that a language can be acquired only by listening and reading, in other words, by being exposed to comprehensible input coming from spoken and written language that is meaningful to the learner.

Unlike many other theories and hypotheses in second language learning, the Input Hypothesis does not expect the learners to produce language before they are ready. The learners should use receptive skills (listening and reading) to obtain the comprehensible input, then productive skills (writing and speaking) will emerge in time. In the meantime, they can be silent, focusing only on interpreting the messages. This is called the “silent period” (Krashen, 1985). Swain’s (1985) Comprehensible Output Hypothesis says that learners should acquire a language when they strive to convey a message, fail, find out the mistakes, fix it, and try it again. In sum, they must utter language in order to acquire it. As a response to Swain, Krashen (1998) claimed that comprehensible output theory has many challenges for learners. First of all, the output produced by beginners might be too scarce to make a contribution to linguistic competence. Second, the possibility of high levels of linguistic competence without output is feasible. Third, there is no direct evidence indicating that comprehensible output leads to language acquisition. Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development Theory (ZPD), and Long’ (1996) Interaction Hypothesis combine the benefits of both the Input Hypothesis and the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis by asserting that both input and output are important for language learning.

According to the Interaction Hypothesis, language proficiency improves by interaction and communication. ZPD is defined by the creator of the term, Vygotsky, as follows:

“ZPD is the distance between a child’s actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (pp. 86).”

Both ZPD and the Interaction Hypothesis promote interaction and cooperation with others, which means learners need to interpret and produce the language in order to advance to the next level of linguistic development. During this interaction and cooperation, they go through the process of “negotiation of meaning”. This process involves strategies such as rephrasing, restating, asking for clarification, slowing down the speaking rate, taking advantage of body language etc. so that the communication becomes meaningful for both sides (Brown, 2000). In brief, learners can receive feedback to correct their utterances and improve their linguistic competence throughout this interaction.

2.4.2 Monitor Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) makes a distinction between acquisition and learning. Although unconsciously acquiring a language is preferable to learning it consciously, consciously learned knowledge plays a crucial role in this process: it acts as an editor. This is called the Monitor Hypothesis. The ability to speak in the target language fluently comes from what has been acquired, and the grammar rules that has been learned in schools monitor the form of the utterances that one produces. This might happen before the action (i.e. speaking or writing) takes place or even after it. In other words, subconscious knowledge (i.e. acquired competence)

initiates the communication, the sentence pops into the mind, then conscious knowledge (i.e. learned knowledge) scans it internally, inspects it, and if necessary corrects it just before the actual production of the sentence (Krashen, 1982). Using the Monitor is difficult, and in order to use it successfully three criteria must be met beforehand:

- To be able to inspect the sentence, the Monitor must *know* the rule,
- The acquirer must be *thinking about the correctness* of the utterance, or *focused on form* of it.
- The acquirer must have *time*.

Meeting all three conditions are difficult in oral communication, since the immediacy of the exchange and the focus on meaning will not allow for enough time to use the Monitor.

Thinking about what is being said and how it is said at the same time is very difficult. In normal conversations, the speaker has not much time to think about the grammar rules. The conditions for the Monitor to be applied are more easily met in written communication, when writers have time to think or consult the available language resources (e.g. textbooks, dictionaries, etc.) to successfully correct their language performance.

2.4.3 Acquisition- Learning Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) asserts that there are two ways of developing ability in another language: learning and acquiring. Acquisition is referred to as storing a language in the brain subconsciously. It is sometimes addressed as “picking up” a language. While having a conversation with someone, or reading a book, or watching a movie acquisition might be occurring at the same time. As the process takes place subconsciously, once something has been

acquired, the acquirer might not be aware of it. The research strongly suggests that both adults and children can acquire a language, both oral and written, subconsciously.

Language learning is a conscious process. The learner is aware of what is happening. Learning usually occurs in the school. When teachers and student talk about “rules” and “grammar”, they talk about “learning” something consciously. Error correction is expected to help this process. When a learner utters something and someone corrects it, then the learner might change his/ her mind (Krashen, 1982). This correction might boost the process.

2.4.4 Natural Order Hypothesis

Krashen’s this hypothesis posits that we acquire a language in a predictable order. Some parts of a language, for instance, some grammar items, are acquired early, whereas some parts are acquired later. The order is not exact. It does not work in the same way for every acquirer. But the variation among acquirers is not extreme, says Krashen (1982). This order is not influenced by teaching or learning because the acquirer might not be ready to incorporate what s/he has been exposed to in their subconscious linguistic schema. Therefore, pushing a student to learn some grammar rules might not work, or in other words it is difficult to change the order. As the order is not exact, this might work for only some acquirers if they are ready to incorporate the target grammar. Contrary to the common belief, the “simple” rules are not necessarily acquired early. Likewise, complex rules are not necessarily acquired later. For instance, a simple rule such as the third person singular –s is acquired later than some complex rules. This appears to be a problem to curriculum designers who design textbooks from “simple” rules to complex ones. A rule might be a simple one for a grammarian, yet it may be a complex rule for acquirers. The figure below presents the average order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes in ESL.

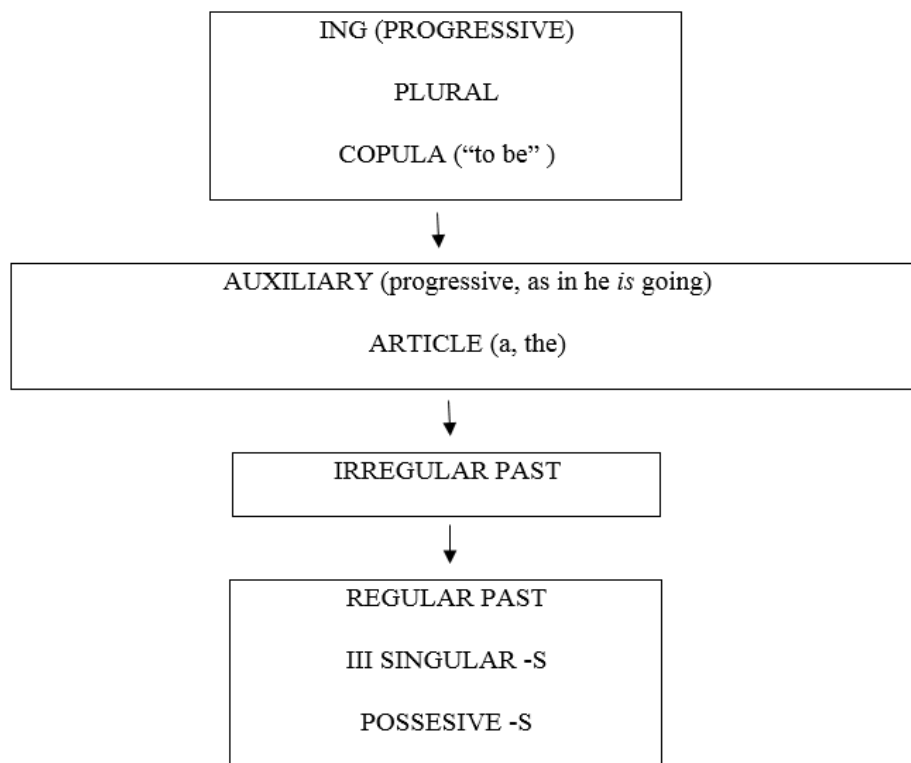


FIGURE 1: The Natural Order of Acquisition of Some Grammatical Morphemes (Krashen, 1977)

2.4.5 Affective Filter Hypothesis

Affective filters hinder the comprehensible input from reaching the “Language Acquisition Device (LAD)”. Chomsky called the LAD, the part of the brain that is responsible for language acquisition (cited in Krashen, 2013). This hypothesis asserts that those affective filters (e.g. motivation, self-confidence, anxiety etc.) do not impact language acquisition process directly but as they prevent the input to reach the LAD, they affect the process indirectly. For instance, if acquirers are anxious, they might understand the input but since it will not reach the acquisition point (i.e., LAD) they will not acquire it subconsciously. A block –herein anxiety- will keep it out from reaching the LAD.

The presence of an affective filter can be explained by comparing two different students who receive the same comprehensible input but only one makes progress since s/he is “open” to acquire it, whereas, the other one does not show any progress because s/he is not “open” to acquire it as a consequence of the presence of an affective filter.

All the above-mentioned review of literature expanded the background of this study in detail. The following chapter will elaborate the study with the details about research design, participants, instrumentations, research procedure, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this thesis, the effects of extensive reading on general language proficiency of Turkish EFL learners who receives instruction in an input-based setting was investigated. The main purpose of this study was to find out the nature of the relationship between reading for pleasure and global language proficiency of Turkish EFL learners.

To that end, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

I. Does Extensive Reading improve Turkish EFL learners' general language proficiency?

To what extent can a nine-month Extensive Reading program improve general English proficiency of Turkish EFL learners?

II. What is the relationship between frequency and quantity of ER and general language proficiency test scores?

To what extent can the frequency and the abundance of extensive reading improve general English proficiency test scores of Turkish EFL learners?

The participants in this study went through an established process which will be described and explained in detail in the following sections. This section introduces the research design, participants, instruments, procedures of the study, and data analysis.

In the first part -research design-, the type of research and the setting in which the research was administered will be discussed. In the second part -participants-, the recruitment procedure will be discussed in detail. The third part -instruments-, describes the tools used

throughout the data collection process. The detailed information about the description of the tests and the questionnaire will be presented in this part.

The fourth part -procedures-, provides information about how the study was conducted, what procedures were involved in the study, the duration of the treatment etc. The final part -data analysis-, will be about how the data gathered is analyzed, and what tools and tests were used in this process.

3.2 Research Design

This research was constructed on a quantitative base and adopted a pre-experimental research design. The dependent variable of the study was Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT) scores, while the independent variable was the amount and the duration of extensive reading participants did in the treatment period. Sixty participants were given a pre-test (OOPT) as part of the institutional requirement to determine their general language proficiency level. After that, they were provided with a large bank of ER materials including various graded readers from famous publishers, magazines, novels, newspapers etc. In the meantime, they received a regular input-based instruction in their English classes. They were explained the benefits of reading extensively outside of the class and asked to choose the material freely. The participants were eager to improve their proficiency level, hence, the accountability of the participants was not a problem whatsoever. Even so, they were asked to keep a diary to record their feelings, thoughts, and progress. As a consequence, it was not difficult for the investigator to encourage and direct the participants during the treatment period. The subjects were also told that they were free to stop reading the material if they did not like it and choose another one. As the basic rule of extensive reading is reading for pleasure, they were allowed to change the material if they would

like to do so. After this approximately nine-month long treatment, they were given a post-test (OOPT), and a questionnaire designed by the investigator was also given to determine their progress with the amount of extensive reading they did.

3.3 Participants

In order for this study to explore the impact of ER on general language proficiency level of Turkish EFL learners, the investigator recruited 60 cadets including 58 male and 2 female in a military college in Turkey. They were all around 19-20 years of age. Their background of formal English instruction was the same for all of them: nine years. Children in Turkey predominantly begin receiving formal education when they are seven, yet, some families insist on registering their kids earlier (i.e., around six), but those cases are exceptional. Formal English instruction begins in 4th grade. Therefore, even if the participants were at different ages, their background education, especially their English instruction background, were the same. They shared the same background education, formal education setting in the college (e.g. hours of formal education, instruction design etc.), first language (i.e. Turkish), agenda within the campus (e.g. meetings, conferences, military education, free hours to do reading etc.) As a consequence, it can be said that the sample group was a homogenous one.

As an institutional regulation, they live in dorms (i.e. barracks) within the campus, and they were allowed to go out of the campus only at the weekends.

The participants were given the pre-test (OOPT) as a part of the institutional routine at the very beginning of the Fall 2015 term. They were divided into classes according to the proficiency scores. This procedure is executed yearly to determine their proficiency level, and to modify their instruction accordingly. The proficiency levels were designed in accordance with

the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) and ranged from A1 to C2. For instance, A1 and A2 students receive instruction in the same classes, and in parallel, B1 and B2 students in the same classrooms. The CEFR A1 level is the equivalent to Novice Low, Novice Mid, and Novice High levels as established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

The participants were selected randomly from A1 and A2 level classes. As the sample group was a homogenous one, this eliminated possible sampling errors. The sample group represents the whole population of the same level. In doing so, the validity of the sample group was increased, and cultural, ethnical, religious, and gender bias were eliminated.

Pre-test results shed light on the fact that, although all participants had nine years of formal English education, they only knew simple expressions, greetings etc. Pre-test results rated the participants at level A1, even though all of them were chosen from A1-A2 classes. The fact that all participants were at the same proficiency level in English will make easier to observe the impact of ER in their global English proficiency. Exploring the impact of ER on the participants who did not have the required grammar, vocabulary knowledge, and other language skills will initially prevent them from understand what they read. Yet, by this way incidental overachievements will be eliminated.

3.4 Instrumentations

Two data collection tools were used in this study: OOPT and a Reading Habits Questionnaire. The OOPT was used to measure the progress and proficiency level of the participants, while the Habits Questionnaire was used to determine what and how much the participants read. The detailed information about the tools is presented below.

3.4.1 Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT)

The test was developed by Oxford University Press between 2007 and 2010 to provide a reliable and valid measure of learners' linguistic knowledge, notably grammar and vocabulary, and reveal how learners benefit from that knowledge to understand the meaning in communication. In doing so, they assisted the university and other language schools, departments, and institutes in dividing and placing the students into groups according to their proficiency level.

The OOPT is designed as a multiple-choice test and consists of two main sections. The first section is addressed as Use of English, including 30 questions on grammar and vocabulary skills. This section has four task types: testing knowledge of forms, testing knowledge of meaning, testing knowledge of both form and meaning, and testing knowledge of pragmatic meaning. In short, this section tests the learners' knowledge of meaning and form, and the ability to combine both and use them in different contexts. The questions of this section consist of dialogues presented with an assisting image so that the test-taker can put those dialogues into a context. There is also a cloze test which assesses the reading comprehension skill and the ability to understand the message in a written text as well as its grammar structures and vocabulary. The second section is a listening section, including 15 listening comprehension questions. In this section, the test-takers are expected to recognize and find out the literal, intended, and implied meanings of the content presented. The whole test requires 60 minutes to complete.

The OOPT is a Computer Adaptive Test (CAT). Thus, it enables test-takers to choose their starting level. Before they begin the test, the OOPT asks whether they want to start at lower, mid-, or higher level. After the selection is complete, the questions start to be seen on the screen. Then, according to the answers of the test-taker, the OOPT picks the following questions.

Every correct answer contributes a little to the systems' prediction of the proficiency level of the test-taker.

The OOPT scores are reported on a scale between 0 and 120, and they are converted into the CEFR levels. As stated earlier, CEFR levels range from A1 to C2, therefore, each 20 points on OOPT correspond to a CEFR level.

Additional advantages of OOPT over other standardized tests such as TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS etc. is that it is less time-consuming. Also, OOPT reports the scores immediately after the completion of the test. However, aside from all the advantages, the OOPT does not include speaking and writing, yet, Pollitt (2009) posits that it is highly reliable and valid in determining the general proficiency level of the learners.

3.4.2 Reading Habits Questionnaire

The Reading Habits Questionnaire was developed by the investigator in order to find out what and how much the participants read in English in their spare times, or outside of class. As there was no common, well-known, valid, and reliable reading habits questionnaire available in the literature, the need for one arose (see Appendix A). In addition to items related to how much and what they read, there were also items seeking answers about the perceptions, views, and thoughts of the participants related to extensive reading. There were 11 items in the questionnaire. Of those 11 items, four were linked to how they felt, what they thought about reading for pleasure in their free time. There was also one item about the listening habits of the participants.

3.5 Procedure

In this section, the investigator will present detailed information about the timeline, how and under what circumstances the study was administered, and how the data collection process took place.

In order to answer the research questions above, 60 participants were given the OOPT by the institution at the beginning of the fall term in 2015 to determine their proficiency level. As the OOPT is an internet-based test, the participants took it in a language lab in the Department of Foreign Languages. All computers and headsets were controlled in order to avoid any problem that might occur during the test. The OOPT lasted 60 minutes. After the test, the participants were provided with a great deal of written resources that can be found in both local libraries (i.e. in their very own classrooms) and in the main campus library. All the materials, which were specifically bought for this purpose, were accessible to the participants. They were also provided with the audiobooks of the graded readers. The main reason for this was that some students reported they feel comfortable listening to the audiobooks while reading the written versions of the same resources simultaneously. To exemplify some of the materials:

Cambridge English Readers, Collins ELT- Agatha Christie Readers, Express Publishing- ELT Graded Readers, ILTS- Our Unique Planet, Oxford University Press- Bookworms Library, Penguin Readers, Scholastic ELT Readers etc.

The participants had the liberty to choose whatever material they wished, and to stop reading whenever they wanted. These reading for pleasure activities lasted almost nine months and throughout this time they received an input-based instruction as well, including a “silent period” during which they were not forced to produce the target language, and they were allowed

to use their native tongue if they asked for it. Students were also asked to keep a diary in order for the investigator to double-check the reliability of the research design.

Finally, at the end of the Spring term, they were given a reading questionnaire to find out how often they read, how many pages have been read in a day/ -week/ -month, and what they thought/ -felt while they were in ER program. The questionnaire was paper-based and was presented both in English and Turkish. They answered it during an English class. Immediately after the completion of the questionnaire, they were given the second OOPT (post-test). The same procedure as in the pre-test was followed again. It was given in a language lab in the Department of Foreign Languages, and it lasted 60 minutes.

3.6 Pilot Study of the Reading Habits Questionnaire

Prior to the actual implementation of the habits questionnaire, there were 16 items to be asked. After the testing of the reliability and validity on 25 students who did extensive reading in addition to receiving an input-based instruction, five items were eliminated. Initially, the face validity of the questionnaire was tested and modified according to the feedback delivered by the pilot group. In order to improve the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, and gather more accurate feedback from the participants, the questionnaire was presented in the first language of the participants. According to the pilot group, there were some words and phrases that caused ambiguity in the meaning. Those words and phrases were replaced or corrected by the investigator immediately. Moreover, two different items showed similar characteristics with some other items, hence, they were eliminated as they did not elicit anything new for the study. As the final step, a Cronbach Alpha test was ran on SPSS to check on the internal consistency of

the reading habits questionnaire, and the results revealed that the reliability of the test was found to be satisfactory, $\alpha=.804$.

3.7 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Prior to entry into the SPSS, this data was coded and carefully checked for errors, and numerous additional statistical tests were performed on them. Initially, a linear regression test was applied to see if there was a significant relationship between ER and the amount of reading done. Then, another linear regression test was administered to see the nature of the relationship between ER and frequency, and a paired sample t-tests were also applied to determine the difference between two tests scores (i.e. pre- and post-tests), to find out if that difference was a significant one. In order to test the reliability of the habits questionnaire the investigator ran a Cronbach Alpha test.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data and aims to answer the research questions as established in chapter 1. A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the general language proficiency scores and CEFR levels, and to investigate how ER impacts the proficiency level of the participants. Regarding the regression test, the independence of errors, assumptions of linearity, and normality of residuals were met. The normality of residuals was tested and the results showed that it was random and independent. This also indicates that the assumption of independence of errors was met. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the variables measured in the study.

TABLE 3: Descriptive Statistics of Dependent and Independent Variables

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Scores	60	8	1	9	3.12	2.156
Post-test Scores	60	46	1	47	17.90	11.682
Pages read on a daily basis	60	50	0	50	18.20	12.856
Valid N	60					

As seen in Table 3, the mean score of the participants on the post-test was not high ($M=17.90$, $SD=11.682$). However, since the mean score of the participants on the pre-test ($M=3.12$, $SD=2.156$) was very poor, it can be stated that participants showed a tendency to improvement after the ER program.

Table 4 shows the materials that participants used throughout the program and the frequency analysis of them.

TABLE 4: The Frequency Analysis of the Materials the Participants Used during the Program

Materials	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Graded Readers	60/60	100	100
Magazines	18/60	30	30
Newspapers	28/60	46.6	46.6
Surfing the Web	46/60	76.7	76.7
Novels	6/60	10	10

Table 4 demonstrates that all the participants used the graded readers as the primary resource, whereas only 10% of them read novels during the program. It can be clearly interpreted that novels were not regarded as interesting and enjoyable at this level. The table also points out that, in addition to the graded readers, almost half of the participants (46.6%) chose to read newspapers as the secondary resource, whereas 76.7% of them stated that they surfed the web for reading in the target language. All in all, Table 4 indicates that the participants in this study used almost all the materials they were provided with. The result-like data also showed that a minority with the highest scores were the only ones who chose to read novels in this period.

4.2 Results by Research Questions

4.2.1 Research Question 1: Does Extensive Reading improve Turkish EFL learners' general language proficiency?

In order to find out whether extensive reading affected the general language proficiency level of the participants, a linear regression analysis was conducted. The results were expected to show the correlation between the independent variable, pages read in a day, and the dependent variable post-test scores. This step brings the *r squared value* and it is the ratio of variance in the

dependent variable (post-test scores) that can be explained by the independent variable (pages read on a daily basis). This is an overall measure of the strength of association. The *r square* for this model was found to be .882 (see Table 5).

TABLE 5: Linear Regression Analysis Results

Model Summary^a

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.939 ^a	.882	.880	4.049

a. Predictors: (Constant), Pages

These results indicate that this model can explain the difference shown in the sample data by 88% accuracy. In other words, the investigator developed a successful model for analyzing this data set. However, the standard error of the estimate already reflects the variability of predictions in a regression line. As seen above, it is not a large value, which points out that most of the observed values clustered fairly closely to the regression line. The standard error of the estimate can be clearly seen below in the scatter plot figure (Figure 2).

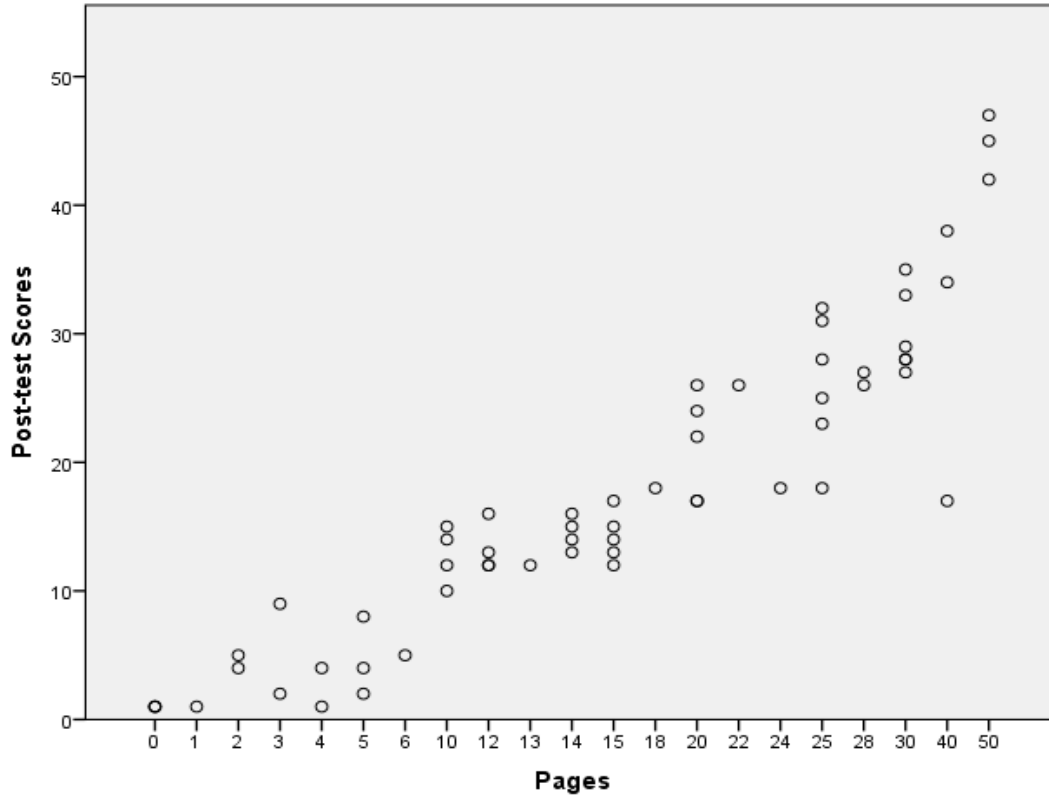


FIGURE 2: Scatter Plot Graph of the Relationship between the Dependent Variable and Independent Variable.

When it comes to testing whether the ER predicts the post-test scores, an analysis ought to be done between the variables. It can be seen in Table 6 that reading for pleasure had a significant impact on post-test scores. In other words, there was a positive relationship between the variables in the analysis ($p < .001$).

TABLE 6: Analysis on the Relationship between Post-test Scores and Pages Read in a Day

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.370	.911		2.601	.012
	Pages	.853	.041	.939	20.812	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Post-test Scores

As seen above, unstandardized regression coefficient B values indicate that pages read on a daily basis had a positive and significant correlation (.853) with post-test scores. In order to find out more accurate answers to this research question, the researcher created a new variable: the difference between two test scores. The range between the pre-test and post-test scores gives us the progress in digits, and by analyzing the regression between the independent variable and the new variable, the relationship between extensive reading and the progress shown by the participants can be seen more accurately. A new model was created to reveal the nature of this relationship. *R square* for this new model was found to be .835. The analysis can be seen in Table 7 below.

TABLE 7: The Analysis between the Range of the Pre- and Post-test Scores and Pages Read on a Daily Basis

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.134	.979		1.159	.251
	Pages	.754	.044	.914	17.107	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Progress from pre-test to post-test

As seen in the table above there is a significant relationship between the progress of the participants from the pre-test to post-test and the independent variable, pages read on a daily basis.

A paired sample t-test was run to analyze the improvement from pre- to post-test and the results showed a significant improvement in the scores. Pre-test mean score was 3.12, while the post-test mean score was observed as 17.9, and it was found to be statistically significant, $p < .001$.

In parallel with this result, the progress shown on the proficiency level of the participants can be seen by checking the CEFR proficiency level changes. According to the pre-test scores, all of the participants were at the A1 proficiency level. After the ER program, the post-test results pointed out that almost half of the participants moved to the upper level, while slightly more than half of them remained on the same level determined by the pre-test. Table 8 shows the change in the CEFR proficiency levels.

TABLE 8: Changes in the CEFR Proficiency Levels

CEFR_PRE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A1	60	100.0	100.0	100.0
CEFR_POST					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A1	32	53.3	53.3	53.3
	A2	21	35.0	35.0	88.3
	B1	7	11.7	11.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

The regression analysis discussed above indicated that every single one of the participants showed progress. Yet, according to the post-test scores, the progress shown by some

were not sufficient to be qualified for an upper proficiency level. On the other hand, 12% of the participants moved to the B1, indicating a jump of two levels at once. No signs of decrease were observed in the scores.

4.2.2 Research Question 2: What is the relationship between frequency and proficiency test scores?

The main purpose of this question was to find out whether a positive correlation between continuing reading and improving in the target language skills exists. In other words, is it correct to claim that the more one reads the more s/he improves his/her target language skills/ proficiency level? It was expected that a strong evidence would emerge by combining the results of the research questions. For this purpose, a linear regression analysis was conducted to check on the relationship between durations on a daily basis and post-test scores. The coefficient B value was found to be .296. The results were presented in Table 9.

TABLE 9: The Analysis of the Relationship between Post-test Scores and Reading Durations

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.654	1.791		1.482	.144
	Reading Durations	.296	.030	.794	9.940	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Post-test Scores

As the final step, in order to make the analysis more reliable a linear, regression test between the newly created variable, the progress from pre-test to post-test, and reading durations

was also run. In doing so, the investigator aimed to determine the nature of the relationship between the progress and frequency. The results are displayed in Table 10.

TABLE 10: The Regression Analysis of the Relationship between the Difference from Pre-test to Post-Test and Reading Durations

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.532	1.726		.888	.378
	Reading Duration	.258	.029	.764	9.013	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Difference

As seen above in Table 10, the B value of the analysis was found to be .258. It clearly indicates that the more the participants read, the more their proficiency level improved.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings out conclusions for this study and presents the contributions it has made to the current knowledge within the field of ELT. The chapter will begin with comparing and contrasting the predictions of the hypotheses and the results obtained from the study, then it will go on to consider the limitations of the study, and to discuss its empirical and pedagogical implications, providing suggestions for further research.

5.2 Contributions to Knowledge

5.2.1 Hypotheses

This study was designed to gain insight into the impact of ER on general language proficiency level of Turkish EFL learners.

The first hypothesis anticipated that short-term ER programs would improve learners' proficiency level. Despite the uninterrupted and intense reading programs studied before (e.g. Iwahori (2008): 7 weeks; Shin (2001): 6 weeks etc.), the majority of the findings clearly show that it is unlikely to observe positive effects of ER in the short term (Bell, 2001). Similarly, Krashen (2004) claims that programs that last longer (over a year) find more consistently positive results. Studies that last less than seven months tend to show either no difference or negative results of ER (Krashen, 2004). Programs that last seven months to one year tend to show either positive (Fader, 1976; Elley, 1991; Jenkins, 1957; Manning and Manning, 1984; Bader et al., 1987; Davis, 1988, Mason and Krashen, 1997; Lituanas et al., 1999; cited in Krashen, 2004) or no signs of improvement after the program (Manning and Manning, 1984;

Schon, Hopkins, and Vojir, 1984; Schon et al., 1985; MacDonald et al., 1966; Davis and Lucas, 1971; Healy, 1963; Davis, 1998; as cited in Krashen, 2004).

Yet, almost all of the studies that cover a period longer than a year showed positive results after ER (Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Elley, 1991; Bohnhorst and Sellars, 1959; Cyrog, 1962; cited in Krashen, 2004).

This study covered a period of nine months. Therefore, the possibility existed that it might show either no difference or positive results after the program. One aspect to consider before discussing the hypothesis is the fact that the participants received a regular input-based instruction. In other words, this was not an uninterrupted and intense reading program from the beginning.

It was found that ER had a positive impact on the improvement of the participants in this study from pre-test to post-test. The analyses presented above pointed out that there was a statistically significant relationship between the duration of extensive reading on a daily basis and post-test scores. In other words, the ER program resulted in the improvement on the post-test scores. Hence, it can be claimed that hypothesis was right about its anticipation, this relatively short-term study (nine-month) influenced the proficiency level of the participants in a positive way.

The second hypothesis predicted that the more participants do extensive reading in their free time, the higher their proficiency scores will be. As discussed earlier in chapter 4, the second research question dealt with the effects of the frequency and the correlation between reading more and proficiency scores. The linear regression analysis showed that coefficient B value was .296, which corresponds to a statistically significant result. In other words, it clearly indicates that there is a linear increase on the intersecting line between x-axis and y-axis, which are

reading durations on a daily basis and post-test scores respectively or vice versa. The same analysis was conducted on two different variables: the range between pre- and post-test scores and daily reading durations. The results were similar. Coefficient B value was found to be .258, that is also a true sign for the prediction made by the second hypothesis.

The results of this study appeared to concur with previous research evidence, which showed that the more learners read for pleasure, the more they will improve their general language proficiency (Renandya, 2007; Krashen, 2003; Elley, 2001; Dupuy & Krashen, 1993; Day and Bamford, 1998). All results echoed Krashen's statement that the longer the length of the ER program, the greater the impact of extensive reading will be (2004).

Another important finding of the study was the improvements shown on the proficiency level of the participants. At the very beginning of the program, the pre-test scores showed that the most of the students started this journey from the scratch. All of them were at the A1 level, which is the lowest level one can have. As the results pointed out, all of the participants increased their test score. In fact, the majority of them moved to the upper level, and even some moved two sequential levels. This might also be a sign of the impact of the ER program.

All in all, this study revealed that extensive reading is an effective way to improve the target language skills out of class. Even though these results indicate that reading for pleasure has a positive impact on proficiency scores and many attempts to ensure the quality of the research had been made, there are also a few inevitable limitations related to different aspects of this study.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

First of all, one important limitation is that the research design was not experimental. In fact, this study was administered according to the pre-experimental design which means there

was no equivalent non-treatment group (i.e. control group) to compare the results to obtain much more reliable findings. This was mainly because there were no available participants who do not read for pleasure. As part of the institutional regulations, all of the participants were receiving input-based instruction, which was supported by out of class readings.

Second, as stated earlier, the longer the length of the program, the more effective the reading program will be. This study covered a nine-month period. Although statistically significant results were obtained, studies that last longer (i.e. over a year) tend to show consistently positive results. Thus, in further experiments, this fact should be regarded as the primary requirement to have almost-certain positive results from all the participants.

One minor limitation was the experimental group's grade. The participants were college-level students. However, different age groups might show different results. Therefore, further studies should be administered in a large sample group at various ages to see the effects more satisfactorily on a large age scale.

The last but most important limitation was the scarcity of the variables used in this study. They were too limited to conduct a well-developed experiment. In order to find out whether the extensive reading itself was the only variable that triggered the participants' proficiency changes, or whether there were some other unknown variables such as extensive listening, regular input-based instruction etc. Multiple questionnaires seeking information about different habits should be handed out to the participants for further studies. As this was not an uninterrupted and intense reading program, all the external habits that might influence the change on the scores should be observed.

5.4 Pedagogical Implications

Considering the results discussed above, it can be said that ER has a positive impact on Turkish EFL learners' general language proficiency. Therefore, ER deserves more attention than it has received so far, especially in an EFL context such as Turkey, where students do not have many opportunities to communicate often with native speakers of English. ER provides a great deal of authentic material, which is the essence of language teaching classrooms. Thus, several pedagogical implications are suggested below.

The findings of this study have several contributions to the design and development of methods of teaching and materials used in the classrooms, particularly in the institution this research took place. EFL learners are supposed to memorize a large number of vocabulary items in order to master the English language. ER can be an efficient tool for that. Learners need to know at least 95% of the running vocabulary in a written text to comprehend it (Hu and Nation, 2000; cited in Alahirsh, 2014). The allocated time for vocabulary instruction in EFL contexts is not enough to cover such a large number of words. Therefore, the need for the exposure to the target language in EFL contexts can be resolved with the aid of a large quantity of books and other written resources. Moreover, the benefits of ER can be availed by the integration of this approach into the curriculum. In doing so, the need for the comprehensible input can be resolved to some extent.

Prior to the implementation of an ER program, some initial steps of preparation for introducing ER should be taken. These steps include both teacher and learner training for ER. The first step might be the opening of professional development courses by educational institutions for teachers. In doing so, the quality of teachers' knowledge of ER can be enhanced. In these courses, teachers can improve their knowledge and understanding of ER and its

significance and role in language teaching. After all, teachers should be provided with the resources that they need to improve their skills in teaching extensive reading. These courses can include workshops and modules on how to integrate ER into a class, how to work with students in a collaborative way, how to bring outside experiences into the class to promote ER, and how to encourage reading for pleasure in free time.

Foreign language education should not be restricted to only four or six class hours per week, particularly in EFL contexts. In addition, as a result of the cultural background and current philosophy of education in Turkey, Turkish EFL learners lack the habit of reading for pleasure in their leisure times. Hence, with a limited and traditional regular instruction and lack of reading habits -both in L1 and L2- it becomes almost impossible to master the English language.

Teachers need to guide the students to develop an awareness of the significance of augmenting their vocabulary. With their lead and encouragement, students can start from reading short, easy, pleasurable, and interesting books. This will improve their reading rate, reading comprehension skill, and awareness in the long run. They will be able to differ intensive instruction from extensive reading approach which involves them in reading large quantities of texts with pleasure (Waring, 2011). Teachers should make sure they complement their regular IR classrooms with outside of classroom such as ER program. As a consequence, the learners will become more confident, motivated, successful, and lifelong readers.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This experimental research was restricted to examining the effects of ER in an input-based setting. As indicated, all the participants were found to be at CEFR A1 level. Hence, further studies should be carried out by recruiting various students from various age groups and proficiency levels. In doing so, the investigators might find out the impact of age factor and

proficiency level in relation to ER program. It can be claimed that this study should be replicated with a well-developed experimental design. The target population was limited to one experimental group, without any control groups. In addition, as the only variable was the reading habits of the students, the impact of any excluded variables such as regular instruction, extensive listening etc. was not under observation in this study. As a consequence, the isolation of the effects of ER cannot be achieved by this setting. Such expansions might allow the investigators to gain a broader range of results, in other words, a more detailed picture of the effects of ER on different target populations with an isolated picture of the effects of ER.

In addition to the proficiency factor, another suggestion to make for further studies is the researched institutions. This study was limited to the recruited population from a college level military school. Yet, in order to widen the scope of this experimental research various instruction settings need to be examined at various institutions. Thus, the investigators would have the opportunity to find out and compare the effects of instruction type with previous findings. As mentioned earlier, even though the reliability and validity of the OOPT has been testified by many investigators and considered as highly reliable in determining the general language proficiency level of the test-takers (Pollitt, 2009), it does not assess the productive skills of the test-takers. In order to see the effects of ER on speaking and writing more satisfactorily, further research is needed. All these factors indicate that by correcting the shortcomings of this study, a more complete and accurate picture of the effects of ER on global language proficiency will be drawn.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Reading Habits Questionnaire

Name:

This questionnaire was delivered to you in order to determine what you read and how much time you spent on reading for pleasure on a daily basis. The obtained results of this particular questionnaire will be used to improve your reading habits and as a feedback for your supervisors to enhance the quality of current philosophy of education. The main purpose of this study is to improve the library in service for your very own and monitor the progress we had in our new philosophy of education. The answers you give will not be shared with any third parties, will not be used to assess or grade you. Therefore, please provide accurate information.

1. How much time in average do you spend for reading in English in a day?

2. How many pages in average do you read for pleasure in English in a day?

3. Do you listen the audiobooks of the same sources provided to you simultaneously?

4. Do you prefer other resources aside from graded readers for reading in English? If yes, please explain your resources below.

5. I read in English for pleasure.

a. Always

b. Often

c. Rarely

d. Never

6. I read in English for extra practice.

a. Always

b. Often

c. Rarely

d. Never

7. I look up unknown words in a dictionary while reading.

a. Always

b. Often

c. Rarely

d. Never

8. I understand the gist of a book despite the unknown words.

a. Always

b. Often

c. Rarely

d. Never

9. Which genres do you like the most? (Sci-fi, action, drama, thriller etc.)

10. In your judgment, what makes reading in English difficult to understand? Rank the following items from 1 to 5. (As 1 is the least difficult and 5 is the most)

a. Vocabulary (Unknown words, idioms etc.)

b. Grammar (Complex sentences etc.)

c. Unfamiliarity with context

d. Format, form and style

e. Interest

11. Is there any book suggestions that you have for adding to your library? If yes, please explain below.
