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Exploring teachers' practices and students' perceptions of the extensive reading approach in EAP reading classes



Eunseok Ro

Department of Second Language Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, HI 96822, USA

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ABSTRACT

The ability to teach effectively relies on understanding both teachers' classroom practices and students' motivation (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). This study focuses on the extensive reading (ER) approach in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context. It explores two teachers' classroom practices and the impacts of these practices on their students' second language (L2) reading motivation and reading amount. A quantitative analysis indicates that the reading motivation of one of the classes significantly increased, particularly in regard to values of intrinsic motivation, while the students in the other classes read comparatively larger amount with less of reading motivation enhancement throughout the course. A qualitative analysis shows that specific elements of these teachers' practices (e.g., the ER classroom activities and the degree and type of teacher guidance) as well as inherent characteristics of ER (e.g., reading for enjoyment, and the benefits to language skills of extensive L2 reading) affected the students' motivation and the amount they read. The study concludes by discussing its findings' pedagogical implications for ER in EAP settings.

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1. Introduction

Teachers and researchers have been implementing extensive reading (ER) approaches in their own teaching and research settings ever since Palmer (1964) introduced the term. Though ER practitioners define and use ER differently depending on their own beliefs and teaching contexts, the general consensus among practitioners is that ER requires students to read a lot, as the term *extensive* implies (for detailed discussions of what constitutes ER, see the April and October 2015 discussion forum issues of *Reading in a Foreign Language Journal*). Many ER studies have reported positive learning outcomes. For instance, Mason (2004) reported that students who read a thousand pages of graded readers per semester learned on average nine words per week (i.e., about 450 words a year), and those who listened to stories for 15 min learned an average of 20 words per story (i.e., about 1000 words a year from weekly stories). Beglar, Hunt, and Kite (2012) found that reading one book every two weeks was the most efficient amount for learners to develop their reading rates. Moreover, according to Nation (2015), repeatedly encountering the same words has been reported to foster vocabulary learning. Because ER provides opportunities for multiple encounters, it increases learners' opportunities to gain new vocabulary knowledge, which in turn leads to improved reading fluency and comprehension (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Jacobs & Farrell, 2012; Nuttall, 2005).

E-mail address: eunseokr@hawaii.edu.<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2016.01.006>

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Richard Day and Julian Bamford along with several colleagues have written widely on the benefits of ER as a means to an end, claiming that ER supports cognitive and affective development as well as listening, speaking, and writing language skills (e.g., Day & Bamford, 1998; Jacobs & Farrell, 2012; Maley, 2008). In fact, Park (2015) found that the integration of ER in an academic writing class with associated writing activities for one semester improved students' use of content (12.67% increase from pre- to post-writing test), organization (12.25%), and vocabulary (9.25%), as well as their overall language use (7.85%). Park showed that ER could be beneficial to second language (L2) learners even in an English for academic purposes (EAP) context. Other empirical studies that show the benefits of ER in many different areas of language learning are reviewed in Nakanishi (2015, pp. 35–36) meta-analysis.

One question that arises for teachers interested in ER approaches is how we can help our students read a lot. This is where the *teacher's role in ER* and the *student's motivation to read* come into play. Kirchhoff (2013, p. 194) defines motivation as the “mental and emotional processes that precede a person's decision to act and the intensity in which to continue the action.” By investigating how we as teachers influence students' reading motivation, we can better understand what teachers do that affects students' cognitive and psychological processes of reading, thus informing our pedagogical choices in order to better help learners develop good reading habits as part of their language development.

2. Overview of research on L2 reading motivation in ER

Recent studies on ER have focused on examining students' L2 reading motivation (e.g., Ro, 2013; de Burgh-Hirabe & Feryok, 2013; Judge, 2011; Kirchhoff, 2013; Komiyama, 2009, 2013; Mori, 2002; Nishino, 2007; Takase, 2007). According to Kirchhoff (2013), for instance, “ER is a teaching practice that is likely to positively influence L2 students' reading motivation” (p. 196). In her investigation of Japanese university students' flow experiences while reading (i.e., “an intense engagement in a text”; McQuillan & Conde, 1996; see Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, for more information on flow experience in learning), Kirchhoff highlighted that the learners were able to experience flow and be “intensively engaged” in reading graded readers. She also noted that the main contributor (40%) to the students' flow experiences was their liking of book content (based on their responses to an open-ended questionnaire designed to understand the reasons students experienced flow). This finding implies that university students can enjoy reading simplified L2 books.

Moreover, both Judge (2011) and Nishino (2007) showed a close association between reading motivation and reading for a prolonged time in their studies. The main reasons the participants in these studies gave for reading extensively and voluntarily over two and a half years suggested that they were intrinsically (and extrinsically, for Judge's participants) motivated to read through their ER experience. Similarly, in an investigation of 219 Japanese high school girls' reading habits and motivation, Takase (2007) found that the best predictors for L2 English reading were intrinsic motivation to read in their first language and in their second language. In line with these studies' results, Ro (2013) study also showed that an unmotivated L2 reader (a Korean female), who had never read English for pleasure before the study, started to like reading English books for fun after 24 ER tutoring sessions. The author found that the participant's pleasure reading experience reduced her anxiety and increased her motivation to read in English. The study suggested several factors that contributed to these changes, including both intrinsic (e.g., comfort and enjoyment) and extrinsic (e.g., usefulness) motivational factors. These five studies not only show a positive link between ER and reading motivation, but also demonstrate that ER can lead learners to enjoy reading in English as a target language.

Despite the previous research's contributions, there is still a lack of understanding of what teachers can do to influence students' reading motivation and the amount that they read, particularly in ESL/EAP settings. Existing research on ER and L2 motivation has been conducted exclusively in EFL settings (e.g., Japan and Korea) and has not focused on teachers' roles. One reason for the dearth of ER research in ESL contexts could be that ER scholars tend to favor practicing ER in EFL settings (particularly in Asia) for its *context-specific* pedagogical benefits. As noted by Lee (2011) and Suk (2015), students in EFL contexts (particularly in Japan and Korea) generally have limited opportunities for L2 input and no freedom to choose their own reading in their FL classrooms; readings are often assigned by the teachers to whole classes, without considering students' individual differences (e.g., interests and proficiency). In other words, the opportunity for pleasure reading is often missing in EFL classroom contexts (Krashen, 2004). The shortage of ER studies in ESL/EAP could also be due to general misbeliefs that ER downplays the centrality of the teacher (see Yamashita, 2013) and is better integrated into elementary or junior secondary school contexts (see Macalister, 2008). Other reasons for the dearth of ER research in ESL/EAP contexts no doubt exist (e.g., curricular demands, time constraints, lack of support for acquiring the necessary book resources). Nevertheless, continued research on ER in diverse contexts is critical to gain a more detailed understanding of how ER can be implemented as well as whether and how ER is beneficial, and to what extent, in various situations. In particular, ER's potential contribution in ESL settings with EAP students is an important area to investigate, as these students “often experience tremendous pressure to become proficient L2 readers in a timely manner” (Komiyama, 2009, p. 36). With this goal in mind, the following research questions guide the present research:

1. Can an ER experience increase EAP students' reading motivation? If so, what specific elements of ER contribute to enhancing reading motivation?
2. How do EAP teachers' classroom ER practices affect students' reading motivation and reading amount?

3. Participants

3.1. Teachers and settings

This study focuses on two male teachers in academic English language programs at an American university. Both teachers were reading instructors who were implementing ER approaches in their own classrooms, and both had previous teaching experiences with academic reading in EAP settings. Table 1 provides more information on the teachers' backgrounds and their ER classroom implementations. All personal names are pseudonyms.

As Table 1 shows, the teachers varied not only in terms of their teaching experience with and without ER approaches, but also in terms of their current ER practices in their classrooms. Although Ulrich implemented ER activities in every class, he gave less class time overall to ER than Peter did. Moreover, the settings in which they taught were distinct. First, Ulrich taught academic reading in a program in which the primary purpose was to facilitate the academic studies of those who had been admitted to the university but did not yet meet the university's English language requirement (hereafter, Institution Uni). The institution used a skill-based language teaching approach (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Ulrich's class of 17 students met twice each week for 75 min for 16 weeks. Other than implementing ER in his class (which will be further elaborated in the analysis section), he focused on enhancing students' active reading skills, higher-order thinking skills, metacognitive awareness, and ability to integrate reading and writing skills, using a textbook (*Academic Reading: College Major and Career Applications*, 8th ed.) and additional classroom activities such as literature circles¹ and reading debates.²

In contrast, Peter's reading classes were in an academic English preparation program for students not currently enrolled in the university (hereafter, Institution Pre). In fact, students who graduated from Institution Pre and were conditionally accepted to the university usually ended up taking ESL courses at Institution Uni. In Institution Pre, the courses were divided into four levels (100 [beginning] to 400 [advanced]) with a focus on academic reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar. Peter taught nine students in 200 (intermediate) and 11 students in 300 (upper intermediate) level academic reading classes in which he utilized ER approaches. Peter also spent much of his class time developing students' basic reading skills such as reading comprehension, vocabulary, reading strategies, and critical thinking with non-ER activities including reading various texts (e.g., newspapers, poems, critical pieces, short academic articles), sharing their experiences, and doing reading exercises (e.g., speed reading, reading comprehension exercises, making vocabulary logs, and writing argument papers). These classes met four times a week for 65 min each for eight weeks. It is important to note here that the institution was in favor of implementing ER in reading classes, and in fact had made ER mandatory for all 100 and 200 level reading classes since Peter had obtained outside funding to support the institution's ER library. These details reflect the very different types of programs and students at Institution Uni and Institution Pre.

3.2. Students

The student participants' ages ranged from 18 to 46 years (*Mode* = 19; *M* = 25.1, *SD* = 7.33). They were 37 in total, comprised of 15 males and 22 females. Almost all of the students were from Asia (84%). The nationality of the largest group was Japanese (40%) followed by Chinese (16%), Thai (8%), Korean (5%), Samoan (5%), and Vietnamese (5%); the other students (21%) were Taiwanese, Israeli, Micronesian, Sri Lankan, Mexican, or French. The amount of time that the participants had studied English (*Range* = 0–18 years; *M* = 8.5 years, *SD* = 5.08) and had lived in English-speaking countries (*Range* = .25–96 months; *M* = 17.5 months, *SD* = 21.57) varied widely. This study's participants are more heterogeneous than those of most of the previous ER motivation studies. The students are further described in Table 2.

As Table 2 shows, Peter's students at Institution Pre had studied English for a shorter time period than Ulrich's students at Institution Uni, a difference that might be expected given that Peter's students were at Institution Pre either as part of a university preparatory program (i.e., they had not yet begun to study at an English-speaking university) or as part of a study-abroad experience. Ulrich's students at Institution Uni had also lived longer in English-speaking countries, but were younger

Table 1
Background information on the teachers.

	NS/NNS	TE (yrs)	TE-reading (yrs)	TE-ER (yrs)	Freq. (%)	CT (min.)
Ulrich	NNS	2	1	0.5	100	25
Peter	NS	7	2	2	25	30

Note. NS = native speaker of English; NNS = non-native speaker of English; TE = teaching experience; TE-ER = teaching experience with ER approach; Freq. = frequency of implementation of ER activities; CT = minutes of class time for ER activities each week.

¹ In this activity, students bring their own chosen articles from their own disciplines and lead small groups to do critical thinking. Oftentimes, one of the group members then becomes a presenter to share what they discussed in their literature circles with the whole class.

² In this activity, students debate a particular controversial topic after reading various associated texts.

Table 2
Background information on the students.

Teachers (n)	Gender male, female	Age mean (SD); median	TSE mean (SD); median	LEC mean (SD); median
Ulrich (20)	7, 13	22.8 (5.72); 20	9.8 (4.78); 9.5	19.1 (21.44); 6.5
Peter (17)	8, 9	27.9 (8.19); 27	7.0 (5.15); 7	15.8 (22.22); 7

Note. TSE = time period of studying English in years; LEC = length of living in English speaking countries in months.

overall, than Peter's students at Institution Pre. The age difference might be due to the fact that the students at Institution Uni were university students, who are typically of a similar age, as many of them enroll in university when they graduate from high school, whereas the student status of the students at Institution Pre was more diverse.

4. Materials

Graded readers—modified books that are leveled according to headword frequency (Claridge, 2012)—were the extensive reading materials used for the current study. Each institution had its own graded reader resources. Ulrich's class at Institution Uni had a collection of 219 ER books; Peter's class at Institution Pre had a collection of 249 ER books. Ulrich carried ER books to his reading class, whereas Peter had an ER library at his institution where students were free to go and borrow books anytime they wanted. In addition to graded readers, some unsimplified books (e.g., *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, 1984 by George Orwell) were used by a few students who wanted to read difficult texts in Ulrich's class.

5. Research design

This study follows a multiple-case study design (Yin, 2003). This method enables researchers to explore differences within and between cases, and it has its advantages and disadvantages. This type of study is considered robust and reliable (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003), but it can also be time-consuming and difficult to find appropriate cases for the methodology. Because comparisons will be drawn, it is crucial that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can either "(a) predict similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predict contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)" (Yin, 2003, p. 47). For this particular study, I expected contrasting results from the two cases considering the distinct teacher practices.

6. Data collection and analysis

6.1. Classroom practices

The data on classroom practices were collected from classroom observations, notes from debriefing sessions, casual conversations, and classroom materials including syllabuses and lesson plans. Content analysis (see Patton, 2002) was used to analyze the systematic patterns in the data.

6.2. Reading motivation

The reading motivation data were collected through a reading motivation questionnaire with 43 items to be ranked on a 5-point Likert scale and five open-ended questions, which was administered to the students at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used to analyze the scaled-item data, while content analysis was used for the open-ended question data. The questionnaire drew upon Eccles and Wigfield (1995) expectancy-value model and Gardner (2001) concept of integrative orientation (i.e., one's favorable attitudes towards other language communities). To be more specific, the study used five reading motivational constructs: expectancy of success (ES; 7 items; e.g., "I am good at reading in English"), intrinsic value (IV; 7 items; e.g., "I enjoy reading English novels"), extrinsic utility value (EV; 16 items; e.g., "Reading English is useful for my future career"), and cost (C; 11 items; e.g., "It is a waste of time to read in English), all from the expectancy-value model, and integrative orientation (IO; 3 items; e.g., "Reading in English is important in that we need to cope with internationalization"). The open-ended questions (e.g., "Please write the things you liked and disliked about ER and ER activities" and "Would you like to continue ER after the course?") were included to gain more in-depth information about the students' reading motivation.

In addition, qualitative data were gathered from interviews and student reflections. Seven students in Peter's classes volunteered to take part in a semi-structured interview about their ER experiences and their reading motivation at the end of the semester. All of the interviewees were asked the same prepared questions (e.g., "What did you like/dislike about your ER experience? What fostered you to read [or hindered you from reading]?"), along with some related questions that emerged during individual interviews. The student reflections came from all 20 students in Ulrich's class; they were written in response to the prompt "Please write about your ER experiences throughout the semester" and were collected after the course was over and all the grades were assigned.

6.3. Reading amount

For Institution Uni, following Yamashita (2004), I made an informed decision to operationally define reading amount as the number of pages that the students read throughout the semester. This was because of the difficulty of tracking and counting all the words that the students read over the semester; some of the books used at Institution Uni did not contain information on the total number of words. The students' book reports were used to track which books they read.³

For Institution Pre, M-reader (i.e., an online module using simple 10-item quizzes designed to allow teachers and students to verify that the students have read and comprehended their readings; see <http://mreader.org>) was used for collecting reading amount data. As it lists the total number of words contained in each graded reader, I was able to count the total number of words that Peter's students read throughout the term. However, I report the number of pages students read to compare the number with Ulrich's class.

7. Results

7.1. Teachers' classroom behaviors

7.1.1. Ulrich

Ulrich not only kept records of his students' reading and consistently encouraged and guided his students to do more ER—by acknowledging those who did the reading and reminding those who did not (in class and through email)—but also made ER a requirement of the course (10%) along with writing short book reports, which enabled him to keep track of what and how much the students were reading. According to Ulrich, this practice was based on his belief that “students need to be encouraged or even pushed, especially in the beginning, to start and sustain ER until they get *hooked on* with reading themselves” (debriefing session). He believed that EAP students would not initially see the value of reading a lot or be interested in reading non-academic books extensively until they were guided to do so. Therefore, by consistently guiding, strongly encouraging, and engaging in ER classroom activities with the students (e.g., “silent reading in class,” “writing a letter to a character,” “writing a different ending,” “writing rave reviews [i.e., student book recommendations],” and “presenting a reading fair” [i.e., poster session on a book of the student's choice]), he attempted to create a classroom environment where ER was appreciated and to have the students to like to read a lot (debriefing session). On one of the two weekly class days, the whole class spent 10 min on silent reading; while on the other day, they spent 5 min on silent reading and 10 min on a related ER activity, for a total of 25 min of classroom ER per week. Following a suggestion of Day and Bamford (1998), he gave his students the freedom to choose their own books. However, in a departure from Day and Bamford's suggestions, he allowed his students to read difficult texts (e.g., unsimplified texts). In a way, he made an informed decision to prioritize freedom to read over ease of reading.

7.1.2. Peter

Peter required all of his students to read graded readers, based on his belief that ER “improves proficiency, through practice, implicitly” (casual conversation). He also guided students' reading and occasionally checked their reading amount. Unlike Ulrich, Peter required students to read 60,000 words and complete M-readers in which they had to answer comprehension questions. In one of the debriefing sessions, he said, “Progress as well as the feeling we are good at something are motivators, and M-readers can provide that to my students.” For an ER classroom activity, Peter designed a 30-min “Reading Circle” (RC), held every Thursday—the last day of instruction each week. In this activity, students were asked to draw a character, scene, or a particular moment from the books they were reading. Then, students worked in groups of four or five and shared their pictures and stories. Unlike Ulrich, Peter did not implement silent reading in his classes.

7.2. Students' reading motivation and reading amount

To examine the students' reading motivation and reading amount, the pre-post closed questionnaire items and reading amount data were investigated with descriptive statistics and MANOVA, while the open-ended questionnaire items, interviews (for Peter's class), and student self-reflections (for Ulrich's class) were analyzed with content analysis.

The mean scores on each of the five reading motivational constructs (minimum 1, maximum 5) for both the pre and the post questionnaire are summarized in Table 3. In converting the factors into motivational variables, the negatively loaded items were reverse scored so that the higher score on each variable indicates a higher degree of motivation.

It is clear from the means in Table 3 that the students' motivation increased over the course of both Peter's and Ulrich's classes. Specifically, the greatest increase was in the students' intrinsic value towards reading (.36 increase) for Ulrich's class and extrinsic utility value (.2 increase) for Peter's classes. These findings seem to show that there is classroom practice influence on the students' affective perceptions towards reading. Students' intrinsic motivation enhancement seems to align

³ The book report was adapted from Ujitani's ER activity, “Writing a Book Report,” from Day (2012, pp. 45–46).

Table 3
Descriptive data for the students' reading motivation (five constructs; maximum point 5).

	ES (SD)	IV (SD)	EV (SD)	IO (SD)	C (SD)	Tot. (SD)
Ulrich [pre]	3.63 (.59)	3.90 (.54)	3.99 (.48)	4.38 (.50)	3.22 (.65)	3.78 (.40)
(n = 20) [post]	3.77 (.58)	4.26 (.51)	3.97 (.60)	4.38 (.56)	3.24 (.58)	3.85 (.39)
RA	581	(16 wk)				
Peter [pre]	3.20 (.73)	3.79 (.77)	3.84 (.62)	4.41 (.53)	3.18 (.56)	3.63 (.49)
(n = 17) [post]	3.33 (.86)	3.92 (.99)	4.04 (.71)	4.33 (.88)	3.30 (.71)	3.77 (.68)
RA	311	(8 wk)				

Note. ES = expectancy for success; IV = intrinsic value; EV = extrinsic utility value; IO = integrative orientation; C = cost; Tot. = total score for the five reading motivational constructs; [pre] = pre-questionnaire; [post] = post-questionnaire; RA = average reading amount (pages).

with Ulrich's teaching practices where he focused on implementing various classroom ER activities to create an environment for students to be encouraged to read. Students' extrinsic motivation increase seems to also align with Peter's classroom practices in that Peter's goal was to have students to read certain amount for their proficiency improvement. Students' autonomy to read was an important value for Ulrich, whereas reading a lot was the focal focus for Peter. It is also important to note that students in all of the classes were already somewhat motivated at the beginning of the semester. This could be due to the students' status as being international students who need to (or even maybe volunteered to) be accustomed to the new culture or their general belief that reading is good for educational purposes. In fact, integrative orientation and extrinsic utility value (including the usefulness of ER) received the highest scores in the pre-questionnaire from both groups of students, supporting this viewpoint.

The students in Ulrich's class averaged 581 pages (*Range* = 176 to 2264; *SD* = 462.94) in 16 weeks while the students in Peter's class read on average about 311 pages (*Range* = 55 to 632; *SD* = 151.55) in eight weeks. The range and standard deviation (*SD*), however, demonstrate the huge variability in terms of reading amount among the students. Specifically, in Ulrich's class, one student read 176 pages and another read 2264 pages (i.e., 13 times more). In fact, without these two extreme numbers, the standard deviation of Ulrich's students' reading amount would be 240.73, with a mean of 510—a significant drop in both. Much less difference—that is, less variability in terms of reading amount—appeared among the students in Peter's classes (from 311 [*SD* = 151.55] to 315 [*SD* = 137.43] pages). Without the two extreme cases, it is more evident that students in Peter's classes have read more on weekly bases (Peter: 40 pages average; Ulrich: 28 pages average). This finding also seems to align with the specific teachers' practices as Peter was the one who emphasized more on reading amount. The students' reading amount comparison between the two classes will be discussed more in the discussion section. Section 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 present the results for Ulrich's class and Peter's classes respectively.

7.2.1. Ulrich

To quantitatively examine whether ER had an effect on the students' reading motivational constructs (ES, IV, EV, IO, C, and Tot.), a mixed MANOVA was conducted, which revealed a significant multivariate main effect of Time (pre vs. post), Wilks' $\lambda = .457$, $F(5, 33) = 3.567$, $p = .025$, partial eta squared = .543. Post-hoc tests showed that students' motivation scores significantly improved in IV ($p = .001$). This again supports possible context-specific teacher influence on students' intrinsic value towards reading. Also, when the reading amount variable (Page) was added as a covariate, there was a significant interaction between Time and Page, Wilks' $\lambda = .402$, $F(5, 33) = 4.165$, $p = .016$. This interaction was qualified by the significant interaction of Time x Page in C ($p = .021$), suggesting that those students who read more pages showed significant improvements in C. This shows that the decrease of students' negative attitude towards reading or their tendency to devalue reading was significantly related with students' reading amount. The better they valued reading, the more they read.

To supplement the statistical data, open-ended questionnaires and students' self-reflections were qualitatively analyzed. All of the students except one said they wanted to continue ER. Their main reasons were because they found ER fun, enjoyable, and useful (both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons). For instance, one student said, "Yes, I would like to continue extensive reading because it is fun and also helps to improve my English." The only person who wrote no said, "I would like to continue, but I'm not sure because I am so busy." This student showed high motivation towards ER (4.10/5) on her post-questionnaire and she read a lot throughout the semester (391 pages), but she still hesitated to say yes to continued ER because of the time issue—an external factor.

Moreover, when students were asked to write about the reasons they liked ER, many of them talked about how ER helped them with language learning (80%; e.g., "I like extensive reading because it improves my reading skills and helps me to read faster"), was relaxing (40%; e.g., "Extensive reading is like a relaxation or entertainment. I can relieve my stress from being involved with reading"), was pleasurable (60%; e.g., "It is pleasurable to read ER books"), and was satisfying (30%; e.g., "To be honest, this is the first book I have completed reading ever since freshman year in high school. I feel so light-headed and proud

of myself”). Moreover, students liked ER because they had the freedom to choose their own books (10%) and because the books were easy (15%).⁴ For example, one student said,

I read books that I wouldn't usually read throughout this semester. The levels of the books I read were just right for me because it was me who chose the books. They were easy and fun.

These comments here are in lining with Ulrich's focus on student-autonomy. The student emphasizes how she liked choosing her own books that were easy and fun. These comments, about finishing reading a book for the first time since freshman year and reading with pleasure a book that the student would not usually read, also provide support for Ulrich's expressed belief in the need to *push* ER in his EAP classes. His approach seems to work (at least with some students), as it seems likely, based on their comments, that these students would not have read the books if they had not been required to. However, they may have expressed positive views because of wanting to be kind to the researcher, or perhaps expecting that the researcher would share the findings with the teacher, and so on.

When students were asked to write about reasons for disliking ER, one mentioned, “I disliked when I could not understand some sentences” while another said, “I disliked reading easy books.” As in this case, individual differences among the students were apparent. Moreover, there were a few students who did not like the stories in the graded readers (10%; e.g., “Sometimes the books were just boring”), and some students felt that there was not enough variety in the books (20%). However, lack of time to read was what many of the students highlighted as a factor they disliked (30%). Students said they simply did not have the time to do it, even if they saw the value of ER and they liked reading. For example, “Sometimes I cannot dedicate much time only for extensive reading though I want to read books.” Moreover, one student complained about ER as a requirement: “I was kind of stressed in the beginning. Feeling that we need to spend extra time to read made me overwhelmed. I used to do extensive reading for fun, but now it's mandatory to read as a part of assignment.” This issue will be further discussed in Section 8.

In terms of classroom activities, almost all Ulrich's students said that they liked silent reading in class (90%), not only because they were able to enjoy the silent time with their books, but also because it provided them time to catch up with their reading. Moreover, many also liked the reading fair (60%) because they enjoyed sharing their thoughts and feelings about the books that they were reading, and it also gave them an opportunity to learn about other books. This finding again is in lining with Ulrich's aim to create an environment where students can be encouraged to read. Furthermore, a few students stated that they found rave reviews a satisfying activity (10%) and book reports useful for record keeping purposes (15%).

What I found most interesting was that several students highlighted the importance of reading ER books for integration orientation purposes (25%). For example, one student said, “ER is so important for people like us who are not raised in the US because we don't know much about the things that native speakers learn when they were little.” In line with the statistical results in Table 3, which show high motivation in the IO factor both in the pre to the post questionnaire, the student seemed to have valued and liked learning about American and other cultures from reading. In the end, although there were individual differences among the students, many liked ER because it provided them enjoyable, relaxing moments and language benefits. However, many still expressed that they did not have enough time to spare for ER.

7.2.2. Peter

A mixed MANOVA revealed that there was no significant effect of Time ($p = .567$), indicating that students' scores did not significantly improve after ER. When the reading amount variable (Page) was combined as a covariate, no significant interaction was found between Time and Word, suggesting that students' reading amount was not significantly influential in their improvement in the motivation survey. Unlike in Ulrich's class, the students in Peter's classes did not show statistically significant positive attitude enhancement towards reading. However, considering the tendency of improvements in most of the motivational variables, the lack of significant result could be due to the sampling sizes.

The students' open-ended questionnaire data and the seven volunteer students' interviews were analyzed with content analysis. In regards to the Reading Circle (RC) activity, however, many said they liked it because it was helpful for English learning (65%; e.g., “RC improved my reading and speaking skills”), was fun (45%; e.g., “I liked RC because it was very fun”), and provided opportunities to share their viewpoints and feelings about their books (15%; “I liked the book sharing parts of RC”). On the other hand, one student did not like RC because she found no educational value in reading and sharing feelings about graded readers:

I do not like RC because reading and sharing feelings about novels do not help me with my English scores. Moreover, I do not like novels because they are boring. But I like academic readings that are informative because I can gain new knowledge.

In the interview, another student said she did not like RC. The main reason for her was because of her lack of English speaking skills. She said she often got demotivated by trying to share her feelings about the books because it was difficult to express exactly what she felt in English.

⁴ The percentages were calculated as follows: First, the contents were systematically identified and grouped by means of a coding system. Then, the number of students who mentioned each type of content (out of the total number of students) was counted and converted into an approximate percentage. When a student mentioned more than one factor, each factor was counted individually.

On the other hand, many students stated that they liked ER (85%). Similar to Ulrich's class, Peter's students enjoyed the stories in the books (40%; e.g., "There were a lot of interesting books to read, I particularly liked adventure books"), gained satisfaction (20%; e.g., "I had satisfaction when I finished each book"), and felt that ER helped them improve their English skills (65%; e.g., "In the beginning, I didn't like ER. But nowadays, I'm adjusted to reading English books. So I think it is good activity for improving my English skills. I want to read more"). In particular, they talked about how ER improved their vocabulary, reading rate, reading comprehension, and writing skills. The students' positive views on ER for language learning benefits align with Peter's belief that students learn better by practicing (reading) more. Interestingly, one student mentioned that she liked being required to read. She said, "I want to continue ER. I like [Peter] requiring me to do ER because I cannot do it by myself." All but three students said they would like to continue ER.

The students who said no to continued ER said, "ER is not necessary for me," "I don't want to continue, it's too stressful for me," and "I have no idea whether I want to continue, but I will do it because I will be required to do." These students were preparing for the IELTS test at the time, and they wanted to study academic reading passages that might improve their test scores rather than reading non-academic texts. Some of the other aspects of ER that the students did not like were related to time issues (30%; e.g., "I don't have time to read books for pleasure"), book difficulty (5%; e.g., "There were some difficult idiomatic phrases from reading books"), and contents of the books (10%; e.g., "Some stories were not interesting"). Similar to Ulrich's students, some students in Peter's classes also problematized the fact that they did not have much free time to read outside of the classroom.

In addition, two of the students that I interviewed said they did not like M-reader because some of the questions were difficult to answer even though they read the whole book. In fact, these students complained that they were not able to achieve the ER goals that they set in the beginning because they failed the M-reader quizzes, which made them demotivated to read. Although only two out of 17 students displayed somewhat negative attitudes towards the module (the others who mentioned M-reader found it a satisfying activity), their comments suggest that M-reader could be a reason for not wanting to continue ER, perhaps especially if it is the only measure for checking students' progress. Peter was right in that some students do appreciate M-reader as it allows them to check on their progress, but the same reason can cause some students to become demotivated. In brief, qualitative analysis shows that although there were students who complained about M-reader and the efficacy of the ER approach in an EAP context, the majority of the students had very positive attitudes towards ER and wanted to continue ER for enjoyment and language benefits.

8. Discussion

As mentioned, the two teachers had distinctive ways of approaching ER in their reading classes. The key features for Ulrich's class were that he guided students to read (e.g., through monitoring and acknowledging students' reading), implemented silent reading and other ER classroom activities in every class to encourage students to read, and made ER a requirement of the class. For Peter, he also guided students and required ER, but he further set a reading-goal (60,000 words) and had his students do M-readers, and although he implemented the RC activity for motivation purposes, he did not replace class time for silent reading.

Students in both classes in general showed motivation enhancement after their experience with ER (see [Table 3](#)). Although there was no statistically significant increase of reading motivation for Peter's students, the pre-post questionnaires showed an increase in all of the motivational constructs (ES, IV, EV, and C) except for IO factor. Some of the converging reasons that the students in both of the teachers' classes liked ER were the intrinsic value of reading (reading is fun and pleasurable, reading provides a relaxing time, and reading an English book is satisfying), autonomy (freedom to choose one's own books), the value of ER books (easiness and fun stories), and the extrinsic utility value of reading (language benefits). However, the main attitudinal impact was on intrinsic value for Ulrich's and extrinsic utility value for Peter's classes, which could suggest that there seem to be context-specific factors influencing on students' perceptions towards reading and their ER experiences. As briefly mentioned earlier, the teachers' distinct classroom practices seem to have affected students' attitudinal stances towards reading. The students who were socially involved with various ER activities in every class seem to have appreciated the sharing and relaxing time of pleasure reading which seems to have influenced on their intrinsic value towards reading. The students who were consistently reminded that reading extensively helps for improving their English skills and had responsibility to read for certain amount seem to have appreciated ER for extrinsic utility reasons.

A few common reasons for not liking ER were given by the students in both teachers' classes as well: the difficulty level of the books (too easy or too difficult), the stories of the books (boring), the students' negative perception of ER (reading for pleasure is not necessary), and lack of time. As an ER practitioner myself and as a researcher, I believe that making available a greater variety of books and conducting better (or more frequent) ER orientations for the students could solve most of these problems, except perhaps the lack of time. Many of the students in both teachers' classes mentioned lack of time as a problem. This might indicate that it can be difficult or even at times impossible for students in EAP contexts to engage in ER, particularly when they are busy with their other school work. The finding of students' strong concern about lacking time is in line with [Mežek \(2013\)](#) report that "one of the most frequently named difficulties they [first-year undergraduate students in Sweden] encounter when doing their reading are time constraints" (p. 171). She found that students do not spend much of their time doing leisure reading mainly because they are already pre-occupied with their school work.

Considering the students' favorable attitudes towards silent reading in Ulrich's class, however, implementing longer silent reading periods in the classroom could help to mitigate this problem. As a matter of fact, EAP students in [Macalister \(2008\)](#)

study showed positive attitudes towards the ER approach with 20 min of silent reading, and Macalister recommended spending 25 or even 30 min to help learners to read more. More research needs to be conducted to better understand the effects of silent reading on students' attitudes or motivation development.

Qualitative data revealed other context-specific reasons for students to like and dislike ER. First, some of the students in Ulrich's class mentioned that they liked the reading fair and other ER classroom activities including rave reviews and book reports because of the feelings of sharing and opportunities to learn about other books. Such positive social dimensions of reading were also found in Peter's classes with his RC activity. However, not everyone appreciated the RC activity in Peter's classes, such as the student who felt it had no educational value. This could be unique to this particular setting because many of the students in Peter's classes were preparing to take the TOEFL or IELTS to enter university in the U.S. For those particular students, the social dimensions of the RC activity that Peter emphasized might not have been their first priority. In a similar vein, some of the students in Peter's class showed negative attitudes towards ER because they did not see value in reading fiction when they had to study for the tests they were planning to take. M-reader was another context-specific problem for at least two students in Peter's classes who felt demotivated to read when the module did not count the words for the books that they read when they failed the quizzes. These students problematized some of the question types, arguing that some of the questions were too specific or difficult for them to answer. However, it needs to be reminded that these negative comments on M-reader are from just two students. The other students expressed positive attitudes. In fact, other studies also report positive attitudinal values from students who use M-readers and ER quizzes, supporting its pedagogical values (see, e.g., Stoeckel, Reagan, & Hann, 2012; Robb, 2015).

Moreover, both Ulrich and Peter used ER as a class requirement, but the students who mentioned this reacted very differently: One student complained about the ER requirement in Ulrich's class whereas one student in Peter's class liked that Peter required her to read. This difference could reflect the students' initial motivations or reasons for taking the courses and their status as university or pre-university students. Students in Institute Uni were required to take the ESL reading course to be enrolled in the university, whereas students in Institute Pre chose to join the program of their own will. Moreover, as university students in the U.S., Ulrich's students were taking other courses in their majors. Their highest priority was probably not improving their language skills but studying their own disciplinary topics. On the other hand, language courses were the only classes that the students in Peter's classes were taking at the time of this research. However, it needs to be noted that only one student in each class liked or disliked the ER requirement; none of the other students talked about this issue. All in all, although individual differences were apparent, both inherent ER qualities (e.g., usefulness and enjoyment) and context-specific factors including individual teacher practices (e.g., different ER activities) and external contextual factors (i.e., institutional differences) seem to have concurrently affected the students' reading motivation.

In terms of reading amount, it could be said that the students in Peter's classes read more (see Table 3) considering the fact that Ulrich's class was twice as long. Moreover, while the students in Ulrich's class spent 15 min on silent reading every week in class, Peter's students did not have the chance to read in the classroom. The fact that Peter's students read more could be mostly because of Peter's goal-oriented approach with ER. Peter required students to set a goal at the beginning of the term, with a minimum of 60,000 words. Though many of the students failed to achieve the goal (only three met it), this could have *pushed* students to read more in their free time and reduced the reading amount variation among the students. In the end, it could be said that the teachers' distinct practices had an effect on the students' reading behaviors considering that the students in Peter's class read more in the given time and that their reading variation was smaller compared to Ulrich's class. However, it is important to note here that the analysis in this study is not meant to be generalized, but rather to describe unique local classroom settings for how ER was implemented and how students perceived and reacted to it.

9. Conclusion and pedagogical implications

To conclude, I found both context-free (e.g., intrinsic and extrinsic reasons of reading) and context-specific factors, including teachers' distinct practices, positively and differently influencing both students' reading motivation and students' reading amount. These findings support the previous ER motivation studies that argued for the power of ER to affect students' reading motivation, and contribute additional insights (e.g., the impact of different ER teacher practices on students' reading motivation and reading amount) to the existing ER literature. This research emphasizes the need for ER practitioners to understand what they can do to influence students' reading habits and to be sensitive to the local context of their teaching settings when implementing ER.

As a final note, I would like to discuss some of the pedagogical implications that teachers should consider when implementing ER in EAP contexts. First, in line with de Burgh-Hirabe and Feryok (2013) suggestion, a wide range of book choices is necessary for ER. Students had diverse preferences regarding difficulty levels and genres. Therefore, in order to sustain students' reading motivation, they should have access to a large variety of books. Second, considering the students' favorable attitudes towards ER in this study, ER should be implemented or at least considered in ESL academic courses either as a requirement or as an extra-curricular activity. The majority of the students in this study saw the value of ER and stated that they would like to continue it even after the course. Some students might not end up reading voluntarily, perhaps because of the time issue, but others might. Third, silent reading and other ER activities (including book reports and M-reader) were appreciated by most of the students and worked well in the academic reading classes. However, it might be better to make M-reader an option rather than a requirement (cf. Suk, 2015). Although most students found M-reader satisfying, two students found it demotivating. The option of choosing either to do a book report or M-reader might have worked better for both

record keeping and affective dimensions of these students' reading. Lastly, this study also provides a partial answer to the question some might ask about the feasibility and practicality of ER in EAP contexts: Can it be done? It can be done.

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Eunseok Ro is currently in the PhD program in the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. His research interests are extensive reading, second language pedagogy, and teacher education related issues. E-mail: eunseokr@hawaii.edu