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Fresh Voices on Extensive Reading: A Narrative Study of Indonesian University Students

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Abstract

Extensive reading (ER) is widely recognized as an effective approach to developing students' reading fluency, yet the implementation of extensive reading inside the classroom often faces challenges related to students' engagement and task design. This study aims to investigate university students' perceptions of how extensive reading is implemented inside their classroom and gather their suggestions to improve the extensive reading practices. A qualitative research design was employed in this study, involving three first-year students from a university in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The data collected for this study are interviews, which were transcribed and analyzed using narrative analysis. The findings indicate two major themes: (1) students' perspectives towards the implementation of extensive reading inside their classroom are generally positive, and (2) students believe that aspects of the extensive reading task should be revised or redesigned to better support their learning process. These insights provide implications for the lecturer to carefully implement extensive reading as an approach to help students learn and build their reading habits while also ensuring that tasks align with the core characteristics of extensive reading and the learning process is effective.
Keywords: *extensive reading, narrative inquiry, students' perspective*

Introduction

English can be considered as one of the main languages used worldwide, and people need to be able to speak English as their second or foreign language. The main reason is that nowadays, it is undeniable that people worldwide need a common language to communicate internationally effectively, to keep pace with the development of the globalization era. English, being the first global language or the first lingua franca, is widely used worldwide for communication in international trade, diplomacy, scientific pursuits, academic purposes, and the publication of academic journals.

There are four essential skills for learning English, which are reading, writing, speaking, and listening. However, reading can be considered as one of the important skills to achieve learning objectives. Thus, reading is one of the vital skills that students or even a person needs to possess. The importance of reading is being promoted everywhere because by reading, students or a person can explore something that they have not known before. This statement is supported by Akande and Oyedapo (2018) who state that reading is an important skill that students should have. This statement is in line with Anggraini et al. (2020) that by having good reading skills, students have the potential to have good speaking, writing, and listening skills. Thus, from those statements above, reading is important for students to gain new information that they might not have found before, and by doing reading activities, students will also be able to improve their language learning performance. In the context of Indonesian higher education, a study by Widiati and Cahyono (2024) emphasizes that students' reading engagements strongly correlate with academic confidence and language learning outcomes. Thus, reading remains central to successful EFL learning and language development.

These days, extensive reading (ER) has become one of the strategies that is commonly used to teach reading. Extensive reading is believed to be beneficial for students to motivate them to read more. Waring (2006) stated that common sense observations and plentiful research evidence have proved the benefits of extensive reading. The strategy of using extensive reading works as students choose the material that they want to read, to gain a general understanding of the text, and to obtain pleasure for them. However, since the activity of extensive reading is being done individually, students have the free will to choose the book they want to read, and it will push them to read more books and even make reading one of their hobbies. Renandya (2016) stated that the aim of extensive reading is not to teach specific language skills or comprehension strategies but to help them become fluent readers. In the Indonesian EFL context, Cahyono and Widiati (2006) emphasized that reading remains a central component of language learning, and developing reading habits should focus on exposure and pleasure rather than test-driven assessment.

Several researchers have done studies about extensive reading in EFL classes. Huang (2015) argues that the implications of the extensive reading approach can and should be incorporated into the foreign language curriculum. This is because there is so much research related to extensive reading, and the result is providing evidence of the benefits of extensive reading for foreign language students if it is implemented under appropriate situations over a period of time. Another study from McLean and Rouault (2017) investigated the effect of extensive reading versus grammar-translation on improvement in reading rate for first-year Japanese university students over an academic year. The study's findings showed that extensive reading is more effective than grammar-translation at improving reading rates.

Suk (2016) carried out an extensive reading versus intensive reading study on 171 Korean university students; the result showed that the extensive reading group achieved a significant gain in reading rate and a relatively small gain in reading comprehension. Lee et al. (2009) conducted a study about the effect of extensive reading on students' writing ability. The result of the study showed that there are improvements in students' writing ability and grammar.

Additionally, recent studies by Wulyani et al. (2022) and Widiati et al. (2023) emphasized the pedagogical and practical aspects of extensive reading in Indonesian contexts. These studies revealed that while teachers recognize the importance of reading for pleasure, challenges such as limited time, classroom management, and inconsistent implementation often hinder success. Similarly, Harimurti et al. (2021) revealed that digital extensive reading platforms such as XReading can help university students sustain reading motivation and autonomy.

Last, Tien (2015) carried out a university-wide extensive reading program in a Taiwanese university involving 5711 students from 93 classes. The students in this study were all non-English majors who were enrolled in General English courses. The duration of this study was 1 year, resulting in students generally having positive perceptions of the extensive reading program. The same study was carried out by Hagley (2017) involving a whole cohort of 600 engineering students in a Japanese university, with the length of extensive reading implemented being 15 weeks. The result showed a statistically significant increase in students' positive view of English after the course, suggesting that the extensive reading program had positively affected students' attitudes toward English.

Although extensive reading has been widely investigated across different EFL contexts, most previous studies tend to emphasize its cognitive outcomes, such as students' improvements in comprehension, reading rate, and vocabulary gain (McLean & Rouault, 2017; Suk, 2016; Lee et al., 2009). By contrast, far fewer studies have examined how students themselves interpret and experience extensive reading as a classroom practice, especially in the Indonesian university context, where implementation can vary widely across institutions. Recent Indonesian research

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has highlighted practical tensions in ER programs, including inconsistent task design, classroom management challenges, and difficulties sustaining learner motivation (Wulyani et al., 2022; Widiati et al., 2023). However, these studies tend to reflect institutional or teacher-centered perspectives rather than the lived experiences of learners.

This lack of learner-centered, narrative-based inquiry is especially notable for freshmen EFL students, who are still at their transitional stage from being high school students to university students, while also being pushed to form their reading identities and adapt to university-level academic expectations. Additionally, the use of digital systems like the XReading app, which is increasingly adopted in Indonesian universities, has still not been explored through deep narrative accounts, especially the effects of implementing the XReading app on students' personal engagement, autonomy, and perceived enjoyment.

Therefore, this present study offers a new contribution to the field by placing students at the center through narrative inquiry, which captures how first-semester EFL learners describe their experiences with extensive reading, negotiate the benefits and challenges brought about by it, and interpret the lecturers' role in shaping their engagement. By focusing on individual stories and cross-narrative themes, this research complements and extends existing quantitative and teacher-focused studies.

To address this gap and articulate students' lived experiences more clearly, this study is guided by the following research questions :

1. How do freshmen students describe their lived experience in the implementation of extensive reading in their classroom?
2. How do freshmen students experience the process of selecting and engaging with reading materials and topics in extensive reading activities?
3. How do freshmen students perceive and describe the role of their lecturer in shaping their experiences with extensive reading?
4. What shared themes and meanings emerge across students' narratives regarding the benefits, challenges, and future expectations of extensive reading?

Method

The study aims to investigate EFL freshmen's perceptions and attitudes toward the implementation of extensive reading in the classroom. Thus, in this study, a qualitative method design was used, supplemented by participants' stories before their experiences in the implementation of extensive reading inside the classroom. Therefore, a narrative inquiry research design was used to collect the data from participants. According to Creswell et al. (2007), narrative inquiry research studies the life experiences of individuals over time. Josselson (2007) stated that narrative inquiry research is a type of research that consists of obtaining and then reflecting on people's lived experiences. Hence, the researcher decided to conduct an interview based on the extensive reading characteristics shown by Day and Bamford (1998). The researcher also used the narrative inquiry framework proposed by Creswell (2012).

The subjects of this research will be three freshmen students enrolled in the Extensive Reading Course in their first semester of the English Language Education Program. The extensive reading course consisted of 2 credits and was delivered in 16 meetings, utilizing the XReading application. Furthermore, from this population, three students were selected as participants. Purposive sampling served as the basis for the selection because the goal of narrative inquiry is to gather rich, in-depth accounts of lived experience rather than to make generalizations. Participants were chosen because they demonstrated (1) varying degrees of XReading platform engagement and (2) their readiness and capacity to describe their

experiences in detail. These criteria ensured that the collected narratives could illuminate various perspectives on the application of extensive reading.

However, since not all students were equally willing or able to participate in lengthy interviews, availability and accessibility also played a role in the decision. This means that the study included aspects of convenience sampling in addition to purposive sampling. Although this overlap is recognized as a limitation, the participants' narratives nevertheless offered insightful information about how extensive reading was actually experienced.

The main tool in narrative inquiry is the researcher, who helps participants share their stories and consider their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, narrative inquiry uses a variety of methods, such as observations, interviews, documentation, and transcripts, to record and depict experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Furthermore, in this study, semi-structured narrative interviews were conducted, guided by open-ended prompts but flexible enough to follow the direction of each participant's story.

Day and Bamford's (1998) ten characteristics of extensive reading served as the basis for the interview guide, which was written in an open-ended format to encourage participants to share stories rather than short responses. For example, instead of asking, "Do you like extensive reading?", the questions invited participants to describe, "Can you tell me about a time when you felt motivated or unmotivated while doing extensive reading?" This approach allowed participants to connect their present experiences with past reading practices and future expectations.

The principles of narrative inquiry, which prioritize collecting accounts of lived experience across time, context, and relationship (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), were followed in the data collection process for this study. After obtaining ethical clearance and participants' consent, the researcher conducted individual storytelling sessions with each student in the form of semi-structured narrative interviews, guided by open-ended prompts that were flexible enough to follow the direction of each participant's story.

The interviews encouraged participants to reflect on their past experiences with reading, their current engagement with the Extensive reading course, and their expectations for the future. This method made it possible for the stories to depict three essential elements of narrative inquiry: place (the classroom and other reading environments), sociality (individual emotions and relationships with lecturer and peers), and temporality (past, present, and future), which are central dimensions of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2012).

Each interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes and took place in a calm environment that encouraged thoughtful discussion. All interviews were verbatim transcribed from audio recordings that were made with consent. Field notes were also taken to capture contextual details and non-verbal cues. These various sources contributed to the richness of the data and supported the authenticity of the narratives (Kim, 2016).

The data analysis began following Creswell's (2012) narrative inquiry framework, which involves identifying the stories within participants' accounts, organizing them into chronological sequences, and interpreting them in relation to broader meaning. Furthermore, to develop unique narrative accounts for every participant, the analysis started with a thorough reading of the transcripts.

Once the individual stories were constructed, a cross-case analysis was conducted to find recurring categories and common themes. Following Lieblich et al.'s (1998) categorical-content perspective, the transcripts were coded, clustered, and synthesized into broader insights about students' experiences. Throughout the process, reflexivity was maintained, acknowledging the role of interpretation in co-constructing meaning (Josselson, 2007; Kim, 2016).

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Results

This study explored the experiences of three freshman students, Daisy, Sunflower, and Rose, who participated in an extensive reading course, analyzed through Creswell's (2012) narrative inquiry framework and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional model of temporality, sociality, and place. The participants' stories revealed both similarities and differences in how they perceived extensive reading and its influence on their motivation, comprehension, and reading habits.

Following the development of the individual narratives, a cross-narrative analysis was carried out to find common themes and patterns among the three stories (Lieblich et al. 1998). These themes can be found after each narrative, which specifically addresses research question 4, synthesizing how students collectively perceive the benefits, challenges, and expectations of the extensive reading implementation

Daisy's Narrative

Daisy was hesitant and curious when she entered the extensive course at first. She initially thought that the activity would feel like her previous reading tasks — compulsory, demanding, and sometimes exhausting. She quickly learned, though, that extensive reading allowed a different rhythm of learning. Over the semester, she developed a generally positive attitude toward extensive reading but consistently identified tensions involving post-reading assignments.

Furthermore, here is what Daisy mentioned during the interview:

> *"Extensive reading helps me understand a lot of new vocabulary, but sometimes it can be fun, and sometimes it makes me tired and bored."*
>
> *"I tend to do extensive reading in a quiet and peaceful place because it helps me to obtain what I seek from doing these activities."*
>
> *"I choose my own topics so I can enjoy my reading activities. I enjoy reading drama, fairy tales, and other intriguing books that are readily available. I choose the topics according to my understanding of the language so that it will be easier for me to understand the topics and help me read faster because I feel the enjoyment."*
>
> *"... she facilitates us with enough sources to find topics and materials that we would like to read in our reading activities."*
>
> *"I like the way my lecturer provides some tips on how to enjoy our reading activities even more and how to reach our weekly target. She always checks in with us during class meetings and likes to inquire about how our extensive reading exercise went and what we took away from the story."*
>
> *"I like to do extensive reading activities, but I feel like the task given is making it less enjoyable. I prefer to write a weekly journal rather than make a summary, it makes me more focused on the summary assignment itself rather than on my reading."*

Daisy's narrative describes a change in her reading identity. Through temporality, her story reflects development from viewing reading as an obligation to experiencing it as a personally meaningful activity. Her strategy of choosing accessible, enjoyable texts, which are still within

her comprehension level, demonstrates the increase in autonomy as an essential principle of extensive reading.

Furthermore, the place dimension can be seen in her preference for quiet reading environments, which provided emotional comfort and focus. This affirms the role of environmental conditions in shaping reading engagement.

Additionally, the sociality dimension is visible in her appreciation for her lecturer's tips, feedback, monitoring, and resource guidance. She describes her lecturer as a supportive facilitator rather than a strict evaluator, suggesting that relational support from her lecturer contributes significantly to her motivation in doing extensive reading activities.

However, the persistent tension between extensive reading pleasure-oriented philosophy and the task-oriented assessment becomes clear in Daisy's rejection of summaries. Her response to the task indicates that post-reading assignments have the possibility of shifting students' attention away from meaning-making toward task completion, which is a contradiction noted in extensive reading literature. Daisy's narrative highlights a broader instructional dilemma on how to maintain accountability without undermining enjoyment.

Looking forward, Daisy hoped that extensive reading could continue to strengthen her reading habits beyond the classroom. She recommended journals rather than summaries because she thought it would keep her attention on the reading itself. Her narrative demonstrates a change in perspective from viewing reading as a duty to viewing it as a means of forming future habits

Rose's Narrative

In Rose's opinion, extensive reading was a welcome change from conventional reading instruction. She approached the extensive reading course with curiosity and quickly discovered that enjoyable, familiar stories increased her reading habits. Additionally, her narrative emphasizes her reading comprehension, her interest-based reading habits, and her desire to maintain the pleasure dimension without the interruption of heavy tasks or burdening post-reading activities.

Furthermore, here is what Rose mentioned during the interview:

> *"I feel that it is fun if I understand the story and the story is interesting for me."*
>
> *"Yes, I choose the materials and topics that I want to read by myself. For my personal preferences, I like to read folklore and fairy tales since it is more enjoyable for me."*
>
> *"I like that these resources are accessible and simple to locate. It helps me in choosing the topics based on my language level and choosing what is easier to read for me. It made me read faster, and I felt like I was able to manage my time while reading extensively and read more."*
>
> *"My lecturer always supports us by giving tips according to her experiences on doing extensive reading activities. She also assists us in locating resources related to the subjects and texts we will be reading."*
>
> *"I enjoyed the story that I have read, but it is getting less enjoyable when I have to summarize it. I would rather read a lot of texts and have discussions with my friends, it might help us in learning something new while also encouraging us to read more materials for discussion before class."*

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Rose's narrative highlights the importance of selecting texts that are easy to comprehend and personally meaningful. This shows that the freedom of choosing materials in extensive reading activities may help students engage with texts even more. This also aligns with the principles of extensive reading, which emphasize reading at or below the learner's level to sustain pleasure and confidence. Her preference for reading folklore and fairy tales demonstrates how familiarity with genres helps her in maintaining engagement.

Furthermore, the place dimension of narrative inquiry emerges in her preference for reading alone in quiet environments, suggesting that extensive reading supports immersive reading when learners can control their surroundings.

Additionally, Rose views the lecturer as an accessible and supportive figure who provides her with tips, feedback, guidance, and sources. This reinforces the importance of teacher scaffolding in extensive reading programs and echoes findings from recent extensive reading studies in EFL contexts.

However, Rose is also facing tension in her narrative, involving post-reading tasks. Rose views summaries as similar to intensive reading, contradicting the pleasure-based nature of extensive reading itself. She suggested that having a peer discussion would be better as a post-reading activity to help preserve enjoyment and maintain student freedom.

Looking forward, Rose said she hoped that extensive reading would help her become more comfortable with other academic texts in the future while preserving her love of reading. Instead of viewing extensive reading as a one-semester requirement, she saw it as a starting point for her ongoing English development.

Sunflower's Narrative

Sunflower expressed strong enthusiasm for extensive reading, seeing it as an enjoyable, engaging, and beneficial activity for her literacy development. She perceived extensive reading as a way to improve her reading abilities. Her narrative reflects a smooth progression from structured academic reading to autonomous reading habits.

Here is what she said during the interview:

> *"I think this activity is excellent because it helps us enhance our literacy skills. Therefore, I always read as much as possible because it is enjoyable and interesting. Extensive reading is engaging for me."*
>
> *"I like to do my extensive reading by myself because I'm able to enjoy the story even more and will not get disturbed by the noise around me. By doing this, I could read faster than I used to read my course books, and I couldn't stop reading until the story ended."*
>
> *"I like how my lecturer is giving us feedback and providing us with enough resources, it is helpful to keep us enjoying reading. And yes, our lecturer always monitors our reading activities and is always curious about the story that we read. I like that."*
>
> *"I always feel lazy when my lecturer gives me tasks after I'm done reading. In my opinion, writing a summary does not help me to engage more with the reading activities, and it is better to have a small discussion in the classroom in my opinion."*

Sunflower's narrative represents an optimal extensive reading experience. Through temporality, she mentions noticeable gains in her reading fluency and enjoyment, indicating a developmental trajectory where extensive reading both skill growth and intrinsic motivation.

Her preference for individual reading highlights the place dimension, similar to Daisy and Rose. Quiet, personal spaces enabled her to become immersed in stories that she reads, reinforcing the idea that extensive reading thrives when learners have the freedom over pace and environment.

Additionally, the sociality dimension is strongly reflected in her appreciation for her lecturer's feedback, monitoring, and resource support. Sunflower describes and interprets these actions as motivating, illustrating the positive impact of teacher presence in extensive reading settings.

However, similar to other participants, she experienced frustration with post-reading assignments. She perceives summaries as tasks that interrupt her reading and are not aligned with the purpose of extensive reading. Her suggestion of light class discussions indicates a desire for reflective engagement without compromising enjoyment.

In the future, Sunflower hoped that extensive reading would help her become a more proficient and self-sufficient English reader. She hoped to carry on the practice outside the classroom, utilizing extensive reading as a springboard to improve academic achievement and her own love of reading.

Sunflower's narrative demonstrates how extensive reading fosters both linguistic development and an emotional connection to reading when instructional practices support rather than constrain the reading experience itself.

Cross-Narrative Theme

Although Daisy, Rose, and Sunflower shared unique experiences, their narratives revealed several overlapping themes. These themes can be understood through a three-dimensional framework of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place.

Extensive Reading as Enjoyable and Motivating

In contrast to their prior experiences with teacher-assigned, intensive reading, all participants described extensive reading as motivating and enjoyable. They eventually found that extensive reading provided a feeling of enjoyment and involvement. Sunflower explained how she fell in love with reading, Daisy talked about learning new words, and Rose emphasized the delight of comprehending easy-to-understand stories. Each student aspired to continue reading as a habit outside of the classroom. This theme demonstrates how enjoyment has developed as a social and personal experience throughout their past, present, and anticipated future learning.

Silent, Individual Reading as a Valued Practice

According to each participant, reading quietly and alone in a quiet place was crucial for concentration and focus. Sunflower clarified that being alone helped her avoid distractions; Rose emphasized the importance of immersion when reading alone; and Daisy favored calm settings. According to these accounts, location is a crucial component: the physical environment of reading shapes their engagement. At the same time, their emphasis on solitude highlights the social dimension of extensive reading; even in a classroom context, students positioned reading as a private act of self-control and introspection.

Perceived Skill Development

Students consistently linked extensive reading to their own development. Sunflower talked about going from slower course-book reading to faster, more fluent reading. Rose saw improvements in speed and time management, and Daisy saw an increase in vocabulary. As students looked back to compare their past skills with their current progress and looked forward, anticipating that extensive reading would support their future academic development, these perceptions demonstrate temporality.

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The Lecturer as Facilitator and Motivator

In every story, the lecturer's role was prominent. Sunflower emphasized feedback and monitoring, Daisy valued resources and advice, and Rose valued support and direction. In each instance, the lecturer influenced students' attitudes toward reading by serving as both a social presence and a source of support. Because it emphasizes the supportive environment and interpersonal relationships that make extensive reading effective for students, this theme reflects sociality.

Tension with Post-Reading Tasks

Summaries and other follow-up assignments were criticized by all participants as detracting from the pleasure of reading. Sunflower clarified that such tasks made her "lazy." Rose compared summarization to intensive reading, and Daisy admitted that tasks made extensive reading less fun. From a temporal perspective, students contrasted the pleasure they experienced during reading with the burden they felt afterward. From a social perspective, their annoyance demonstrated how institutional demands conflicted with their own enjoyment.

Shaping of Reading Identity

Lastly, the students' narratives demonstrated how extensive reading influenced their identities as readers. Sunflower accepted extensive reading as a component of her literacy development. Rose found she could enjoy stories and take ownership of her learning, and Daisy shifted from seeing reading as an obligation to seeing it as empowerment. These changing self-perceptions reflect sociality, as their sense of self as readers was shaped by relationships, feelings, and support in the extensive reading course, and temporality, as identities were formed over time.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate how first-year students experienced extensive reading as a lived practice shaped by time, relationships, and learning environments. The findings are examined using Creswell's (2012) framework and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative space. Six themes emerged: enjoyment and motivation, silent individual reading, perceived skill development, the lecturer's role, tension with tasks, and the shaping of reading identity.

Extensive Reading as Enjoyable and Motivating

When given the freedom to select materials based on their interests and comprehension levels, all participants reported that extensive reading was enjoyable. This view is consistent with Richards and Schmidt's (2002, cited in Shen, 2008) explanation that when students read for pleasure, extensive reading promotes the development of good reading habits and vocabulary. In a similar vein, Waring (2006) contended that extensive reading fosters motivation and engagement, as students come to view reading as enjoyable rather than required.

These observations are supported by more recent research. While Ng et al. (2019) emphasized enjoyment as a key component of maintaining long-term engagement, Ateek (2021) found that extensive reading enhanced motivation and the willingness to read outside the classroom. Additionally, a 2023 evaluation of classroom-based extensive reading confirmed that text choice and autonomy are closely related to students' motivation (Yamashita & Jeffries, 2023). These studies support the claims made by Daisy, Rose, and Sunflower that extensive reading is motivating because it emphasizes pleasure and choice.

Silent, Individual Reading as a Valued Practice

The study's participants favored reading alone, in silence, and frequently in peaceful settings. Rose and Sunflower also stressed the importance of solitude for focus and absorption, while

Daisy talked about selecting "a quiet and peaceful place." Shen (2008) added that this autonomy helps students see reading as self-directed rather than teacher-driven, while Day and Bamford (1998) noted that silent, self-paced reading is a defining principle of extensive reading.

The importance of place and context in extensive reading is supported by recent studies. Lee and Lee (2020) found that while quiet, self-selected settings improved persistence and comprehension, online distractions decreased students' focus. This aligns with Mikeladze's (2010) view that the amount and manner of reading in class are crucial, as students should be encouraged to describe their experiences during reading. Students' preference for silent, personal reading thus reflects both the place dimension of narrative inquiry and the philosophy of autonomy underlying extensive reading.

Perceived Skill Development

Daisy, Rose, and Sunflower all linked extensive reading to progress in vocabulary, reading speed, and comprehension. These impressions are consistent with previous research: Suk (2016) found that extensive reading improved vocabulary acquisition and reading rate, and Bell (2001, as cited in Shen, 2008) demonstrated that extensive reading increases reading speed without impairing comprehension. As they contrasted past struggles with current advancements and projected future development, students' acknowledgement of these advantages illustrates the temporality of their narratives.

Recent research reinforces these insights. Ateek (2021) demonstrated that extensive reading significantly improved vocabulary and fluency in ELF learners, while Al Shaye and Khodabakhsh (2023) showed that extended novel reading enhanced vocabulary acquisition. When taken as a whole, these studies demonstrate that extensive reading not only gradually improves skills but also reinforces the confidence that students in this study expressed.

The Lecturer as Facilitator and Motivator

Every participant underlined the lecturer's helpful role, which includes tracking progress and offering resources, advice, and comments. This aligns with the idea put forth by Day and Bamford (1998) that educators should act as reading role models, offering guidance without exerting control. The significance of teachers setting an example of professional behaviours and attitudes was also emphasized by Gallimore and Tharp (1992, as cited in Lunenberg et al., 2007). The sociality component of narrative inquiry is also evident in the students' stories, as their interactions with the lecturer significantly influenced their participation.

These findings are consistent with Renandya's (2016) argument that successful extensive reading programs require teacher support. Ng et al. (2019) also noted that teacher scaffolding ensures extensive reading does not collapse into unstructured reading. More recently, Yamashita and Jeffries (2023) confirmed that accountability and teacher encouragement are indispensable in classroom-based extensive reading, particularly for freshmen who are still developing reading habits. Additionally, Widiati et al. (2023) and Wulyani et al. (2022) both identified that the effectiveness of reading programs depends heavily on teachers' ability to balance guidance and learner independence.

Tension with Post-Reading Tasks

Students frequently expressed disapproval of post-reading assignments like summaries, despite generally favorable opinions. Sunflower acknowledged that they made her "lazy." Rose compared them to intensive reading, and Daisy thought they diminished enjoyment. This conflict highlights a disagreement between the basic beliefs and instructional strategies of extensive reading. Shen (2008) highlighted that "reading is its own reward," and Hafiz and Tudor (1989) defined extensive reading as reading for enjoyment without follow-up activities.

The opinions of students align with those of Tien (2015) and Hagley (2017), who found that extensive reading programs were successful when students were not subjected to onerous

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post-reading requirements. These results are supported by recent reviews: Excessive accountability measures, such as required summaries or frequent testing, often detract from motivation, according to Yamashita and Jeffries (2023). The study's participants suggested weekly journals and small-group discussions as substitutes that strike a balance between enjoyment and introspection. This suggests the need for accountability practices that support rather than contradict the philosophy of extensive reading.

Shaping of Reading Identity

Moreover, the stories show how extensive reading changed how students identified as readers. Sunflower accepted extensive reading as a component of her literacy development, Daisy transitioned from duty to empowerment, and Rose positioned herself as an independent learner. This is consistent with Waring (2006), who emphasized the capacity of extensive reading for lifelong learning, and Richards and Schmidt (2002, as cited in Shen 2008), who contended that extensive reading fosters a love of reading.

The focus of narrative inquiry is on how relationships and time shape identity. Students' connections between their current autonomy and future goals and their previous teacher-directed experiences demonstrate the temporal dimension. Their preference for private quiet reading spaces demonstrates the place dimension, while their dependence on lecturer assistance reveals the sociality dimensions.

Additionally, recent research emphasizes how narrative inquiry shapes identity. Learner stories, according to Consoli (2024), demonstrate how language instruction gradually alters one's perception of oneself. This aligns with the narratives here, as students did not just gain skills but also began to see themselves differently as readers with autonomy, purpose, and confidence. The findings also resonate with Syafinaz et al. (2024), who found that learners' sustained participation in extensive reading is shaped by their L2 motivation self-system. Enjoyment, autonomy, and a sense of progress were key psychological factors influencing persistence in reading activities.

Why Students Dislike Post-Reading Tasks?

A common theme among participants was the belief that post-reading tasks, especially summaries, reduced the enjoyment of extensive reading. From a pedagogical standpoint, this conflict highlights a significant misalignment between the philosophy of extensive reading and its frequent application in educational settings. Extensive reading emphasizes enjoyment, autonomy, and engagement centered on meaning, where "reading is its own reward" (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989). However, when students are required to complete summaries, the activity leans more towards intensive reading, which emphasizes analysis, precision, and task completion over enjoyment (Day & Bamford, 1998).

Additionally, from a motivational perspective, post-reading tasks increase cognitive demands, shifting students' focus from the reading experience to the end-product assessment. This contradicts what students in this study valued most: the freedom to select their own materials, read at a comfortable pace, and deeply engage with stories. The narratives indicate that students felt summaries disrupted their reading flow and compromised the autonomy that initially makes extensive reading appealing. This suggests that practices aimed at accountability in extensive reading need to be thoughtfully crafted to maintain enjoyment, and that alternatives such as reflective journals or casual discussion activities should also be considered, as the students themselves suggested.

Practical Implications of Using XReading in the Indonesian EFL Context

The implementation of XReading significantly influenced students' experiences with extensive reading. Students valued the ease of access to the platform, its broad range of graded readers, and the opportunity to select texts that suited their interests and skill levels. Additionally, every

feature of XReading closely aligns with the principles of extensive reading, which emphasize learner autonomy and self-directed engagement (Day & Bamford, 1998; Robb, 2015). Previous research in Asia has also indicated that XReading is effective in maintaining reading motivation by offering leveled materials, immediate dictionary support, and a structured digital library environment (Brown, 2017; Harimurti et al., 2021). These features can be especially beneficial in Indonesian settings, where physical access to graded readers is often limited.

Nevertheless, the result also highlights pedagogical considerations specific to Indonesia. Although the tracking tools in XReading facilitate efficient progress monitoring for instructors, students may view these features as a source of performance pressure, reflecting a concern that digital accountability can clash with the pleasure-driven essence of extensive reading (Yamashita & Jeffries, 2023). Furthermore, disparities in Indonesian learners' access to reliable internet and personal devices across regions can affect the consistency of their reading habits (Wulyani et al., 2022). This indicates that digital extensive reading platforms must be implemented with an understanding of local constraints rather than assumed to function as universal solutions.

To achieve positive results, instructors need to adopt a facilitative role, guiding students in selecting texts, offering motivational feedback, and balancing digital oversight with practices that support autonomy (Renandya, 2016). When given such support, tools like XReading can enhance the integration of extensive reading in Indonesian higher education by improving access to materials, fostering learner independence, and promoting a sustainable reading routine both in and out of the classroom.

Conclusion

This research investigated the experiences of three Indonesian EFL freshmen as they engaged in extensive reading through a narrative inquiry. The study focused on how students articulated their experiences with extensive reading, their choices and interactions with reading materials, their perceptions of their lecturer's role, and the common themes that emerged from their stories. Using Creswell's (2012) framework and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space, the research has shown that students generally viewed extensive reading as enjoyable, motivating, and beneficial for their language development.

In their narratives, students highlighted the significance of silent and individual reading settings, which facilitated deeper engagement and sustained focus. They also noted clear improvements in vocabulary knowledge, reading fluency, and self-confidence, showcasing how extensive reading contributes to both linguistic growth and the development of their reading identities over time. The lecturer significantly influenced these experiences through feedback, guidance, and encouragement, emphasizing the necessity of supportive teaching practices in extensive reading classrooms.

However, the study also found a persistent conflict. Although students regarded extensive reading as a practice driven by pleasure, post-reading assignments such as summaries were consistently perceived as diminishing enjoyment. The participants proposed substitutes they felt would better encourage their reading engagement, such as reflective journals and class discussions. This implies that while extensive reading is beneficial, its application must be carefully aligned with its foundational philosophy to maintain student motivation.

The application of XReading in this context offered both opportunities and challenges. Students valued the platform's accessibility and its diverse range of texts suitable for their reading levels, which fostered independence and boosted reading frequency. Nonetheless,

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certain features, such as digital tracking, along with contextual factors like unstable internet access, could diminish the joy of reading if not carefully addressed.

Overall, this study enhances the existing literature on extensive reading by highlighting the perspectives of Indonesian freshmen, a demographic that has been largely overlooked in extensive reading research, and by providing narrative insights into their experiences in digitally supported university classrooms. The results emphasize the importance of extensive reading practices that strike a balance between autonomy, enjoyment, and minimal accountability, with educators serving more as facilitators instead of evaluators.

Several limitations must be recognized. The study involved only three participants from one university, limiting the applicability of the findings. Moreover, since narrative inquiry heavily depends on self-reported experiences, the results reflect students' subjective interpretations rather than measurable outcomes. Future research could expand the participation pool, compare students' experiences across different institutions, examine the lecturer's perspective, or explore the long-term development of reading identity across multiple semesters.

Despite these limitations, the study offers meaningful implications for the pedagogy of extensive reading in Indonesia. It illustrates that when extensive reading is thoughtfully implemented with user-friendly digital tools, meaningful autonomy, and inspiring teacher support, it can foster healthy reading habits, sustain interest, and help learners establish robust literacy foundations during their initial university years.

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