



# Teacher Modeling to Motivate Extensive Reading Students in an EFL Context

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This study aims at investigating the teacher modeling as a motivation tool in Extensive Reading (ER) classes from both the teachers' and students' point of view. The in-depth interviews with four ER teachers were used to explore the teachers' perceptions toward becoming a reading model and the extent they perceived the effect of teacher modeling to motivate the students to read. The questionnaire distributed to 112 ER students was used to explore the extent the students perceived teacher modeling as their motivation to read more. The findings showed that the teachers valued modeling in a positive way. Nevertheless, they still perceived that modeling may not be effective enough to boost the students' reading motivation. Although the students felt very positive toward teacher modeling the act of reading during Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) session, they did not perceive this as their biggest motivation to read more.

Extensive reading approach has shown many significant benefits on both second and foreign language learning. It improves not only students' reading ability but also some other skills and language area such as listening, writing, vocabulary and grammar as well (see among others Bell, 2001; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). It is not surprising then to find that recently many more teachers have integrated extensive reading programs into their curriculum either as a separate course or as part of an existing reading course (e.g., Demirci & Gobert, 2015; Macalister, 2008; Haider & Akhter, 2012).

Regardless the kinds of extensive reading program the teachers choose, bringing

the ten principles (Day & Bamford, 2002) into the real classroom practices is never an easy matter. The freedom of choice the students have requires them to become independent and take charge of their own reading. To experience the real benefits of extensive reading, the students need to be able to select books appropriate to their target language competence, set their own reading targets and evaluate their own reading progress. This requires big efforts from the teachers since the students may not yet be accustomed to make their own decisions. Moreover, in a context where English is only a foreign language, many of the students do not read in their native language and they do not like reading in English. As the principle suggests, the extensive reading teachers need to orient and guide their students (Day & Bamford, 2002). This means there should be enough scaffolding from the teachers.

Hadiyanto, A. K. (2018). Teacher modeling to motivate extensive reading students in an EFL context. *Extensive Reading World Congress Proceedings, 4*, 219-227.

Researchers (e.g., Yamashita, 2012; Ro, 2013) claimed that extensive reading can develop students' positive attitudes toward reading and can increase students' motivation to read. However, introducing the joy of reading cannot be done simply by lecturing the students. Many students already view reading as a schoolwork and "not as a joy to be shared with others" (Applegate & Applegate, 2004: 556). Extensive reading teachers, therefore, need to change this perception first. Day and Bamford (2002) clearly mentioned in their top ten principles of extensive reading that the teachers need to become a role model of a reader for students. They explained further that extensive reading teachers "are themselves readers, teaching by example the attitude and behaviors of a reader" (p. 140). By seeing that the teachers have great enthusiasms in reading, the students are expected to adopt the same spirit. This may then lead them to have more positive attitudes in reading and motivate them to read more.

Applegate and Applegate (2004) conducted a study to investigate the reading habits and attitudes of the preservice teachers. One of their important findings was the respondents could become engaged readers because their teachers shared a love of reading with them. They pointed out that "Teachers who are engaged and enthusiastic readers are more likely to encourage and cultivate at least some kindred spirits in their classroom" (p. 555). This statement shows that enthusiasm in reading might be inherited from their teachers and thus confirms the important role of a reading teacher.

Loh (2009) conducted a case study to investigate whether the teachers model the act of reading during the Uninterrupted

Sustained Silent Reading (USSR). He found that although the respondents believed in the importance of reading and modeling, they did not model reading. The respondents said that they did not read together with the students because they were busy with their own responsibilities. Since only the teacher can influence the reluctant reader to read, he strongly recommended that the teachers read together with the students. He stated that "Only through the persistent and dogged modeling can the teacher be the key that unlocks the gate to the reading garden" (p. 110).

Believing that teacher modeling could address the motivational issue in extensive reading programs, our extensive reading teachers were also requested to read a book during the twenty-minute DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) session last semester. It was also suggested that the teachers could share and discuss what they had read to their students after the DEAR session. Besides fostering the students' reading motivation, this activity is also considered important to make our students, the future English teachers, experience teachers as a reading model. Perhaps, as Applegate and Applegate (2004) mentioned, they can also inherit the reading traits from their teachers.

This study aimed at investigating the teacher modeling as a motivation tool in extensive reading classes from both the teachers' and students' point of views. Two research questions would be addressed, i.e., What are the ER teachers' perceptions toward modeling in ER class? and What are the ER students' perceptions toward teacher modeling in ER class? It is expected that this study could enrich our understanding toward teacher modeling in extensive reading programs, particularly in EFL context.

## **Method**

### *Context of the Study*

This small-scale study was conducted in an English Language Education Program (ELEP) in Indonesia. ELEP is a four-year undergraduate program that produces English teachers. Extensive Reading (ER) is a four-credit required course offered to the first-year students in the first semester. The class meets twice a week with the duration of 100 minutes for each meeting.

### *Overview of Our ER Course*

Our ER course aims at increasing students' interests toward reading in English. To reach this aim, we implement the ten principles of extensive reading as proposed by Day and Bamford (2002). Although the students are free to choose graded reader books from the library, they are required to read at least 1,250 pages. The target number is given with the aim at encouraging the students to read books regularly.

The reading activity is mostly done outside the class. Nevertheless, a twenty-minute silent reading session called Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) is provided at least once a week to develop the students' reading habits. This session can be done at the beginning or the end of the class. Teacher reading was usually optional. However, last semester the teachers were requested to also read a book during the session.

In addition to DEAR, there are some other activities such as book discussions, individual and group presentations, a drama performance, a puppet show and writing their own story. These activities are adapted from Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language (Bamford & Day, 2004).

The course assessments consist of the student's individual reading performance, individual and group projects. The individual reading performance is assessed based on the number of pages the students have read and the book reports they have submitted.

### *Participants*

The participants of this study were four teachers teaching ER class in the academic year of 2016/2017 and 112 students who were taking ER in that particular academic year. They were all Indonesian. Regarding the teaching experience, the three teachers—teacher A, teacher B and teacher C—have taught ER class at least three times. For teacher D, it was his first-time using ER. Nevertheless, he has experienced ER class as a student. Each of these teachers was in charge of an ER class with 28 students. Concerning the teachers' reading habits, all of them claimed that they read both in English and Indonesian.

### *Instruments*

This study used a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire to collect the data. The semi-structured interview was used to explore the teachers' perceptions toward their becoming a reading model in ER class. There were five main questions and some supplementary questions, depending on answers to the main questions. The questionnaire was used to investigate the students' perceptions toward teacher modeling the act of reading. There were four open-ended questions and one closed question the students had to answer. The questionnaire was distributed at the end of the program. For the ease of the students, they could answer either in English or Indonesian.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Teachers as Reading Models in ER Class*

Different from the teachers in Loh's study, all the four teachers here believe in and practice modeling. They all agree that demonstrating is much more convincing than only telling the students that they are also readers. As most of them have been ER teachers for several times, they have more awareness on the role an ER teacher needs to play. The statements from Teacher B and Teacher C could illustrate this point well.

*It is important for the teachers to show the students that we are the reading model. If the students never see us reading or if we only ask them to share what they have read, but we never do the same, we cannot show them that we also love reading. (Teacher B)*

*ER teachers need to be reading models. Based on my experience, it is difficult to ask these days' students to read longer texts. They like reading comments on Facebook or WhatsApp messages, but not books. So, we need to motivate them and give them examples. We need to show them that we also read. We can show it in class by reading a book together with the students during the class reading activity. After that, we can share what we have read to show them that we really read a book. (Teacher C)*

As a reading model, the four teachers shared the kinds of activities they had done in class either before or after DEAR. They explained that they did not only read together with the students during the DEAR session, but they also tried to act as the students' reading partners. They showed their curiosity toward the book the students had read. They shared their favorite books and recommended some interesting books they had read.

*There was a student in my class sharing her book with the whole class. I told them that the story sounds interesting. I don't like a love story, but I want to read that book. (Teacher C)*

*I recommended some books to read. For example, I knew that some students liked to read mystery, so I suggested them to read books written by Edgar Allan Poe. (Teacher B)*

*When I found that there was a student reading the same book as I was, I asked them which chapter s/he had read, which part s/he found most interesting, and then I told them I was reading the same book or I had read that book. Sometimes what I considered interesting was different from what they considered interesting. We then discussed the reasons together. (Teacher A)*

Extensive reading teachers need to build a community of readers, in which all the members are engaged and enthusiastic readers (Day & Bamford, 1998). Here, the teacher's questions about the student's book, teacher's recommendations for some interesting books to read, teacher's decision to read the same book as the student, and teacher's sharing the book s/he had read are some examples of the activities that can show their reading enthusiasm. This can also model the students on how to act as a member of a reading community. It is expected that by seeing this example, the students can adopt these behaviors.

For teacher D, modeling also means showing his students how to complete the follow up reading activity. He explained that after the DEAR session, he shared to his students the book he had read and demonstrated to the students how he wrote a book report.

*I read during DEAR and share to the class what I read. I want to show to my students what they should do when they are writing their own book report. I hope by seeing my example, after I read I do this and that, they can have a clearer understanding on my expectation toward their reports.*

Although the four teachers value the importance of modeling and they have done various activities to demonstrate their enthusiasms in reading, they still perceive that their modeling activity could not boost the students' motivation to read more. In the interview, teacher A and teacher B mentioned that they could find some of their students read their favorite books or the book they recommended. Nevertheless, both teacher A and teacher B still claimed that modeling was not effective enough in motivating their students to read more books.

*Modeling is good, but I think my students tend to pay more attention to the real evidence such as from research data and their seniors' experience. This is more convincing and powerful. (Teacher A)*

*I think even after I tried modeling, the unmotivated students remain unmotivated. Basically, they don't have any reading motivation. Modeling only works if the students have enough motivation (Teacher B)*

Teacher C and teacher D also share a similar point. Teacher C found that the students in her class still focused on academic achievement rather than reading engagement.

*Many students in my class don't like reading. They said that they were frustrated to read many books. They still value that reading is important because they want to get good grades for reading. (Teacher C)*

Although teacher D mentioned that the students showed improvement, it is still limited to the students' task performance. He said "I could see the students make some improvements after they submit their assignments."

### **Students' Perceptions of Teacher Modeling**

To respond to the question: *which one(s) of the activities in ER class motivates you to read?* it could be found that from 458 occurrences, the individual project and writing book report are the most frequent activities the students chose. Table 1 shows that while individual project and writing book reports have 70 occurrences (15.28%) and 67 occurrences (14.63%), teacher's sharing only has 35 occurrences (7.64%). Teacher's sharing is a modeling activity in which the teachers tell about the book they have read or they are reading. This result indicates that teacher modeling can motivate only a small number of students.

The response to the next question: *what motivates you most?* seems to confirm the result

Table 1: Some Activities That the Students Consider Can Motivate them to Read More

Activity	Number	%
Individual Projects	70	15.28
Writing book reports	67	14.63
Group projects	65	14.19
DEAR	62	13.54
Book Discussion	61	13.32
Teacher's motivation	48	10.48
Teacher's sharing	35	7.64
Oral book reports	28	6.11
Teacher-selected reading materials	22	4.80
TOTAL	458	100

of the previous question. Table 2 shows that among 112 students, writing book reports has the biggest percentage (33.93%) and teacher’s sharing has the lowest percentage (4.46%). 17 students (15.18%) chose teacher’s motivation and encouragements as the activity that motivates them most.

Table 2: The Activity the Students Perceive can Motivate them Most

Activity	Number	%
Writing book reports	38	33.93
Project	20	17.86
Teachers’ motivation	17	15.18
Book discussion	17	15.18
DEAR	15	13.39
Teacher’s sharing	5	4.46
TOTAL	112	100

This finding also confirms the finding from the teachers. Only a few of the students become motivated to read more because of teacher modeling. Moreover, teacher A’s comment above seems to be supported. Teachers’ giving motivation and encouragement through spoken words can motivate the students more than teacher modeling. These are some of their comments.

*I felt better because [my] teacher can understand about her students. Not only give materials but also advice. (Student 14)*

*I feel challenged. I mean they believe I can read and understand more book or higher level, so I have to try. (Student 36)*

*I feel better because the teacher can convince me to read more book. (Student 48)*

*I want to do her suggestions. Because every suggestion from her is important for my progress (Student 79)*

Regarding the 80.36% of the participants who did not choose teacher’s sharing or teacher’s motivation, Figure 3 shows that writing book reports has the biggest percentage (42%) followed by projects (22%), book discussions (19%) and DEAR sessions (17%).

Below are the students’ reasons for choosing that particular activity:

*Writing book reports. If [I] don’t read, I can’t write the book report. And If [I] can’t do it well, I will not get a good grade. (Student 33)*

*Writing the book report because by writing the book report it makes me want to know more about the book and I should read the book until the end of the book. So, I can know how is the book about. (Student 82)*

*Doing the projects because to be able to do them, we need to understand the book. (Student 3)*

*Doing the group projects because we must read books for the sake of the group’s grade. (student 80)*

*Discussing the book, because I cannot share about the book If I didn’t read the book. So, I have to read the book to be able to discuss it with my friend. (student 11)*

*DEAR, because only at that moment I could focus on reading. (student 47)*

*DEAR, because it makes me focus and just read and I think it is effective for a lazy reader like me. (student 73)*

These responses confirm the statements from teacher C and teacher D. The students' motivation is more on passing the course with excellent grades rather than enjoying the reading activity. Although it is a pity, this can still be understood. As our ER is a required stand-alone course, the students feel the necessity to always perform well in all the assignments given. They believe that each of their satisfying performance contributes to an excellent grade, which will result in their excellent GPA. Moreover, as the students are accustomed to being instructed by their teacher, DEAR is beneficial to force them to read.

For the question: *what do you feel when you saw your teacher reading the book during DEAR?* it could be found that many of the students (31.25%) said that they did not feel special about that, or that they did not really care as they only focused on their own book. However, some interesting comments could be found as follows:

*I feel that it is fair because both the teacher and students were reading together. No one just kept silent and did nothing. (Student 5)*

*I feel it is good because it is not just the students who were doing the DEAR session but the teacher was also doing the same activity. (Student 12)*

*I think the teacher shows to us that even though she is a teacher, she still needs to read a book. (Student 23)*

*I feel like I don't struggle alone. When my teacher was also reading during DEAR, it means they appreciate our works, and they try to do the same. (Student 36)*

*Sometimes I looked at Ms. A when we were doing DEAR, and I saw her enjoying*

*reading her book. It feels like Ms. A also liked doing DEAR. (Student 106)*

*I really feel that my teacher had shown that she was the role model in our class. When my teacher was reading her book, I could feel that she was serious and that she tried to understand what the story was about. (Student 108)*

Although teacher modeling the act of reading during the DEAR session may not yet be effective in boosting the students' reading motivation, it could be seen that the students feel very positive about that. They could see how their teachers value reading and enjoy reading a book. It also reduces the teacher's hierarchy as the top authority in the classroom. The extensive reading teachers here become the students' fellow learners (Jacobs & Renandya, 2015)

Regarding the questions: *what do I feel when listening to my teacher share her book?* these are some responses from the students.

*I feel interested. It is interesting when the teacher shared her book she has read. It aroused my curiosity and made me want to read the book. One of them was One Leaf. I wanted to read the English version, but the book was not available in the library. (Student 5)*

*I was quite interested. The reason I started to read the Sherlock Holmes series was because she made it sounds so interesting. ... (Student 27)*

*Feel happy because she does not only show how to be a good reader by reading a lot of books, but she teaches us that it is not enough to read a lot of books. You have to know what the book is about. (Student 82)*

Those responses show that the students like listening to their teachers telling about the book they have read. It could arise their curiosity about the book, inspire them to read the same book, and make them learn the characteristic of a good reader. Extensive reading teachers are suggested to read either the book that matches the students reading level or the book that matches their own reading level (Day & Bamford, 1998; Jacobs & Renandya, 2015). From the students' responses below, reading the same book as the students' book is worth considering.

*I didn't understand because my teacher read and shared a high-level book. I usually read a low-level book. (Student 15)*

*At first I felt confused. But then after I read the book myself, I could understand the story. (Student 40)*

## Conclusion

From the teachers' point of views, it can be seen that all of them valued modeling in a very positive way. As a reading model, they have demonstrated the act of reading, shown their enthusiasms in reading and modeled the behavior of a reading community member. Nevertheless, they still perceive that modeling is not effective enough in boosting their students' motivation to read more. They found that many of their students are still struggling to achieve the target number of pages they need to read. In addition to modeling, they also have tried some other ways to motivate their students to read. They have, for example, shown data from research findings, shared how they themselves view reading and shared their own reading experience.

Similar to the teachers, the students also do not perceive teacher modeling as their

biggest motivation to read more. The majority of the students are still motivated to read more books because of some academic reasons such as getting a good grade or being able to complete assignments. Nevertheless, they feel very positive toward their teacher reading books together with them. Although it is relatively small in number, it can be found that some students have become enthusiastic to read certain books because of their teachers. Some of them also learn how to become a good reader.

Although both the teachers and the students in this context do not perceive teacher modeling as a motivation tool that could boost the students' motivations to read more, it does not necessarily mean that teacher modeling is useless and that extensive reading teachers need to stop becoming a reading model. To change reading habits that have already been deeply rooted in the students' minds needs time and teachers' efforts. If the students may not be able to find a good model of a reader out of the school, at least they could see this figure from their extensive reading teachers. If later in the future these students become English teachers and remember their own experience seeing their teachers as their reading partners, they might act the same.

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