

## **Developing L2 Learners' Use of Reading Strategies through Extensive Reading**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated second language (L2) learners' use of reading strategies through extensive reading in a Korean English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university context. Extensive reading was implemented as part of class activities over an eight-week period in an EFL class. Seven students from the class volunteered to participate in the study. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews, pre- and post-survey questionnaires, and the teacher's reflection notes to identify the types of reading strategies used to engage with texts during extensive reading, and to examine any changes in students' use of reading strategies as a result of extensive reading. The results showed that the students engaged with the texts that they were reading by using various reading strategies. The changes in their use of reading strategies varied depending on extensive reading experience. The rationale behind the selection of diverse reading strategies for extensive reading is discussed.

**Keywords:** extensive reading, in-class reading, reading strategies, effect of reading programs on reading strategy use, English as a Foreign Language, second language reading, foreign language reading

Reading is an indispensable skill that students should be encouraged to develop in both their first language (L1) and L2 contexts. In Korean English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, universities are increasingly adopting textbooks and lecture materials written in English, and students are required to read large amounts of English to complete assigned tasks. Therefore, the ability to read fluently is one of the most crucial skills for student success in academic contexts (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022; Nation & Macalister, 2020). One effective way to develop reading fluency is to incorporate extensive reading into L2 curricula (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe & Yamashita, 2022; Krashen, 2004; Nation & Waring, 2019). Extensive reading provides L2 students with the opportunities to read a large amount of comprehensible text for an extended period of time. As result, L2 students enhance their reading skills and become fluent readers through reading. Findings from numerous research have confirmed its positive effects on different areas of L2 learning, including reading comprehension, reading speed, vocabulary, motivation, and other areas (Nation & Waring, 2019).

To become a fluent reader, in addition to reading extensively, an L2 student should be able to

read strategically (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). Research on L1 and L2 reading shows that readers use multiple reading strategies to comprehend texts, and reading strategy instruction has received a great deal of research attention as a means of improving students' reading comprehension and developing their awareness of texts (Afflerbach et al., 2017; Anderson, 1991; Hudson, 2007; Pressley, 2002b; Taylor et al., 2006). It is said that fluent readers use reading strategies more effectively and actively than less fluent readers. Findings from meta-analyses of L2 reading strategy instruction have also demonstrated the effectiveness (i.e., moderate to large effect sizes) of reading strategy instruction on reading comprehension, highlighting the importance of explicit reading strategy instruction in improving reading comprehension (Taylor et al., 2006; Yapp et al., 2021).

In numerous L2 settings, teachers often teach reading strategies to help students comprehend texts. However, it cannot be assumed that a short period of reading strategy instruction will result in the successful long-term use of the learned strategies (Carrell, 1998). In many EFL settings, especially in Korea, it can be difficult for students to practice the learned reading strategies consistently, which is necessary to develop automatic reading skills, because of insufficient class time and resources allocated to reading strategy practice. The incorporation of extensive reading into L2 curricula is a viable and effective way to address the issue. Through extensive reading, L2 students can practice reading strategies by reading a wide range of self-selected books over an extended period of time. Despite plenty of research on extensive reading, the area of how individual learners use reading strategies and which reading strategies L2 learners frequently employ to enhance their reading comprehension through extensive reading remains unexplored and requires further research attention.

Therefore, this study aims to explore L2 students' reading strategy use through extensive reading. Findings from the current study are expected to help identify the kinds of reading strategies that are used and developed through extensive reading, and to demonstrate strategies that can be used to promote more reading in extensive reading programs. The following section reviews the literature on extensive reading in L2 settings and L2 reading strategies. The subsequent sections describe the method employed in the present study, report the findings, and discuss the results. Lastly, suggestions are provided for L2 extensive reading practices regarding reading strategies.

## Literature Review

### *Extensive Reading and its Effects on Learning*

Learning to read by reading a lot of written texts is a fundamental way to develop reading skills both in L1 and L2 settings. In L2 settings, decades of research have provided evidence for the effectiveness of learning to read by reading, that is, extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Grabe & Yamashita, 2022; Krashen, 2004; Nation & Waring, 2019). In general, extensive reading means reading large amounts of comprehensible text. Extensive reading provides L2 students with the opportunity to read a wide range of written texts, which are often self-selected and easily comprehensible, for an extended period of time.

Studies on extensive reading have confirmed the effectiveness of extensive reading on different areas of L2 learning. One main improvement as a result of extensive reading is reading comprehension and fluency (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Beglar et al., 2012; Suk,

2017). For example, Beglar et al., (2012) investigated the impact of Japanese EFL university students' ( $N = 97$ ) pleasure reading experience on their reading rate over two semesters. Their findings showed that the students in their extensive reading groups outperformed the students in their intensive reading group maintaining reading comprehension. In addition to improvements in reading skills through extensive reading, another important outcome is vocabulary growth. Through extensive reading, L2 students have the chances to meet not only new words but also partially known words. Repeated exposure to rich input in meaningful contexts; therefore, repeated exposure can improve L2 students' vocabulary acquisition incidentally and implicitly (Horst, 2005; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Webb & Chang, 2015).

Additional convincing evidence from research that reports the benefits of extensive reading is improved attitudes toward and motivation for L2 reading (Mori, 2002; Takase, 2007; Yamashita, 2013). L2 students can be motivated to read more by selecting easy and interesting books and taking control of what, when, where, and for how long they want to read independently. These features of extensive reading can help L2 learners develop a sense of autonomy and accomplishment, leading to positive L2 reading experiences. Nakanishi (2015) meta-analyzed the effects of extensive reading in L2 contexts to determine the overall impact of extensive reading. Findings from 36 studies ( $N = 3,942$ ) included for analysis revealed that the effect size was medium ( $d = 0.46$ ) for group (extensive reading group vs. control group) contrasts, confirming the effectiveness of extensive reading on L2 reading abilities. Overall, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that extensive reading plays a crucial role in developing increased L2 reading abilities and motivation for L2 reading (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022; Nation & Waring, 2019).

### *Reading Strategies and Reading Comprehension*

Along with extensive reading, reading strategies also have a significant impact on reading comprehension (Afflerbach et al., 2017; Block & Pressley, 2007; Hudson, 2007; Pressley, 2002b; Taylor et al., 2006). Reading comprehension is a complex process that requires readers to actively make meaning from text. The ability to use appropriate reading strategies while reading is vital for successful reading comprehension. Reading strategies are defined as "deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text" (Afflerbach et al., 2008, p. 368). A number of research findings show that effective reading strategy use is associated with successful reading comprehension, and readers use different strategies depending on their reading proficiency (Afflerbach et al., 2017; Anderson, 1991; Block & Pressley, 2007; Grabe, 2009; Oxford & Crookall, 1989; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Taylor et al., 2006; Yapp et al., 2023). It is said that proficient readers actively use strategies to support their comprehension of what they are reading, and their metacognition is active as they read. In contrast, many less-proficient readers do not read strategically lacking metacognitive awareness to apply reading strategies needed for their reading comprehension.

*Measuring reading strategy use.* As a way to measure students' reading strategy use, a survey questionnaire has been used by several researchers. Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) developed a 28-item 5-point Likert scale survey instrument, the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), to measure 150 L1 and 152 L2 college students' metacognitive awareness and reading strategy use in academic settings. The questionnaire was categorized into three types of strategies: metacognitive strategies (e.g., monitoring, planning, managing reading), cognitive strategies (e.g., rereading texts, adjusting reading speed, guessing the meaning of unknown

words), and support strategies (e.g., using a dictionary, taking notes). Their findings indicated that the overall use of reading strategies by L1 and L2 students was moderate. Cognitive strategies were used most by both groups, followed by metacognitive and support strategies.

In a Korean EFL university setting, Hong-Nam and Page (2014) investigated university students' metacognitive awareness and reading strategy use ( $N = 419$ ) using the SORS. Results indicated that the students used problem-solving strategies the most frequently, and a linear relationship was found between reading proficiency and strategy use. In a Chinese EFL setting, Zhang and Wu (2009) investigated Chinese senior high school students' ( $N = 270$ ) metacognitive awareness and reading strategy using a questionnaire adapted from the SORS. Findings indicated that the use of reading strategies was fairly frequent, with problem-solving strategies being the most frequently used, followed by global strategies and support strategies. In relation to reading strategy use among different proficiency levels, it was found that high-proficiency level students significantly used more global and problem-solving strategies than their intermediate- and low-proficiency level students.

### *Curricular Challenges to Practicing Reading Strategy Use*

Taken together, previous studies show that L2 students use reading strategies to comprehend texts. Problem-solving strategies were found to be the most frequently used, followed by global strategies and support strategies. The type of reading strategies used seemed to vary depending on students' level of reading proficiency. The benefits of reading strategies in reading comprehension have led to the inclusion of L2 reading strategy instruction in L2 reading curricula. However, oftentimes those reading strategies learned may not be fully practiced due in part to the lack of class time and limited input in real L2 classroom settings.

Such contextual issues can be mitigated when extensive reading is incorporated into existing L2 classes. Practicing reading strategies consistently for a long period of time is essential (Carrell, 1998; Grabe & Yamashita, 2022). Extensive reading can provide L2 students with the opportunities to use, both consciously and unconsciously, the reading strategies that they have learned in previous classes and newly developed to interact with text. A few studies on extensive reading in L2 settings have shown that combining extensive reading with strategy instruction has a stronger impact on reading development (Burrows, 2012; Shih et al., 2018). There has been a limited study that investigated what kinds of reading strategies L2 students use during extensive reading (Hayashi, 1999). The existing literature on extensive reading lacks information on what L2 students actually do over time to comprehend texts when reading in and out of class, although studies on the effects of extensive reading on different areas of L2 learning have been extensively investigated.

Extensive reading can provide L2 students with a conducive learning context for the consistent and implicit use of reading strategies. To date, there has been a paucity of research examining the role of extensive reading in the development of reading strategies. Furthermore, previous studies on reading strategy use often relied on self-report measures to assess students' reading strategy use. Although self-report data is useful, self-reported answers on strategy use may not match with students' actual strategy use (McNamara, 2011) because it may be subject to biases and limitations, such as inaccurate answers and misinterpretation of questions.

## The Current Study

This study aims to combine self-report survey data with interviews to examine changes in reading strategy use as a result of extensive reading. Furthermore, the study examines reading strategies that L2 students use to support their comprehension and engagement over extended periods of time. By understanding how individual L2 students approach their reading difficulties and what reading strategies they employ during extensive reading, we can gain valuable insight into the effective and successful implementation of extensive reading, which could potentially lead to improved reading skills.

The present study was motivated by the following research questions:

1. What types of reading strategies do EFL university students frequently use when reading extensively?
2. Are there any changes in individual EFL university students' reading strategy use through extensive reading?

## Method

### *Participants*

Seven out of 29 EFL students enrolled in a high-beginning level English writing course at a university in South Korea volunteered to participate in the current study. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 26 years old: 3 first-year, 3 second-year, and 1 fourth-year undergraduate students. They consisted of two males and five females majoring in business administration, accounting, tourism administration, and nursing. Their self-rated English reading levels ranged from high beginning to intermediate. Five students rated themselves as high-beginning readers, and two rated themselves as intermediate readers. The researcher of this study was the instructor of the class.

### *Procedure*

The class met twice a week, with one session lasting 50 minutes and the other lasting 100 minutes, for a total of 150 minutes. From Week 6 to Week 14, the 100-minute class time included 15-20 minutes of extensive reading. Prior to introducing extensive reading in the class, the instructor explained the benefits of extensive reading to the students. Graded readers were provided by the instructor. They were displayed at the front of the classroom for the students to choose from based on their interests and reading levels. At the start of each class, the students silently read self-selected graded readers for 10 to 15 minutes. After their independent reading, the students engaged in a writing activity (e.g., writing a brief summary) for approximately five minutes. This activity was designed to check their reading comprehension and to develop their writing abilities. The students were instructed on how to select a book and were provided with assistance as required. They were encouraged to read as many books as possible both in and out of class. The instructor monitored the students' reading patterns and provided guidance as needed throughout the implementation of extensive reading. The students were required to keep a reading log and write short book reviews to be accountable for their extensive reading assignment. In order to receive 5% of the course grade, the students were required to read a minimum of three books, which is

equivalent to approximately 30,000 words, by Week 14.

### *Data Collection*

The data collected for the current study comprised a questionnaire on reading strategy use, semi-structured interviews, and the instructor's personal notes on communication with the students. Informed consent was obtained from the participants in the study. The Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) was used to investigate whether there were any changes in reading strategy use after extensive reading. The SORS consists of thirty 5-point Likert scale items classified into three types of reading strategies: global reading strategies (13 items), problem-solving strategies (9 items), and support strategies (8 items) (see the Literature Review).

Three out of the 30 items (e.g., *I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember; I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information; I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.*) were excluded from the questionnaire because they were not deemed appropriate to reflect strategies used for extensive reading. The questionnaire was translated into Korean and administered via Smart-LMS, a learning management system software, in Weeks 6 and 14 using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never or almost never*) to 5 (*always or almost always*). The questionnaire took approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed with the seven students who volunteered to participate in this study. The reliability coefficient was .61 at Week 6 and .82 at Week 14.

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom with the seven students to gain a deeper understanding of their use of reading strategies during extensive reading. The first interview was conducted approximately two to three weeks after the students had begun their extensive reading and had completed at least one graded reader so that they could reflect on their extensive reading experience during the interview. The second interview was conducted at the end of the extensive reading experience. The interviews focused on the students' extensive reading experiences, including reading difficulties, solutions to their reading problems, and book selection. Additional topics related to extensive reading and reading strategies were also addressed based on the students' responses. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 25 minutes. The interviews were recorded with the students' consent and transcribed for analysis. The participants received a gift card as compensation for their time.

### *Data Analyses*

Data analysis for this study employed both quantitative (i.e., survey of reading strategies and amount of reading through extensive reading) and qualitative (i.e., semi-structured interviews and the instructor's personal notes) approaches. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the features of the quantitative data, including the means and standard deviations of individual students' reported use of reading strategies and reading amount.

The data collected from the student interviews and the teacher notes, taken from observing and communicating with the students during the implementation of extensive reading, were analyzed to identify relevant themes and patterns that would assist in answering the research questions. The analysis was conducted in the following manner: (a) Grouping of emerging ideas and recurring characteristics into relevant themes and patterns; (b) identifying differences and similarities; (c) constantly comparing data to uncover relationships; and (d) checking data for accuracy by re-reading (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

## Results

The present study examined the use of reading strategies over the course of eight weeks of extensive reading in a Korean EFL university context, employing surveys and interviews with seven EFL students. According to the data analysis of the amount of reading shown in Table 1, which was determined based on the information from the students' reading logs, interviews with the students, and the teacher's personal notes, the seven students read a mean of 65,721 words ( $SD = 10,993$ ), which is equivalent to a mean of 5.86 graded readers ( $SD = 1.36$ ). The levels of graded readers that the students read were mostly graded readers with 400 to 1,500 headwords, which correspond to elementary to intermediate levels according to the Extensive Reading Foundation Graded Reader Scale (see Table 1).

Table 1. *The amount of reading done by the participants during the study*

Student	Age	Gender	Self-rated Reading Level	Number of Books Read	Number of Words	Levels of Graded Readers Read*
S1	26	Female	High-beginning	8	81,542	400–1,500
S2	22	Female	Intermediate	5	66,202	1,000–1,700
S3	21	Female	High-beginning	6	73,073	800–1,500
S4	21	Male	Intermediate	4	55,163	1,000–1,900
S5	20	Male	High-beginning	7	69,599	800–1,500
S6	19	Female	High-beginning	5	48,806	700–1,200
S7	19	Female	High-beginning	6	65,663	400–1,500
<i>Mean</i>				5.86	65,721	
<i>Standard deviation</i>				(1.35)	(10,933)	

Note. \*The levels of graded readers are based on headword counts.

### *Frequently Used Reading Strategies during Extensive Reading*

The data analysis from the interviews and the teacher's personal notes revealed a number of reading strategies that the students frequently employed during extensive reading (Research Question #1). Table 2 presents a list of the reading strategies that the students frequently used to engage in reading during the eight weeks of extensive reading.

Table 2. *Most frequently used extensive reading strategies*

1. Rereading when necessary.
2. Guessing unknown words.
3. Skipping words.
4. Visualizing the plot.
5. Checking and monitoring comprehension while reading.
6. Using a dictionary or translator.
7. Translating English into L1.
8. Adjusting the speed of reading.
9. Choosing books carefully.
10. Making predictions.

The primary reading strategy employed by the students was rereading when necessary. When the students encountered confusing sections, they typically "tried to read those parts again." In order to gain a better understanding, they "read a few paragraphs before and after paying particular attention to the confusing parts." For example, the students reread when they "could not remember the names of the characters," "forgot the plot" or "lost concentration while reading."

Another frequently used reading strategy was to consult an online dictionary or translator when encountering unfamiliar words or complex sentences, although the frequency of using this strategy gradually decreased. The consultation of a dictionary or translator seemed to be contingent upon the students' level of reading comprehension. The students indicated that they tended to rely on a dictionary or translator when they were unable to comprehend the books they were reading, which often occurred intermittently at the outset of extensive reading. Despite the presence of complex words and grammatical structures in the text, the majority of students did not resort to using a dictionary or translator as they were able to understand the books they were reading. As they progressed through the graded readers, their reliance on a dictionary or translator decreased.

Other reading strategies that the students employed during extensive reading include monitoring and checking comprehension, visualizing the plot, translating English into the L1, reflecting on what they have read, pacing their reading, and making predictions (Table 2). It appears that the students applied multiple reading strategies simultaneously when appropriate. When the book was engaging and appropriate for their level, the students demonstrated a wider range of reading strategies to comprehend and engage with the text. This is supported by the following comments:

S1: There are parts that I don't understand. If they are not important in the story, I skip them. I can tell if I understand the story or not. The books are not difficult... If I can create pictures of what is happening in my mind, I continue reading. If not, I read again. There are some pictures in the book. I imagine the story in my head using the pictures. ... I keep reading if I find the story interesting.

S6: If I don't understand a sentence because of a word, I try to translate the sentence into Korean carefully. I think about how the word is used in the context. ... I try to go back and figure out what I'm reading. If the story is interesting, it's more engaging and easier to read.

S1's strategic approach indicates that she does not always perceive comprehension difficulties as problematic as long as the overall comprehension is intact. Her selective engagement with the text does not seem to impede overall comprehension in the context of extensive reading. Alternatively, she appears to bypass or employ alternative strategies to maintain the flow of her reading in parts that she considers unimportant.

*Using strategies for choosing books to read.* Lastly, the students seemed to have developed strategies for selecting books for extensive reading. To promote extensive reading, the students were given instructions on how to choose books at the start of extensive reading. They were advised to choose books based on their interests and proficiency level by reading the title, back cover blurb, and a few pages to check for no more than 3-4 unfamiliar words per page. Over time, they were observed to spend more time choosing books and to use a variety of strategies to select the right books. Reading books that did not match their interests led to unsatisfactory reading experiences, which in turn affected their reading motivation. Successful book selection experiences appeared to sustain their reading engagement and motivation. The students considered their interests, reading levels, and previous reading experiences when choosing books to read. The following remarks demonstrate the strategies that the students used when selecting books:

S6: I didn't enjoy the book because I'm not a fan of mysteries. Although the book

wasn't challenging, I found it difficult to follow and focus on the plot. I just didn't like it, so I usually go for classic novels written by famous authors and whose titles I recognize. ... When choosing a book, I check the title and read the summary on the back cover. I also check the level, the picture on the front cover of the book, and the author's name.

S5: I read the short summaries on the back cover and check the titles on the front cover. I consider whether the title is appealing. ... I skim the first few pages to see if the plot grabs my attention. I also check the length and level of the book. I try to find out as much information as I can about the book.

Overall, it appears that the students utilized a range of reading strategies to enhance their reading comprehension. During the interviews, the students were able to identify and describe the strategies they had used, even though in some instances the strategies seemed to be used unconsciously while reading.

### *Changes in Reading Strategy Use*

Descriptive statistics of the pre- and post-questionnaire surveys on perceived reading strategy use through extensive reading are shown in Table 3 (Research Question #2). The total mean scores for each subscale of reading strategies (i.e., global reading strategies (GRS), support strategies (SS), and problem-solving strategies (PSS)) from the pre- and post-questionnaire surveys were moderate to high, with a mean score ranging from 3.39 to 4.30. In particular, the use of problem-solving strategies decreased the most as a result of extensive reading, with a mean score of 4.30 on the pre-survey and 4.05 on the post-survey. In comparison, the mean scores for global-reading strategies were 3.65 and 3.73, and for support strategies were 3.48 and 3.39 on the pre-survey and post-survey, respectively. There was a minimal change in the overall use (Total) of reading strategies ( $M = 3.79$  for pre-survey,  $M = 3.72$  for post-survey).

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics for seven students' reading strategy use*

Student ID	GRS	SS	PSS	Total
	Pre $M$ ( $SD$ ) Post $M$ ( $SD$ )	Pre $M$ ( $SD$ ) Post $M$ ( $SD$ )	Pre $M$ ( $SD$ ) Post $M$ ( $SD$ )	Pre $M$ ( $SD$ ) Post $M$ ( $SD$ )
S1	3.55 (1.67)	4.00 (1.12)	4.63 (.7)	4.00 (1.36)
	3.18 (1.23)	3.13 (1.36)	3.88 (1.53)	3.37 (1.22)
S2	3.36 (.98)	3.75 (.83)	4.13 (.33)	3.70 (.85)
	3.36 (.66)	3.63 (.86)	4.13 (.00)	3.67 (.77)
S3	4.09 (.51)	3.88 (.93)	4.63 (.48)	4.19 (.72)
	3.73 (.45)	3.63 (.86)	3.88 (.33)	3.74 (.58)
S4	4.73 (.62)	2.88 (1.73)	4.38 (.48)	4.07 (1.33)
	4.64 (.86)	4.00 (1.73)	4.50 (1.00)	4.41 (1.34)
S5	3.18 (1.40)	2.75 (.97)	4.50 (.50)	3.44 (1.29)
	4.00 (.51)	3.13 (.78)	4.38 (.43)	3.85 (.8)
S6	3.00 (.85)	3.63 (.99)	3.75 (1.09)	3.41 (1.03)
	3.82 (.39)	3.63 (.48)	3.75 (.43)	3.74 (.44)

S7	3.64 (1.23)	3.50 (1.00)	4.13 (.93)	3.74 (1.11)
	3.36 (.78)	2.63 (.70)	3.88 (.43)	3.30 (.81)
Total <i>M</i>	3.65 (.59)	3.48 (.49)	4.30 (.32)	3.79 (.30)
( <i>SD</i> )	3.73 (.50)	3.39 (.46)	4.05 (.28)	3.72 (.36)

*Note.* *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; GRS = global reading strategies; SS = support strategies; PSS = problem-solving strategies; score interpretation by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002): High (mean of 3.5 or higher), moderate (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low (mean of 2.4 or lower)

### *Examining Changes in Strategy Use in Individual Students*

With regard to the use of reading strategies by individual students, S1, who read the most among the seven participants, demonstrated noticeable changes in her perceived use of reading strategies. After extensive reading experience, S1's use of reading strategies decreased in all three subcategories, particularly in support strategies ( $M = 4.00$  for pre-survey,  $M = 3.13$  for post-survey) and problem-solving strategies ( $M = 4.63$  for pre-survey,  $M = 3.88$  for post-survey). In a similar vein, S7 demonstrated a notable decrease in the use of support strategies when employing reading strategies ( $M = 3.50$  for pre-survey,  $M = 2.63$  for post-survey). A comparable trend was observed in S3, who exhibited a decrease in her strategy use, particularly in problem-solving strategies ( $M = 4.63$  for pre-survey,  $M = 3.88$  for post-survey).

Compared to S1, S3, and S7, the remaining students, with the exception of S2, demonstrated a slight increase in their overall use of reading strategies. S4's use of reading strategies was high in general, with the exception of support strategies, which showed a notable increase between the pre- and post-surveys ( $M = 2.88$  for pre-survey,  $M = 4.00$  for post-survey). This increase in the use of support strategies by S4 can be attributed to his engagement with reading graded readers that were more challenging than his reading level. Unlike the other students, S5 and S6 demonstrated an increase in their use of global reading strategies after extensive reading. The mean score for S5 increased from 3.18 in the pre-survey, to 4.00 in the post-survey; the mean score for S6 increased from 3.00 in the pre-survey to 3.82 in the post-survey. S2 did not exhibit any noticeable changes in her use of reading strategies after extensive reading experience.

The interview data showed that extensive reading resulted in noticeable changes in the use of reading strategies. One notable change was a decrease in the use of online dictionaries or translators. Instead, the students reported employing alternative reading strategies (e.g., rereading, using contextual clues) to overcome reading difficulties, as indicated in the following comments.

S3: In the beginning, I often used a dictionary when I didn't understand the book I was reading. Now, I try to guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word first. If I can't guess the meaning of the word, I use a dictionary. ... Sometimes I had to reread when I wasn't sure about the names of the characters.

S4: When I read English books now, I try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words instead of stopping to look them up. This way, I can continue reading without interruption. I look up any unknown words after I finish the chapter. ... I reread unclear parts to help me focus on reading. ... I sometimes make predictions by looking at chapter titles.

The comments above suggest that the students used contextual clues to assist them in determining the meanings of unfamiliar words. It appears that extensive reading of graded readers, which provide detailed context, in contrast to reading academic texts, enabled the students to guess unfamiliar words, read without any interruption and establish a sense of flow and momentum in their reading. The prioritization of maintaining fluency over immediate comprehension is likely a consequence of their assumption that missing one word does not impair reading comprehension. A reduction in the reliance on a dictionary during extensive reading enabled the students to employ a wider range of reading and vocabulary learning strategies.

Furthermore, the students reported that their tendency to translate English text word-for-word into their native language decreased as they read more and became more familiar with the graded readers. The students came to realize that they did not have to read word-for-word to comprehend graded readers. They appeared to coordinate a variety of reading strategies in order to effectively and efficiently construct meaning from the texts they were reading, which is a hallmark of proficient reading. Please refer to the Appendix for the changes in reading strategy use observed among individual students, based on data obtained from the survey and interviews.

*Summary.* The findings demonstrated that the students employed diverse reading strategies to engage in extensive reading, and that the utilization of individual students' use of reading strategies appeared to evolve over the course of extensive reading. The students remarked that "a book reads well if it is interesting". Their reading motivation was sustained for a longer period of time when they found the books interesting. They also reported that they were better able to recall the stories after reading engaging books. The findings suggest that various factors influence the selection of strategies for extensive reading, including the materials being read, the reader's interests, and reading stamina.

## **Discussion**

This study explored the changes in reading strategies and the types of reading strategies used by seven EFL university students over eight weeks of extensive reading. The findings indicated that the students utilized various reading strategies to comprehend text while reading extensively. Although the change in the use of overall reading strategies seemed minimal, there was a notable difference in the use of problem-solving strategies compared to the other subscales (i.e., global reading strategies, support strategies). A more detailed examination of the reading strategies used by individual students revealed that while some students made significant changes, others made minimal changes in their reading strategy use. It appeared that each student's use of reading strategies during extensive reading was contingent upon their self-selected reading materials and interests.

### *The Role of Reading Materials Choice in Reading Strategy Use*

Reading materials played a role in the students' use of reading strategies. In this study, the students read self-selected graded readers that they had selected based on their reading level and interests. It can therefore be reasonably assumed that they encountered fewer reading challenges than when reading academic texts, which often contain complex information. The results of the questionnaires indicated a reduction in the use of problem-solving and support strategies among three students after engaging in extensive reading. The interview data also

indicated that as the students became more comfortable and engaged in reading in English, their reliance on a dictionary or translator, as well as their translation of English into L1, decreased. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Hayashi (1999) with Japanese EFL university students. The findings of the current study suggest that the students were able to develop coping mechanisms for reading difficulties over time by using various strategies, such as determining when to use a dictionary or translator, guessing unfamiliar words, and paying special attention to important words or sentences.

Reading graded readers at the appropriate level for an extended period appears to have motivated students to read more (Nation & Waring, 2019). Upon completion of graded readers without difficulty, the students came to perceive reading in English as a non-threatening activity, and the sense of achievement derived from the completion of an English book appears to have encouraged them to continue reading. The students appeared to attempt to use various reading strategies, both consciously and unconsciously, to increase their reading speed while maintaining reading comprehension and the retention of the content; using a variety of reading strategies seemed to have become a habitual practice. Grabe (2009) points out that “the real goal for comprehension strategies is the use of effective strategies without continuously needing to move to conscious problem solving” (p. 226). Reading graded readers over time appears to have played a role in enabling the students to use a range of appropriate reading strategies without consciously trying to solve their reading problems. Consistent engagement with appropriate texts over time can help students become strategic readers (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022).

#### *The Role of Learner Interest in Reading Strategy Use*

In addition to reading materials, the students' use of reading strategies seemed to be influenced by their interest in reading. Research has shown that interest enhances reading comprehension and recall of reading materials (Hidi, 2001). This study found that the students preferred certain genres and chose books based on their interests. Interesting texts played a crucial role in the students' use of reading comprehension strategies (Shirey & Reynolds, 1988). All students reported that they were “able to understand better when the book was interesting”, although other factors may have also contributed to their reading comprehension. Moreover, most of the students noted that “an interesting story reads well” because they could easily “visualize the story” while reading and “remember the story better after reading.” In contrast, the students found it “hard to understand and remember the story if it wasn't interesting.” As a result, they were more selective when choosing books to read. The aforementioned comments indicate that interest has an impact on the use of reading strategies, the retention of information, and the level of engagement in reading (Hidi, 1990; Naceur & Schiefele, 2005; Schiefele, 1999). Reading interesting books allowed the students to unconsciously relate to and predict the story, leading to the use of more reading strategies. They were able to connect new information with their existing knowledge and empathize with the characters (Schiefele et al., 2012). The findings suggest that educators should incorporate instruction that increases students' interest and motivation for reading. Furthermore, providing guidance on selecting books that match each student's interests can foster a positive reading experience.

One of the most common difficulties students face in when reading is having to read uninteresting books. When students are not interested in the material, they may lose their stamina to read and find it difficult to maintain their focus on the book they are reading (Hiebert, 2014). The students in this study indicated that reading uninteresting books

negatively impacted their motivation to read and their reading comprehension. The students persisted in reading books that they found uninteresting because they did not want to waste the time they had already invested. It is possible that similar situations may arise in many other extensive reading programs. Therefore, it is essential to provide students with the necessary strategies to deal with these problems and to encourage extensive reading. Simply advising students to abandon an uninteresting book and choose another one is not sufficient. Teaching students how to persevere by setting specific goals and purposes for reading can be beneficial (Hiebert, 2014; Jang, 2008; Nett et al., 2010). Additionally, teaching students reading strategies that enable them to regulate and control their interest when they encounter uninteresting books can reduce their lack of interest in future reading tasks. The strategies used by EFL learners have been demonstrated to be associated with the goals they seek to achieve (Wiśniewska, 2013). Regulation of interest in reading can be achieved by setting specific reading goals (Jang, 2008). Furthermore, educators can instruct learners on how to regulate their interest by modeling think-alouds (Springer et al., 2017).

Studies have demonstrated that reading amount is positively correlated with reading strategy use (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022). The students in this study used several reading strategies to comprehend graded readers, and they seemed to use reading strategies more efficiently as they read more. At the outset, they tried to understand every word in the book and translate each word and sentence into their L1. As they read more, they became more comfortable with reading graded readers and came to understand that translating every word was unnecessary. They appeared to modify their reading strategies to improve their reading comprehension and reading speed. The students monitored their reading comprehension and tried to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words by rereading and using contextual clues. Upon the completion of one or two graded readers, the students exhibited comfort with reading in English and confidence in their use of reading strategies. It is plausible that reading graded readers may have resulted in fewer reading problems pertaining to unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures in English than reading academic texts. However, reading longer texts (i.e., graded readers), to which the students were not accustomed, seemed to cause additional reading problems, such as difficulties in maintaining attention, memory failure, and higher demand on working memory, which can lead to reading difficulties (Kendeou et al., 2014). To resolve these reading difficulties, the students often had to reread certain parts while attempting to make connections. Because the students read books at their proficiency level, they appeared to be capable of monitoring their reading as proficient readers do (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995).

To sum up, the findings of the current study show that the students used a range of reading strategies to understand graded readers. The changes in reading strategy use varied according to individual students' extensive reading experiences. Two critical factors, that is, reading material and interest, seemed to influence the students' reading strategy use for extensive reading. The findings suggest that teachers can facilitate students' engagement in extensive reading by teaching specific reading strategies to promote extensive reading (Shih et al., 2018). For example, teachers can teach students how to select appropriate books and manage their interest in reading, among other reading strategies, to increase and maintain their motivation for reading and reading engagement. Furthermore, an extensive reading program could provide instruction on frequently used reading strategies for extensive reading, as identified in the current study, to enhance the impact of extensive reading on reading development. In many EFL contexts, including Korea, reading strategies are commonly taught to students in intensive reading classes with the objective of equipping them with the necessary skills to excel in examinations. Regrettably, students often have restricted avenues

for practicing these strategies. Students should have plenty of opportunities to read and practice their learned reading strategies in order to become proficient readers (Guthrie et al., 2001). Extensive reading can provide L2 learners with the opportunity to practice their learned reading strategies over an extended period of time.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The results of the present study must be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size and the absence of a control group in the research design. The absence of a control group makes it challenging to ascertain whether the observed changes in reading strategy use can be attributed to extensive reading. Furthermore, the data collected from the self-rated surveys and interviews may not accurately reflect the students' actual comprehension process while reading. In other words, the students may have used a range of reading strategies without being conscious of doing so. It is recommended that future research take into account the limitations of this study in order to produce more refined and rigorous findings. Despite the limitations of this study, it offers valuable insights. To gain a deeper understanding of how individual students use reading strategies when reading extensively in English, the study employed a combination of surveys, interviews, and the teacher's personal notes.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated the use of reading strategies by a cohort of students in a Korean EFL university setting during extensive reading. The findings indicate that the students' use of reading strategies was contingent upon their reading experience. The qualitative data supports the findings that the individual students employed a range of reading strategies that were most effective for their reading comprehension and engagement.

A substantial body of research has demonstrated the effectiveness of extensive reading on reading speed, reading comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition (Nation & Waring, 2019). However, there has been limited experimental research on the use of reading strategies during extensive reading. The findings of this study provide insight into the appropriate reading strategies to be taught in extensive reading classes. The reading experiences of individual students in this study can assist teachers in understanding the reading strategies that L2 students are more likely to use when reading extensively. The reading strategies most frequently employed by the L2 students in this study can be incorporated into extensive reading programs. Research suggests that successful reading comprehension is associated with reading strategy use, and there is a positive correlation between the use of effective reading strategies and reading amount. It is recommended that L2 students be provided with sufficient opportunities to practice their learned reading strategies until they can be employed strategically for comprehension. Therefore, reading programs should allocate sufficient time for students to repeatedly employ reading strategies while interacting with texts (Dewitz et al., 2009). Extensive reading offers L2 students with the necessary opportunity to practice their learned reading strategies independently and consistently for an extended period of time.

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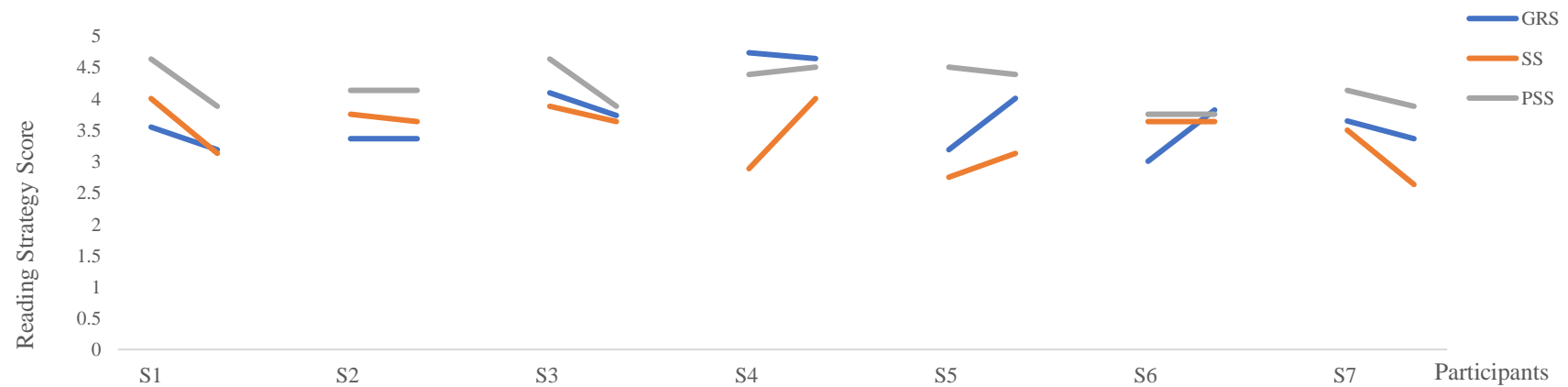
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### Appendix

*Changes in Reading Strategy Use by Individual Students through Extensive Reading (from Survey Data)*



*Changes in Reading Strategy Use by Individual Students through Extensive Reading (from Interview Data)*

S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7
Rereading (+)	Rereading (+)	Rereading (+)	Rereading (+)	Rereading (+)	Rereading (+)	Rereading (+)
Guessing (+)	Guessing	Guessing (+)	Guessing (+)	Guessing (+)	Guessing (+)	Guessing (+)
Skipping (+)	Skipping	Skipping (+)	Skipping (+)	Skipping	Skipping (+)	Skipping (+)
Visualizing the plot (+)	Visualizing the plot	Visualizing the plot (+)	Visualizing the plot (+)	Visualizing the plot (+)	Visualizing the plot (+)	Visualizing the plot (+)
Checking/monitoring (+)	Checking/monitoring	Checking/monitoring (+)	Checking/monitoring (+)	Checking/monitoring	Checking/monitoring (+)	Checking/monitoring (+)
Using dictionary or translator (-)	Using dictionary or translator	Using dictionary or translator (-)	Using dictionary or translator (-)	Using dictionary or translator (-)	Using dictionary or translator (-)	Using dictionary or translator (-)
Translating (-)	Translating	Translating (+) (-)	Translating (+) (-)	Translating (-)	Translating (-)	Translating (+) (-)
Adjusting speed (+)	Adjusting speed	Adjusting speed (+)	Adjusting speed (+)	Adjusting speed	Adjusting speed	Adjusting speed
Choosing books (+)	Choosing books (+)	Choosing books (+)	Choosing books (+)	Choosing books (+)	Choosing books (+)	Choosing books (+)
Making predictions (+)	Making predictions	Making predictions (+)	Making predictions (+)	Making predictions (+)	Making predictions	Making predictions (+)

*Note.* The plus sign (+) indicates an increase in the use of the strategy. A negative sign (-) indicates a reduction in the use of the strategy.

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