

Student Perceptions and Effectiveness of Integrated Intensive-Extensive Reading Strategy (IERS) to Improve Reading Skills of Grade Eleven Learners within a Virtual ESL Classroom in Galle District

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Reading is a complex, multi-faceted activity, which involves a combination of both lexical and text processing skills. Two major approaches have been used among many, in developing reading skills; Extensive Reading (ER) and Intensive Reading (IR). Numerous research studies have proven the effectiveness of combining ER and IR, yet the application of these two approaches to Sri Lankan English as a Second Language (ESL) virtual classrooms, has not received adequate attention from the researchers. Thereby, this study investigates the effectiveness of integrated intensive- extensive reading strategy (IERS) in improving learners' reading skills and their perceptions towards IERS within Sri Lankan virtual ESL classrooms in Galle district. A sample group of thirty grade 11 ESL learners were divided into two groups as control and experimental groups where IR and IERS were applied respectively. These learners were selected as they could be easily accessed and reading for comprehension is an essential requirement in the Ordinary Level Examination. The data for the research was collected through a mixed- method. The quantitative data were collected through the marks of pre-post tests, where grammar, vocabulary and comprehension were tested, while qualitative data were collected through an interview which scrutinize learner perceptions towards IR and IERS. The findings of the study revealed that the mean scores of the post-test of the experimental group were higher than the control group, depicting, IERS is more effective than solely intensive reading in the aforementioned setting. The learners' perceptions manifest that IERS is effective in enhancing learner interest, interaction and motivation, allowing more opportunities for outside reading, than in IR. Therefore, Sri Lankan ESL teachers can use IERS to improve ESL learners' reading ability. The influence of IERS on other language skills can be an intriguing area for further research.

Key words: Extensive reading, Intensive reading, Integrated intensive- extensive reading strategy

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