

Extensive Reading in Developing Solutions to Improve the
English Language Competence
(Special Focus on First Year Undergraduates of the Faculty of Arts)

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While English is considered a key factor of one's success as a member of the globalized society most undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts do not possess a significant command of English. Most students do not have an environment conducive to use English for oral and written communication. As these undergraduates are bound to depend on their own energies, it is necessary to investigate new methods and implement them in order to motivate them in their pursuit of English. Extensive reading is considered as an effective strategy to keep the learners engaged in their pursuit of English. Therefore this research focuses its attention on promoting extensive reading as a strategy to improve the literacy level in English of the students in the Faculty of Arts. The main objective of this study was to develop a methodology which promotes extensive reading. That methodology will focus on introducing a new culture of reading in English external to their classroom requirements. This research was focused on the students of the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. Necessary data was gathered based on the Faculty of Arts. A survey was done in order to find out learners reading habits and attitudes towards the concept extensive reading. New solutions were developed to implement a new reading culture among the students. The outcome of the entire process was considered as a case study as all the activities are focused on the Faculty of Arts. Questionnaires, interviews and test papers were used as tools. There were 30 students in the sample and they were given a pre-test before practicing extensive reading activities. After completing extensive reading activities they were given a post test. Out of 30 students 27 students had improved their proficiency level in English in certain aspects. Research findings helped to develop a mechanism to increase proficiency level of students in English. Extensive reading activities that allow students to respond on a personal level to their books encourage students to read and allow them to enjoy what they have read. Such activities can interfere with students enjoying reading in English and help them to improve their English language competence.

Key Words: Extensive Reading, Intensive Reading, Second Language