

## Evaluating the Importance of Extensive Reading in Second Language Acquisition on the students of Grade 5 in Private Schools of Pakistan

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### Abstract

*The concept of 'Extensive Reading' has gained recognition for last 20 years. Many researchers have researched the importance and advantages of reading extensively in ESL and EFL Contexts. English enjoys the status of ESL in elite schools of Pakistan; however, the implication of second language acquisition is quite vague and unclear. Though these schools focus on English language since the foundation level, a majority of students are never able to write immaculate scripts or speak well. To hone their all four skills in English language, it is important that they acquire it rather than learning it. For the acquisition of English language the role of input cannot be neglected. Reading is one of the input skills without which the acquisition of language is almost impossible. The current study highlighted the importance a specific way of reading such as 'extensive reading' in the process of acquisition of English in Pakistani settings. The target population was all private low fee schools of Lahore. The sample was 120 students. Intact groups were used in the current study. The study was quasi experimental in nature and pretest posttest control group design. The Cambridge KEY for schools (sample test) was the instrument. Reading is a complex skill in second language which enhances vocabulary, knowledge of semantics and understanding. Through a systematic reading learners gain a large amount of vocabulary. Reading was another independent variable in this research. Students were given the exposure towards extensive reading materials in form of short stories with and without illustrations. This was manipulated in form of excessive amount of input.*

**Keywords:** *ESL, EFL, SLA, Extensive Reading, Intensive reading*

### Introduction

'Extensive Reading' (ER) has gained immense importance in the domain to language, its learning and its acquisition; therefore, linguists worked on reading strategies such as reading intensively and extensively to acquire any language. Reading in an extensive manner actually

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refers to reading a diverse material and genres without producing any written work.

According to (Bamford & Day, 2000) in extensive reading pupils in academic settings are generally concentrate on understanding broader meaning to the text rather than learning words in a list.

Elite schools in Pakistan are using the models of extensive reading but in low fee schools the programs are not run efficiently. Therefore, the outcome is not very positive. English is the second language of Pakistan hence it guarantees success. Classrooms in ESL do emphasize over the need of reading intensively in comprehension activities but reading extensively is usually neglected. Krashen (1992) emphasized over the importance of reading a huge amount of texts for ‘second language acquisition’. Krashen (1982) claimed that extensive reading is one of the input skills. Nuttall (2000) enunciated that foreign language competence can be acquired through reading a huge amount of content in the target —the only way to enhance proficiency in language is to read a lot (as cited in Hafiz & Tudor, 1989). According to researchers, reading extensively bring numerous benefits such as vocabulary building, establishment of grammatical rules, fluency in speaking and lastly strong writing expression. Reading is a very complex skill in language.

It develops the knowledge of vocabulary, ‘semantics’ and sentence structure. Renowned researchers (e.g. Brown, 1993 & Coady 1997) have focused on the impact of reading in developing learners’ understanding of ‘linguistic structures. Reading involves personalized reading styles as readers perceive information in their own style (Alkilabi, 2015).

Hence, this research focused on highlighting the importance and effectiveness of reading in an extensive way in second language classrooms.

## **1.2. Questions of Research**

1. Is there any importance of reading extensively in ‘second language acquisition’?
2. Are there any benefits of reading extensively for second language acquisition?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Research**

Determining the effectiveness of the programs which focus on reading in an extensive in ESL was the major purpose of the study. It further targeted at gauging the benefits of the ‘Extensive Reading’ programs in the process of acquiring a target language. The current

research can help language teachers in planning the classrooms reading activities to make them useful for the acquisition.

#### **1.4 Objectives**

The present study intended to investigate whether extensive reading brings any benefits in the process of acquiring a second language. In addition it intended to determine the effectiveness of such programs in classrooms of second language.

#### **1.5 Delimitations**

1. The study was able to include only two schools of private sector in Lahore district; area Johar Town .It did not cover the public school.
2. The study was confined to the grade five. The current research did not determine the impact of extensive reading on elder pupils.

### **2. Theoretical Background**

This chapter will elaborate upon previous researches conducted on extensive reading.

#### **2.1 Reading as a Receptive Skill**

Reading is a complex skill in second language which enhances vocabulary, knowledge of semantics and understanding. Through a systematic reading learners gain a large amount of vocabulary. Reading was another independent variable in this research. Students were given the exposure towards extensive reading materials in form of short stories with and without illustrations. This was manipulated in form of excessive amount of input.

#### **2.2 Reading in an Extensive Manner**

Benettayeb (2015) stated that the concept of ‘Extensive Reading’ was purported by Palmer (1917). According to Carrell and Carson (1997) reading extensively demands a huge amount of lengthy and variety of material to be read for a broader understanding of the text regardless of the understanding of its meaning.

Another characteristic is that reading extensively must be an experience which is enjoyable, and learners must be free to choose texts and books on the topics they find interesting. Comprehension factors are minimal as they generate anxiety and cannot develop pleasure (Chen, 2018).

Reading in an extensive manner is also called the reading of texts for pleasure (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989). This means students do self-selected reading with almost no accountability

(Krashen, 1997). There are no interruptions in form of assessments and they just read for pleasure (Trelease, 2006). Reading huge blocks of written material allows readers to develop understanding of the text (Day & Bamford, 2002). Waring and Takahashi(2000) stated that in pleasure reading students read huge blocks of text for the sake of pleasure regardless of understanding the meaning of each and every phrase which makes them feel confident. Nuttall (2005) declared that reading which is done extensively is the only way which can enhance the linguistic skills of students. According to de Morgado(2009) 'Extensive Reading' (ER) has brings numerous benefits for language development in both first and second language contexts.'

### **2.3 Extensive Reading and Input Hypothesis**

Krashen (1982; 1985, 2004) purported the concept of 'Input Hypothesis' which was later called 'Comprehension Hypothesis'.

Krashen (1989) claims that through reading language competence can be only through reading a lot of texts on varied themes.

### **2.4 Extensive Reading in 'Second Language Acquisition'**

Richards (2002) claims that due to the research in first language positive impact of reading strategies are very clearly defined; however, not much change could be brought in the instructions of reading in the context of a second language learning. The dilemma is that despite of all the studies which are conducted on reading, there are still various problems which need the attention for improvement of language teaching in the classrooms. The most crucial problem according to (Malmeier, 2013) is that all the researches which are done focused on short term goals besides these were not streamlined. Therefore, still it cannot be claimed with confidence that which strategy is the best for language learners. Trelease (2006) also emphasized over the benefits of absence of reading assessment. This strategy supports the argument of Grabe &Stoller (2001) to support the benefits of extensive reading.

Cunningham and Moore (1993) claim that reading target language texts brings vocabulary building benefits. Numerous other scholars such as (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006; Gipe, 2006; Graves, 2006) believe that the continuous development of vocabulary is possible through 'Incidental Learning' which is an outcome of extensive reading. (Waring & Nation, 2004) and a wide range of topics (Schmitt, 2000) that are comprehensible (Nation, 2001).

Schmitt (2008) believes intentional strategies for extensive reading cannot be ignored. Both

methods provide a large exposure of reading and new vocabulary (Marzano, 2004; Sokmen, 1997). According to Sonbul and Schimmit (2010) reading extensively causes learning to happen incidentally. Extensive reading has been advocated by many linguists, most notably (Krashen, 1993) who argued that reading in an extensive way enhances vocabulary and improves grammatical concepts. The time required is almost twelve months for better outcomes. In fact, (Krashen, 2004) in a survey claimed that the effects of ER will be strong if the program is conducted till one whole year. Nakashini (2015) conducted a Meta -analysis on ER and corroborated Krashen's findings that sustained extensive reading (ER) studies produce a greater effect. Moreover, (Grabe, 2009, p. 328) stated that "reading extensively, when done consistently over a long period of time, leads to better reading comprehension as well as improved abilities in several other language areas".

### **2.5 Analyzing the Positive Effects of 'ER'**

Many benefits of ER have been mentioned by (Jacobs & Farrell, 2012). Reading extensively improves fluency and comprehension ability of students. (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002) provided many benefits of ER.

The very important benefit of reading in an extensive way is the enrichment of vocabulary. While reading, learners encounter various helpful phrases and vocabulary words. Therefore, overtime a large vocabulary bank is developed. Later, students incorporate these words and phrases in their speech and writing which raises the standard of their overall language fluency (Nation 2008; 2015).

According to Renandya & Jacobs (2016) during 'Extensive reading' students are able to grasp grammar of target language with in a context which is more beneficial than teaching and learning of grammar in a formal classroom setting. Teaching of grammatical rules does not help as they are well aware of the rules but face difficulties in their application processing. Through 'ER' students come across various grammatical patterns over and again with in text and it helps them developing an understanding of the patterns of grammar without learning rules.

Students reading widely develop a strong understanding of grammar and vocabulary in context, which in turn allows them to use language to communicate in real life (Ellis, 2005). Thirdly, ER expedites the reading speed of makes L2 learners (Day & Bamford, 1998) which is important for reading fluently. Slow speed of reading hampers cognitive functions to understand meaning in a broader sense. ER develops their skills of word recognition and

enhances their comprehension (Renandya, & Jacobs 2016).

### **2.6 Correlation between Reading and Academic Performance**

Studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between reading in an extensive way and general academic performance (Gradman and Hanania, 1991; Pichette, 2005).

Reading extensively is very useful for those learners who have certain knowledge of language (Robb& Susser, 1990). That is why it is a very helpful tool for language acquisition and improvement in academic performance. Krashen (1993) points out the key to becoming a proficient reader is the practice of reading. This reading ability further develops someone into a skilled writer with a huge word bank and a strong grammatical base. According to (Ferdila, 2014) methodology of extensive reading is proved to be very useful and it has developed the interest of learners in reading. These numerous benefits of language learning include development of authority, enhancement of linguistic background knowledge, improvement of comprehension skills, and building confidence through encouraging effective and useful reading habits and a string liking for reading (Grabe, 2010). Richards and Schmidt (2002) had also researched in the domain of reading in an extensive manner and claimed that it is an activity to read at wider lengths in for the sake of developing a broader understanding of any text.

### **2.7 Motivation in Extensive Reading(ER)**

ESL strategies attract the attention of the language teachers to learn about the new strategies for successful execution of the reading activities. However, it is mandatory to adapt, adopt or bring innovation to the strategies according to the specific ESL contexts where learners have different characteristics (Yeh, 2010). ESL teachers face resistance from the learners because English is usually a compulsory subject with which the students struggle the most.

Thus, negative attitudes such as anxiety, frustration, low self -esteem, establish between the student and the teacher which make acquisition difficult (Archer, 2012). Therefore, motivation for students is of vital importance in extensive reading which can be brought by choosing the right material and adopting the context based strategies.

### **2.8 ER and Background Theory**

Benettayeb (2015) mentions that the huge blocks of reading input causes to develop various skills in language. He focuses on the fact that written language is the most complex skill and cannot be mastered by the use of direct instruction.

The extensive amounts of input develop over all proficiency in L1 and L2 can be gained by reading. Reading extensively has been proved to be very effective for providing quality input to ESL learners according to (Krashen 1993b; Day & Bamford 1998; Hedge, 2000; Maley 2005). In the current years, the notion of comprehensible input has been embraced by the linguistics as it confirms the linguistic competence of learners (Hedge, 2000).

### **3. Research Methodology**

According to Brown (2006), research methodology is a structure on the basis of which any study is carried out. The current research is a part of a study that adopted a positivist paradigm. It was a quasi-experimental study in which only one group was exposed to the intervention.

#### **3.1 Paradigm**

The paradigm for the current research is positivism because it tries to make predictions, investigations and explore certain behaviors to test hypothesis. Positivist paradigm emphasizes over the objectivity of the entire research process (Creswell, 2008).

The researcher in positivism is completely objective in approach and controls the entire process of research (Crotty, 1998).

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The current research was experiment by method and its design was quasi experimental. The researcher developed lesson plans and activities for extensive reading for the experimental groups.

According to Leedy (1993) the quantitative method aims at answering the questions and defining relationships within variables which are measurable.

In second language researches randomization is usually not possible (Mackey, & Gass 2015). In such circumstances, where randomization is not possible due to time constraints and some other institutional policies with regards to the time table of students and teachers, the researcher needs to work with an established class called an intact group. An intact group allows the researcher to provide any evidence to support any links between variables (Hatch and Lazarson, 1991). The students' age ranged between 10-11 years.

#### **3.3 Population and Sample**

Due to, the age factor in second language acquisition, grade 5 students of private schools in Lahore were the target population. Considering the 'Critical Period Hypothesis' (CPH) purported by Lenneberg (1967) which claims that the acquisition of second language becomes difficult due to brain plasticity in puberty. The population was grade 5 students. Grade 5 students of two private schools in Lahore, Johar Town, were the sample. Both the sections of two schools were involved in research. These were total one twenty (120) students.

### **3.4 Instrumentation**

In this research, a standardized language achievement test KEY (A2) for school designed and developed by Cambridge University, was used as an instrument. The need of assessing learning outcomes has led to the development of tests while using various test formats. Testing language is useful therefore it must be done a specific way and exercise according to (Hossain& Ahmed, 2015).

According to Wigglesworth (2008) tests should be designed in a way which can assess learners' skills in language by their performance. Therefore, researchers in second Language acquisition have used a variety of nontraditional tests for collecting SLA data (Shohamy, 2000). 'A2 Key', is a standardized test developed by Cambridge University. Previously, it was known as '(KET)'. It is an examination of English language offered by 'Cambridge Assessment Department, known as 'Cambridge ESOL examinations'. This level is targeted at A2 level by the 'Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)'.

### **3.5 Reliability of KEY A2 Test**

For the KEY exam 2010, the reliability figure (Cronbach's Alpha) for Reading/writing = 0.90 (SEM= 3.12), Listening = 0.86 (SEM=1.78) Speaking= 0.87(SEM=2.40) and the total score for reliability was 0.95 and SEM=3.42. These figures which are based on the raw scores depict high level of reliability.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

The researcher approached all grade 5 students from the chosen private schools of Lahore, Johar Town, keeping in mind the traditional curriculum followed by the school and the characteristics of students which were required in this particular experimental study. Intact groups were used. Teaching activities were designed. Pre- test was conducted for both the groups in two schools; after conduction of pre-test and analyzing its score, the experimental group was exposed to the huge amount of reading in class; however, the control group



followed the prescribed syllabus they had been followed previously in regular English lessons.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

The researcher collected scores of both group groups and compared the difference in the mean score through descriptive and inferential statistics while using paired and independent samples *t*-tests.

## 4. Results and Discussion

*Table 4.1 Summary table for pre-testing post-testing reading for two groups (experiment and controlled) of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2*

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Reading	120	19	51	34.19	7.267
Post-test Reading	120	22	60	37.99	8.357

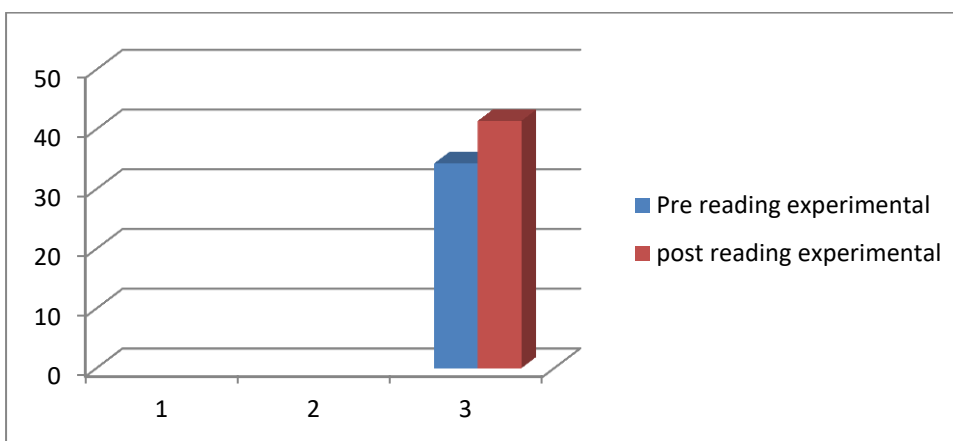
The table 4.1 for the descriptive analysis, the minimum score for pre- test reading for both the groups experimental and control of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 was 19 out of 65 minimum was 51 maximum, and for post-test cohort1 and cohort 2 Maximum 60 out of 65 and Minimum 22 out of 65 which validates the fact that the class was a mixed ability class and intact groups did not affect the transparency of the results. For pre-test, the N=120, (M=34.19) SD= 7.267, and for post- test reading, the N=120 (M=37.99), SD =8.357. The descriptive statistics for pre and post results show a significant mean score.

*Table 4.2 Sample descriptives for group mean score of reading experimental session before and after treatment*

	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test Reading			
Pre-test Reading			

41.42	60	8.759	1.131
34.30	60	8.438	1.089

The table 4.2 above shows that post- test listening score, N=60, with Mean=41.42 and SD=8.75 are higher than pre- test reading session, N=60 with Means 34.30 and SD=8.43. The results of pre -test posttest reading experimental session were different before and after the intervention.



The figure 4.1 Pre- posttest reading experimental

The figure above presents pretest posttest reading experimental session. The figure of the graph presented above illustrates the data analysis of pretested and posttested reading for interventional group. For pre-test N=60, Mean = 34.30, whereas for post- test N=60, Mean=41.42.

Table 4.3 Comparison of scores before and after treatment of reading experimental session

Paired Differences		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	S.d	Std. Error Mean		

Post-test Reading	7.117	6.742	.870	8.176	59	.000
Pre-test Reading						

The data analysis for paired samples *t*-test validates that the treatment in form of reading had a significant difference on the group which was exposed to the intervention. The mean score difference of both the groups was 7.117 which is significantly higher as  $t = 8.17, p < 0.00$ . Score of reading before treatment was ( $M = 34.30, SD = 8.43$ ) and after experiment the scores were ( $M = 41.42, SD = 8.75$ ), conditions;  $t(59) = 8.17, p = 0.00$ . These readings of data validate the significant positive change after the exposure of ‘Extensive Reading. Hence it indicates that teaching the grade 5 children, did result in a higher average score.

**Table 4.4 Group statistics (Control Group) before and after reading tests**

<b>Paired Samples Statistics</b>					
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Post-test Reading	34.57	60	6.347	.819	
Pre-test Reading	34.08	60	5.941	.767	

The table 4.4 illustrates the difference in mean score of pretested and posttested reading of control group in both the schools. For the posttesting  $N=60, Mean=34.57$  and  $SD= 6.34$  is the same for pre-test  $N=60, Mean=34.08$  and  $SD=5.94$  which shows a very insignificant difference before and after reading intervention on controlled group.

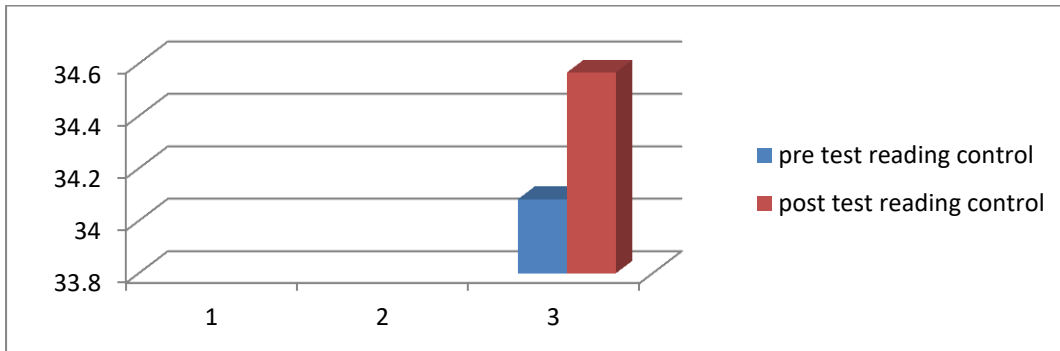


Figure 4.2 reading data for control group

The mean bar for pretest reading shows the value of 34.08 while mean bar for reading post-test is 34.57.

Table 4.5 Paired samples t-test for controlled group

Comparison of Paired Samples Test	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Post-test Reading - Pre-test Reading	.483	4.512	.582	.830	59	.410

The table 4.5 for the Paired Samples present that there is no marked mean score difference for the pre-test reading and posttested reading,  $t(59) = .830$ ,  $p = 0.41$ . Since the  $p > 0.05$ . In conclusion, the difference in the scores of pre-test reading ( $M = 34$ ,  $SD = 5.94$ ) and post-test reading ( $M = 34.57$ ,  $SD = 6.34$ ), conditions;  $t(59) = 830$ ,  $p = 0.41$  which is not significantly

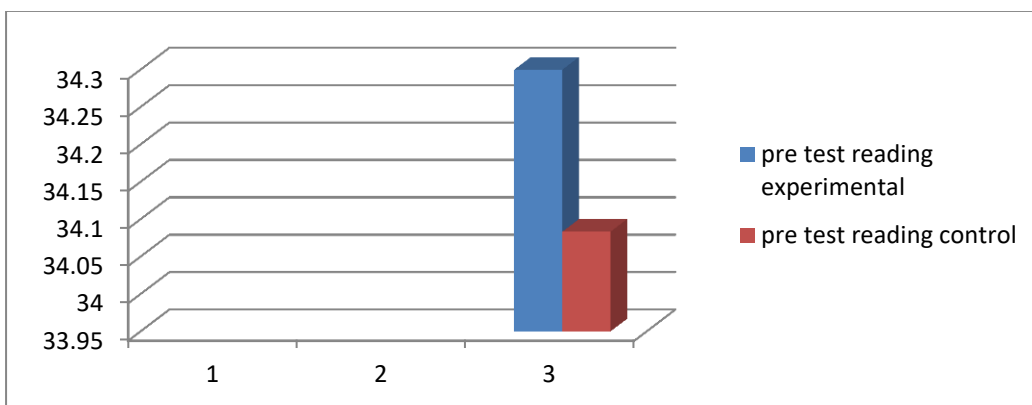
improved. The results from these tests support the theory of Krashen which claims the importance of extensive reading input for the acquisition learning second language. This comparison before and after the intervention highlights that reading activities (extensive) performed with grade 5 students had an impact on the acquisition in the context of target language.

**Table 4.6 (Comparison of pre-test reading for experimental and control group) before intervention Group Statistics**

	Either Experiment or Control	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test Reading	Experiment	60	34.30	8.438	1.089
	Control	60	34.08	5.941	.767

The above table 4.6 shows the statistics for Experimental and controlled group results in pre - test reading.

For Pre- test reading experimental group with N=60, Mean= 34.30 and SD=8.43 whereas for pre –test the Control Group with N=60, Mean=34.08 and SD=.5.941



**Figure 4.3 Data analysis before intervention for experimental group**

(N=60, with Mean= 34.30) and SD=8.43 whereas for the controlled group N=60, Mean=34.08; SD=.5.941

**Table 4.7 Independent samples t-test to compare scores of both groups in pre-tested reading**  
**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Pre-test Reading	Equal variances assumed	9.112	.003	.163	118	.871	.217	1.332
	Equal variances not assumed			.163	105.960	.871	.217	1.332

The analysis of table 4.7 shows a mean score difference of .217 which is not at all significant in comparison to the results of posttest reading. The  $t(118) = .16$  and  $(p = .871)$  which suggests ( $p > 0.05$ ) that implies that the difference for pre-test reading scores when compared to control and experimental groups are not significant keeping in mind the statistics. However, the results of results of posttested reading of controlled and intervention groups were quite significant

**Table 4.8 Post -test reading and experimental and control**  
*Group statistics for comparison of the control and the experimental group on reading (post – test reading after intervention)*

<b>Group Statistics</b>		Either experiment or Controlled	N	M	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean	Error
Post-test Reading	Experiment		60	41.42	8.759	1.131	
	Control		60	34.57	6.347	.819	

For experimental the N=60, with Mean =41.42 and SD=8.759 whereas for control group N=60, Mean=34.57 and S6.34. The results show a marked positive improvement in the performance of experimental group after the intervention of reading in huge amount.

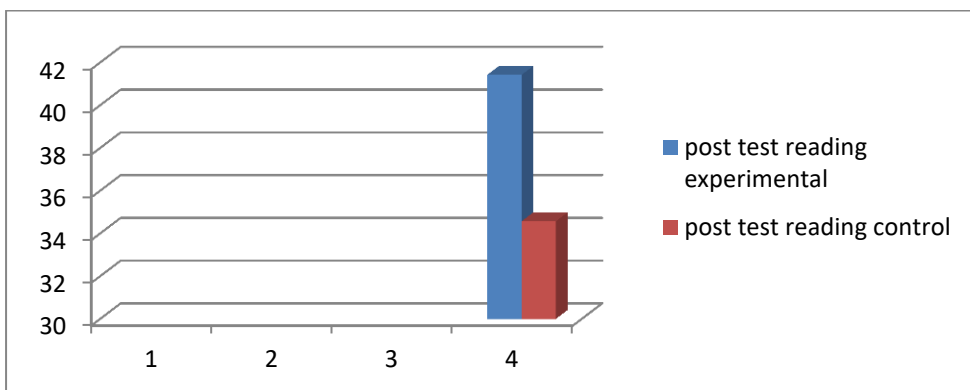


Figure 4.4 Posttested reading results of experimental and controlled group

For Post- test reading Experiment the bar indicates the score of 41.42 while for post -test control group Mean=34.57.

Table 4.9 Independent Samples t-test for experimental and controlled group reading score in posttest (after intervention)

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Post-test Reading	Equal variances assumed	4.356	.039	4.905	118	.000	6.850	1.396
	Equal variances not assumed			4.905	107.568	.000	6.850	1.396

The table 4. 9 presents the data analysis of post-tested reading of both groups (control and experimental). The (N=60) who were exposed to intervention were compared to (N=60) who were taught in the traditional manner. The (M=41.42) for experimental, and for control group (M=34.57). The mean score difference is 6.850 which is quite significant; therefore it can be assumed that after the treatment the students in intervention group performed very well and showed a significant improvement. However  $p=.039 > 0.5$  for the 'Levene's test implies that the above row of equal variance assumed will be observed.

The analysis of data before and after intervention answers the research questions which was to highlight the importance of reading extensively in the first place. Moreover, it answers to the other question of research which was about the benefits of extensive reading. The data results showed a significant improvement which means that extensive reading brings a positive change among students.

This finding suggests that challenging input caused a positive difference in the acquisition of language which supports the first condition of input hypothesis(i+1) of Krashen (1982) and validates the positive role reading extensively for acquiring target language structures.

The analysis of the mean score of before and after reading intervention of control group (Post-test Reading=34.57, Pre-test Reading=34.08) in comparison to the post test reading scores of experimental group (41.42,) and pre-test reading of experimental group(34.30) proved that reading extensively had a significant impact on the performance of students.

## 5. Conclusion

Hence reading in an extensive manner is crucial for acquiring any second language. The researcher in the current study used extensive reading as an independent variable. The results of experimental post-test reading signified improvement after the use of free reading activities. The results are similar to the study of (Saragi, Nation, & Meister, 1978) and Laufer-Dvorkin (1981) who claimed that extensive reading brings numerous benefits for language learners and acquirers in form of wider vocabulary, strong writing expression and spelling ability. Students chose books of their personal interest without any threat of losing marks in reading exams. Students discussed the characters among themselves which helped them in generating discussion in target language.

Krashen (2003) also claimed that in an extensive manner is the most powerful strategy to deliver language instructions because it provides linguistic structures in low anxiety



environment. This type of reading develops students' interest in the texts because they are not supposed to produce any written reports.

The concept of extensive reading was introduced in this context and the students showed a significant improvement. The study hence was in line with the studies of (Doughty & Long, 2003; Ellis, 1997; Grady, Lee & Lee, 2011; Patten & Benati, 2010; VanPatten & Williams, 2007; Nasaji & Fotos, 2010;) who validated the significance of excessive reading in 'second language acquisition'. The students after being exposed to the reading activities performed very well when they were tested after the intervention.

As Anderson & Nunan (2008) state that for some people reading does not carry any importance. This was found in the beginning of the current study as well as students were not aware of the benefits and did not want to read in the library lessons. Later, when they realized that they will not have to do any written work on the books they tread, their interest was developed and they chose the books of their own choice. Through extensive reading, the reading habits of students were tried to be formed to bring a positive change in linguistic competence corroborated by (Nation,2003). Hence keeping in mind the positive impact of reading in an extensive manner, it is highly recommended that teachers in Pakistan must allow the children to read freely. Monitored library lessons will help facilitators to make the reading activities more impactful.

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