

**Investigating the effectiveness of the  
scaffolded extensive reading  
intervention in enhancing the reading  
proficiency of weak second language  
learners of Hong Kong**

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# **Investigating the effectiveness of scaffolded extensive reading in enhancing the reading proficiency of weak second language learners in Hong Kong**

## **Abstract**

An Extensive Reading (ER) scheme was adopted by the Hong Kong Education Bureau as a part of the English curriculum in 1991, yet lower-performing students learning English as a second language (L2) at numerous lower banding schools seem to have failed to reap many benefits from this scheme over the past 30 years.

To investigate the problems encountered by these weak and presumably unmotivated L2 learners during the process of reading for pleasure in their L2, English, the present study adopted a mixed methods research design, with data being collected from multiple sources, such as semi-structured interviews, think-aloud protocols, reading and vocabulary tests. The study included a scaffolded extensive reading intervention lasting 12 weeks with basic vocabulary knowledge and reading strategy development as the essential ingredients, with a view to enhancing the reading proficiency as well as the vocabulary levels of these weak L2 readers.

Seventy students aged 13 to 15 participated in the study. They were divided into three groups: 35 in the experimental group and 35 in the comparison group with another batch of 20 students in the control group. To explore whether and to what extent the implementation of a scaffolded ER intervention could improve the reading comprehension as well as the vocabulary power of these weak L2 readers, pretests and posttests were administered to identify any improvements made. Statistical analyses of both reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge tests were conducted and significant results ( $P<0.05$ ) were obtained, which indicated that both vocabulary knowledge plus reading skills or strategy development can facilitate the extensive reading and improve the reading proficiency of weak L2 learners.

*This thesis is dedicated to my dutiful parents who have worked hard to support the family but not yet been rewarded enough at the end of their lives.*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	1
1.1    Background for Undertaking the Study.....	1
1.2    The Research Context.....	2
1.3    The Organisation of the Thesis.....	4
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b> .....	6
2.1    Definitions and Benefits of Extensive Reading.....	6
2.2    Processes in Reading.....	11
2.3    Extensive Reading and the Facilitation of the Reading Rate and Fluency.....	13
2.4    Extensive Reading and the Gains in Vocabulary.....	26
2.5    Gaps in Previous Research.....	28
2.6    Approaches to Vocabulary Learning.....	28
2.6.1    Incidental or Implicit Learning Approach.....	28
2.6.2    Intentional Learning Approach.....	29
2.6.3    A Combination of Incidental and Intentional Learning Approaches.....	30
2.7    Extensive Reading and Reading Strategies.....	31
2.7.1    Definition of Reading and Reading Strategies.....	31
2.7.2    Classification of Reading Strategies.....	33
2.7.3    Research on Correlation between Learning Strategies and.....	35
Language Proficiency	
2.7.4    Studies on the Strategies Employed by Successful Learners in.....	38
Enhancing their Reading Ability	
2.8    Extensive Reading and L2 Motivation.....	39
2.8.1    Definition of Reading Motivation.....	40
2.8.2    Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation.....	41
2.8.3    Day and Bamford's Model of L2 Reading Motivation.....	42
2.8.4    Extensive Reading and Reading Motivation Research in L2.....	43
2.8.5    L2 Motivational Framework of the Current Study.....	44
2.9    Research Questions .....	47
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	49
3.1    Study Setting.....	49
3.2    The Research Participants.....	50

3.2.1	Background Information on the Control Group.....	50
3.2.2	Background Information on the Comparison and Experimental Groups..	52
3.2.3	Ethics.....	53
3.3	Development of the Instrument for the Study.....	55
3.3.1	Different Textbooks for the Control and Experimental Groups.....	55
3.3.2	Graded and Levelled Readers for the Comparison and .....	58
3.4	Instruments for Data Collection.....	61
3.4.1	Reading Comprehension Pretests.....	61
3.4.2	Reading Rate Test.....	67
3.4.3	Semi-structured Interview Protocols.....	68
3.4.3.1	Data Analysis.....	71
3.4.4	Think-aloud Protocols.....	72
3.4.4.1	Introspective Research Methodology.....	72
3.4.4.2	Previous Studies on Reading Processes using Concurrent and.....	76
	Retrospective Verbal Reports	
3.4.4.3	Pilot Experiment.....	79
3.4.4.4	Main Experiment.....	80
3.4.4.5	Data Analysis.....	82
3.4.5	Vocabulary Pretests.....	83
3.4.5.1	Vocabulary Size Test.....	83
3.4.5.2	Vocabulary Test from HKEDB .....	84
3.4.5.3	Vocabulary Knowledge Scale Test.....	86
3.4.6	Questionnaires.....	91
3.4.6.1	Questionnaire 1 – Reading Motivation.....	91
3.5	The ER Intervention.....	94
3.5.1	Silent Reading of Self-selected Books.....	98
3.5.2	Oral or Written Reporting to the Researcher.....	106
3.5.3	Scaffolded Reading Strategies and Vocabulary Learning.....	110
3.5.3.1	Implicit or Incidental Learning.....	111
3.5.3.2	Explicit or Intentional Instruction.....	112
3.5.3.3	Independent Strategy Development.....	114
3.5.3.4	Schedule and Content of the Scaffolded ER Activities.....	116
3.5.4	‘Big-book’ Story Sharing Session.....	125

3.5.5 Book-blurbs Activity.....	126
3.5.6 Reading Board Games.....	126
3.6 Instruments for Measuring the Effect of the ER Intervention.....	128
3.6.1 Questionnaire 2 – Opinions about the 3-month ER intervention.....	128
3.6.2 Reading Comprehension Posttests and Delayed posttests.....	128
3.6.3 Semi-structured Interviews.....	128
3.6.4 Vocabulary Knowledge Scale Posttest.....	129
<b>Chapter 4: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyses &amp; Results.....</b>	130
4.1 Participants.....	130
4.2 Study Design.....	130
4.2.1 Quantitative Data Collection.....	131
4.2.1.1 Reading Comprehension Tests and Vocabulary Knowledge.....	131
Scale Test	
4.2.1.2 Extensive Reading Motivation Questionnaire.....	132
4.2.2 Qualitative Data Collection.....	133
4.2.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews.....	133
4.2.2.2 Data Transcription of the Semi-structured Interviews.....	133
4.2.2.3 Reliability and Validity Issues.....	134
4.3 Independent and Dependent Variables of the Study.....	135
4.4 Quantitative Data Analysis.....	137
4.4.1 Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge Scale Tests.....	140
4.4.2 Reading Motivation Questionnaires.....	152
4.5 Qualitative Data Analysis.....	168
4.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews I – Analysis.....	168
4.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews II – Analysis.....	182
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion.....</b>	191
5.1 Reflection on the Research Design of the Present Study in Relation to the.....	191
Findings	
5.2 Findings of the Research Study.....	197
<b>Chapter 6: Limitations of the Study.....</b>	206
6.1 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research.....	206
6.2 Recommendations for Schools Based on the Research.....	208
References.....	210

Appendices.....	229
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## **List of Tables**

Table 3.1 - Extracts of the Reading Comprehension Tests.....	65
Table 3.2 - Example of Vocabulary Knowledge Scale.....	87
Table 3.3 - Example of the words tested using the REVISED Vocabulary.....	89
Knowledge Scale	
Table 3.4 - Factor Analysis.....	94
Table 3.5 - Activities of the Three Groups During the 12-week ER Intervention Study.....	96-97
Table 3.6 - Similarities and Differences between the Comparison and Experimental Groups...	104
Table 3.7 - Contents of the 3-month Scaffolded ER Activity/ Training.....	117
Table 3.8 - Extracts of the Three Reading Board Games.....	127
Table 4.1 - Description of the Variables in the Quantitative Data of the Present Study.....	136
Table 4.2 - Comparison between the Control Group, the Comparison Group and the.....	139
Experimental Group in the Reading Comprehension Pretests and Posttests	
(BEFORE removing the outliers)	
Table 4.3 - Comparison between the Control Group, the Comparison Group and the.....	140
Experimental Group in the Reading Comprehension Pretests and Posttests	
(AFTER removing the outliers)	
Table 4.4 - Comparison of the Mean Score Difference of the Pretest and Posttest.....	142
between Groups	
Table 4.5 - Comparison between Control Group, Comparison Group and Experimental .....	145
Group in the Reading Comprehension Delayed-posttest and Posttest	
Table 4.6 - Comparison of the Mean Score Difference of the Delayed-posttests and.....	146
Posttests between Groups	
Table 4.7 - The Descriptive Statistics of the Vocabulary Test of Groups 1 and 2.....	149
Table 4.8 - The Descriptive Statistics of the Vocabulary Test of Groups 1 and 2.....	150
Table 4.9 - An overview: Comparison between the Comparison Group and the.....	151
Experimental Group in the Reading Comprehension Pretests, Posttests and	
Delayed Posttests.	

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Background for Undertaking the Study

Regardless of whether it is reading in a first or second language, regardless of whether it is reading instructions, the headlines in a newspaper or a novel, reading is ubiquitous and an indispensable skill in post-industrialized societies. In order to broaden our horizons and to gain access to various types of knowledge in a second/foreign language, gaining the skills to read efficiently and effectively is an essential part of learning the language. It also enables learners to make use of written input to improve their linguistic competence and helps them express their ideas in writing. Hence, reading has received an overwhelming amount of attention in many second/foreign language classrooms around the globe. In recent decades, the value of reading extensively in English as a second or foreign language has also been well researched and its success has been amply documented.

The type of reading that the present study converges on is Extensive Reading (henceforth ER). This involves the individual reading, at his or her own pace, a good quantity of self-selected books and other materials for pleasure or gist, without any special focus on particular features of the language used in the reading material (Day & Bamford 1998). The theoretical underpinning of ER was developed in the 1980s and 1990s on the basis of Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen 1981, 1985, 1997), which claims that an essential factor in second language (L2) acquisition is exposure to adequate amounts of comprehensible input. For Krashen, for input to become 'intake' and contribute to the acquisition of linguistic competence, the learner must have an open attitude and his/her affective filter must be low (i.e. the learner must feel little or no stress or anxiety while being exposed to input).

An extensive reading programme in a second or foreign language classroom is an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of materials in the target language, thereby obtaining a good amount of comprehensible input as long as they have selected reading materials that are at the right level for them. Learners are expected to choose their own reading material and read it independently of the teacher both inside and outside the normal class hours. Moreover, the idea is that they will be reading for enjoyment and focus on meaning rather than on form, which is the way a low affective filter can be achieved during the extensive reading process (Day & Bamford 1998).

Hedge (2000: 204-5) notes what others have noted, that extensive reading provides help to students to “build their language competence, progress in their reading ability” and that it helps students to “become more independent in their studies, acquire cultural knowledge and develop confidence and motivation to carry on learning”.

## **1.2 The Research Context**

In Hong Kong, most students are bilinguals who mainly use their native or first language (L1) - Cantonese - to communicate with each other in their daily lives. But for academic pursuits and for future work, they have to reach high levels in their second language (L2), English. This requires them passing high-stakes public exams which entail reading in English. Such exams are the arena in which students compete for a place at tertiary institutions or the workplace.

In view of this, enhancing students’ performance in reading is an essential element in English language teaching. Teachers need to provide learners with ample reading opportunities and to build their reading skills to help them achieve the ultimate goals of reading fluently, understanding difficult texts and making use of different reading resources.

Within the education system of Hong Kong, English language is one of the core subjects in both the primary and secondary school curricula and English is the medium of instruction in all tertiary institutions. According to the syllabus for English Language (Curriculum Development Council [CDC]1999), the teaching of four core skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – is crucial and necessary in each key stage of learning. The subsequent Curriculum Reform in Hong Kong places an even stronger emphasis from primary school onwards on the importance of ‘Learning to Read & Reading to Learn’ in developing learners’ linguistic competence in English and their interest in reading with a view to helping them prepare for their life-long learning (Curriculum Development Council [CDC] 2001).

In light of the success reported for programmes of extensive reading in second and foreign language learning in the numerous studies to be discussed in Chapter 2, the Hong Kong Extensive Reading Scheme in English (HKERS) was initially introduced by the Education Bureau (former Education Department) at the junior secondary school level – from Secondary one to three (Grade 7 to 9) - in 1991. It was extended to the Primary five and six levels (Grade 5

to 6) in 1995 and finally to all levels of local primary as well as secondary schools, including senior forms (Grade 10 onwards) in 1997 after piloting an initial scheme in nine schools from 1986 to 1988 (Green 2005). According to Green (2005: 306-7), the HKERS aimed not only to “provide a broad-spectrum panacea for language learning ills, particularly those endemic among learners living in non-native speaking cultures” but also to “develop in students the habit of reading in English and so to increase exposure to the language which in turn will improve their general proficiency”.

The official guidelines of the HKERS were given to participating schools which implemented the HKERS. The Education Bureau (or former Education Department) made an attempt to allow a certain degree of flexibility in the HKERS and offered extensive reading grants to the participating schools. At the initial phase, a team which provided the guidelines, resources, and even briefing sessions was set up for running the HKERS in schools. Since 1993, schools can implement the HKERS in accordance with their resources as well as the time available in their own school curriculum. In most schools, students silently read an English book they have selected (sustained silent reading) for 15-20 minutes in a morning session, and/or they have a separate lesson where one or two lessons per cycle are set aside for students to read specifically for the HKERS. Alternatively, some schools may opt to adopt a Class Readers programme where all students read the same book simultaneously in class.

Over the past four decades, the Education Bureau (EDB) has streamed all Primary six (Grade 6) students of Hong Kong into three bands per annum, on the basis of their school academic results. The high-achievers are mainly placed into secondary schools of the highest banding, that is, Band One, whereas low-achievers are generally allocated to schools of the lowest banding, Band Three.

For more than 30 years now, the Hong Kong Extensive Reading Scheme has significantly improved the English reading ability of numerous L2 learners. However, these improvements apply largely to students with higher proficiency in English who are more highly motivated. The HKERS has shown various benefits for students in primary and secondary schools in the high and medium bands. However, for local secondary schools in the lowest band, ER has been found to have little or limited impact on developing the proficiency of weak or struggling L2 learners. In spite of taking part in the HKERS, they remain poor readers who cannot read fluently and are

not able to comprehend various kinds of texts well enough to perform well in high stakes exams (Lai 1993, Green 2005). This is shown clearly in the results for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE). It is a public exam which is administered annually for all those who have finished 6 years of secondary education, where English is one of the core subjects and which is the designated route for obtaining a place in university or a good job in the future.

Unfortunately, each year at least 20% of the candidates obtain a Level 1 or Unclassified result, which means they have “failed” in the Diploma of Secondary Education (English) exam. This implies that they have not achieved even the basic level of English proficiency that is expected of a secondary or high school graduate. Somewhat similarly, over the past 10 years, at least 30% of students in Form 3 (Grade 9) did not achieve basic competency in the English Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA), which is another public exam set by the Hong Kong Examination Authority (HKEA) and held annually to test the English proficiency of junior-form L2 learners in all schools of Hong Kong (HKEA website 2019 – [www.hkeaa.edu.hk](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk)).

These facts raise the question: what is the missing piece of the puzzle in the Extensive Reading Scheme of Hong Kong, which is meant to aid weak students in learning to read better and enhance their English proficiency? The researcher’s personal observation as an English teacher for over a decade in various local low-banding secondary schools is that some schools merely allocate 15-20 minutes for their weak students to read silently once a week (or at most twice a week) and that, during these periods, many students actually do not read for pleasure but instead take out their English textbooks or other textbooks in English to revise for an upcoming test. If they are not involved in reading extensively, these students obviously cannot reap any benefit from the HKERS, which is all about reading extensively. This situation forms the context for the current study, which tests a programme of scaffolded extensive reading meant to help overcome the problems sketched above.

### **1.3 The Organisation of the Thesis**

This chapter has given a brief rationale for organizing a scaffolded Extensive Reading programme in the context of a low-banding secondary school in Hong Kong, where English is learnt as an L2.

To provide the background as well as the theoretical framework upon which the present study is based, **Chapter Two** will review the relevant literature. It is divided into two main sections. The first section outlines the research on Extensive Reading to introduce the features as well as the benefits of ER. A number of empirical studies will be discussed which illustrate the positive relationship between extensive reading and the acquisition of second language linguistic competence and higher-level reading skills. The second section of Chapter Two presents a review of the literature on how to help second/foreign language learners learn basic vocabulary and how reading strategies as well as richer vocabulary power can facilitate L2 readers to read better. In addition, the motivational factors which could drive weak L2 learners to read English more will be discussed.

**Chapter Three** presents details of the research design that was adopted. It first outlines the context and details of the data collection and also includes detailed description of the research methodology as well as the biographic details of the control, comparison and experimental groups. This chapter justifies the epistemological position the researcher has taken in conducting her research study. The second part of Chapter Three provides an overview of the different research methods adopted in the present study: the introspective research methodology as well as semi-structured interviews along with discussion of relative strengths as well as limitations of the various procedures for obtaining the think-aloud protocols or verbal reports on cognitive or mental processes. In addition, there will be further discussion of the design and the procedures used in the present study, partly based on their application in previous studies pertinent to reading strategies.

**Chapter Four** provides a report on the quantitative results of this research study. It starts with a presentation of preliminary analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data collected from both the comparison and experimental groups. Following that, it answers each research question on the basis of the results of the statistical data analyses.

**Chapter Five** discusses the results more widely and concludes with some implications of the research. **Chapter Six** addresses the limitations of the study, lists possible research directions in the future and gives recommendations to be shared with schools based on the current study.

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on extensive reading in second and foreign language contexts. First, it discusses various definitions of extensive reading (ER) by different scholars and then continues by reviewing studies focusing on the effectiveness of ER with regard to different aspects of language, such as reading comprehension and knowledge of vocabulary. Following that, gaps in the previous research studies are identified.

In addition, this chapter reviews research studies which the researcher drew on in the analysis of her data presented in the later chapters. The review is not meant to be comprehensive in nature; rather the studies discussed here are those selected on the basis of relevance to the current study. The major aim here is to outline the theoretical framework underpinning the analysis of the data.

Next, the chapter reviews the most appropriate approach(es) advocated in the literature in aiding L2 learners to enhance their lexical knowledge. Following that, it discusses the definitions of the key terms “reading” as well as “reading strategy” and also reviews how different researchers have classified various strategies in reading. The next part describes the findings of recent studies which have found correlations between language proficiency and reading strategies, particularly during extensive reading. The last two parts review the published results of several studies of strategies adopted by language learners of different proficiency levels to enhance their L2 reading comprehension. In reviewing all these aspects of different studies relating to strategies adopted by individuals in their reading, the researcher aimed to identify the most appropriate reading strategies which could be introduced in the scaffolded ER programme in order to facilitate the weak participants of the present study in enhancing their reading proficiency. Following this, the literature on L2 motivation is reviewed and L2 motivational framework of the present study is also delineated. Finally, the chapter concludes with the aims of the current study, formulated as a set of research questions with the hypotheses stated.

### **2.1 Definitions and Benefits of Extensive Reading**

In learning a second or foreign language, mastering good reading skills is of paramount importance. Generally speaking, reading can be classified into two categories: intensive reading (IR) and extensive reading (ER). As Day and Bamford (1998) point out, the term “extensive

reading” (ER) was initially used by Harold Palmer (1921), an early twentieth century source, in referring to the practice of “abundant reading” in foreign language pedagogy in the early twentieth century, which had the goal of helping readers understand the meaning and the content of the language during the process of reading. ER can be opposed to intensive reading (IR), which is mainly about reading word-for-word and involves close attention to grammar and vocabulary. As Palmer (1917:205) describes it:

Reading may be intensive and extensive. In the former case each sentence is subjected to a careful scrutiny, and the more interesting may be paraphrased, translated, or learnt by heart. In the latter case book after book will be read through without giving more than a superficial and passing attention to the lexicological units of which it is composed.

According to Day and Bamford (1998), the ER concept was later taken up by ELT methodologist Michael West who referred to ER as “supplementary reading” that could facilitate the ability as well as the joy of reading and cater for individual differences.

Different scholars have their own definitions of extensive reading. In the eyes of Day and Bamford (1998), extensive reading refers to reading a large quantity of easily comprehensible materials, be it books or magazines, in the student’s target or new language while enjoying freedom and full autonomy in book choice. Thus, ER can provide enjoyment for students who read extensively and sometimes it is referred to as “pleasure reading” as well as “sustained silent reading” or “free voluntary reading.”

From the perspective of Richards and Schmidt (2002:193-4), ER implies “reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading.”

According to Grabe and Stoller (2011:286), ER can be defined as “reading in which learners read large quantities of material that are written within their linguistic competence”. Apart from enhancing reading motivation and promoting positive attitudes towards reading, ER results in more fluent reading as well as better vocabulary growth, thereby facilitating the development of language and literacy skills (Grabe 2009). In addition, ER can help in developing L2 reading strategies and practising L1 reading strategies simultaneously because previous L1 reading experiences allow readers to apply L1 strategies and skills in L2 reading (Koda 2005).

From a practical point of view, an understanding of the definitions of ER plays a significant role in this study since how ER is defined and viewed has an impact on the way it is implemented. Among the above three popular definitions of ER, the similarities are that ER is defined as an approach to language pedagogy in which it is essential that learners read a massive quantity of books or any relevant written materials in the target language. According to Nation (2009), a language learner should read at least one book a week in order to maximize the benefits of ER. Apart from this, the materials must be easy and comprehensible to the learners and within their language ability or reading proficiency levels, so that learners will have no problems in understanding the reading materials. They will, therefore, be able to have meaningful exposure to the target language then, thereby enhancing their reading fluency, comprehension as well as building lexis incidentally and incrementally (Nation 2009, Grabe 2009).

Day & Bamford (2002:137-141) present the following list of conditions and principles that they say should be met for an ER programme to have the desired benefits:

1. The reading material is easy.
2. A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available.
3. Learners choose what they want to read.
4. Learners read as much as possible.
5. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding.
6. Reading is its own reward.
7. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.
8. Reading is individual and silent.
9. Teachers orient and guide their students.
10. The teacher is a role model of a reader.

In general, these ten principles proposed by Day & Bamford are instrumental in guiding educators while practising the ER programme. Yet, in the process of implementing the ER programme in this current study, two of them, “Reading is its own reward” + “The teacher is a role model of a reader”, were not really applicable in the pedagogical environment of the current study. In view of this, some adaptations were made.

First and foremost, from the perspectives of Day and Bamford (1998), if learners enjoy their easy and comprehensible extensive reading in a language other than their L1, that in itself is already the reward and, hence, it is not necessary to have any comprehension checking or testing after the

extensive reading. However, the idea of enjoyment did not fully tally with the researcher's own observation and experience of being a language teacher for over a decade in various low-banding schools in Hong Kong, where teaching weak students in learning English was her main duty. The vast majority of such students were seen to be weak and unmotivated readers of English, who had not developed a habit of reading English books owing to a lack of linguistic abilities and interest in reading materials other than in their L1. For such students, even if they opted to participate in an ER programme, reading in their L2 was never considered as a reward in their eyes. Previous research, discussed below, has made the same point. Having taken this into account, the current study adopted an extrinsic reward system, described fully in Chapter 3.

According to Davis (1995), who described a very successful ER project in Singapore, the success of that project was due to the application of an array of motivational strategies which included a reward system that stimulated students to do more reading. For example, the project developed a competitive spirit by showing the number of books read among the students coupled with a testing system that checked their progress in reading. Hence, in the current research study, an attractive reward system was also adopted to motivate the weak L2 readers to engage themselves more in their reading.

The successful experience of Singapore in implementing an ER programme shows that students should be held accountable for their extensive reading. Thus, the schools in Singapore developed a testing system in order to check the progress of reading among students. In the same spirit, Robb (2011) advocates the use of M-Reader, which is a free database of quizzes about graded readers that can be read online. This makes learners accountable for their own reading conducted outside the classroom, by exploiting learners' tendency to attach importance to almost everything which is graded. Other researchers (Kelley & Clausen-Grace 2006; Reutzel et.al 2008; Worthy & Broaddus 2001) also supported the view that students should be held accountable for their reading to avoid them spending too much time "reading" merely one book.

According to Wigfield & Guthrie (1997), social interaction around text discussion (i.e. by means of discussing the reading texts with the teacher or peers) is a crucial element of reading motivation and also effective in motivating even reluctant readers to read more frequently and widely. Aside from these possibilities, students also tend to have goals for reading as well as

using reading strategies when they realise they will be expected to conduct a text discussion or sharing with their peers or teacher (Gambrell 1996; Palmer et al. 1994; Worthy & Broaddus 2001). In light of this, the ER programme implemented in the current study included a story-sharing session in which the students had to share or report the story read to the researcher after they had finished their reading, with a view to monitoring their progress in reading. According to Hunt (1965, 1971a, 1971b in Reutzel & Juth 2014), this is also an appropriate time for the teacher to provide immediate feedback or guidance and to assess whether students really comprehend a text or not while they are discussing or sharing a text with him or her.

Another problematic item in Day and Bamford's (2002) list is their last principle, which states that teachers should act as a role model for the extensive reader. From a practical perspective, such a principle is difficult to implement. Ideally, if a teacher is a role model for a reader, the teacher should be reading at the same time as the students will then tend to imitate and learn from the teacher and focus on their own reading more effectively. Yet classroom reality can be that, if teachers do not walk around the classroom to monitor the reading of those less motivated or unmotivated students, they may not actually be doing their reading.

Moreover, according to Gambrell (1996), if a teacher models the reading act in a passive way by merely holding a book and reading quietly, this will not teach students much about how or why one reads a book. For modelling to be effective, the teacher should instead promote books, read amusing books aloud or discuss books. Stahl (2004) further added that it is preferable for the teachers to monitor students' reading activity as well as progress more actively during silent reading time instead of modelling the reading act in a passive way. Hence, in the present study, the researcher played a dual role, that is, teacher-as-monitor (*walking around to check if students were actually reading*) plus teacher-as-role-model (*occasionally reading her book while the students were reading and occasionally organising some big-book sharing sessions with the aim of discussing and sharing some interesting books with the students*).

There are obviously various advantages to a learner regularly going through large amounts of text - of input - in the L2 with some degree of interest. Over the past two decades, numerous studies have indeed provided evidence that extensive reading can facilitate language acquisition. The literature has considered its effects on vocabulary learning (Horst 2005; Pigada & Schmitt 2006),

the development of reading speed and reading comprehension (Al-Homoud & Schmitt 2009; Bell 2001; Hitosugi & Day 2004; Iwahori 2008; Lai 1993; Mason & Krashen 1997; Robb & Susser 1989; Sheu 2003; Yamashita 2008), increased motivation towards L2 reading (Ro 2013), as well as the enhancement of writing ability<sup>1</sup> (Hafiz & Tudor 1989, 1990; Mermelstein 2015).

Some of the additional benefits of ER include giving students more chances to encounter words in context, thereby helping them understand how these words are to be used (Thornbury 2002) and increasing sight vocabulary (Nagy, Herman & Anderson 1985; Nation & Coady 1988; Coady 1997). Eventually ER could lead to a considerable increase in size of their lexicons, where vocabulary, in fact, appears to be quite hard for L2 learners through explicit teaching in the language classroom.

## 2.2 Processes in Reading

In the past, reading was traditionally seen as something passive since readers need not produce any language. In recent decades, however, reading has come to be viewed as an active process which requires readers to interact with the writer's ideas via interpreting and extracting the meaning of the writer in the text, using both their background knowledge as well as textual knowledge (Harris 2000, Benettayeb 2010 in Al-Nafisah 2015). According to Green (2005), reading involves the readers in using a variety of skills, such as predicting and drawing conclusions, questioning and inferring. As Koda (2007, 2010) points out, reading comprehension is now commonly regarded as a cognitive and social process which consists of extracting as well as constructing meaning while interacting with the written text.

Reading in one's first language (L1) is very different from reading in a second language (Chen et al. 2016 in Grabe 2016). According to Schank (1982), when readers are reading in their L1, the words they encounter are already in their oral-aural vocabulary banks and they simply need to utilise their word-recognition skills. Hence, reading in the L1 is from the start more fluent than in an L2, as L1 readers are in possession of essential sight-recognition vocabulary and word recognition in the text is therefore smooth and fluent.

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<sup>1</sup> However, since writing ability is not a focus of the present study, the literature relevant to that aspect will not be reviewed here.

By contrast, L2 readers have limited linguistic knowledge and vocabulary size, which means that they are restricted in what they can read fluently. With reference to Koda (2005), L2 readers will face barriers to their L2 reading since L1 and L2 reading involve two distinct systems of cognitive processing and there will be transfer effects of cognitive skills as well as strategies and even interference from their L1. Thus, to assist readers reading in the L2 more fluently, increasing the size of their vocabulary coupled with developing a good knowledge of grammar are top priorities.

Obviously, individual language learners possess different levels of language proficiency. According to Grabe & Stoller (2011), developing the automatic word recognition skills and decoding the text effectively are conducive to reading fluency as well as comprehension. Highly-proficient L2 readers can identify words in a text quickly or automatically whereas weaker readers need more time and greater cognitive resources to do so. They may face a great number of problems in identifying letters, parts of words and even the whole word in the reading process (Koda 2005, Grabe 2009b).

In light of this, Grabe and Stoller (2011) proposed that encouraging second or foreign language learners to read large amounts of L2 texts with a reduced cognitive load, as characterised in ER with its controlled sentence structures and lexis, can facilitate the automation of lower-level skills, such as word recognition, syntactic parsing and semantic proposition encoding (Koda 2005). Gradually, readers are more able to divert much of their attention to higher-level processing like making inferences, adopting strategies in understanding the meaning of a text and drawing on background knowledge to interpret ideas (LaBerge & Samuels 1974).

An important issue relevant to the entire discussion here and which will reappear in various sub-sections of Chapters Two and Three is the overall nature of lower-level and higher-level processing in reading. A distinction is usually made between bottom-up processing and top-down processing while reading a text. Carroll (2008:56) describes bottom-up processing as a model "which proceeds from the lowest level to the highest level of processing in such a way that all of the lower levels operate without influence from the higher levels" and top-down processing as a model in which "information at the higher levels may influence processing at the lower levels". With reference to Grabe (2009), if the low-level processing in L2 is done slowly or inefficiently,

it may deter readers from utilising finite cognitive resources for high-level processing like meaning construction.

### **2.3 Extensive Reading and the Improvement of Reading Rate, Reading Fluency and Reading Comprehension**

As defined by Grabe (2009:291), reading fluency is “the ability [of a reader] to read rapidly with ease and accuracy, and to read with appropriate expression and phrasing when asked to read orally”. Reading fluency is always composed of three basic elements - automaticity in recognising words, accuracy in decoding words and rapidity in the reading rates (Grabe 2009, Kuhn & Stal 2003). According to Carver (1982), there always exists a positive relationship between fluency and comprehension. He highlighted this positive relationship by demonstrating how limiting the L1 reading rate reduced readers’ comprehension of the text when compared with the comprehension levels while reading without any restriction of the rate.

Theoretically speaking, reading fluency is connected to the concept of automaticity (LaBerge & Samuels 1974). When automaticity is developed from scratch, an individual is required to devote a lot of attention to performing something but once the automatic stage has been reached, s/he does not need to invest any attention in performing the act anymore (Kuhn et al. 2010). With respect to the development of reading skills, automaticity will normally begin from word identification skills, moving on to phrase level skills and then, finally, discourse level skills. Once the process of word identification becomes more automatic, and learners are more able to recognise or identify words quickly and accurately, readers can then possess greater capacity for more attention or more attentional resources in the working memory, which is of limited capacity in nature, to use for higher-order comprehension processes (LaBerge & Samuels 1974).

According to Grabe (2016:306), “reading comprehension requires the following skills and knowledge resources to varying degrees depending on levels of proficiency” and he offers this list:

1. The ability to decode graphic forms for efficient word recognition
2. The ability to access the meanings of a large number of words automatically
3. The ability to draw meaning from phrase- and clause-level grammatical information
4. The ability to combine clausal-level meanings to build a larger network of meaning relations (comprehend the text)

5. The ability to recognize discourse-level relationships and use this information to build and support comprehension
6. The ability to use reading strategies with more difficult text and for a range of academic reading tasks
7. The ability to set goals for reading and adjust them as needed
8. The ability to use inferences of various types and to monitor comprehension in line with reading goals
9. The ability to draw on prior knowledge as appropriate
10. Abilities to evaluate, integrate, and synthesize information from a text to form a situation model of comprehension (what the reader learns from the text)
11. The ability to maintain these processes fluently for an extended period of time
12. The motivation to persist in reading and to use the text information appropriately in line with reader goals

Reading fluently with appropriate comprehension levels requires the efficient employment of cognitive processes. Since cognitive resources are finite, some of these lower-level reading processes must become automated to reduce the cognitive effort required for word recognition (Grabe & Stoller 2011). On the one hand, readers must develop automatic and accurate sub-lexical and lexical processes; integrate the orthographic, perceptual, phonological and morphological processes which are necessary while reading individual words; and then extract semantic meaning quickly from orthographic forms. On the other hand, apart from word recognition, readers have to parse syntax accurately and analyse the text into phrasal and larger units, thereby extracting grammatical information to gain more understanding of clause-level meanings and also interpreting messages within the text by means of schematic activation (Wolf & Katzir-Cohen 2001).

According to LaBerge & Samuels's model of information processing in reading (1974), automation of word recognition aids in the application of limited cognitive resources to other lower-level processes metaphorically called bottom-up skills, such as syntactic parsing as well as semantic proposition encoding, and also to top-down skills or other higher-order processing in working memory. This automation of lower-order skills, such as word decoding, is a prerequisite for developing good reading fluency (Alderson 2000; Koda 2005). An abundance of empirical research into reading development puts forward the idea that lower-level processes are of pivotal significance. Stanovich and Stanovich (1999:29) believe that "instructional programmes that emphasize spelling-sound decoding skills result in better reading outcomes because alphabetical coding is the critical subprocess that supports fluent reading". In other words, when learners have "extended exposure to meaningful print" (Grabe & Stoller 2011:24)

while reading ability-appropriate level L2 texts in the ER programme, it facilitates their word-decoding skills and develops their parsing skills to process information more efficiently.

The final lower-level reading process involves the semantic level. This is where proficient L2 readers accurately and quickly carry out semantic proposition formation, which entails the evaluation of word meanings followed by combining word meanings as well as structural information into basic units of clause-level meaning. However, weaker L2 readers usually form semantic propositions at a rather slow speed and require large amounts of finite cognitive resources. When they fail to do so, their comprehension will eventually be blocked (Grabe 2009b, Koda 2005).

Overall, reading authorities (Grabe 2009b, Grabe & Stoller 2011) have argued that it is through the reading and processing of large amounts of texts (i.e. engaging in ER activities) that lower-level reading processes of orthographic decoding, syntactic processing, and semantic proposition formation are developed, thereby enhancing the reading fluency and proficiency of weak readers. Apart from this, if timed reading and extensive reading can be conducted simultaneously in a certain period of time, ER participants can then read increasingly smoothly and fluently. Thus, increased reading rates, while maintaining high levels of comprehension, might result from a combination of improved processing speed plus the coordination of such autonomous processes as orthographic decoding and phonological recoding.

Previous findings of Rasinski (2004) and Rasinski et al. (2005) indicates that a learner's automatic processing in decoding, to a great extent, can be evaluated by observing his or her reading rate or speed, which determines how fluently s/he reads. Various studies have also suggested that an ER programme can facilitate the reading rate as well as fluency of L2 learners. Iwahori (2008) conducted a research study with 33 high school EFL students in Japan whose English proficiency was at a beginning or elementary level to explore the effect of ER on the participants' reading rate over a 7-week period. The participants were assigned to read 28 graded readers and comic books (a goal set between the researcher and the participants) at home for seven weeks. No extensive reading activity took place in class.

Iwahori (2008) employed a 100-item C-test (which was designed according to the cloze test) to assess the overall language proficiency of the participants and also 1-minute reading probe to

measure the reading rates of the participants with the help of a reading text extracted from a book about timed readings. Readability<sup>2</sup> was checked via adopting Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level<sup>3</sup>. The participants were also informed of the need to answer three comprehension questions relevant to the text after the reading rate test to ensure that they had read the text at their normal rate. The same reading text was employed as both the pre-and-post tests. The results indicated that the participants' mean reading rate improved from 84.18 to 112.82 wpm after reading extensively at home for seven weeks. However, there was no control group in this research study and the extensive reading activity was done outside school in an unmonitored way. Thus, it is hard to conclude that the participants' improvements in the reading rates were directly the result of the ER programme itself.

In addition, as stated by Iwahori (2008), the ER home activity lasted for seven weeks, which might be considered a rather short duration of time. In view of this, if the pre-and-posttests were the same, it was very likely that there might have been a “possible practice effect on the result of the posttests” (Iwahori 2008:83) since students took the identical reading speed test and C-test as pre-and-posttests within a short period of time. Moreover, even though the researcher had set a goal of reading 28 books in seven weeks with the participants, the actual amount of the reading done by the participants at home was not reported in the study. Hence, the effectiveness of the ER activity could not be confirmed (Suk 2015).

Further support for the value of ER was found by Robb and Susser (1989), who carried out a study to examine the impact of extensive reading over two semesters on 125 EFL freshmen's reading ability at a university in Japan. Participants were divided into two groups: experimental or extensive reading (ER) group and control or intensive reading (IR) group.

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<sup>2</sup> “Readability can be defined as judgements of how difficult or easy a particular written text is to comprehend. Readability can be commonly measured by lexical or semantic features and syntactic complexity. In other words, the word frequency and sentence length of a text serve as a basis for measuring how readable a certain text is” (Widodo 2009:239)

<sup>3</sup> “Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level is a readability metric used to determine how difficult a text is to understand based on the length of words and sentences in the text. The values vary from 0 to 18 where 18 represents the most difficult text” (see <https://clickhelp.com/software-documentation-tool/user-manual/flesch-kincaid-grade-level.html> for a basic description). Hence if the value of the text falls between 1 and 5, it implies that the reading text is very easy for readers to read.

The students in the experimental group read SRA<sup>4</sup> reading cards in class plus an average of 641 pages in books written for American teenagers after class and they were requested to produce a brief summary writing in a notebook after reading. In order to check if the participants of the experimental group had done their reading at home, a short quiz was administered in class. The control group used a textbook with a strong emphasis on reading skills. Both groups took different pre-and-posttests. The pretest was Multiple Skills Series Midway Placement Test (Form X) containing some test items on general reading skills and specific reading skills plus a reading speed test. The posttest was a similar placement test (Form Y) with similar types of questions but the test content was different. Afterwards, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to compare mean differences between the pretest and posttest results within the two groups. The mean differences of the posttest in the ER group were found to be statistically significant.

The results of Robb and Susser's (1989) study showed that the experimental group made considerably more gains on two reading comprehension measures (i.e. "guessing vocabulary from context" and "understanding the important facts"). In other words, the ER group outperformed and read significantly faster than the control group did after receiving their extensive reading treatment. The findings of the study thus revealed that an extensive reading approach produced much better results than a skills approach.

However, there are some methodological issues which need more consideration since Robb and Susser (1989) mentioned that the pre-and-posttests they administered were not equivalent. Moreover, the way they measured the reading rates of the ER as well as control groups and the readability of the reading rate texts were not mentioned (Iwahori 2008). Also, no further information about the test was given in the study. Hence the students' improvements in reading rate and reading comprehension could have been due to the different pre-and-posttests used, and not entirely the result of the extensive reading treatment implemented. In addition, the researchers selected some unsimplified texts (with American youngsters as the intended readers) for the Japanese EFL participants in their research study as outside class reading. Here doubt

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<sup>4</sup> SRA cards are produced by Science Research Associates Inc. (a Chicago-based publisher) and were named after it. These SRA cards normally come in a box (*the SRA Reading Laboratory Kit 2c & 3a*) and the text on each card is categorized into various levels of proficiency (from easy to difficult in different colours). They aim to facilitate independent reading and develop text understanding by asking literal, interpretive, inferential and critical questions after reading the text on each card (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science\\_Research\\_Associates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_Research_Associates) for a basic description).

could be cast on how well these EFL participants understood the contents (Suk 2015) and how much they benefitted from the extensive reading done since they were simply described as “freshman English majors” (Robb & Susser 1989:242) and their English proficiency was never indicated in the study.

Lai (1993) covers a research study conducted with 226 secondary students (aged 11-15) studying in S1-S3 (Grade 7-9) in Hong Kong for more than four weeks during the summer vacation. There were three treatment groups and the participants’ English proficiency was heterogeneous as they came from various local schools with different background of learning in their L2 as well as varying levels of motivation. All the participants were asked to read graded readers as well as short and easy passages. The students in the treatment groups read 16.2 books on average every four weeks. The Standardized Reading Test junior versions A and B, designed by the Hong Kong Reading Association, was adopted as the reading comprehension tests. Pretests and posttests (using different versions) were administered and a t-test was used to compare means within the groups.

In order to measure the reading rate, the participants first read a text and when they had finished reading, the time they had spent was recorded. The reading rates were then calculated by wpm (word per minute). To measure comprehension, participants were asked to answer eight true or false questions after they had finished reading. The results revealed that the students showed an improvement in their reading rate and the more motivated the participants were, the more improvements they showed. Again, the readability of the reading rate texts, which were selected by the researcher, was not discussed in the study. In addition, there was no control group and, therefore, any students’ improvements in reading rate could not be entirely attributed to the extensive reading programme itself.

Bell (2001) discusses the result of an ER study which measured both reading comprehension and reading speed over a period of two semesters with 26 young adult learners in Yemen Arab Republic whose English proficiency was at an elementary level. Bell used an Intensive Reading (IR) class as a control group, which was required to read short texts and work on grammar, vocabulary and rhetorical patterns in the reading texts. In contrast, an Extensive Reading (ER) group participated in an extensive reading programme and had to read any of the 2000 graded

readers available in the British Council English Language Centre. A record was kept to note down any of the titles read plus the time which each participant spent on reading per week. Both groups were requested to write a book report and present their ideas in class on each book being read. They had equivalent amounts of reading time.

For measuring reading speed, Bell (2001) chose two different reading texts. For measuring reading comprehension, Bell selected another three different texts with three kinds of questions such as true/false, modified cloze and multiple choice as the pretests and posttests. Yet “in reporting final results for reading comprehension it was decided to adjust the weightings of the three components of the reading comprehension test in order to reduce the effect of the multiple choice and true/false items on the overall result” (Bell 2001:4).

For analysing the results, Bell used t-tests on pretest and posttest data to compare the mean scores of the intensive reading group and the extensive reading group. The results indicated that the extensive reading group outperformed the intensive reading group and showed more improvement in both reading speed and reading comprehension.

However, this research study had a number of limitations. First and foremost, the study lacked reliable as well as valid measures as what Bell (2001) claimed in his own research study that “the validity and reliability of the instruments used to measure reading speed and comprehension need to be established by correlating them with standard tests of reading comprehension” (Bell 2001:10). Since both the pre- and posttests contained three different kinds of questions, namely, true/false, cloze-tests and multiple-choice tests which were weighted in an unspecified manner, this means that the significant increase from 47.25 to 80.97 reported in the mean scores of the extensive reading group may not be entirely reliable (Belgar et al. 2012).

In Bell’s study, reading speed as well as comprehension ability were measured separately using various reading texts at different times. It is questionable how well the participants comprehended the reading passages while they were taking the reading speed test since no comprehension questions were included in the reading speed test to check the participants’ understanding of the texts (Belgar et al. 2012, Suk 2015). Finally, since the number of books or pages read was not mentioned at all in the study (Suk 2015), it was unclear to what extent

extensive reading had a significant impact on the ER participants' reading comprehension.

In 2009, Al-Homoud and Schmitt reported on a study they conducted with 70 male EFL students (aged between 13 and 18) who had learned English as a foreign language in their high schools for six years in the 10-week pre-sessional intensive course of a university in Saudi Arabia. The aim was to find out if there were any differences between an extensive reading approach and a traditional intensive reading approach in terms of learners' improvement in reading comprehension ability, reading speed, vocabulary gain and changes in learners' attitudes towards reading. Apart from this, the study also sought to identify what degree of difficulty of graded readers works best in aiding learners to improve their reading comprehension, reading speed and vocabulary knowledge. The English proficiency of the participants in this study was rather weak and they were novices in the practice of extensive reading.

The research design was of the T1-treatment-T2 type, with the Vocabulary Levels Test, the TOEFL & PET (Preliminary English Test) reading comprehension tests, and the reading speed test given to both the intensive as well as extensive reading groups of participants before (T1) and after (T2) the treatment. The 23 learners in the control (intensive reading) group were given treatment during four 50-minute classes held each week. The treatment consisted of the reading instruction that was usual at the university in question. It involved the teacher explicitly teaching new words, testing students on these new words and drilling reading strategies (e.g. how to locate main ideas within paragraphs) as well as dictionary use strategies. The 47 learners in the treatment (extensive reading) group were given the same amount of class time, with the first 10-15 minutes of each session focusing on intensive reading skills, such as skimming, scanning and reviewing grammatical structures. In the next 20-25 minutes, students could read silently in their own chosen graded readers and in the last 10-15 minutes, vocabulary learning strategies, such as guessing the word meaning from the context and some dictionary skills, were taught.

The results indicated that "the extensive reading approach was at least as effective in improving reading comprehension as the intensive reading approach" (Al-Homoud & Schmitt 2009:393). The participants in both control and treatment groups had no significant differences in reading comprehension gains in either the TOEFL or PET measures.

Regarding the reading speed, participants in both groups revealed considerable improvement, with the extensive group showing a more significant improvement than the intensive group. Apart from this, the study revealed that “an extensive reading approach using graded readers is effective in improving language proficiency but the level of reader is not critical” (Al-Homoud & Schmitt 2009:397). In other words, reading at a comfortable lower level (with more of the vocabulary already known) or reading at a more difficult higher level (with more unknown vocabulary) did not have much effect on reading speed or vocabulary gains.

In addition, the results revealed that participants in the extensive group had more positive attitudes towards their learning experience (such as reading fluency, reading comprehension and vocabulary) than those who participated in the intensive reading group. Overall, the study highlighted that “the relatively stress-free and highly popular extensive reading approach was as good as or better than the more formal and pressured traditional reading approach” (Al-Homoud & Schmitt 2009:399).

Despite the positive effect of extensive reading on reading rate and comprehension, the study had some limitations. First, some reading comprehension questions should have been asked after the reading rate measures to validate if the students actually comprehended the texts while reading at their normal speed. Other than this, the researchers did not report anything relating to the actual amount of reading done by the learners in the ER group; instead they solely provided an estimate (Suk 2015). Hence the extent to which the students actually read during the ER treatment was unclear.

Beglar et al. (2012) reported on their investigation of how extensive or pleasure reading affected the reading rates of 97 Japanese university students over a period of two semesters, i.e. 28 weeks. Participants were divided into four groups: one intensive reading (IR) group and three extensive or pleasure reading (ER) groups. The students in the IR group needed to read a collection of fairy tales in and after class. ER group 1 not only had to read intensively some fairy tales in class, but was also required to read selected graded readers or unsimplified books on their own after the lessons. ER groups two and three read six graded readers chosen by the teacher plus self-selected graded readers or simplified books in class. Besides, they were required to read self-selected graded readers or unsimplified books after class. Pleasure (ER) group 3 read more simplified

texts than ER groups 1 and 2 with ER group 1 doing the least amount of reading.

To calculate the amount of reading done by the participants, Belgar et al. (2012:673) used “standard words (Carver 1982, 1990) in which every six character spaces were counted as one ‘word.’” Four reading passages containing eight multiple-choice comprehension questions were set as a pretest and a posttest. The participants in the IR group read about 40,000 standard words, whereas the participants in the three ER groups read 136,029, 158,993 and 200,170 standard words respectively. The results of this research study indicated that the ER groups achieved more gains in reading rates than the IR group did. The ER groups had faster reading rates while maintaining their reading comprehension simultaneously. Moreover, the results revealed that participants who read simplified texts, such as graded readers, had achieved faster reading rates than those who read unsimplified texts. Aside from this, the ER groups were able to engage in reading extensively more varieties of books after class, resulting in much more reading input than the IR group (who merely read a collection of fairy tales in and after class) had, thereby obtaining faster reading rates.

However, there was one limitation in this study. Even though the researchers and instructors attempted to make participants accountable for their reading by requesting them to submit written reports after reading, doubt was still cast on how those written book reports were examined or checked for accuracy since neither the instructors nor researchers would have known much about the varied contents or main ideas of each book available (Suk 2015).

In another study, Modirkhamene and Gowrki (2011) examined if reading graded readers extensively could help Iranian EFL learners improve their reading fluency and lexical knowledge and also if gender could moderate the effect of ER. In this study, 24 female and 37 male intermediate EFL learners, aged 16-18, were randomly divided into experimental and control groups. Their L1 was Kurdish, their L2 was Farsi and they had been learning EFL for 5 years already in secondary school for 75 minutes per week. From a total of 61 participants, 46 students took part in an extensive reading (ER) programme and the other 15 students attended an intensive reading (IR) programme. Following a quasi-experimental design which involved a pretest, treatment and posttest, Modirkhamene and Gowrki (2011) conducted 2 pretests - Vocabulary Levels Test and Reading Entire Text method - to measure the learners’ vocabulary knowledge as

well as reading speed before participating in the ER programme.

The 46 students in the extensive reading groups engaged in two 1-hour classes per week which lasted for 12 weeks with a 1-week break in the middle part of the course. They had the same amount of class time as that of the intensive reading group. However, aside from reading extensively with no examinations given, this group also had to do some intensive reading exercises and some follow-up interactive activities, such as discussing the meanings of certain words as well as the writer's viewpoint.

Apart from the intensive reading instruction, the students in the extensive reading group were also given 180 graded readers in diverse genres to choose for their reading during the treatment. For the intensive group, the participants were asked to read texts from Select Reading (Lee & Gundersen 2002 in Modirkhamene & Gowrki 2011) as well as Interchange 1 (Richards 2005 in Modirkhamene & Gowrki 2011) and then work on some comprehension questions after reading in order to practise reading skills such as skimming, scanning and inferencing. They were taught by the researcher's colleague who gave explicit instruction on new words, tested students on previously-learnt words and drilled them in reading and dictionary use strategies.

The results of a set of two-way ANOVA indicated that (a) the females outperformed the males in reading and vocabulary tests; (b) the reading fluency of the EFL learners improved more with the use of the extensive reading approach than the employment of the more focused intensive reading approach, possibly due to the effect of automatic word recognition process gained whilst reading extensively by the students; and (c) extensive reading activities did not help to significantly improve the learners' vocabulary knowledge, which can be attributed to the fact that the nature of vocabulary learning in ER is gradual and incremental (Waring & Nation 2004). In other words, the students may have experienced some growth in their vocabulary power but the gains may not have been considerable.

Modirkhamene & Gowrki (2011) also adopted the Vocabulary Level Test, which is a general/standardized vocabulary test attempting to measure participants' vocabulary knowledge after the extensive reading activities. However, this may not seem to be an appropriate option because even though the participants may have acquired some words during extensive reading, these

words might not appear or be tested in the Vocabulary Level Test. Hence, vocabulary gains that could have taken place might have remained undetected.

With a view to exploring the effects of extensive reading on the development of general reading ability and lower-level linguistic ability and to compare which of these two abilities appear more quickly when a lot of extensive reading is done, Yamashita (2008) carried out a study. The participants were 38 Japanese first-year university students (majoring in agricultural studies) who participated in her EFL reading class that was their only English class. The extensive reading programme for this study was a 90-minute weekly course which lasted for about 15 weeks. The participants had a collection of about 500 English graded readers of varied levels to choose from and they were required to write a short report in their native language, Japanese, after reading.

This study used the Placement/Progress Tests (PPT) and the Extensive Reading Tests (ERT) developed in the Edinburgh Extensive Reading Project as pretests (PPT in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, ERT in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week) and posttests (PPT in the 13<sup>th</sup> week, ERT in the 14<sup>th</sup> week). The aim was to identify whether there were any improvements in the participants' learning after 11 weeks. The final 15<sup>th</sup> week was devoted to the summary of the extensive reading intervention and the post-class questionnaire.

The Placement/Progress Tests (PPT) are mainly cloze tests which were employed in order to measure various kinds of language-related knowledge as well as abilities including syntactic or grammatical knowledge and also both lower as well as higher levels of abilities in reading comprehension. The scoring criteria of the tests put much emphasis on micro-level linguistic competence like vocabulary and morphosyntax.

On the other hand, the Extensive Reading Tests (ERT) were utilized in order to measure the participants' general reading ability and score. In general, the results gave an indication of their reading speed and comprehension accuracy. Repeated measures t-tests were employed to examine the learners' differences between the pretest and posttest. Overall, improvements from pretests to posttests in both the PPT and ERT were found to be significant. The ERT broadly measures the participants' reading ability, while PPT mainly focuses on the learners' lower-level linguistic ability. The results further implied that "the effects of extensive reading might be

manifested more quickly in general reading skills than in L2 linguistic ability" (Yamashita 2008:661)

According to Yamashita (2008), the reason why their L2 reading ability exhibited greater improvement than their L2 linguistic ability may be that these participants were already skilled readers in L1 but lacked opportunities to use their L1 reading strategies (like predicting, inferencing and integrating information) in their L2 reading, which took the form of traditional intensive reading classes requiring them to read difficult materials rather slowly. Hence when they were given opportunities to activate or apply their effective strategies in L2 reading by reading extensively a lot of texts which interested them and were within their L2 linguistic ability, they were able to apply these strategies to their L2 reading rather quickly. Aside from that, for L1 reading strategies to be transferred to L2 reading, it is necessary for learners to have attained a certain threshold level of basic proficiency in the L2 (Davis & Bistodeau 1993). In addition, the more they were exposed to L2 reading, the more efficient (in terms of speed and consistency) and automatic (in terms of lower-level processing skills like word recognition) they became in processing the written language in their L2 reading.

On the other hand, their L2 linguistic ability was found to have developed more slowly than their reading ability, probably because even though the learners were exposed to a good amount of L2 input through extensive reading, relevant L2 linguistic features may not have appeared frequently enough to become noticeable for L2 learners in this input via ER. As a result, some explicit instruction, which helps to draw learners' attention to specific linguistic features, may be necessary to achieve greater linguistic ability (Schmidt 2001 in Yamashita 2008). Apart from that, L2 learners may attempt to transfer some processing strategies to written linguistic stimuli shaped by their L1, yet this was often found to be not appropriate for processing strategies in L2 (Ellis 2006 in Yamashita 2008).

Similar to the limitations reported in some studies mentioned above, Yamashita (2008) did not include a control group and, therefore, doubt is cast on whether the differences of the participants' scores between pre- and posttests were the impact of the extensive reading treatment. Other than this, the sample size of 38 participants in the study was relatively small.

## 2.4 Extensive Reading and the Gains in Vocabulary

Vocabulary, i.e. lexical or word knowledge, plays a pivotal role in the process of reading comprehension since vocabulary is essential in building local as well as global contexts during the reading process. According to Laufer (1997:21), “the threshold for reading comprehension is, to a large extent, lexical”. Hu & Nation (2000) even claim that for comprehension to take place, 98% of the words in a text must be understood. This implies that the greater a learner’s vocabulary knowledge, the greater his or her reading comprehension performance is likely to be. With enough lexical knowledge, efficient word decoding as well as recognition skills, L2 learners can then devote more attentional resources to other necessary comprehension processes, such as syntactic parsing and constructing as well as integrating ideas from the context, thereby facilitating better comprehension of meaning.

In 2005, Horst discussed a study which he initiated concerning the vocabulary growth of 21 adult immigrant students (whose English proficiency varied from beginning to high intermediate) in an ESL setting in Canada. The learners participated in an extensive reading programme in which they read graded readers in and out of class for six weeks (an hour per week in class). The aim was to examine students’ growth in vocabulary attributable to the graded readers which they read. The mean number of graded readers which every participant checked out during the six weeks was 10.52 books. Horst employed three procedures, using an electronic scan of the first 20 pages of the 12 graded readers for the pretest and the first 20 pages of the other 37 graded readers for the posttest. He employed lexical frequency profiling<sup>5</sup> and created a vocabulary checklist test of 100 items (50 words were extracted from a 1001-2000 word-list and 50 were off-list or less frequent words) which were used for the pretest and posttest with three rating choices ‘*know, not sure, do not know*’. Different individualised posttests were developed based on four of the graded readers which every participant had selected to read and then administered to 17 participants only. The results of the pretest and posttest involved measuring the 1001-2000 frequency band words as well as off-list words. The results showed that learners’ knowledge of the high frequency words improved by 76% and of the lower frequency words by 62%. The participants had a significant mean increase of 17 words.

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<sup>5</sup> The Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP) “shows the percentage of words a learner uses at different vocabulary frequency levels in her writing—or, put differently, the relative proportion of words from different frequency levels” (Laufer & Nation 1995:311).

Although Horst's findings appeared to confirm that the participants did have some gains in lexical learning, this growth in vocabulary might not be wholly attributable to the effects of extensive reading since there was no control group in the study and there was also the possibility that the participants might have learned the target words via other easily-accessible sources in Canada. Moreover, the pretest and posttest did not have the same content and the amount of reading done by the participants was not mentioned in the study. Furthermore, as Horst (2005) reports, only some portions of the texts were analysed, which made it difficult to provide a very precise indication of the actual amount of the vocabulary learnt by the participants. There was also a lack of validity by employing students' self-reported checklist ratings choices like '*know, not sure, do not know*' in the vocabulary test. And finally, doubts could be cast on the reliability of the test since every participant took a different individualized posttest (Suk 2015).

Pigada and Schmitt (2006) carried out an in-depth case study with a single learner who was learning French in order to investigate the effectiveness of extensive reading on the learning of some French words. The learner read four graded readers which consisted of 30,000 French words in total within a month. The study examined 70 nouns and 63 verbs (133 French words in total) from the graded readers which the learner had read, using identical pretest and posttest. The researchers investigated the effects of word frequency (in this case, how many times one of the target words appeared in the text) in relation to the acquisition of three types of vocabulary knowledge, i.e. spelling, grammatical knowledge and word meaning. The frequency of the 133 target words in all the graded readers ranged from 1 to over 20 occurrences.

The results of Pigada and Schmitt's (2006) study revealed that words with single exposure received the least gain in the knowledge of word meanings. Notably there were gains in knowledge of spelling even with a small number of exposures. Their study also found a noticeable increase in knowledge for words with over 10 occurrences. Other than that, there was also a 65% gain in lexical knowledge of the target words attributable to ER, yet much of the gain was not in word meaning but in spelling. Thus, such gains could not be easily compared to those from other vocabulary research studies, which placed the main focus on word meanings.

Moreover, there were some other methodological issues in this research study. First and foremost, as indicated by Pigada & Schmitt (2006) themselves, this study was quite limited in

scope since it was a case study of one single student with high motivation for learning French. In addition, the interval between the identical pretest and posttest was merely one month, which was considered to be rather short. Hence, similar to Iwahori's (2008) study, there was the possibility that rehearsal or practice effects might have been involved, raising doubts as to whether or not the participant would still be able to remember the content of the test.

## **2.5 Gaps in Previous Research**

As indicated above, many of the previous research studies regarding extensive reading suffer from various methodological issues or constraints concerning their design. These include: (1) the absence of a control group, (2) short intervals between the pretests and posttests, (3) lack of comprehension questions in reading rate tests, (4) no report of the amount of extensive reading done, (5) inadequate provision of information on the delivery of the ER activities and (6) the adoption of general vocabulary tests but not vocabulary tests derived from the ER materials in checking the amount of lexis learnt from ER. Such limitations lessen their ability to demonstrate a positive impact of extensive reading in the realms of reading comprehension, reading rate and vocabulary knowledge. Eventually, all these research gaps have led to concerns about the effectiveness of ER and also indicate that more well-controlled studies of vocabulary learning and extensive reading are still necessary.

## **2.6 Approaches to Vocabulary Learning**

Over the past two decades, numerous research studies have focused on the three main approaches to vocabulary learning, namely: (1) the incidental/ implicit learning approach; (2) the intentional learning approach; (3) a combination of the above two approaches.

### **2.6.1 Incidental or Implicit Learning Approach**

Incidental or implicit learning refers to (comprehension or lexical) knowledge acquisition through a process which occurs simply, naturally and unconsciously (Ellis 1994) or by engaging in (reading or vocabulary) learning activities “without learners’ awareness of an upcoming retention test or without learners’ deliberate decision to commit information to memory” (Laufer & Hulstijn 2001:11). According to Grabe (2009), implicit learning occurs, without learners being

aware of what is learned, from the continual as well as repetitive exposure to an enormous amount of input. Such input can result in automaticity as well as fluency in the reading processes and eventually contribute to the development of lower-level reading processes, which facilitates the learning of receptive vocabulary from the context incrementally in an unconscious manner. Above all, ER is considered a compelling example of a method promoting implicit learning as it provides L2 learners with the above-mentioned conditions through consistent reading practice.

Huckin and Coady (1999) highlight three advantages of adopting the incidental approach to vocabulary learning. In the first place, since nearly all the words will be encountered in a contextualized format, the L2 learner will be able to obtain more enriched information about the meaning as well as the use of the lexis. In addition, when learners are reading books during extensive reading to learn new vocabulary items, they typically have autonomy in choosing what books they would like to read and how and they can learn words they are interested in, at their own pace. Furthermore, employing an incidental approach to vocabulary learning can stimulate reading and the knowledge of word collocation can be enhanced.

As indicated in section 2.4, numerous previous studies (e.g. Horst 2005, Pigada & Schmitt 2006) adopted an incidental vocabulary approach in facilitating the participants to enrich their lexical knowledge. However, there were various methodological issues which led to some doubts being cast on the effectiveness or gains made via such an incidental vocabulary learning approach.

In the same vein, Waring and Nation (2004) have also queried the effectiveness of ER or implicit learning in learning vocabulary incidentally. They contend that ER fails to provide ample opportunities to learn new lexis efficiently within a limited amount of time. Instead, they argue that intentional vocabulary learning or explicit vocabulary instruction, with a strong emphasis on linguistic word forms, is comparatively more effective in vocabulary learning.

### **2.6.2 Intentional Learning Approach**

Grabe (2009:61) describes the intentional learning approach as reading with “conscious attention to, and awareness of, the specific skills or language knowledge that a reader is focusing on”. The way this works in concrete terms is that the reader practices “rehearsal (in working memory) to establish a first memory of the information which can then be registered in long-term memory

and reactivated for subsequent explicit processing. For example, learning word meanings by practising with flash cards” or teaching learners “about word parts and word roots in order to (help them) remember word meaning” or how to “use conscious strategies while trying to understand a difficult text” (Grabe 2009:61). Explicit instruction about word meaning is one of the many features of the intentional vocabulary learning approach which was adopted in the current study.

As indicated in section 2.3, Al-Homoud & Schmitt (2009) compared the results of intensive and extensive reading treatments given to EFL learners in Saudi Arabia and found that the two methods resulted in roughly equal gains in vocabulary knowledge. However, the review of that study and other studies indicated a critical concern relating to the tools adopted to measure lexical gains after the reading treatment.

Al-Homoud & Schmitt (2009) adopted the Vocabulary Levels Test but this ready-made standardised vocabulary test failed to measure and test each participant on their understanding of the words which s/he had actually encountered while reading (Suk 2015). Hence, there is doubt regarding the vocabulary gains actually achieved. In order to fill this research gap, the present study attempted to adopt a modified vocabulary knowledge scale test to measure the full or partial lexical growth after the participants had done their extensive reading.

### **2.6.3. A Combination of both Incidental and Intentional Learning Approaches**

Over the past few decades, there has been mounting evidence that a combination of intentional and incidental vocabulary learning appears to be most effective in enhancing the lexical knowledge of a learner, even though classroom resources as well as class time may be limited in many circumstances. According to Schmitt (2010:33), “Intentional learning is focused and effective, but limited in terms of the number of words (and word knowledge types) it can address. Incidental learning is slow and untargeted, but can fill in the ‘contextual’ types of word knowledge, and provide recycling for words already partially learned”. Hence, his conclusion is that use of both approaches is essential, with one approach compensating for the limitations of the other.

Zimmerman (1997) conducted a 10-week pilot study pertinent to the combined effects of lexical as well as reading instruction for 35 post-secondary L2 students of high-intermediate English

level in the U.S. They were divided into two groups, an experimental group and a control group. Both groups received 24-25 hours per week of skills-based English instruction with academic skills, composition, reading and oral language included. The difference between the instruction of the two groups was that the experimental group received interactive vocabulary instruction for three hours per week. The Michigan Placement Test was adopted and the participants' grammar as well as reading scores on this test were compared using ANOVA. The differences between the two groups were not significant.

Checklist pretests and checklist posttests were administered at the start and the end of the 10-week period in order to measure the levels of the lexical knowledge via a 50-item checklist. The results showed that interactive lexical instruction had a significant effect on word scores and that learners who completed some interactive vocabulary exercises after taking part in the ER activities outperformed those who merely read. Nevertheless, a limitation of the study, mentioned by the researcher himself, was that the sample size was small and any reported slight changes should be interpreted with caution (Zimmerman 1997). Apart from this, adopting self-report checklist ratings choices which required the participants to give a rating about their knowledge of the lexis tested appeared to have poor validity and may have also failed to assess their small or incremental vocabulary growth during the reading process.

## **2.7 Extensive Reading and Reading Strategies**

### **2.7.1 Definition of Reading and Reading Strategies**

Despite being frequently mentioned in various publications, the term “learning strategies or reading strategies” has been used in a multitude of ways by researchers over the years. Ellis & Sinclair (1989) suggest that such a lack of consensus may be attributed to the range of data elicitation techniques, diverse range of learner backgrounds as well as learning settings (like a classroom or a naturalistic context) employed in previous studies.

Schramm (2008:231) stated that “reading is the concept of meaning construction that characterizes reading not as a passive way of getting information, but as an active process of constructing understanding. The activation and use of topic-specific pre-knowledge as well as the psycholinguistic processing of text information both play an important role in meaning

construction. On the basis of the constructed meaning, readers also make intended inferences about information that is only implied in the text. Readers also integrate text information into their mental model in a bottom-up process". Thus, if some second language readers have limited or narrow linguistic pre-knowledge of the target language or the text, they may encounter difficulties while reading the text.

In his book, Grabe (2009:15) expresses a similar viewpoint to Schramm (2008). He draws attention to the interactive nature of reading, saying that "the text provides information that the author wants the reader to understand in certain ways", with comprehension occurring when:

the reader also brings a wide range of background knowledge to reading, and he or she actively constructs the meaning of the text by comprehending what the writer intends and by interpreting in terms of the background knowledge activated by the reader.

Grabe (2009:14) points out that "reading is a strategic process in that a number of the skills and processes used in reading call for effort on the part of the reader to anticipate text information, select key information, organise and mentally summarise information, monitor comprehension, repair comprehension breakdowns, and match comprehension output to reader goals".

On the other hand, according to Brown (1980:456), a reading strategy is regarded as "any deliberate, planful control of activities that gives birth to comprehension" whereas Olshavsky (1976-77:656) opines that reading strategies serve as a "purposeful means of comprehending the author's message".

In the current study, following Griffiths (2008), reading strategies are defined as purposeful or thoughtful actions which L2 readers take consciously or at least partially consciously while attempting to understand or comprehend what they read. In other words, while readers are in the reading process, they adopt various reading strategies to enable them to comprehend the text.

With regard to Block (1986), reading strategies are closely linked to readers' performance in reading comprehension. If readers expect to read a text with ease, appropriate or relevant strategies have to be implemented so as to achieve comprehension. The study of reading or comprehension strategies can help to "indicate how readers conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not

understand" (Block 1986:465).

For Johnston (1983), reading strategies also play a crucial role in the learner's reading process. He describes the connection between reading and strategies by stating that "reading comprehension is a complex behaviour which involves conscious and unconscious use of various strategies, including problem solving strategies, to build a model of the meaning which the writer is assumed to have intended" (Johnston 1983:17).

### **2.7.2 Classification of Reading Strategies**

As discussed in detail in section 2.7.1, Brown (1980), Johnston (1983) and Block (1986) all treat reading strategies as a precious tool in facilitating readers of varied levels to read efficiently and effectively, thereby enabling them to interact with the writer. However, over the past three decades, no consensus on the classification of reading strategies has been reached. Different researchers have established their own categories, which are best fit for the need or process of their specific research studies. It is useful to consider some of these.

In work by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), O'Malley et al. (1985) and Wenden (1986b), learning strategies are classified into the categories of metacognitive, cognitive and social-affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies are termed as "higher order executive skills that may entail planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning activity" (O'Malley & Chamot 1990:44). Such strategies develop awareness and knowledge in learners throughout the learning process, assist them in organizing and managing the overall learning process which can be utilised in a wide array of learning or reading tasks (O'Malley & Chamot 1990). On the other hand, cognitive strategies "operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning" (O'Malley & Chamot 1990:44). Cognitive strategies are considered to be task-specific and involve conscious ways of wrestling with learning. Similar to metacognitive strategies, social-affective strategies can be employed across a broad spectrum of tasks and include "either interaction with another person or ideational control over affect" (O'Malley & Chamot 1990:45).

A different approach to the classification of reading strategies was taken by Hosenfeld (1977), who identified 14 strategies from think-aloud protocols from 40 students as they read in a

foreign language. He classified these into two main categories: main meaning and word solving strategies. Main meaning strategies comprised of comprehensive strategies employed to understand the meaning of the texts like using grammar to get the meaning. Word solving strategies were adopted to decode unfamiliar words and included methods like using the context of the passage.

In 1986, Block reported on an investigation of the strategies adopted by six learners learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and three native English-speaking learners who were all labelled as poor readers studying at college. The first language of the six ESL students was either Spanish or Chinese. The method used was to ask the students to think aloud while reading an expository passage in a book about psychology. In a manner similar to Hosenfeld's (1977) classification of reading strategies, Block identified 15 strategies employed by the learners and sub-divided them into two levels: local strategies and general strategies. Local strategies are attempts made by learners to gain an understanding of the meaning of some specific linguistic items which involve rereading and questioning the meaning of a word. General strategies are more related to the comprehension-monitoring or comprehension-gathering, such as anticipating or predicting content and integrating information.

In a study comparing strategy use in L1 and L2 reading by native speakers of English and French, Davis and Bistodeau (1993) followed the analysis made by Block (1986) and grouped the strategies into two main categories: bottom-up or local strategies (those concerning individual word focus) and top-down or general strategies (those relating to self-questioning or making inferences) with a view to examining whether or not the participants employed a higher proportion of lower-level strategies while reading in their LI texts.

Contrary to Block (1986), Anderson (1991) conducted his research study utilizing concurrent as well as retrospective reporting with 28 Spanish-speaking participants from Central and South America while attending a university level intensive ESL programme. Anderson (1991) established his own scheme of categorising the strategies adopted by the participants. He proposed four categories: support strategies (e.g. skimming or scanning), strategies for establishing coherence in texts (e.g. using background knowledge or rereading), supervising strategies (e.g. stating success or failure in reading) and paraphrase strategies (e.g. paraphrasing

or translating a word into the L1).

In all the above-mentioned studies, different researchers adopted their own system of classifying the reading or learning strategies. In fact, further methods of classification would also be possible. In the current study, a combination of the strategy classification schemes in the aforementioned research studies was employed (see Appendix G) so as to provide a broader picture of what strategies proficient and non-proficient English learners use when they are trying to comprehend a reading text.

### **2.7.3 Research on Correlations between Learning Strategies and Language Proficiency**

Given the importance of the reading strategies employed by both strong and weak language learners, it is not surprising that plenty of research studies have been conducted on the correlation between learning strategies and language proficiency. A common finding is that reading strategies are closely related to L2 learners' proficiency. In other words, if learners are non-proficient in their L2, their strategy use will be confined to some lower-level skills. Moreover, stronger L2 learners appeared to have adopted a broader range of learning strategies in various situations than those weaker L2 learners did. However, some researchers (e.g. Vann & Abraham 1990) have argued in their studies that the difference between the stronger and weaker learners does not lie in the range of strategies adopted but in the way they manage these strategies.

In a study initiated by O'Malley et al. (1985), it was revealed that:

1. Intermediate learners tended to adopt more metacognitive strategies when compared with beginners.
2. Even unsuccessful language learners knew about and were able to employ as well as discuss strategies; however, they appeared to have utilised a smaller number of strategies and did so less frequently than those successful learners. What is more, they often adopted strategies which failed to assist them to complete the task or were not appropriate to the task.

Similar results were also obtained by Vann and Abraham (1987) from their case study consisting of one successful and one unsuccessful learner. Comparatively, the successful learner employed a significantly greater number and more varieties of strategies which could directly or indirectly facilitate the language learning than the unsuccessful or weak L2 learner did. Furthermore, when

comparing the approaches to their own learning, a few significant differences were noted. Not only was the successful learner found to be more focused on language form and correctness than the unsuccessful one, but also displayed different flexibility in using strategies while managing their respective area of the task.

In a subsequent study that focused on strategies utilised by unsuccessful learners, Vann and Abraham (1990) concluded that such language learners were also active strategy-users, yet the problem is their failure in adopting the strategies in an appropriate way. This phenomenon may indicate their lack of adequate knowledge concerning different types of strategies. Vann and Abraham's study (1990) revealed that aside from examining those strategies adopted by proficient language learners, strategies adopted by unsuccessful learners are of equal significance and more information should be obtained in future studies.

Anderson (1991) carried out a research study with Spanish-speaking learners to analyse differences in the reading strategies used by strong and weak learners of English. The study involved the selected Spanish-speaking participants completing a reading comprehension test plus reading academic texts of an ESL (English as a Second Language) programme. The results revealed that high achieving readers were able to apply strategies more appropriately as well as effectively, knowing the situation as well as time to apply suitable reading strategies in an assigned task.

Kletzien (1991) initiated a research study in order to explore the reading strategies employed by readers with various proficiency levels. Comprehension tests showed that the proficient readers were reported to have utilised "more strategies on the easiest passage but their strategy use was the same on the medium and difficult passage" as the non-proficient readers (Kletzien 1991:67). However, as the difficulty of the texts increased, proficient readers employed more varieties of strategies and adopted strategies more frequently than the weak readers.

In a study conducted by Dreyer and Oxford (1996), it was revealed that there was a very high correlation between strategy use and language proficiency among Afrikaans learners. The highly proficient participants tended to employ significantly more cognitive strategies for mental processing of information, more compensation strategies for compensating for missing

knowledge, and also more metacognitive strategies for organising as well as assessing learning than those language learners of lower proficiency did where the non-proficient participants tended to adopt more social strategies.

Other than those research studies from the West, Park (1997) initiated a study in South Korea with 332 EFL local university students and discovered a significant correlation between learning strategies and language proficiency. Varying from Dreyer and Oxford's (1996) findings, Park's study (1997) indicated that learners of higher proficiency favoured cognitive and social strategies.

To gain a better understanding of local learning context, Hepburn (1992) carried out a study to identify the strategies or techniques adopted by Hong Kong senior secondary students who were learning English as an L2. The correlation between language competence and strategies, were also considered and analysed. The findings indicated that students of high English competence had more consistent strategy use in searching for meaning than those with low competence. This is similar to what Bremner (1999) reports on in a study among a group of undergraduates in Hong Kong. What was discovered was that learners of high proficiency inclined to use cognitive strategies more whereas less proficient learners adopted more affective strategies.

Peacock and Ho (2003) reported on their use of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)<sup>6</sup> based on semi-structured interviews in a study with 1,000 local L2 learners in Hong Kong. They discovered that the more proficient the learners were, the more cognitive and metacognitive strategies were adopted by them.

The review above points to the conclusion that highly proficient learners employ more metacognitive and cognitive strategies in a more structured and purposeful way. This helps them to create mental linkages, to retrieve information as well as to analyse and reason, which contributes to better learning and performance. Less proficient learners tend to adopt more social, affective and compensation strategies to boost their confidence during the learning process.

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<sup>6</sup> Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is a self-report questionnaire created by Oxford (1990) with a substantial list of language learning strategies included. It has been widely used in the language learning strategy field to measure learners' self-reported strategy use in both second and foreign language settings (Griffiths 2008).

## 2.7.4 Studies on the Strategies Employed by Successful Learners in Enhancing their Reading Ability

While there is a great deal of recent research on the correlation between language proficiency and learning strategies, Rubin (1975) already focused on examining the strategies of successful or proficient learners since the 1970s. Her assumption was that, once identified, such strategies could also be applied to non-proficient or weak learners. Seen in this light, other researchers also started investigating what kinds of strategies proficient and non-proficient learners of English would adopt in enhancing their reading ability.

Hosenfeld (1977), briefly mentioned in section 2.7.2, initiated a study with 40 foreign students adopting think-aloud protocols to identify the relationship between reading strategies and reading success. In her study, the participants were asked to think aloud while reading in the foreign language. Half of the students were labelled as successful learners and the other half were not so successful in their L2 learning. In her findings, successful learners were found to have focused on meaning, to have read in broad phrases, skipping inconsequential or less important words, and to have a positive self-concept as a reader. By contrast, unsuccessful learners usually lost track of the meaning of the text when they were decoding and had a more negative self-image as a reader.

During the reading process, many readers will inevitably come across unfamiliar or unknown words. Hosenfeld (1984) also used the think-aloud protocol in order to identify word-guessing strategies employed by L2 young readers. She found that successful readers usually memorise the main idea of the text so as to infer the meaning of unfamiliar or unknown words. When they encounter unfamiliar words, they try to identify the parts of speech of unfamiliar words, guess their meanings from others in the sentences or from background knowledge.

To explore how successful language learners build up their reading skills in a language other than their first, Schramm (2001 in Schramm 2008) conducted a study via think-aloud protocols with German undergraduates who were asked to think aloud while reading a psychology textbook in English. Schramm (2001 in Schramm 2008) found that successful readers do not have too many worries about comprehension problems which do not endanger their pursuit of the reading goal. By contrast, less successful readers “tend to worry about comprehension problems that are not relevant to the pursuit of the reading goal, and/or they tend to ignore, or find easy pseudo-

solutions to comprehension problems that put them at risk of not achieving their reading goal” (Schramm 2001 in Schramm 2008:237).

Schramm’s (2008:238) overall finding was that “good readers are able to develop clear goals for their reading, and they are able to reconstruct the author’s goal and action steps from the text and to relate information from the text to their own goals. Also, good readers are able to monitor their own comprehension, evaluate problems, and take appropriate action”.

All in all, the majority of the aforementioned studies indicate that while high and low proficiency learners may display contrasting or different strategies in learning their L2, a more significant difference between them lies not in the range of strategies they use, but in their management of these strategies and whether the strategies are employed efficiently and appropriately. In the later chapters, the results of the think-aloud protocols pertinent to reading strategies adopted in the current study will be employed to devise a strategy training, thereby aiding the weak L2 learners in developing better reading proficiency.

## **2.8 Extensive Reading and L2 Motivation**

As pointed out in Chapter 1, good reading skills are of pivotal significance in developing as well as enhancing language proficiency in an L2. The majority of the weak L2 readers involved in the current study were also found to have low or no motivation in reading English. This is a major problem in L2 language acquisition but, surprisingly, there appears to have been very little published which places a specific emphasis on methods in enhancing the reading motivation of the L2 learners, in particular, those with low levels of English proficiency. In view of this, the present study was a three-month extensive reading intervention study which was carried out in Hong Kong with the aim of motivating weak L2 readers to read more English books. It was hoped that the intervention programme would stimulate weak L2 learners to take more initiative in reading English and eventually develop good reading habits.

Looking back at the literature, there were several previous studies (Al-Homoud & Schmitt 2009; Mason & Krashen 1997; Robb & Susser 1989; Ro 2013,; Suk 2015; Takase 2007; Yamashita 2013) which found that participants who have taken part in an extensive reading programme

tended to have better attitudes towards L2 reading and/or be more motivated in developing the habit of reading more independently or extensively. However, this raises a question: If weak L2 readers have never been motivated to pick up an easy book to expand their reading repertoire and sustain their interest in reading thereafter, how could they benefit from reading extensively? In light of this issue, it is of paramount importance to sort out the means of igniting the motivation of unmotivated and struggling readers so that they will take action and embark on their reading journey.

Since motivation is a relatively complex issue and it appears to be an impossible task for the researcher to cover everything, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) suggested that researchers should selectively picking the area(s) which they are most interested in. Hence the aim of this section is not to provide a broad theoretical overview of second or foreign learning motivation but a summary of selected ideas pertinent to the construct of L2 reading motivation in the present study. Special attention will be paid to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1985) with its concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (which also informed the construct of the reading motivation questionnaire used in the current study), the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura 1993) as well as the motivational framework of Dörnyei (2003) (which also inspired the design of the motivational framework for this study).

Also relevant for the present study was Day and Bamford's (1998) model of L2 reading motivation (which informed the design of both the reading motivation questionnaire and the motivational framework of the current study), created within the framework of expectancy-value theory (Eccles et al. 1983, Eccles and Wigfield 1995). Based on their model of L2 reading motivation, Day and Bamford (1998, 2002) proposed guidelines for the ER approach which proved very effective in developing reading fluency.

### **2.8.1 Definition of Reading Motivation**

Numerous researchers (e.g. Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011) have emphasised that motivation should never be neglected in any study aiming to gain a better understanding of how second language reading works.

According to Ryan and Deci (2000:54) "to be motivated means to be moved to do something".

Reading motivation within the framework of cognitive psychology is defined as one of the salient factors which has an impact on learning motivation as well as reading efficiency. It is also multidimensional in nature with certain goals and beliefs, which can affect an individual's reading behaviour (Baker & Wigfield 1999; Guthrie & Wigfield 1997).

### **2.8.2 Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation**

A useful theoretical framework for researching the dimensions of reading motivation is provided by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1985) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura 1995).

According to the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1985), the chief reason or rationale for learners to read is intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivation.

To develop learners' intrinsic motivation in reading, it is important that they first get involved in reading about issues or topics which interest them, since this is a crucial factor which fosters intrinsic motivation. When learners engage themselves in reading a text and experience satisfaction from the encounter with it, they can have something similar to a so-called flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1990), in which learners are totally involved in the reading activity and often lose track of the time and even the surroundings. When readers experience such a flow, they are actually enjoying the reading experience and they will come to regard reading itself as a kind of reward (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

In addition, Deci and Ryan (1987) describe three central intrinsic needs which are included in self-determination theory, namely the need for autonomy, the need for competence and the need for psychological relatedness. Simply speaking, if learners are provided the opportunity to make autonomous choices, this will motivate them intrinsically. In the same vein, if learners feel competent when they engage themselves in a challenging activity, they will have more intrinsic motivation. Finally, if learners develop a sense of belonging which is obtained from social relationships with trust and care in a learning environment, it can also enhance intrinsic motivation.

Seen in this light, if a teacher can fulfil learners' need for autonomy and take their interests into consideration by allowing them to choose their own books or reading materials autonomously and decide their approach to reading, this will result in intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan 1987).

All these facets of intrinsic motivation are correlated to mastery goals such as learners improving their reading skills or placing more focus on their own progress (Ames 1992). Intrinsic motivation is, indeed, an essential element of reading motivation in the sense that it can increase learners' reading engagement and pave the way for voluntary as well as lifelong reading (Wigfield & Guthrie 1997).

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is derived from external or social sources, which often leads to less cognitive engagement and less use of complex learning strategies (Ryan & Deci 2000). Learners who are extrinsically motivated can become engaged readers when the reading tasks can bring them tangible and/or intangible rewards such as prizes, good grades, recognition, public acknowledgement, or help them outperform others. For beginning or struggling or reluctant readers, external recognition or a reward might act as a significant encouragement because when these weak learners begin to learn how to read, they usually have low intrinsic motivation. Yet with the aid of extrinsic motivation, these reluctant readers may make more attempts to overcome their reading problems and begin to enjoy the reading tasks and gradually develop more intrinsic motivation in reading in the future.

### **2.8.3 Day and Bamford's Model of L2 Reading Motivation**

Using expectancy-value theory, Day & Bamford (1998) created their own model of L2 reading motivation so as to cater for the multifarious nature of reading motivation in L2. Day & Bamford's expectancy-value model (1998:28-30) "consists of four major components: *materials, reading ability in L2, attitudes towards reading in L2, and sociocultural environment, including the influences of family and friends*. Materials and reading ability are related to the expectancy component of successful L2 reading, while attitudes and sociocultural environment are related to the value component".

As Day & Bamford (1998, 2002) point out, in order to motivate L2 readers, the reading materials have to be readily accessible, interesting and well within the learners' linguistic competence. There should be a variety of reading materials on different topics and genres available so that readers can always have the autonomy to freely choose a flexible approach to reading so as to read for different reasons in various ways. With all the above criteria in mind, Day & Bamford (1998) proposed extensive reading which highlights the vital role which reading materials play in

reading motivation and the significance of learner autonomy.

According to Day and Bamford (1998), L2 reading ability is connected with the individual's sense of self-efficacy and beliefs about their reading ability. Learners who have low reading ability usually have lower expectations of success, which results in lower reading motivation. In an extensive reading approach, they can choose to read materials which are within their reading comfort zone and will likely develop increased motivation to read.

The value component of L2 reading motivation consists of attitudes toward L2 reading and the sociocultural environment. Drawing on a model of first language reading attitudes, Day & Bamford (1998) contend that four sources of attitude, namely L1 reading attitudes, previous L2 reading attitudes, attitudes toward L2 and the L2 classroom environment are crucial in shaping L2 reading attitudes. Day and Bamford (1998) suggest that motivation to read in L2 is greatly influenced by extensive reading materials and attitudes towards reading (which can compensate for low reading ability and/or unsupportive sociocultural environment) and less by the other two dimensions mentioned above.

Regarding L1 reading attitudes, Day and Bamford (1998) suggest that attitudes to L1 reading, whether positive or negative, can transfer to L2 reading. Nevertheless, researchers of reading motivation report that the transfer of reading attitudes is not as simple as that. Takase (2007), who studied EFL reading motivation of Japanese high-school students that read graded readers in an ER programme, discovered that intrinsic motivation for both L1 and L2 reading had the strongest positive relationship with the reading amount in the L2. Nevertheless, some motivated L1 readers were not motivated to read in the L2, as they felt L2 reading involved a struggle, as opposed to the enjoyment of reading effortlessly in their L1.

#### **2.8.4 Extensive Reading and Reading Motivation Research in L2**

Over the past two decades, a plethora of studies have indicated that numerous learners develop positive attitudes toward reading extensively and become more independent readers after participating in extensive reading activities in L2 (Al-Homoud & Schmitt 2009; Arnold 2009; Elley 1991; Judge 2011; Mason & Krashen 1997; Ro & Chen 2014; Robb & Susser 1989; Takase 2007; Yamashita 2013).

Judge (2011) presents results from an investigation of the motivation levels of nine Japanese private high school enthusiastic readers after reading extensively for two and a half years by initiating case studies with them. The learners read graded readers, English books for L1 youngsters, and Japanese stories written in English. To collect the necessary data, Judge (2011) conducted interviews in English with the learners, administered a written questionnaire, and collected documentary evidence like reading records and book summaries written by the learners.

Overall, it was reported that the learners enjoyed having autonomy over the books they could choose to read and some of the learners even had ‘flow’ experiences (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) while reading extensively. The nine learners also demonstrated a mix of motivations which tended to change over time during the ER programme. Yet, the study failed to provide ample information pertinent to the actual ER treatment, such as how the ER programme was delivered in relation to motivating learners for reading extensively. In addition, the total number of words the learners had actually read to show the effectiveness of the ER programme was not stated (Suk 2015).

Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009) explored the effectiveness of ER on learners’ attitudes toward L2 reading with 70 students learning English (EFL) in the 10-week pre-sessional intensive course of a university in Saudi Arabia. They administered a 50-item questionnaire, using a 6-point Likert scale, at the end of the course. The findings revealed that the participants in the extensive reading group had more positive attitudes towards reading plus learning experiences than the intensive reading group. However, the study, again, failed to report the total number of words the participants of the extensive reading group had read to indicate the effectiveness of the ER treatment (Suk 2015).

### **2.8.5 L2 Motivational Framework of the Current Study**

Over the past three decades, there have been, in fact, a considerable number of research studies which have focused on the different ways of enhancing the social motivation of learners in learning a second or foreign language. Seen in this light, the current research study adopted an L2 motivational framework provided by Dörnyei (2003) in designing a scaffolded ER programme so as to boost the motivational levels of the local weak readers in reading more in their L2. Altogether, there are four motivational guidelines devised by Dörnyei (2003) in order to

support L2 motivation in the motivational framework: (1) creating the basic motivational conditions; (2) generating initial motivation; (3) maintaining and protecting motivation; and (4) encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation.

The first guideline proposed by Dörnyei (2003) is creating the basic motivational conditions, such as providing a supportive as well as pleasant reading environment, and adding varieties into the ER programme. In the current study, the researcher first conducted semi-structured interviews with some of the participants before the start of the ER programme so as to ensure that the books purchased could largely match with their preference or interests. Aside from this, all the ER activities were scheduled to be held in very spacious and brightly-lit rooms, such as the Annexe library and the activity room, furnished with nice and comfortable seating. To motivate the participants to read more L2 books and help them locate those amusing books with ease, all the books were coded with colourful labels indicating the reading difficulty level. Then they were categorised according to the level of difficulty as well as genres and placed on different tables with various sorts of interesting and appealing book covers attracting the potential readers. Moreover, to add varieties into the ER programme, different genres of books and also board games were introduced at Week 0, 8 and 13 to make participants feel that reading is fun.

The second guideline suggested by Dörnyei (2003) is generating initial motivation, which mainly includes introducing motivational practice first, followed by fostering mastery goals for ER so that they could have a stronger drive to continue with their reading in the case of the present study. To adhere to this guideline closely, all the participants in this current study were allowed to freely select the books they enjoyed reading and then read at their own pace. Such support of autonomy is indeed a kind of motivation. Apart from these, participants were requested to share the stories with the researcher whenever they finished reading a book. In this way, participants could be provided with opportunities to obtain some immediate feedback and delve deeply into texts or connect the texts to personal experiences while making an oral report to the researcher. To further assist the participants in developing mastery of understanding, the researcher not only introduced some basic or high-frequency vocabulary items to enrich their banks of sight words but also modelled the appropriate reading strategies to the weak learners in the scaffolded ER activities and big book sharing sessions, thereby enhancing reading fluency and facilitating more in-depth comprehension. Eventually, the participants could be motivated and gradually attributed

success in the L2 reading processes to effort as well as practice.

The third motivational guideline mentioned by Dörnyei (2003) is maintaining as well as protecting motivation in the L2 learner, which largely consists of securing motivated minds in the supportive reading environment. In the case of the current study, fun gadgets (such as a candy machine) plus the extrinsic rewards were gladly received by the participants after they had shared the stories they had read verbally with the researcher. These were all employed to keep the motivation flame burning.

The fourth motivational guideline proposed by Dörnyei (2003) is encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation among L2 learners, which primarily entails reinforcing motivational attributes as well as giving motivational or concrete feedback to the learners. Within the arena of extensive reading, the motivational process of self-efficacy for reading is of paramount significance when a learner has to make positive retrospective evaluation of his/her reading performance.

In a broad sense, self-efficacy can be defined as an individual's own belief about his/ her capacities to learn behaviours or to perform at designated or particular levels (Bandura 1977, 1982). Self-efficacy is widely considered to be a process of motivating oneself. Seen in this light, if a learner's self-efficacy in L2 learning is well supported by the various sorts of positive feedback received, it places responsibility on the individual as s/he will increasingly be able to develop more self-confidence in attaining more competent levels in the acquisition of various language skills like reading and writing. Moreover, the development of self-efficacy is gradual as well as incremental. Thus, to form efficacy beliefs and perceptions, an individual has to obtain information from various sources such as the verbal feedback obtained from others, the observation of how peers, seniors and role models perform in an activity or a task, and also emotional states (eg. stress or anxiety) which can help that individual to predict future failure or success (Bandura 1997).

Hence, to facilitate learners in enhancing self-efficacy based on their previous reading performance, they should be provided with assistance in breaking up the task into more manageable steps of smaller goals because if the goal is a general one, such as reading

extensively for a rather long period of time or giving an oral presentation of the books which have been read, participants will tend to lose their stamina or confidence easily. In contrast, if the goal is smaller, more achievable and short-term to start with, such as having extensive reading for 15 minutes per day or sharing with a classmate or a teacher one or two favourite idea(s) of the book being read, then learners will feel that such kind of goal is more realistic or attainable to begin with. Once they have achieved the set target, they would be able to develop more confidence in their own abilities, thereby raising their self-efficacy which could somehow motivate them to strive for better reading performance in the future (Bandura 1997).

In the case of the current study, the researcher made an attempt to provide various kinds of motivational feedback to the struggling readers so as to support their self-efficacy while and after reading extensively in their L2 (Bandura 1977, 1982). For instance, the researcher assigned relatively simple tasks or activities (such as finishing reading a very easy book in two days, sharing one of your most favourite ideas of the book read or five useful and new lexical items you have learnt in the book) or set up small reading goals with the participants. Once they had achieved those smaller targets, their own self-efficacy was raised for that particular reading goal. Following that, the researcher gave them some concrete or positive feedback or extrinsic rewards and assisted them in setting up bigger reading goals in order to motivate them to have even better performance in the near future.

## 2.9 Research Questions

In order to achieve the goals of the current study, it sought to answer the research questions indicated below:

1. Whether or to what extent can the implementation of a new scaffolded extensive reading programme improve the reading comprehension ability of weak learners in a second or foreign language learning context?
2. Which approach(es), the incidental or the intentional or a combination of both, is/are more effective in aiding weak L2 learners to enrich their vocabulary banks?
3. What comprises the reading motivation of L2 junior secondary students of low English proficiency in Hong Kong?

In connection with research question 1, it was hypothesised that there would be an improvement in the reading comprehension ability of the weak learners in the second or foreign learning context after joining the new scaffolded extensive reading programme.

Research question 2 led to the hypothesis that a combination of both the incidental and intentional approaches is the most effective in aiding the weak L2 learners to enrich their vocabulary banks.

For research question 3, it was hypothesised that extrinsic motivation should be the dominant component in motivating those weak L2 learners who have low motivation to read L2 books.

## **Chapter 3 – Methodology**

This chapter gives background information about the control, comparison and experimental groups of the current study and the development and contents of the testing instrument for collecting the data of the 12-week extensive reading (ER) intervention.

As the adoption of introspective methods and semi-structured interviews in previous studies as well as their particular designs have direct relevance to and have informed the methodology of the present study, the second part of this chapter reviews some of the important previous literature and discusses the introspective research methodology in general. The third part of this chapter introduces the scaffolded extensive reading programme (SER) which was designed to help the weak L2 readers of the current study to read better. The last part describes the questionnaire employed to delve deeply into the factors of motivating the weak L2 participants to read more.

### **3.1 Study Setting**

The research study involved 70 Form Two (Grade 8) students, aged 13-15, from a co-educational low-banding school in Hong Kong. These 70 students were divided into the comparison and experimental groups according to their self-discipline and own preferences of joining either one of the groups. There were also 20 students in a control group; see below. The native language of almost all the participants was Cantonese - except two of them who were immigrants from Mainland China, spoke Mandarin as their mother tongue. The vast majority of them had learned English as a Second Language (ESL/L2) for about seven years but their English proficiency, especially when it comes to reading, was poor as English was seldom used at school - only in the English lessons, while for the other subjects, like History and Science, Cantonese was employed as the medium of instruction in the whole school.

At school there was one compulsory English morning extensive reading session for about 15 minutes once every two weeks for all the students in junior-form (F.1-F.3/ Grade 7-9). The students were advised to bring or borrow from the library any of their favourite English story books or magazines or newspapers to read during that English morning reading session. Yet the English reading atmosphere in the school was not conducive to reading at all. This was observed by the researcher, who went round five of these English extensive reading morning sessions in

the junior forms for each morning session from 3 January to 31 March 2016. Only a few students took out an English story book or newspaper or magazine to read. Instead, many students opted to do their unfinished homework surreptitiously or simply read their English textbook for doing their revision on a forthcoming dictation or quiz, keeping a story book or newspaper as a cover on top.

### **3.2 The Research Participants**

#### **3.2.1 Background Information on the Control Group**

Before the students first started studying in this school, i.e. since Form One (Grade Seven), they had been streamed into A, B, C or D class according to their results in the English entrance placement test set by the Education Bureau. The first 35 students who obtained the highest scores in that placement test were supposed to be more ‘elite’ students and they were put into class A first, followed by the remaining students who were put into classes B1, B2, C and D. Hence, according to this sequence, students in Class D were assumed to have the worst results in the English entrance placement test and their English proficiency were assumed to be very weak since they were studying in one of the low-banding schools in Hong Kong, which mainly accepts students of lower academic achievement.

The whole school had arranged a 15-min Extensive Reading session once every two weeks for all the junior-form (Grade 7-9) students in the school but since the A & B1 classes from Form One to Three (Grade 7-9) have stronger abilities in Maths and their English was supposed to be better than the others in the whole Form (according to the school uniform test and exam results provided by the school authority) and English was employed as the medium of instruction in Mathematics. Hence, the school arranged some Maths tests or quizzes for the A & B1 classes during the 15-min ER session once every two weeks. Hence all the A and B1 classes of the junior forms (Grade 7-9) in this school would not have any ER sessions for the whole academic year and this had been the practice of this school for many years.

In this ER research project, those who did not join any extensive reading activities during the school time, that is, the students in Classes A & B1, were originally supposed to be the participants of the control group. However, students in Class A were finally not selected to be the members of the control group in this ER research project because when the researcher

informally chatted with a few students from class A who acted as volunteers in the pilot reading rate test and think-aloud experiments to explore more about their abilities in expressing their thoughts or ideas in mind, she realized that some students in Class A would have had some private reading tutorials when they returned home after school. In view of this, all the 17 students in Class B1 were selected as the members of the control group as they did not have any extensive reading activities outside the daily regular English lessons and they were also occupied with various extra-curricular activities after school.

Apart from these, three students from Class D were also included in the control group list as they were not interested in reading at all and reluctant to join any extensive reading activities at school. Hence, they indicated on the parents' reply slip or consent forms that they would not be interested in joining any of the ER programmes during lunchtime or after school. Moreover, they were found to be either late for school or absent when all the five morning reading sessions were held between January and March 2016. Eventually, a total of 20 students were included in the control group.

For the control group of this 12-week intervention study, the more elite students from class B1 received some intensive English reading skill training from the textbook, *Longman Elect*. There were altogether eight chapters in the book and in the first term their English teacher had already gone over the first four chapters with them. Each chapter had one or two reading passage(s) with various vocabulary and grammatical activities around it/them. Hence, according to a few lesson observations made by the researcher in the school, during the first 30 minutes of the lessons, the job of the English teacher was to introduce some new vocabulary items that were used in the passage. Then she proceeded to discuss the main and subordinate ideas of the reading text with the students. If time allowed, s/he introduced any reading or word-attack strategies involved. Following that, she checked the answers of the reading comprehension questions with the students and subsequently introduced the grammatical structures used in the passage(s) by giving students some grammatical exercises to do. Finally, these student participants received some feedback from the teacher when she checked the answers with them. A similar kind of instruction and process was followed with the comparison and experimental groups when the other regular English teachers worked with them.

### **3.2.2 Background Information on the Comparison and Experimental Groups**

As already noted, the participants in the comparison and experimental groups of the research study were studying in one of the low-banding schools in Hong Kong. In the whole Form Two at that school, all the students were streamed into four classes: The school placed the more elite students with better English proficiency into Classes A and B1 where English was employed as the medium of instruction in Mathematics. The school then categorised all the remaining students whose English proficiency was lower into Classes B2, C & D where Cantonese was the medium of instruction in all subjects, except English.

The participants selected for the comparison group of the ER programme and the experimental group of the scaffolded ER programme were a homogeneous group of similar ages, 13 to 15 years old, with a similar English level ranging from elementary to pre-intermediate. Most, if not all, of the participants had failed almost all the English school tests and exam held between September and December 2015, one or two months before the study began. The researcher selected the students from Classes B2, C & D according to their willingness in joining the ER programme indicated on the consent form and also due to the fact that they all had very low or weak English proficiency. However, since most of the participants in the experimental group had to stay behind at the school in the Annexe library after school to join the scaffolded ER programme, only the students with better self-discipline (as suggested by their class teacher and the vice principal) were included in the experimental group.

After the researcher had looked at their English test and exam results at the school, the English reading comprehension tests (set by the researcher) were administered to all the students in Form Two, which also functioned as the pretests (see Appendices A1, A2). This was a counter-check in addition to their school tests and exam to confirm that their reading abilities were really weak. The results of the two reading pretests indicated that almost all the students in Classes B2, C and D had weak English reading proficiency; they all failed the reading pretests (determined according to the pass scores 50 out of 100 full marks officially set by the school in the tests and exams). Some of the more elite students in the same form attained relatively higher marks in the same reading pretests with the highest average score going as high as above 70 out of 100 and many of the more elite students of the whole Form Two at least obtained a pass (an average score of 50) in the two reading pretests.

Subsequent to the reading pretests, the potential study participants were identified. They were the students who failed the tests and also did not obtain a pass mark in the school's English exam. The researcher invited them to join the study and come to a briefing session during which they were given consent forms to sign. In the briefing session, these participants were informed of the objectives of the ER research project, which was to establish whether and to what degree the implementation of a new scaffolded extensive reading programme could improve their reading fluency as well as their comprehension ability and empower them to perform better in the second or foreign language learning context. Following that, the researcher handed out the information sheets about the study as well as consent forms for them and their parents to sign. The researcher also informed the students that they could opt to discontinue their participation in the ER programme (scaffolded or not) at any time without any further explanation even if they and their parents had previously signed a consent form agreeing to their participation in the research study. Before the research properly began, all the selected participants signed and gave back their written consent forms with their parents' signatures to the researcher, stating their willingness to join the 12-week ER intervention programme during lunch-time or after school.

### **3.2.3 Ethics**

During the process of planning a research study, one has to ruminate on how the research aims, contents, methods and outcomes conform to ethical principles and practices. Inevitably, there are always some ethical issues which should be considered top priority. Among these, the most crucial ethical issue in the present study was 'informed consent'. According to Diener and Crandall (1978:57), the definition of informed consent is "the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions".

In fact, such a definition consists of four vital elements: voluntarism (participants can choose freely whether to participate in the study or not); full information (researchers give full or thorough information to the research participants, such as how the data was collected and treated); comprehension (research participants or subjects understand completely the nature of the research study, regardless of its complexity or risk involvement); and competence (mature and responsible individuals will make right decisions once they are provided with the relevant and full information) (Cohen et al. 2011).

Hence, when the participants of this current study, who were all under 18 years old, were found to be incapable of making the right decision of whether they should take part in the research study or not simply because of their young age or immaturity, the researcher had to seek the consent from their parents or caregivers by sending out the consent forms and the parental reply slips to the parents of the potential research participants. Since some of the parents might not have known how to read in English, the form was written bilingually in their native language, Cantonese, to avoid any misunderstanding of the messages. The English version of the consent form and parental reply slip were on the other side.

On the consent form, the parents or caregivers were informed of the nature of the research project (i.e. a project about enhancing the reading proficiency among English second language learners in Hong Kong). After that, the aim and the significance of the project were delineated (i.e. improving learners' English reading skills, thereby empowering them in the second/ foreign language learning context). Following that, voluntary participation in the research study was emphasised (i.e. participants can always feel free to quit the study anytime). What participation would entail was stated on the consent form (i.e. reading selected story books silently in the Annexe library or the Activity room during lunchtime or after school for 30 minutes three times a week, sharing a story which was read with the researcher plus completing questionnaires, reading comprehension, reading rate as well as vocabulary tests and participating in semi-structured interviews or think-aloud protocols). Any risks as well as benefits of joining the research project (eg. acquiring better reading skills), how the data was stored and disseminated with complete confidentiality (i.e. data would be anonymised by using numbers or pseudonyms for participants and results digitised by the researcher for future analysis only) and the researcher's contact details were mentioned in the consent form.

Finally, the parental reply slips were placed at the bottom of the entire consent form. Once the forms had been readily printed by the participating school, the vice principal went to each F.2 (Grade 8) class and distributed the consent forms to all the potential participants. He also reminded them to fill in the forms together with their parents and all the students were required to submit the signed consent form regardless of their intention to join the research project or not. Finally, all the potential participants needed to submit the signed consent forms to the vice-principal the next day when he came to each classroom to collect them.

As indicated earlier, in section 3.2, there was a total of 55 students who were not selected to join the experimental group of the current research study who were designated as the control and comparison groups of the entire study. Hence, they were considered as disadvantaged by not being in an experimental group who had the chance to learn more basic or high frequency vocabulary items and reading strategies during the three-month ER intervention.

In view of this, a few months after the termination of the ER intervention, the researcher had a brief meeting with the vice-principal about the outcomes and implications of the entire ER intervention. Simultaneously, all the worksheets plus reference materials pertinent to the three-month scaffolded ER intervention were submitted to the vice-principal, who all along had been providing considerable and varied help to the researcher throughout the study. When the vice-principal received all the relevant hard copies, he indicated that he would place all of them in the main library for any students or school teachers to gain access of them by reading them or making photocopies in the library since no loan of the materials would be permitted.

### **3.3 Development of the Instrument for the Study**

Two categories of instructional materials were employed in the study:

- (1) Different textbooks and compiled books for the control, comparison and experimental groups;
- (2) Graded and levelled readers for the comparison and experimental groups.

These two categories will be described in the following two subsections.

Following that, section 3.5 presents how the materials were used in the activities.

#### **3.3.1 Different Textbooks for the Control, Comparison and Experimental Groups**

All the Form Two students of the participating school had to attend regular English lessons (35 minutes/lesson) five days a week for five to six hours per week in total. In these regular English lessons, the students of the comparison and experimental groups used the compiled books prepared by their English teacher at the beginning of the school term. The students of the control group used the textbook they had purchased for the whole academic year as their regular English teachers adhered rather strictly to the scheme of work prepared by their panel head and form coordinator at the beginning of the academic year. Tests and exams were set according to what had been assigned to the teachers to teach in the scheme of work and students had to revise the

language items learned in the book used in their regular English lessons. Due to the problem of learner diversity, the Form Two students were divided into six groups, each with a different regular English teacher. The first two groups were the more elite students and they were instructed by their regular English teacher using a higher English level textbook, *Longman Elect*. The other four groups, who were the members of the comparison and experimental groups in the current study, were the students with weaker English proficiency. Students in neither group used publishers' textbooks for their regular English course since their learning pace was too slow for even using the easier version of the same series of textbook - *Longman Activate* - according to the information provided by the English panel head. In view of this, their regular English teachers had tailor-made and compiled two coursebooks - coursebooks A and B. Coursebook A was longer than coursebook B and contained more grammar materials while maintaining the same amount and same content of reading passage(s) in each chapter of the book as the materials provided by the Longman books in the easier version noted above. Only the weakest group used the compiled coursebook B with shorter contents and fewer grammar exercises. All the students in the Form (regardless of whether they were elites or non-elites) had to do intensive reading practice and the grammar practice compiled in either coursebooks A & B or the textbook, *Longman Elect*.

For the intensive reading practice in the regular English lessons designed by the publisher, all students were asked to read the passage(s) in the books and then answer some comprehension questions. However, the amount and the level of the difficulty of the reading passages in all these textbooks and two compiled coursebooks varied a lot. There were two reading passages, a shorter text and a longer text in *Longman Elect* (the textbook used by the more elite students). The vocabulary items were introduced in a richer way (e.g. sometimes even the parts of speech of some new words were discussed) and more grammar exercises of various levels were included in that textbook. In addition to this, the newly introduced vocabulary and grammar items were highlighted with a different colour to make learners notice their uses or functions in both the shorter and longer reading texts.

By contrast, the compiled coursebooks A and B had only one shorter reading passage included in each chapter of the books and since they were compiled photocopied reading texts and grammar exercises, all the printing was in black and white without any colours to make learners notice the

uses and functions of the newly-introduced vocabulary and grammar items. Apart from these differences, to adapt to the level of the weakest students in the whole form, coursebook B had even fewer grammar items introduced when compared to those in coursebook A. In view of these book adjustments, the English tests and exams in school were adapted to these changes and there were at least two or three different sets of test and exam papers in each school term. The first set of test and exam papers was for the more elite students using the textbook *Longman Elect*. The second easier set was for those weaker students using the compiled coursebook A whereas the last and easiest set was for the weakest students using the compiled book B.

More specifically, the textbooks used by the control, comparison and experimental groups had a similar structure of contents. They both had eight chapters with interesting topics such as sports, technology, new gadgets or anything concerning students' everyday lives. Each chapter consisted of a passage (compiled coursebooks A & B) /two passages (original textbook from the same publisher, *Longman Elect*) that developed students' intensive reading skills and introduced some target vocabulary items. Following that, there were some activities or exercises introducing the target grammar structures which had been used in the passage(s). Sometimes reading strategies or strategies for tackling difficult words were also introduced in *Longman Elect* but not in the other compiled coursebooks. The main differences in the three coursebooks was the level as well as the length of the reading comprehension passages, the amount of vocabulary items and grammar practice in each chapter.

Undoubtedly, coursebooks serve a useful function in introducing new features of a language like new lexis as well as grammar and provide at least some practice of such language elements. However, most, if not all, coursebooks are not designed to provide much revision, in terms of vocabulary knowledge or sentence structure development, or recycle those newly-learnt vocabulary items and grammar in the later chapters and are therefore not good at aiding L2 learners in building a deeper knowledge of language features covered. Hence, no matter what coursebooks those weak students had been using in their L2 learning, if they could not engage themselves in reading extensively, they would not encounter language a sufficient number of times to enable them to fully understand or at least develop a sense of how the lexis and grammar function in the language since an array of words and phrases, for instance, have different meanings and uses in a sentence (Waring 2009).

### 3.3.2 Graded and Levelled Readers for the Comparison and Experimental Groups

With respect to extensive reading, there were two sources of reading materials considered for the selected participants: authentic materials and graded plus levelled readers. However, after looking at their results in the pre-tests of both reading comprehension and vocabulary, the researcher decided to select the graded and levelled readers to be adopted in this ER programme. This was based on the results of the first pre-reading test which chiefly tested learners on their breadth of lexical knowledge and also based on the fact that most of the words used in the two reading pretests were the first 1000 and 2000 high-frequency English words which appeared more frequently than those 3000 words or academic words in a book. Yet many students were found not to have abundant knowledge of this fundamental 1000 and 2000 lexis which they were supposed to have learnt well in their primary or elementary schools, that is, from Grade one to Grade six.

According to Nation and Deweerdt's description of graded readers (2001:55),

A typical graded reader series consists of books written at five or six vocabulary levels, beginning at around 300-400 words and increasing in stages to around 2500 words.

To help elaborate more clearly about the idea of graded readers, Fujigaki (2009:280) further added that:

The indication of vocabulary level by the number of head-words<sup>7</sup> printed on each graded reader suggests that an equal number of words will be understood when the reader's level matches this indication.

In fact, with reference to the *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, the number of headwords which the publisher suggests for a book roughly indicates its readability, which is decided by many components like '(a) the average length of sentences in a passage (b) the number of new words a passage contains (c) the grammatical complexity of the language used and (d) previous background knowledge or cultural factors' (Richards et al. 1992:306). In light of this, the simpler/shorter the sentences used in the book, the more readable the book is, which implies that book has a certain degree of "ease" of reading and can be read or comprehended more easily (Widodo 2009).

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<sup>7</sup> A headword is similar to a dictionary entry where a group of words share the same basic meaning, eg. *helps, helping, helpful, helpless* (the Extensive Reading Foundation Website – [www.erfoundation.org](http://www.erfoundation.org))

Broadly speaking, graded readers are largely categorised or graded with a view to their lexical and syntactic difficulty. In Coady's view (1997), graded readers are instrumental to foreign language learners in the sense that they can often provide repeated exposure to those simplified lexical and syntactic structures in the graded readers, which can assist beginning or intermediate learners to acquire reading skills as well as fluency and also consolidate the grammar plus lexis learnt in the lessons previously. Most graded readers "tend to be either simplified (or retold) versions of already published material, or written for the target audience, and graded reader series consist of both fiction and non-fiction texts" (Macalister 2009:208).

According to Nation (2013), graded readers are comprehensible books written in easier language for second or foreign language readers. This includes careful control of vocabulary to reduce the vocabulary burden of the text or book by excluding words that are beyond the learners' current level of lexis in order to prevent readers from struggling with unknown or difficult lexis, which will slow down reading and exert a negative influence on their motivation to read (Widodo 2009). Eventually, readers are able to meet a manageable amount (i.e. 95-98% of the vocabulary known in the book) of unknown or difficult words in these graded or levelled texts.

For instance, when learners read a series of graded readers at each of the varied levels, they will have opportunities to meet new words repeatedly in the series and then be able to retrieve knowledge of words which they have encountered before in previous texts or books. Gradually, these numerous encounters of the same or similar words in a variety of contexts will facilitate the enrichment of their knowledge of these words resulting in a good retention of them (Nation 2013). According to Nation & Wang (1999), it is preferred that learners read at least one graded reader per week to enable them to meet new lexical items again within a short duration of time.

While embarking on the scaffolded reading programme with the weak L2 readers, the researcher did not directly request any participants to initially read those graded readers but merely those levelled readers in the first month and then move onto more new choices for the participants in the second month by including easier graded readers among the books exhibited on the tables.

Generally speaking, levelled readers (LR) are classified by the publisher using a different benchmark from that of the graded readers (GR). Originally, levelled readers were written for

young children using English as their native language to learn more about their L1 so that LR could assist the young readers to move to read higher levels of books more easily as they grew up, thus more easier levels of readers were available to cater for the varied needs and levels of the learners (Takase 2009). A levelled book shares almost all the features and benefits of graded readers like simplified lexis as well as sentence structures. Yet the major differences between the GR and the LR are that more choices at the lower level of books are available in LR to cater for the needs of those young beginners or weak readers who have not developed enough stamina or lexis to read a longer text with 300 or 400 headwords and also there are usually multiple copies of each level of books in LR, which is determined not by headwords but the amount of words and the number of lines on each page with more pictures or illustrations as clues to facilitate readers in understanding the meaning or the words of the story ([www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com) online).

For instance, the Oxford Reading/Story Tree is one of the levelled reader series which was adopted in the ER programme of this study. This series “written for British children contains over 800 books including nine levels of story books, ten levels of easy non-fiction, seven levels of advanced stories, and two levels of biographies. The lowest level of story books contains one word or a sentence in one page in order for beginner readers to grasp the whole story with the aid of pictures” (Takase 2009:453). In contrast, the Oxford Bookworm series, which belongs to Graded Readers, entails about 400 headwords as the bottom level among its series of story books.

According to Takase (2009:91),

“reading an enormous quantity of books of easy levels, like those lower levels of levelled readers, at the beginning or earliest stage of the ER intervention can lower the learners’ affective filter and enable them to unlearn translation habits (in the reading process). Also, they (can) shift to higher levels of books more easily, become motivated to read, and thus acquire reading speed and fluency, regain self-confidence and experience pleasure reading”.

Throughout the present study, there were about 200 graded and levelled readers in total from six different main publishers. These were books from Oxford University Press, Macmillan, Scholastic books, Penguins, Nelson Cengage Learning and Stanford House. The genres among the graded and levelled readers were varied: crime and detective stories and adventure stories plus

other non-fiction texts. The level of the graded readers ranged from 200 to 2400 words (see Appendix E for the titles, by level, of all these readers).

### **3.4 Instruments for Data Collection**

In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the reading proficiency and also the reading problems encountered by the weak L2 participants in the current study, six ways of collecting the relevant data were adopted:

- 3.4.1 Reading comprehension pretests
- 3.4.2 Reading rate test
- 3.4.3 Semi-structured interview protocols
- 3.4.4 Think-aloud protocols
- 3.4.5 Vocabulary pretests
- 3.4.6 Questionnaire

This scaffolded extensive reading intervention adopted a quasi-experimental research design involving one control group, one comparison group and one experimental group working on various types of tests. Before the commencement of the scaffolded ER activities, reading comprehension pretests as well as a reading rate test were administered to the three groups of participants and different vocabulary pretests to both comparison and experimental groups so as to explore the reading ability and the levels of lexical knowledge among all the participants. On top of the three kinds of tests, an extensive reading motivation questionnaire for both experimental and comparison groups was developed in order to discover the motivational factors which can motivate those weak L2 participants to read English books more. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to help the researcher understand more about the background of the participants and their opinions towards the established ER practice at school.

#### **3.4.1 Reading Comprehension Pretests**

Before the scaffolded ER intervention study, two different types of texts were included in the reading pretests. To ensure that all the participants took seriously the two reading comprehension tests, both the pretests and posttests were held in the school hall for 30 minutes on two alternate days with the vice-principal as the only invigilator of the two reading comprehension tests. The researcher scored the two tests by adding up the total marks of the first comprehension test (out

of 100) and the second comprehension test (out of 100) and then divided by two to obtain the average score to arrive at the final score of the two reading comprehension tests.

Two passages were selected from two different textbooks: *Success with Reading Tests, Grade 4* and *100 Reproducible Reading Formative Assessments: Standards-Based Assessments Designed to Increase Student Achievement Grades 4-8*. The two selected passages were 745 words and 368 words in length. Both were of expository and narrative nature. The first reading comprehension test consisted of six different informational short extracts taken from the book, *Success with Reading Assessments, Grade 4*, with texts extracted from various sources: magazines, brochures articles and newspapers (see Appendix A1). The first test aimed to find out how broad the lexical knowledge of all the participants had. The second reading test was extracted from the book, *100 Reproducible Reading Formative Assessments*. It was a short story which was similar to those included in the graded readers of the ER intervention. It aimed to assess the comprehension ability of all the participants (see Appendix A2).

According to Bachman (1990), the performance of the test-takers on a language test varies depending on the features of the test methods and the language ability of the test takers, and a myriad of research studies (Birenbaum & Tatsuoka 1987, Kobayashi 2002) have lent support to such a test method effect. In light of this, the test setter should be cautious in “determining the extent to which test performance is influenced by the particular test method used” (Bachman 1990:12). So, if the tester aims to test the language proficiency or abilities of a language learner, the tester needs to minimise the impact of a particular test method on the test-taker. Alderson (2000) also echoed such a view by indicating that, to ensure the validity<sup>8</sup> of a test (such as reading), it is crucial to keep the test method effect that may have the potential to spoil the measurement of the test-taker’s (reading) ability to the lowest or minimum level. Hence, in considering the most appropriate language testing method(s) for the reading pretests and posttests of the current study, several testing methods like using multiple-choice (MC) questions, cloze passages and short/long questions in testing the comprehension ability of the participants were given serious consideration.

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<sup>8</sup> Validity refers to “the degree to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to be measuring” (Thomas 2009:107)

Over the past few decades, numerous research studies have considered a comparison of the test method effects between multiple choice (MC) items and open-ended items such as those in long questions or even cloze passages, and their level of difficulty in a relative sense. Among all possibilities, Shohamy (1984) remarked that MC items are consistently and relatively easier than open-ended items since the former requires the skills of comprehension but only selection whereas the latter requires the skills of comprehension as well as more challenging production. Eventually, it may turn out to be slightly more demanding for the weak participants or low-achievers of this study since many of them may have experienced difficulty in expressing their ideas in their L2, English.

Apart from this, when the tester rephrased some of the wording in setting the cloze passages or long questions to test the reading ability of the test-takers, the linguistic load such as unfamiliar vocabulary or complexity of the tested items was prone to be a more obvious problem in the aforementioned testing methods. As a result, this may have added an extra burden or layer of difficulty to the test-takers, who were weak L2 learners in the present study (Shohamy 1984). When analysing the data, this could have presented difficulties in delineating whether a study participant's poor test performance was the consequence of the test-taker's problem in comprehending the text or a problem in answering the question itself (Alderson 2000).

Seen in this light, despite the fact that guessing was found to have been largely applied in answering those MC questions as mentioned repeatedly in the literature (Alderson 2000; Allan 1992; Hughes 2003), using MC questions as one of the means in testing the reading ability of the participants was still adopted in the current study. This was because the primary objective of the reading pretests and posttests was to identify who the poor readers were and MC questions with a good scoring reliability<sup>9</sup> are, comparatively and generally, the easiest and the most efficient type among other available language testing methods (Hughes 2003).

Furthermore, Shohamy (1984) added that the performance of those test-takers whose language proficiency is at a weak or low level always tend to be more sensitive to the test method effect plus the language in which test items are presented. Hence, in setting the MC questions, the

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<sup>9</sup> "Reliability refers to the extent to which a research instrument such as a test will give the same result on different occasions." (Thomas 2009:105)

researcher made an attempt in avoiding using difficult words in the questions and also provided easier synonyms or a few L1 translations in brackets adjacent to L2 words which were considered to be more difficult.

In addition, from the perspective of the test-takers, some information provided in the questions or option statements of the MC items may have given additional clues or added sources of knowledge in facilitating the readers, in particular, those weak ones, to understand some of the key ideas of the text or develop a mental model of it by looking at what the questions asked or the options provided, though these options entailed both true or false pictures or scenarios of the text which may eventually confuse the test-takers (Gordon & Hanauer 1995).

Meticulous attention was also paid to setting the MC questions so as to avoid test-takers adopting different test-wiseness strategies, such as eliminating options which contain extreme determiners like ‘every, all, none’, deleting options that look alike in meaning or spelling, and making use of information from other available test items in the MC questions (Allan 1992). Moreover, four short questions were added to the second reading comprehension test in order to help those test-takers to stay focused on their comprehension of the second reading text, which was relatively longer than the first one. Also, it could have minimised the effect of test-takers becoming test-wise in individual or specific test formats (Kirschner et al. 1992) where numerous researchers have reached a consensus that adopting more than one test method in a test can somehow mitigate some of the problems which emerge in relying on merely one single test method (Shohamy 1984, Kirschner et al. 1992).

In the first reading comprehension test, there were six short extracts. There were two to four multiple-choice questions checking if the readers understand the main ideas, contextual clues, details and inferences in the texts. Two extracts from the two comprehension tests are shown in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1 – Extracts of the Reading Comprehension Tests**

Also, in some extracts, one or two questions were concerned with the use of reading strategies such as guessing the unknown word from the context. The participants' reading comprehension ability was measured by their choice of the correct answer by circling the option A, B, C or D in the two tests while responding to the comprehension questions. One score was given for each correct answer. To avoid students randomly circling option A, B, C or D without giving the question any serious thought, there were four short questions which required them to answer in simple English. Grammatical errors were not taken into consideration when scores were given as long as these written answers were intelligible to the marker - the researcher.

The rationale for the selection of these two passages was due to the level of text difficulty and text familiarity. Stories were a familiar type of genre for the participating students. Also, newspapers or brochures or magazines clips were something which are not new or novel to the participants as they sometimes needed to consult these for their school assignments. Moreover, there were not many difficult words in either text.

To ensure the two reading texts were of an appropriate level for the participants to be used as the pre-and-posttests, the readability levels of the two texts were measured via the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level formula. The results of Test 1 (745 words) and Test 2 (368 words) were Flesch-

Kincaid Grade Levels 3.7 and 4.6 respectively, which indicated that the two tests were easier for Grade 4 & 5 students. In addition, the lexical coverage or richness of the two chosen texts was examined using Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP) assessment software (Laufer & Nation 1995) at <http://www.lextutor.ca>.

Before the reading comprehension pretests were administered, the selected short texts were scanned one after another and pasted onto the LFP website, which is probably the most reputational as well as widely used lexical richness measurement tools. It is chiefly based on the British National Corpus (BNC), which is a representative of contemporary usage within the UK, to show the percentage of the lexical coverage of the inputted text by categorising the vocabulary items embedded in the text into four various frequency layers or levels: (i) the list of the most frequent or first 1,000 word families, (ii) words from the second 1,000 frequency level, (iii) the Academic Word List (AWL), and (iv) off-list words (lexis of low frequency or technical terms or proper nouns, which did not appear in the previous three groups) ([www.lextutor.ca](http://www.lextutor.ca)). This provided certain fundamental descriptive statistics about the selected text based on word frequency and also depicted the extent to which a text contained low frequency and academic words. Hence, it allowed the researcher to check whether the participants would find the two tests too difficult or not.

Once the analysis of the lexical frequency of the selected texts was completed, it was discovered that the majority of the words in the two selected texts were among the first 1,000 high frequency words plus a minority of them in the second 1,000 high frequency words used in reading and writing. Thus, these two texts would have been of the appropriate reading level for the local students studying in Form 2 or Grade 8.

To ensure the reliability of the reading tests, the more elite class (F.2A) of the participating school took the tests as well and the majority of the students in that class got over 70 out of 100 marks. The previous cohort of weak students from the same classes of the year before (2014-15) also took similar tests in the pilot study and the stronger ones achieved about 70 marks whereas the weak ones also failed in the reading tests as what the weak F.2 students of this year did.

To make sure there was good reliability of the two reading comprehension tests, the researcher

also asked some student helpers of this ER intervention study, who were all sixth-formers (in grade 12) with good English proficiency, to answer all the questions without referring to the reading texts to check how many questions they could answer accurately with the help of simply their background or previous knowledge of the questions. Alongside this, the reading comprehension tests were piloted with a weak class of 70 students of the previous 2014-15 cohort in the pilot study (held one year before the actual study) before they had been administered and the results of the reading pretests among the pilot group of students were similar to those of the participants in the current study.

### **3.4.2 Reading Rate Test**

According to Waring (2009), when readers can read fluently, it implies they can read a great amount of comprehensible language at a fast speed within their comfort zone and consequently, learners can obtain a good chance “to notice and pick up more depth of knowledge about language features that the course book can only introduce. It is only by reading fast that they can meet a lot of language” (Waring 2009:106).

To investigate how fast and fluently all the participants could read and also identify any of their problems concerning reading fluency, a shorter passage was selected to be included in the reading rate test. The passage chosen for the reading rate test was a different and shorter one with 230 words only (see Appendix B1/B2). It aimed to find out how much (speed) and accurately (fluency) each student could read the selected text. In the short text, which was about the history of paper-making, there were four paragraphs in total with four multiple-choice questions for each paragraph to avoid the participants skipping one of the paragraphs in order to read faster. After finishing reading the text, the participants put it inside the drawer of their desk and took out a question paper which contained four reading comprehension questions for them to answer by choosing the most appropriate answer for each question, circling the option A, B, C or D.

As indicated by Nation (2009), to develop fluency in reading, decoding as well as comprehension of the words in the text must go hand in hand. According to Nation (2009:141), “there is no point in reading faster if little is understood. For careful silent reading, readers should score seven or eight out of ten on a comprehension test.” Hence to make sure all the participants had a rather thorough understanding of the text, all of them were required to achieve 75% accuracy of the text. In other words, they had to obtain at least three correct answers out of the four questions

since all the students were not expected to have a reading speed race and read fast without a good comprehension of what the text was all about.

Seen in this light, during the first trial of the reading rate test, if the participant could not achieve 75% accuracy, then s/he had to re-read the passage and the stopwatch would be pressed again to count the additional time the participant spent on reading the text again in order to achieve 75% accuracy of the test and the additional time would be added onto the original time to ensure all the participants had the same basis of text understanding to make the comparison of the reading rates more meaningful and fairer and also to enhance the reliability of the reading rate results.

Prior to the start of the reading rate test, the participants took a practice test with a shorter text (in about 70 words) as an example to ensure that they had understood the test procedures (Appendix B3). Following this practice test, each participant took the actual test one by one by turning over the short reading text on their desk and then s/he pressed the stopwatch (with a beep sound) in front of him/ her whenever s/he was ready.

To ensure reliability of the reading rate test, a few days ahead of the commencement of the test, five elite students from class 2A of the same form, who achieved the highest average scores in the two reading pretests, were first invited to do the reading rate test. Consequently, a vast majority of them could read the prescribed text in less than two minutes achieving 100% accuracy after attempting those four comprehension questions in the form of multiple-choice test type. The results were impressive as all of them answered the questions correctly after reading the short text and only one student read more than two minutes as he is a very cautious reader. However, with the same text (230 words in total) and same condition provided (achieving at least 75% accuracy of the text), the mean reading rate of all the participants in both experimental and comparison groups exceeded five minutes. Since the reading rate test (Appendix B1/B2) was administered to gain a better understanding of any reading fluency problems most weak participants might have encountered during reading, the relevant data was not be further analysed.

### **3.4.3 Semi-structured Interview Protocols**

To probe into and further explore the initial research question, to record the participants' views of the scaffolded ER intervention in more detail, and eventually to acquire an enhanced

understanding of the perceived improvement in L2 reading as a result of the ER intervention after the entire programme ended, semi-structured interviews (before and after the 3-month ER intervention) were included in the present study.

With reference to McDonough & McDonough (1997), semi-structured interviews involve a structured framework in interviews, yet the researcher can explore greater flexibility for the interview as long as the scope of questions are under the overall framework. Also, they can freely change the sequence of the questions in the question set or ask a more in-depth question so as to obtain more detailed answers. No research method can ever be perfect in reality, and the main pros and cons of semi-structured interviews will be discussed below.

To begin with, the main drawback of employing semi-structured interviews is that such interviews are more time-consuming than quantitative methods like surveys or questionnaires, which consists of directly filling in the relevant information with the given options. In light of this, while conducting a survey, the researcher can reduce time costs and avoid further consuming time for travelling, transcribing, or even coding of the interview data after the pieces of data from participants are collected (McDonough & McDonough 1997, Denscombe 1998).

Aside from the high time cost, low reliability should also be considered as a drawback to the interview. As participants or interviewees sometimes may feel awkward or embarrassed to answer some questions truthfully, eventually they may make up fake answers in the presence of the interviewer, especially if the interviewee has known the interviewer prior to the study. Hence, the consistency plus the objectivity is not simple to achieve at times (Denscombe 1998).

In contrast, a notable and important strength of employing semi-structured interviews is that they contribute more detailed, in-depth or unique insights into the research topics through provoking thoughts that were not considered in the past by the researcher. Such interviews are especially useful when the researcher purports to gather some data or information relating to the learning or reading attitudes and beliefs of the target language, or even discover any problems or challenges that the participants may have encountered in the L2 learning process of a research study (Denscombe 1998).

What is more, during the entire process, the researcher is only required to arrange a simple interview timetable or schedule, consisting of a list of questions to be discussed and mentioned (*a questionnaire was used in the current study*), together with the flexibility and freedom to follow up some key notions or further develop the questions to obtain more details from the participants if necessary. Simultaneously, the participants are also given the freedom and flexibility to dig deeply into their ideas or explain their views throughout the interview (Thomas 2009). Hence, semi-structured interviews are beneficial to researchers in generating plentiful interactions between the interviewee and the interviewer, thereby enabling them to discover more unique, personalised or in-depth responses to the questions asked (McDonough & McDonough 1997).

Apart from the two major advantages indicated above, adopting semi-structured interviews can further guarantee that the collected data is more reliable and can have a higher validity since the interviewer can check and verify for accuracy and relevance of the data, through clarifying face-to-face with the interviewee when any doubt arises (Denscombe 1998). Overall, since the benefits of employing semi-structured interviews exceeds those of the downside, the researcher ended up adopting such a kind of research method in the current study.

After the reading pretests were administered and prior to the start of the scaffolded ER programme, about half of the total participants (16 weak students from the comparison group and 20 students from the experimental group) who were randomly selected from the ER programme, were interviewed in groups of six for 20-30 minutes in their L1, Cantonese, during the screening semi-structured interview. 13 questions from Part A, B, C and D of the questionnaire were asked and also acted as prompts to help interviewees express their opinions of the established arrangement of the ER morning sessions regularly held at school, their past English learning experience, their reading habits and preference in their L1 plus their L2 together with the obstacles which they faced. The interviewees were all informed that the whole interview would be audio-recorded on a digital recorder. The questions asked were as follows:

**A. L2 learning experience in their earlier stage of life**

1. Do you enjoy learning English? Why or why not?
2. Did you read much English when you were a primary school kid? OR Do you think you learned English well in your primary school?
3. Do you want to improve your English or learn English better?

4. Did you make any attempt to achieve this?

**B. Their reading habits and preferences**

1. How often do you read an L1 book and an L2 book respectively as a secondary school student now? OR can you recall when you last read an L1 and L2 book (not the English coursebook) or something in English on the website?
2. If you can choose anything in English to read, what would that be? Why?
3. What kinds of story books are you more interested in reading when you have some spare time? Why?
4. What do you usually do to kill time leisurely?

**C. Comments about the existing ER practice at school**

1. Do you think the ER morning session held once every two weeks is effective in helping you learn some English?
2. Do you think it is enough? Do you prefer the school increasing the frequency of the ER morning session from once every two weeks to at least once every week OR increasing the length of the ER morning session from 15 minutes to 20 or 25 minutes? Why?
3. What do you think when your English teacher asked you to write a brief report after reading an English book? Do you think the ER morning session could help you learn some English? Why or why not?

**D. Difficulties encountered in the reading process**

1. Do you think the English books in the school library interest you? Why or why not?
2. What difficulties did you usually face while reading an English story book? OR what discouraged you most of time while taking out an English book to read?

**3.4.3.1 Data Analysis**

After obtaining all the protocols of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants, the qualitative data were analysed through the thematic analysis method<sup>10</sup> (Braun & Clarke 2006). First of all, the data were transcribed. Following that, to ensure there was good reliability of the data, the researcher invited one of her ex-colleagues, who is an English panel head in the high school, to listen to the audio-recordings to double-check if anything in the

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<sup>10</sup> “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke 2006:79).

transcriptions could be improved or adjusted in order to bring out the best of the interviewees' ideas in the protocols. Aside from these, upon the completion of the data transcription, the researcher read the whole, long transcripts very carefully at least five times and then labelled, numbered, underlined and highlighted all the main ideas that seemed to be highly relevant to the question asked or previous literature about ER or appeared repetitively or sounded interesting. Following that, she began coding the rubric development of the qualitative data - the interviews before the three-month ER intervention.

### **3.4.4 Think-aloud Protocols**

After obtaining the scores of the reading pretests completed by the 70 participants, 10% or seven of the participants who joined the screening of the semi-structured interviews before the commencement of ER programme were invited to attend the think-aloud sessions since they were, comparatively, the most expressive among all the other interviewees.

#### **3.4.4.1 Introspective Research Methodology: Concurrent & Retrospective Verbal Reporting**

To inquire into the first research question, introspective research methodology was employed in the current study so as to inspect the various reading strategies utilized by the proficient and non-proficient L2 language learners respectively. In fact, introspection has a long history in psychological research ever since the early twentieth century, despite it having been abandoned in the next five decades. Yet, since 1980s, such introspection methodology was once again cited and adopted more frequently when Ericsson & Simon (1984) proposed and formulated a model of mental processes grounded on the information processing theory and addressed numerous concerns and various criticisms pertaining to introspection methodology in its initial form (Brown & Rodgers 2002). According to Block (1986), Anderson (1991) and Brown and Rodgers (2002), introspection has become an increasingly prevalent means employed in countless psychological research studies for examining and discovering the cognitive processes and mental states in human brains more deeply via acquiring verbal protocols and reports from the participants or interviewees to examine their mental states or cognitive processes.

Ericsson & Simon (1984:15) proposed a definition for "verbal reporting" as "bringing information into attention, converting it into verbalizable code, and finally, vocalizing it". In recent decades, introspective verbal protocols have been generally perceived as a valid or reliable

source of data on the mental or cognitive processes of participants in performing tests or specific tasks (Ericsson & Simon 1993).

The two general ways of introspection research methodology to acquire verbal protocols or reports are *concurrent* and *retrospective*. *Concurrent verbal reports* refer to reports acquired when a participant verbalizes or speaks aloud his or her cognitive processes or mental activities or “successive states of heeded information” (Ericsson & Simon 1984:16) when s/he is simultaneously performing the relevant specific task. The aforementioned process is often described as the “think-aloud” method. In the case of the current study, a weak reader is often engaged, verbally describing his or her mental or cognitive activities, voicing out his or her difficulties or solutions in tackling and managing those difficulties while comprehending the text or completing each test question. *Retrospective verbal reports* are available by accessing the participants’ “STM [short-term memory] or retrieval from LTM [long-term memory] and verbalization of a durable and partial memory trace of the heeded information just AFTER completing a task” (Ericsson & Simon 1984:16). For the situation in the present study, participants were required to provide verbal reports on the difficulties s/he had experienced while reading the text and how s/he managed them AFTER reading the text, or gave his or her comments on the short text or test, like emotions or summary, upon completing the short text or finishing the test.

Ericsson and Simon (1984) further elaborated that the verbal reports of mental or cognitive processes from the participants can be classified into three distinct or different levels:

Level 1 - direct verbal expressing noticeable or brief information that is encoded naturally in linguistic forms, such as reporting how to spell an English word.

Level 2 - ‘translating’ information or explaining an idea which is not encoded in the original linguistic forms into a verbal code before reporting it, for instance, describing fragrance.

Level 3 – necessitating extra generative or interpretive processes on aspects which a participant would normally fail to notice. This usually happens when a participant is asked to delineate his/her motives for actions, thoughts, and ideas in mind, for example, explaining how s/he arrives at the answer to the respective question.

In reality, both concurrent (or think-aloud) reporting and retrospective reporting contain their

respective pros and cons. When compared with retrospective reporting, think-aloud methods are relatively more popular among researchers and are frequently employed in an array of research studies pertinent to various reading strategies (Hosenfeld 1977, 1984, Block 1986, Davis & Bistodeau 1993, Schramm 2001). The significant rationale behind such a wider and more frequent usage of think-aloud reporting is that several drawbacks of employing retrospective method, the alternative way, occur in gathering data for reading strategies. Substantially, there is no denying that retrospective reporting outweighs the other method as it avoids interruptions during the participants' performance or mental task given that retrospective reporting occurs upon completion of the cognitive task. Hence the participant is not required to perform the mental task (thinking) and the verbal task (reporting) simultaneously (Ericsson & Simon 1984), which would be exhausting and distracting for the participant, thereby losing focus or direction of the task easily during the reading session.

In contrast, the major disadvantages of adopting retrospective reporting are that the mental or cognitive activities reported by participants would be significantly short or brief given that the participants might forget or were not entirely conscious in paying attention to the mental processes involved when performing the tasks (ibid.). Moreover, in accordance to Ericsson and Simon (1984), the participant may at times confuse other information recoverable from similar past experiences with the information attended previously during recalling those cognitive or mental processes.

Furthermore, the participant may describe information which s/he has generated or inferred but not based on the previous information, or make random guesses about some likely cognitive or mental processes s/he has undergone yet failed to recall, thereby reducing the reliability of the research. What is even worse, the participants' perception of their own reading experiences may also be changed or distorted upon completion of the task (ibid.).

In addition, with reference to Johnston (1983) and Block (1986), another downside of the retrospective reporting is that it failed to provide a direct view of the reading process and, therefore, could not help the researchers understand how the participants processed a reading text and the reasons on their inability to comprehend the text. The other alternative, think-aloud or concurrent reporting, could in comparison provide a more accurate and reliable overview of the

entire reading processes (McDonough & McDonough 1997). Taking the present study as an example, when the participants experienced some comprehension problems or located some unknown words while scanning a text, the researcher could immediately find out what the participants' methods were in coping with the problems during the reading process by means of the think-aloud protocols.

What is more, adopting the think-aloud method guarantees good reliability with more accurate collection of data given that certain strategies occurred may only be remembered by short-term memory temporarily or fleetingly. If the participant reported his or her mental activities via think-aloud protocols (Ericsson & Simon 1980), the strategies would not be greatly affected by factors like memory loss, especially when the participant was overloaded and pressured by a vast amount of information within a short period of time (Ericsson & Simon 1984). Furthermore, some strategies apposite to reading cannot be observable readily to the naked eye or acknowledge visually throughout the research. For instance, numerous mental processes, such as the act of making mental association of an unknown lexis, cannot always be easily identified, despite recording the entire reading process.

Despite Ericsson and Simon (1980) and Block (1986) emphasizing the significance of the think-aloud protocol in their studies, and how it functioned as a constructive tool in facilitating the researchers to understand more about the mental processes undergoing in the participant's brain, specifically in conducting research studies related to reading strategies, on the flip side of the coin, inevitably such method has its own limitations. A particularly challenging situation would be requesting a group of introverts and weak L2 learners to perform a verbal task (reporting) along with the assigned mental task (thinking) at the same period, even when they have been trained to complete the think-aloud reporting process prior to the study (Brown & Rodgers 2002). Worse than that, it may cause disruptions and interruptions to the participant's cognitive and reading processes significantly. What is more, another drawback is that the think-aloud reporting may be altered when the participant explains the thoughts in his/her mind while reading, such as modifying a better version of their process. (Ericsson & Simon 1984).

In a nutshell, a small proportion of reading strategies occur overtly and are relatively simple to observe visually in reality, yet a large proportion of other strategies appear covertly and require a

lot of immediate introspective or invasive forms of data collection, displayed most significantly in the think-aloud protocols (Cohen & Hosenfeld 1981), where the participant would be encouraged to speak aloud directly the cognitive processes he/she is undergoing and then report relevant strategies being utilized when performing the assigned tasks.

From a macro point of view, if one of the sub-goals of the current study was to identify the reading strategies employed by both the proficient and non-proficient L2 learners in comprehending a text so as to assist or guide the design of the materials for the scaffolded ER intervention and also help both the students and the language practitioners to be more aware of the difference of strategy used frequently by those good and poor L2 learners while reading, an overall analysis or assessment of learners' typical strategy use grounded in their responses to the survey or questionnaire, may not, in fact, have generated an in-depth understanding of L2 learners' use of specific strategies and may, therefore, may have failed to elicit the cognitive process underlying the adoption of strategies by the weak or good language learners. Eventually, it may give the researcher a vague or brief picture of the strategies employed by the two groups of L2 readers who possess a stark contrast, not only in reading proficiency but also in the variation and amount of strategy use.

After analysing the pros and cons shown by different methods of data collection, think-aloud reporting was centrally adopted in the present study, aiming to locate the covert strategies adopted by those who were deemed low-achievers. Retrospective reporting was also assimilated into the study, providing further guidance for the researcher to develop a better understanding of the comments of those low achievers regarding the obstacles they faced in the processes of reading and completing the test.

#### **3.4.4.2 Previous Studies on Reading Processes using Concurrent and Retrospective Verbal Reports**

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, a gradual growth of research collecting verbal protocols or reports was observed, when the study's recorded data of the reading strategies were used by different levels of second or foreign language learners.

Block (1986) examined the various strategies chosen by the six L2 learners and three native

English-speaking learners, all of which were considered weak readers at the college level. The selected subjects were then requested to participate in the think-aloud experiments or join an immediate introspection while comprehending an expository text extracted from a psychology textbook. Prior to the actual study, Block (1986) was concerned with whether these participants could really interrupt their reading and verbalize in English (L2) with ease, not only about describing their understandings from the text but also their thoughts in mind. Facing such uncertainties, Block (1986) launched an initial pilot study with two weak L2 subjects, who were asked to think aloud while comprehending the texts. Block (1986) discovered that as long as the participants observed a brief demonstration regarding the technique or skill of thinking aloud, they were mostly capable of verbalizing their thoughts of the strategy use easily in the provided reading tasks and also revealing both their strengths and limitations as L2 readers.

As inspired by Block's study (1986), when the researcher carried out her previous research study (Man 2011) pertinent to the reading strategies adopted by both the high-achievers and the low-achievers, she followed the same procedure by including a pilot-testing procedure so that the subjects could have some ideas on what and how they were expected to produce in the think-aloud experiments, thereby increasing the validity of the study.

In view of this, the current study of reading strategies followed a similar pilot-testing procedure as Block (1986) and Man (2011). Hence, all the subjects were briefed on how to verbalise their thoughts and ideas processed in their brain while reading a short text of less than 100 words. Such a practice can produce more valid and reliable results from verbal reports or protocols. During pilot training, researchers can check, test, observe and evaluate whether the training facilitates subjects in generating the protocols desired by the researcher (i.e. verbalise their mental processes clearly while reading), thereby enhancing research validity.

Exploring reading strategies, Kletzien (1991) further emphasised in his research study the crucial role of verbal ability in describing the reading strategies adopted by the strong and the weak readers respectively, when comprehending texts of varying levels of difficulties and conducting the think-aloud experiments. As Kletzien (1991:70) commented, "it is possible that reading strategies used by readers who excel in verbal ability are different from the reading strategies used by readers whose verbal ability is below average. Moreover, differences in verbal ability

might contribute to differences between good and poor readers in the way they describe their reading strategies, even if the strategies themselves are actually similar”.

Considering the significance of such practice, prior to the start of think-aloud reporting of the present study, screening semi-structured interviews and pilot-testing were thus conducted to explore the background and/or even challenges of those weak L2 learners (See Appendix H) and also understand their initial verbal ability simultaneously. As a result, seven subjects out of the total 36 interviewees with relatively stronger verbal ability were selected as the subjects of the think-aloud experiments held before commencing the ER programme.

Davis and Bistodeau (1993) report on a study they conducted on L1 and L2 reading strategies, with 16 native speakers of English and French as subjects. Think-aloud protocols were adopted, so the participants had to speak aloud on how they processed the text mentally during reading. Furthermore, after reporting via the think-aloud experiments, the participants were also invited for a brief exit interview so that they can further clarify and interpret more clearly about the think-aloud data.

Based on the benefits derived from the design of David and Bistodeau’s (1993) study, the researcher sat slightly adjacent to the subjects observing how they recorded their verbal thoughts. Given that each subject participated in the think-aloud protocols individually in the spacious Annexe library during lunch time and after school, the researcher had ample time to conduct the exit interview, which could be considered as a kind of retrospective reporting, shortly after the think-aloud protocols had been conducted. As a consequence, the researcher could clarify or elaborate the subjects’ reading strategies before, during and after reading a text, and also interpret more accurately or clearly the think-aloud data with those selected participants upon completion of the think-aloud reporting. In general, such a combination of two methods is vital for enhancing the reliability of the think-aloud data because during the reading process, the participants at times might overtly concentrate on reading to the extent where they might neglect the need of verbalizing their thoughts in mind. Now, thanks to the adoption of an additional research method – the retrospective reporting – the reliability of think-aloud data could be increased. Grounded on the above-mentioned merits, the current study therefore adopted a similar blend of methods to acquire more accurate and reliable findings.

To conclude, every method of obtaining verbal reports together with its unique design attributes has its pros and cons. Nevertheless, during the reading process, readers naturally make an attempt to read and re-read some sentences or phrases to help them better comprehend or infer the meaning. Hence, although retrospection avoids disrupting the participants' cognitive processes during a reading session, verbal protocols obtained from retrospection may face the risk of being 'contaminated' by reports of the mental processes, which may be influenced by other reading experiences or by inability to remember.

In contrast, immediate or concurrent think-aloud reporting usually will not be easily influenced by such factors, despite distracting readers' ongoing mental processes at times to a certain extent. Thus, it is a common practice for most researchers to include pilot-testing prior to the actual concurrent think-aloud protocols, such that the findings will be of higher validity. Meanwhile, some other researchers tend to enhance the reliability of the think-aloud protocols by means of adopting an exit interview, which can be regarded as a type of retrospective reporting, to recognize the relevant thoughts that were missed or somehow failed to be simultaneously verbalised during the think-aloud reporting.

In the upcoming section, the blueprint of the current introspective study will be portrayed in more detail, mainly discussing how the pilot and the actual studies of think-aloud experiments were conducted.

#### **3.4.4.3 Pilot Experiment**

Around one week before commencing the think-aloud experiment, seven participants were chosen as the stronger students after engaging in the screening semi-structured interview with the researcher. During the interview, the interviewer was granted a rare chance to examine more about the randomly selected participants' verbal ability while elaborating their answers to the questions included in the semi-structured interview (see Appendix I).

Two days before the think-aloud experiments, a two-day trial session was conducted, inviting seven weak learners (six boys and one girl) in pairs or groups of three, along with three strong readers, to carry out the pilot experiments. The participants were invited during lunch time or after school day to the Annexe library. The study was conducted to examine whether the

concurrent or immediate think-aloud reporting was best fit for the current study, and to determine the format and duration of the think-aloud reporting orientation or demonstration. All the participants involved in the think-aloud experiment joined voluntarily.

In every pilot experiment, two participants were taught individually on the methods to speak any comments on the story or their thoughts out loud while reading, following the three distinct levels of verbalization suggested by Ericsson and Simon (1984), mentioned in detail in section 3.4.4.1 of this chapter. First, the researcher raised questions on reporting the spelling of the word(s) s/he saw on the instruction sheet. Next, every participant had to visualise and describe the steps in detail as if they were instructing the researcher on procedures of riding a bike. Finally, each participant was requested to briefly elaborate the process of reading a few English sentences or phrases s/he had never read before, followed by a very short and simple reading test done individually. During the process, the participant had to report his or her thoughts verbally to the researcher while comprehending a few sentences with a total word count of 50 words extracted from the card of SRA reading laboratory box 1C. After that, s/he should also complete the three Multiple-Choice questions with only two options per question. After these pilot experiment trials, think-aloud reporting was eventually decided on for adoption in the current study.

#### **3.4.4.4 Main Experiment**

This main verbal reporting experiment mainly consisted of three sections – a screening semi-structured interview prior to the pilot think-aloud protocols coupled with the actual immediate/concurrent think-aloud reporting, and eventually the retrospective verbal reporting (also known as the exit interview) instantly when concurrent think-aloud protocols ended. The three strong and seven weak L2 readers from the screening semi-structured interview were also invited to join the pilot and actual think-aloud experiments. All the 10 participants acknowledged the experiment process and consent was given before conducting the experiments.

The major experiment took place after school on three consecutive days in the same venue as the pilot test, the Annexe library. Two pairs of students generated the think-aloud reporting during the first two consecutive days individually, whereas the other six students were put into two groups and repeated the same procedures on the third day. After reading the text, all the participants were required to fill in a simple test, consisting of a few comprehension questions. Short answers

were required for the questions to double check if the participants had understood the short passage completely after reading. It should be noted that grammatical mistakes found in the short answers were not considered as long as the meaning was intelligible to the marker, also the researcher. The short test was modified and set by the Education Department approximately one or two decades ago as a model for the placement test in various secondary schools, identifying any room for improvement of the L2 reading proficiency of the F.2 or Grade 8 students of a particular cohort upon completing their studies as the respective academic year came to a halt (see Appendix H1).

After the think-aloud task, each participant joined a brief exit interview with the researcher, for a duration of 10 to 20 minutes. The participant's main task was to briefly summarise the words or phrases or even sentences that s/he could comprehend or still recall after reading the passage, such as the main idea or the summary of the text, major challenges while comprehending the text amid the reading process and their methods in locating the answers for the short questions.

Before commencing the main experiment, all the participants were given a brief introduction of the experiment and the objectives of the think-aloud protocols, coupled with the theory and rationale of making the pertinent audio-recording during the verbal report, and lastly the exit interview right after the think-aloud protocols on an individual basis. In addition, they were informed that the researcher would stand or sit slightly further away from them and assistance would only be provided whenever any urgent help was suddenly sought in the process.

Following the briefing session, the researcher provided a demonstration for the participants on how to generate the think-aloud protocols, identical to how she demonstrated in the pilot test. Subsequent to that, each participant would attend a training session to practise verbalizing thoughts and ideas while reading another simple 50-word text at the same time. During the process, the participant could spend 10 minutes to familiarize themselves using the think-aloud reporting of another reading passage from a card of SRA reading laboratory 1C (Appendix H2).

Throughout the main experiment, each participant was required to say aloud his or her thoughts or strategies in mind while reading the text. The researcher also positioned herself further adjacent to each participant, keeping a comfortable distance from the participant. Moreover, an

audio-recorder was placed in front of the participants to record the verbal protocols, allowing the researcher to make convenient observation notes of the procedures and also ensure that each participant's thoughts on his or her strategies in mind during reading and interview processes could be recorded accurately. Throughout the think-aloud experiment, if the researcher recognised a long and dead silence lasting over five seconds, the researcher encouraged the participant to rethink or express the thoughts mentally aloud, such as failure in understanding the definition of the words or comprehending the meaning of some particular sentences. After completing such a task, the participant was invited to attend an exit interview for 10 to 20 minutes so that the researcher could clarify her doubts with the participants in the main experiment or analyse and collect more information on the participant's strategy use before, during and after reading and testing.

During the whole experiment, each participant had flexibility in choosing the language, usually Cantonese or English, to report his or her thoughts or ideas, which they felt comfortable with. This ensured a more reflective description of the verbal protocols of their mental processes. All of the ten selected participants chose Cantonese as the primary language to verbally report the thoughts in their minds while reading English to answer some comprehension questions. It should be noted that for some of the participants, frequent insertion of several English words as well as phrases were observed, most of which were quoted directly word by word from the reading text and the test items. No time limit was set for any of the procedures in this main experiment to maintain flexibility. When the think-aloud experiment was carried out individually, each participant worked on his/her respective passage and then answered the questions set in the reading test.

#### **3.4.4.5 Data Analysis**

Once the relevant data had been collected, the think-aloud protocols as well as the exit interviews were translated, transcribed and coded. In addition, the observation notes and the answers of the reading test were referred to whenever necessary.

Upon the completion of the transcription work, all the think-aloud data of each participant was categorised with reference to the strategy classification scheme (*with definitions and examples of each strategy included*) which had been developed earlier by including the reading strategies

reported in previous strategy research studies (Block 1986, Anderson 1991, Kletzien 1991, Davis & Bistodeau 1993). As this current study was to investigate if the weak learners comprehended the reading text correctly and also how they comprehended the reading text to arrive at the right or wrong answers in the short test, their responses for both correct and wrong answers in the short test were counted and analysed. Some of these responses reflected more than one strategy use since some participants who had higher English proficiency often reported the adoption of multiple strategies in order to arrive at the correct answers. When these multiple strategies were detected in the think-aloud protocol, each strategy reported, by either the strong or weak L2 learners, was included in both the coding and analyses.

Finally, after all the data had been successfully coded, the frequency of each strategy category employed was tallied as well as triple-checked. Moreover, a score was calculated for total strategy use, which entailed the number of times any reading strategy was mentioned in the think-aloud protocol.

### **3.4.5 Vocabulary Pretests**

Before embarking on the scaffolded ER programme, the 70 participants were given various kinds of vocabulary tests in order to help the researcher gain a better understanding of their vocabulary size or levels. Each test served a particular purpose.

#### **3.4.5.1 Vocabulary Size Test**

The first vocabulary test adopted in the present study was the Vocabulary Size Test developed by Nation (2012) (<https://my.vocabularysize.com>) and only a few voluntary participants were involved in it. These seven L2 learners (10%) were randomly selected from both comparison and experimental groups. They were invited to complete the Vocabulary Size Test on the website (<https://my.vocabularysize.com>) during lunch-time so that the researcher could obtain a better idea about the state of vocabulary knowledge these participants, in general, had possessed. Following that, the researcher purchased the appropriate levels of books, which matched the participants' vocabulary size and levels, to be included in the ER programme, thereby allowing them to read these English books with ease to develop their reading fluency.

The vocabulary size test was selected among a list of tests available on the website basically

because this test entailed 140 multiple-choice (MC) items of different English words, with 10 items from every 1000-word family level and it could cater for the varied English levels of the participants. In addition, the test itself has a myriad of bilingual versions. So, even those participants, who were weak in vocabulary in the current study, should have found no difficulties in understanding the test since they could select the appropriate version in their L1 and chose their desirable answers from the options provided while completing the test. After that, the learners' total score was multiplied by 100 to calculate his/ her overall receptive vocabulary size.

Completion of the test showed that the 10% randomly selected participants possessed a receptive vocabulary size of 600-800 English word families and they knew simple words like 'shoe, time, drive, poor, stone, jump, quiz' out of the 140 words on the website.

#### **3.4.5.2 Vocabulary Test from HKEDB**

Another vocabulary test was developed with the help of the Wordlists compiled by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong (HKEDB). In 2012 a resource package "*Enhancing English Vocabulary Learning and Teaching at Secondary Level*" was developed by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong. The vocabulary items highlighted in the resource package were primarily chosen from the attached *wordlists for the English Language Curriculum* developed by the EDB a few years ago for the sole purpose of teachers' reference in Primary and Secondary Education (CDC 2012).

As aforementioned, the lexical items in the wordlists were selected and produced in accordance to their English frequency levels in (a) "*a general service list of English Words (GSL)*" (West 1953 in CDC 2012:273), (b) "*the British National Corpus (BNC)*" (2007 in CDC 2012:274) and (c) "*the Academic Wordlist*" (Coxhead 2000 in CDC 2012:274). These long vocabulary lists consist of English words belonging to various word frequency levels and they were arranged according to the alphabetical order. Adjacent to the word itself, there was a number 1/ 2/ 3/ 4. '1' implied that the word was supposed to be learnt in lower primary stage (i.e. Primary/ Grade 1-3) and all the words marked with '1' belonged to those 1000 high frequency vocabulary list. '2' suggested that the word was supposed to be learnt in the upper primary stage (i.e. Primary/ Grade 4-6) and all the lexis indicated with '2' belonged to the 2000 high frequency word list. '3 & 4' meant that the words were supposed to be learnt in the junior and senior secondary stages respectively (i.e. Secondary 1-3/ Grade 7-9 & Secondary 4-6/ Grade 10-12) and all the lexical

items indicated with ‘3’ or ‘4’ belonged to the 3000 high frequency or academic word list (AWL). In order to obtain a clearer picture of how many high frequency 1000-words and 2000-words the weak L2 learners of the present study had already learnt well after receiving their primary education so as to help the researcher determine what 1000 and 2000 high frequency words she should introduce in the explicit vocabulary instruction of the scaffolded ER activities, another seven students (10%) were randomly selected out of the 70 participants to take a vocabulary test at home. They were given 18 double-sided worksheets containing a total of 1870 words of all these 1000 and 2000 high frequency lexis they were supposed to have learnt in their six years of elementary schooling (from P.1-P.6/ Grade 1-6). All they had to do was skip all the unknown words and simply write down the L1 meaning of the English words they knew on the wordlists, without seeking any help from the dictionary or family members or friends since no marks would be counted in the test and hence their academic results would not be affected.

After collecting all these tests from the seven voluntary participants randomly selected, the researcher began to locate all the lexis which these seven L2 learners had no knowledge of in common. Almost all of the participants merely learnt less than one-third of the total words, ranging from 500-600 words on average only. Subsequent to that, the researcher categorised all these unknown words according to the collocation themselves and also various themes or topics such as vocabulary relating to food or emotion or school environment so that students could create a paradigmatic association<sup>11</sup> as well as syntagmatic association<sup>12</sup> while the researcher was introducing these new groups of words to them. Eventually, about 100 common and high frequency 1000 and 2000 words were selected from the wordlists and were introduced during the first four weeks of the scaffolded ER activities so that the weak participants’ vocabulary bank of those fundamental lexical items would be enriched and they would encounter less difficulty while reading those easy English books.

Each week after 30-40 words were explicitly taught to the experimental group, a revision quiz was administered to assess if students had understood the meaning of the newly-learnt words by asking them to simply write down the L1 translation adjacent to the difficult or new lexis on the

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<sup>11</sup> “Example of paradigmatic associations are: (1) musical instrument – piano/guitar/violin/drum, and (2) vehicle – car/bus/train/plane” (CDC 2012:5).

<sup>12</sup> “Syntagmatic associations refer to word combinations, such as ‘play football’, ‘go shopping’, ‘film star’, ‘high performance’ etc. These associations are based on the way words are used and on the patterns in which they typically occur” (CDC 2012:6).

quiz. This could also act as a kind of spaced revision in order to help those weak learners to have better retention of the new lexis learnt. All the participants were informed of the upcoming quiz at the end of each week while the new words were being introduced. Throughout the four weeks, the majority of the participants passed the four revision quizzes (with 50 marks set as the passing score) and only two or three students who failed in various revision quizzes had to stay behind to study the words and take the revision quiz again.

#### **3.4.5.3 Vocabulary Knowledge Scale Test**

To answer the second research question: which approach(es), the intentional or the incidental or a combination of both, is/are more effective in aiding the weak L2 readers in enriching their vocabulary bank, the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) test was adopted with the aim of exploring the amount of lexical items learned as a consequence of implicit and explicit learning so as to understand more about the effectiveness of each approach to vocabulary acquisition.

The VKS test was administered to all the 70 participants before the commencement of the scaffolded ER activity and after the end of it. The VKS test was based on the vocabulary knowledge scale developed by Paribakht and Wesche (1993) aiming to evaluate the incremental improvement of lexical knowledge via conducting extensive reading since vocabulary knowledge could not be enhanced drastically but incrementally. To measure the progressive degree of lexical knowledge, the VKS test, which is a relatively more sensitive scale to incremental vocabulary improvement, entails a 5-point scale report and performance indicators are employed to indicate the participants' demonstrated as well as self-perceived knowledge of the given words. As delineated in table 3.2 below, the scale ratings range from unfamiliarity of the given lexis, little recognition of the word form, limited idea of its meaning either in L1 or with a synonym provided and to the ability of using the word genuinely in context with semantic as well as grammatical accuracy.

**Table 3.2 – Example of Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS)**

<b>eg. <u>noise</u> (noun)</b>
I. I don't remember having seen this word before.
II. I have seen this word before but I don't know what it means.
III. I have seen this word before and I think it means _____ (synonym or translation)
IV. I know this word. It means _____ (synonym or translation)
V. I can use this word in a sentence, e.g. _____

In the original VKS, Level I showed that the learner had no knowledge of the word and not even its form and, therefore, score 1 was given. Level II revealed that the learner could recognize the form of the word and score 2 was given. Level III and IV indicated the learner's receptive knowledge of the word, for instance, its meaning and scores 3 and 4 were given respectively. Level V measured the learner's productive knowledge of the word, that is, his or her ability of using the word in a sentence and, therefore, score 5 was given when the lexis was used accurately in semantic as well as grammar. Once the participants were able to demonstrate evidence of their vocabulary knowledge relating to the given words, a relevant score was awarded to them for every word shown, according to the categories indicated above. However, score 4 was given if the lexis was used in the context correctly but grammatically wrong.

In order to answer the second research question as indicated above, the researcher selected 35 words from the 15 books of the ER intervention which had proved very popular when the pilot study was conducted with the students of the same school from a previous cohort (2014-15) a year before this actual present study. These 35 words were chosen because each of them had appeared in all the 15 specially-selected books for at least 10 times in total. According to Horst, Cobb and Meara (1998), eight exposures of a target English word were crucial for substantial vocabulary learning to take place in a specified period of time. Hence, these 35 words were selected according to their high frequency of occurrence in the 15 selected books or texts read.

In the second month of the scaffolded ER programme, the researcher informed all the participants in both comparison and experimental groups that they had to join in the selection of the three most popular books of the year by reading 15 most popular books (marked with an orange star on the book cover) nominated by the students of the previous cohort 2014-15 to find out which three

books the students of this cohort would enjoy reading most. Hence aside from choosing the books which the participants were interested in reading on their own during the three-month scaffolded ER programme, they were expected to read all 15 story books before the end of the ER programme to choose their top three favourites.

Following that, the researcher kept checking her weekly record of the books which the students read at the end of the second month to update the progress of the students by finding out how many selected books had already been read by all the participants. In fact, it was not a difficult job at all since the majority of the participants also had similar preferences in reading books (eg. *Mr Bean's Comics Collection*) as those of the students in the previous cohort 2014-15. Prior to the announcement of such an election, an impressive majority of students had already read half of the selected books in the first month as some of the books had relatively less content and most of these selected books had a few copies available. Nevertheless, there were still a few cases where some participants had only read about half of the selected books at the end of the second month. The researcher, in this case, prompted those three students at the end of the second month to read those selected books faster since most of these books, if not all, were short and amusing.

In the present study, the researcher also made some slight modifications to the scale before the commencement of the ER programme in order to obtain more precise information to answer the second research question indicated above (see Appendix C). First and foremost, there were still five levels in the VKS but the researcher changed it to a 4-point scale by giving no marks to the interviewee who indicated that s/he had not seen the given word before. In this way, the researcher could have a better understanding of how well the participant had known the 35 words before the ER programme began. For instance, when a participant mentioned that s/he had not seen all the 35 words before, then s/he would score 0 and the researcher would have a clearer idea of the number of students who initially had impoverished knowledge of the basic lexicons shown, which they were supposed to have mastered well in their six years of elementary schooling.

Aside from this, since vocabulary learning is gradual as well as incremental in nature (Schmitt 2010, Waring & Nation 2004), the researcher also wanted to learn more about the participants' progress of vocabulary learning by changing the description of the scale in order to realistically reflect those incremental improvements. For example, if a participant did not know the meaning

of the given word ‘stool’ but s/he could say that it was a kind of furniture, then it implied that the participant had some partial knowledge of the word but s/he only failed to express, either in L1 or L2, the exact meaning of the word. In that case, s/he had attained Level III with 2 marks awarded. Thus, after the minor modifications, the revised scale was shown in Table 3.3 and described as follows:

for Level I (showed no knowledge of the given word), score 0 was awarded.

for Level II (revealed some degree of word recognition, i.e. the word form), score 1 was given.

for Level III (indicated some partial knowledge of the word), score 2 was awarded.

for Level IV (indicated some knowledge of the word, i.e. the word meaning), score 3 was given.

for Level V (demonstrated a deeper knowledge of the word by producing a grammatically and semantically correct sentence), score 4 was awarded.

If a participant produced a sentence using the given word in the right context but with wrong grammar, score 3 was awarded in that case.

**Table 3.3 – Example of a word tested in the REVISED Vocabulary Knowledge Scale**

**1. Noise (noun)**

- I. The participant has not seen this word before.
- II. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- III. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- IV. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- V. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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Prior to the commencement of the scaffolded ER programme, the researcher asked 10 students each day to go to the Annexe library one by one after school according to the time indicated on an appointment card. If any of them got occupied that day after school, s/he could change the meeting time to the next day during lunch-time. When a participant arrived at the venue, the

researcher gave him/her a quick briefing of what s/he had to do in the entire process. Following that, the researcher showed the participant 40 words written on the colourful word cards one by one. Among all, 35 word cards contained the vocabulary items which were selected from the 15 books aforementioned and five other words were the pseudo or fake ones which were made up by the researcher to enhance the reliability of the information provided by the participants.

Hence, if any students mentioned that they had seen any of the made-up words on the word cards, the whole piece of information would be considered as unreliable as the participants seemed to be fairly uncertain of the words they had actually seen or not. Fortunately, no participant said that s/he had seen any of the five pseudo words before because s/he knew so well that the researcher was standing in front of him/her and would keep asking the participant for more information to clarify it if that had really happened. Actually, this also explained why the researcher, aiming to measure their knowledge of the 35 words, opted to have a one-on-one interview by ticking the options for all the participants in the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale test instead of giving them the test individually to select the option most applicable to them on their own. Such a practice further improved the reliability of the test and also avoided the participants filling in the answer carelessly or without a second thought even though the first option “the participant has not seen the word before” was provided in the test to prevent them from making any wrong guesses.

In addition, to avoid any of the participants memorising the words s/he had seen in the VKS test and also help to obtain a more precise answer for the second research question, no participant was informed that they would have a vocabulary pretest and a posttest during the three-month ER study. Also, the time allowed for all the participants to think about each word on the word card was controlled to five seconds only with the help of a nearby timer and then the word card was taken away immediately. Subsequent to this, the participants had to share their knowledge of the given words with the researcher. Upon hearing the response, the researcher ticked the option for the participants which best fitted their answers and also noted down everything they said on the test paper. In this way, the researcher had a better understanding of how many sight words of 1000- and 2000- high frequency levels these 70 participants knew or were able to recognize in the entire test more accurately and fairly, even though it was relatively more time-consuming than simply asking the interviewee to complete the test on their own.

However, such one-on-one interviews were more informative as they enabled the rater/ the interviewer/ the researcher to have more interaction with the participants by asking them more in-depth or more questions so as to make clarifications of what she was not certain of (Pigada & Schmitt 2006). In addition, it increased the reliability of the data. Other than this, during such a process, the researcher also discovered what the majority of participants often confused, such as the spelling of some words: ‘litter and little’ and ‘save and safe’ since many of them seldom read English books. Also, a single rater (i.e. the interviewer or the researcher) meant that no interrater reliability check was applicable in this case (Pigada & Schmitt 2006).

### **3.4.6 Questionnaires**

Aiming to answer the third research question about what composes the reading motivation of those L2 junior secondary students of low English proficiency in Hong Kong, the extensive reading motivation questionnaire was designed. It was written in English, translated into Cantonese and then distributed to all the 70 participants prior to the start of the scaffolded ER activity. This questionnaire aimed to investigate whether the intrinsic or extrinsic factors or both motivated the secondary students or teenage readers, in particular, the weak ones, to read more extensively in English.

#### **3.4.6.1 Questionnaire 1 – Reading Motivation**

Generally, reading motivation itself is not directly observable nor is it easy to measure in an objective way. In light of this, the majority of researchers have tended to employ self-report data in order to access and understand the readers’ own views or perspectives and a precise measurement instrument would be developed by researchers to minimise the potential subjectivity of the self-report data. Among all the available reading motivation questionnaires, the most frequently adopted one is the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ), which was developed and tested by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997). However, the construct of this questionnaire seemed to be rather complicated and was deemed inappropriate for the present study. Consequently, the researcher designed her own questionnaire (see Appendix D1) so as to discover the most significant factor(s) which motivated the weak L2 readers to read more in English.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the questionnaire was designed based on self-determination theory

(Deci & Ryan 1985) with its essential concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation informing the construct of the reading motivation questionnaire in the current study. Aside from that, Day and Bamford's (1998) model of L2 reading motivation was also highly relevant to the construct of the reading motivation questionnaire.

A total of 18 statements was written on the ER motivation questionnaire. Half of them were designed by the researcher and the rest of them were developed on the basis of a previous study on L2 reading motivation (Komiyama 2009a). A 4-point Likert scale, ranging from '1=totally disagree with the statement/ very different from me, 2=disagree with the statement/ a little different from me, 3=agree to the statement/ a little like me and 4=totally agree to the statement/ a lot like me', was also extracted from Komiyama's study (2009a) to be included in this questionnaire.

The 18 statements pertinent to motivation for L2 reading include six dimensions of motivational factors: (1) intrinsic drive, (2) extrinsic drive to excel, (3) extrinsic academic compliance, (4) extrinsic test compliance, (5) extrinsic drive to receive incentives like reward, praise, recognition or attention, (6) extensive reading motivation (Appendix D2).

There were three statements in total in each dimension and they were all randomly placed in the questionnaire to counter-check if students seriously answered it and also to increase its reliability. In the questionnaire, the statements #5 – *It's fun for me to read about something I like in English*, #7 – *When the topic is interesting, I am willing to read a bit difficult English materials*, #17 – *I like reading English to learn some new words or something new about the people and things that interest me* were written to explore more about the intrinsic drive of the weak L2 learners.

In the questionnaire, the statements #6 – *I read more English books so that I can develop better reading skills for my future jobs or studies*, #10 – *I try to finish my English reading assignments (eg. writing English reports) on time*, #13 – *I read in English so that I can do my assignments (eg. writing book reports) exactly as what the teacher tells me to do* were written to gain a better understanding of the extrinsic drive to academic compliance among the weak L2 learners.

In the questionnaire, the statements #4 – *I like reading English when I can get some rewards (eg. food or coupons) after reading*, #9 – *Getting some rewards after reading can motivate me to read*

*English more, #15 – I like reading English when I have to share my reading with my teacher or friends/peers instead of writing book reports* were written to explore more about the extrinsic drive to receive incentives like rewards, praise, recognition or attention among the weak learners.

In the questionnaire, *the statements #3 – I am willing to work hard to read better than my friends/ classmates in English, #8 – I like my teacher or my friends to say that I read well in English, #16 – I want to be the best at reading in English* were written to investigate more about the extrinsic drive to excel among the weak L2 learners.

In the questionnaire, the statements *#1 – I like seeing my reading scores improve on tests/exams, #12 – I try to read in English because I need a good score on English tests/ exams, #18 – It is important for me to receive a good English reading score on reading tests/ exams for my future jobs* were written to scrutinise the extrinsic drive to test compliance among the weak L2 readers.

In the questionnaire, the statements *#2 – I like reading interesting books or graded readers when there are more colourful pictures or bigger fonts/ words inside the book, #11 – I like reading English books of shorter contents & the autonomy to choose any kind of books I prefer, #14 – I like reading easy English books with shorter sentences or easier words* were written to explore more about the extensive reading motivational factors among the weak L2 readers.

Upon receiving all the questionnaires from the 70 learners, the data were analysed and results presented in bar charts to show what factors motivated the weak L2 learners in reading English more. In addition, to ensure the reliability of the construct in the reading motivation questionnaire, factor analysis was adopted to examine the internal consistency for each factor using Cronbach's alpha (Suk 2015). After categorising different factors, each factor was found to have a relatively good reliability (Alpha = 0.734 for Factor 1, Alpha = 0.777 for Factor 2, Alpha = 0.671 for Factor 3) as indicated in the Table 3.4.

A thematic labelling of the variables for each factor was chosen. Factor 1 was comprised of three items: Reading for extrinsic rewards. Factor 2, Reading for academic achievement which consisted of nine items: three items from extrinsic test compliance, three items from extrinsic drive to excel, three items from extrinsic drive to academic compliance, were initially

determined. Factor 3, Reading for pleasure, entailed three items from intrinsic drive and three other items from extensive reading motivation.

**Table 3.4 – Factor Analysis**

Factor Labels and Reliabilities for the Motivation Factor (n=70)

Factor	Label	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Reading for Extrinsic Rewards	3	0.73374
2	Reading for Academic Achievement	8	0.78281
3	Reading for Pleasure	5	0.69301
Total		16	0.74261

For factor 1, the number of items reached optimal level, no item was required to be deleted.

For factor 2, originally there were 9 items and then it was found that if 1 item could be deleted, the Cronbach's Alpha increased from 0.77676 to 0.78281. For factor 3, originally there were 6 items and it was discovered that if 1 item could be deleted, the Cronbach's Alpha increased from 0.67184 to 0.69301. As a result, the final 16 items have Cronbach's alpha value: 0.74261.

Hence, when the number of items was small and the Alpha value is greater than 0.5, then it implied that the reliability was acceptable. In this case, all the 16 items were accepted. Seen in this light, the final 16 items in the motivation factors provided some reliable sources for the researcher to gain a better understanding of what might drive weak readers to read more in their L2 (Appendix D3).

### 3.5 The ER Intervention

This was a longitudinal study which lasted for 12 weeks. The preparation work for this ER intervention study commenced in November 2015 and the actual research study began on 3 January and ended on 1 April 2016.

The activities for the comparison group (G1) and the experimental group (G2), described further below, were exactly the same except for the reading strategies and also basic vocabulary

scaffolding which imply additional attention was given, in particular, to the experimental group.

- (a) Silent reading of self-selected books for 20-30 minutes (for both G1 and G2);
- (b) Oral/written reporting to the researcher about the contents of the story (for both G1 and G2);
- (c) Big-book sharing session in Week 0 & 7 (for both G1 and G2);
- (d) Book Blurb activity in Week 0 (for both G1 and G2);
- (e) Reading Board games in Week 0, 8 & 13 (for both G1 and G2 groups);
- (f) Scaffolded ER activities (for Group 2 only) – (a) vocabulary learning and revision for about 15 minutes, 3 times a week for 7 weeks and (b) reading strategy training and practices for about 30 minutes, 3 times a week for 4 weeks.

Hence, there was a difference between the comparison group (G1) where the participants were expected to engage in merely reading extensively (like what the majority of junior form students in other local schools were doing) and the experimental group (G2) where the students were requested to participate in the scaffolded ER activities after the end of 30-min ER session each time. The aim of this was to help the researcher to answer the first research question and determine whether or to what extent the implementation of a new scaffolded extensive reading programme can improve their reading comprehension ability and empower them to perform better in the second or foreign language learning context?

The activities of the three groups, namely Control Group, Comparison Group and Experimental Group during the 12-week ER intervention study are summarised in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5 – Activities of the Three Groups during the 12-week ER Intervention Study**

Week	Day	Comparison Group (G1)	Experimental Group (G2)	Control Group (G0)
0	I. II. III.	*Book blurbs activity 30 mins *Big-book sharing 30 mins *Reading board game: Set 1 <i>Space Voyage (Finding main ideas + Noting details)</i> 30 mins	*Book blurbs activity 30 mins *Big-book sharing 30 mins *Reading board game: Set 1 <i>Space Voyage (Finding main ideas &amp; noting details)</i> 30 mins	* Having regular English lessons only
1	I, II, III.	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (10 mins briefing + choosing books) (20 mins reading books)	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (10 mins briefing + choosing books) (20 mins reading books) <b>*Scaffolded activity 15 mins x 3</b> <b>Day I + II: Revising the verb-table with the main focus of the common irregular verbs (infinitive, past &amp; past-participle: eg. <u>go-&gt;went-&gt;gone</u>)</b> <b>Day III: Revision Quiz</b>	* Having regular English lessons only
2	I, II, III.	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books) <b>*Scaffolded activity 15 mins x 3</b> <b>Day I + II: Learning different but common first-1000 high frequency words</b> <b>Day III: Revision Quiz</b>	* Having regular English lessons only
3	I, II, III.	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books) <b>*Scaffolded Activity 15 mins x 3</b> <b>Day I + II: Learning different but common first-2000 high frequency words</b> <b>Day III: Revision Quiz</b>	* Having regular English lessons only
4	I, II, III.	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books) <b>*Scaffolded Activity 15 mins x 3</b> <b>Day I + II: Learning different but common first-2000 high frequency words</b> <b>Day III: Revision Quiz</b>	* Having regular English lessons only
5	I, II, III.	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)	*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books) <b>*Scaffolded Activity 15 mins x 3</b> <b>Day I + II + III: Learning 35 different but common first-1000, 2000 high frequency words</b>	* Having regular English lessons only
6		PUBLIC HOLIDAYS	PUBLIC HOLIDAYS	PUBLIC HOLIDAYS
7	I, II, III	*Big-book sharing 30 mins (20 mins reading the story together) (10 mins asking comprehension questions) *Silent reading 30 mins (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)	*Big-book sharing 30 mins (20 mins reading the story together) (10 mins asking comprehension questions) *Silent reading 30 mins x 2 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books) <b>*Scaffolded Activity 15 mins x 3</b> <b>Day I: Learning the meaning of some common prefixes</b> <b>Day II: Learning the meaning of some common suffixes</b> <b>Day III: Revision Quiz</b>	* Having regular English lessons only

8	I, II III	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 2 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p> <p>*Reading board game: Set 2 <i>Robot Rescue (Making Inferences + Predicting outcomes)</i> 30 mins</p>	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 2 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p> <p>*Reading board game: Set 2 <i>Robot Rescue (Making Inferences + Predicting outcomes)</i> 30 mins</p> <p><b>Scaffolded Activity 15 mins x 3</b></p> <p><b>Day I + II: Learning the different parts of speech of 20 words</b></p> <p><b>Day III: Revision Quiz</b></p>	* Having regular English lessons only
9.	I, II, III	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p>	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p> <p><b>*Scaffolded activity 30 mins x 3</b></p> <p><b>Day I: Reading strategy training - Sentence and Text chunking</b></p> <p><b>Day II: Reading strategy training – Rereading or Repetition</b></p> <p><b>Day III: Consolidation practices</b></p>	* Having regular English lessons only
10.	I, II, III	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p>	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p> <p><b>*Scaffolded activity 30 mins x 3</b></p> <p><b>Day I: Reading skill training - Skimming</b></p> <p><b>Day II: Reading skill training – Scanning</b></p> <p><b>Day III: Consolidation practices</b></p>	* Having regular English lessons only
11.	I, II, III	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p>	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p> <p><b>*Scaffolded activity 30 mins x 3</b></p> <p><b>Day I: Reading strategy training - Previewing &amp; Locating main ideas</b></p> <p><b>Day II: Reading strategy training -Predicting</b></p> <p><b>Day III: Consolidation practices</b></p>	* Having regular English lessons only
12.	I, II, III	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p>	<p>*Silent reading 30 mins x 3 (20 mins reading books) (10 mins oral reporting + choosing books)</p> <p><b>*Scaffolded activity 30 mins x 3</b></p> <p><b>Day I: Reading strategy training - Guessing meaning from the context and Making Inference</b></p> <p><b>Day II: Reading strategy training – Forward (minor focus) &amp; Backward (major focus) References, esp. using pronouns &amp; referents</b></p> <p><b>Day III: Consolidation practices</b></p>	* Having regular English lessons only
13.	I. II. III.	<p>*Reading board game: Set 3 <i>Jungle Journey (Sequencing + Finding cause &amp; effect)</i> 30 mins</p> <p>*Reading board game: Set 1 <i>Space Voyage (Finding main ideas + Noting details)</i> 30 mins</p> <p>*Reading board game: Set 2 <i>Robot Rescue (Making inferences + Predicting outcomes)</i> 30 mins</p>	<p>*Reading board game: Set 3 <i>Jungle Journey (Sequencing + Finding cause &amp; effect)</i> 30 mins</p> <p>*Reading board game: Set 1 <i>Space Voyage (Finding main ideas + Noting details)</i> 30 mins</p> <p>*Reading board game: Set 2 <i>Robot Rescue (Making inferences + Predicting outcomes)</i> 30 mins</p>	* Having regular English lessons only

The following subsections give a description of each of these activities in detail with justification of why the activities took place when they did.

### **3.5.1 Silent Reading of Self-selected Books**

The duration of the whole intervention study was three months (12 weeks in total excluding public holidays, Saturdays and Sundays). The participants of both comparison and experimental groups had to read graded plus levelled readers of their own choice independently for 11 consecutive weeks. As noted above, the participants were in two groups which were supervised and instructed by the researcher. The participants were required to read for 30 minutes (with a minimum of 20 minutes per day and a total of 60 minutes per week). During these 30 minutes, the researcher monitored the reading of the participants by walking around the room in an undisruptive manner and if any participants in the comparison group needed help, the researcher or the student helper, who was a sixth-former (in Grade 12), provided help with any unknown words asked about by the participants. Alternatively, the participants in the experimental group could also use the seven electronic dictionaries on the desks near them (two were broken after the first month) since electronic dictionary look-up provide quick and easy access of the word meaning. Also, it increased deliberate learning chances of the more difficult lexis and helped learners remember a word better (Knight 1994, Nation 2013). In addition, if the participants had learnt, in the scaffolded ER activity, how to make inferences for the unknown lexis from the context while reading, they could practise this inferencing skill during the reading process, followed by using the e-dictionary to confirm their guesses. The participants of the comparison group did not have any access to e-dictionaries at all.

In this three-month ER programme, there were two stages. In the first stage (i.e. the first two months), all the participants could only choose to read Level One (marked with a coloured label) of the available levelled readers (placed on the first two tables of the room) in the first month and then Level Two books (inclusion of graded readers) in the second month (placed on the third table), which were relatively shorter in content and had easier lexis and simpler sentence structure in order to facilitate the development of their reading fluency – see details above and Appendix E - for a description of books available.

Since the majority of the participants were relatively weak readers who “display greater lack of confidence, have more difficulty in assessing reading materials, (and) have a lower tolerance for

longer periods of reading activities” (Fujigaki 2009:290), the researcher opined that choosing something easier (at *i-1/ i-2 level*) for the participants, who had not developed any reading habits either in L1 or L2, to start with in the ER programme was indeed a kind of scaffolding to help motivate more and more students to make an attempt or spike more engagement in L2 reading with shorter texts plus more pictures or illustrations found in those levelled books.

The researcher assumed that the participants would find only little or even no difficulty in reading these graded and levelled readers of Level One and Two (which were written with upper-primary school kids as their target audience in mind) with 1000 (Level One books have more than those of Level Two books) and 2000 high frequency words and contained very few unknown words. Thus, it could somehow help develop their reading speed and fluency since the majority of them seldom read English books and had a relatively slow reading rate as compared with that of other more elite students of the same form or age group during the reading rate test.

What is more, as suggested by Nation (2015:139), “in a well-designed extensive reading course around two-thirds of this time should be spent on reading material which contains a small proportion of unknown words (around 2% of the running words). Around one-third of the time should be spent reading very easy material containing little or no unknown words with a focus on reading for fluency”. With reference to Gorsuch & Taguchi (2009), since reading fluency is composed of readers’ fast pace of reading, accuracy and automaticity in word recognition skills, when those weak readers engaged in the complex reading processes and read extensively some very easy materials embedded with shorter sentences or simpler syntactic structures, they would have few or even no problems in lower-order identification processing. This is because they could identify or recognize almost all of the words in those easy texts and become more automatized in reading without the need of devoting a lot of attention to the words around. Eventually they were able to read faster and faster through more and more practice of reading extensively.

As indicated earlier in Chapter Two (LaBerge & Samuels 1974), word recognition is one of the essential components in lower-order identification processing skills. When readers are able to develop automaticity in word recognition skills by means of repeated or extensive exposure to less complex print, they can allocate less attentional resources for lower-order identification processing and then direct more attentional resources to those higher-order processing skills like

understanding the relationship and the development of ideas within and between paragraphs in a text. In this way, it can immensely improve the comprehension of the text better since the total attentional resources which readers can employ at one time is of a very limited amount (Benjafield 1997).

Following that, in stage two, the Level Three and Four graded readers were introduced in the third or last month and placed on the fourth table of the room. These graded readers of Level Three and Four, which were written for Upper Primary Six (Grade 6) or junior Form One (Grade 7) students, were a bit more difficult and longer than those in Level One and Two and aimed to develop the reading proficiency of the participants and enrich their previously met vocabulary items. During the reading process, the participants of the experimental group were expected to also learn to apply some of the reading strategies being learnt in the scaffolded ER session in the third month.

There was only one library on the third floor of the main campus of the participating school for about 1000 students of the whole school to use during recess, lunch time and after school. The existing library was merely the size of two small classrooms which was not large enough for accommodating more than 30 students to read their books quietly during lunch-time and after school as the participating students would get disturbed amid the reading process while their schoolmates were entering the library for borrowing and returning books.

The books in this library were physically arranged as in other ordinary libraries, so they were placed vertically with only the book spines visible by the students searching for their desired books. There were graded readers in this library with labels classifying the books into easier and more difficult levels. However, most of the books (including those classified as easy) were likely to be boring to students with loads of small or medium-sized English words condensed in large paragraphs and with very few pictures or illustrations.

Moreover, there were not many books at easier levels – merely about 80 books for the students of the lower English proficiency in the whole school to choose and read. The classification of books as easier was probably because they were not as thick as those so-called ‘difficult’ books are. However, most of the ‘easier’ books had at least 10 to 20 pages – which was actually considered as ‘too much’ for those weak students who had not developed a habit of reading books in English,

according to what some students had mentioned in the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires submitted by the students of the previous 2014-15 cohort who participated in the pilot study of the ER intervention treatment.

With reference to the school records provided by the librarian, only very few students in both the comparison and experimental groups were in the habit of borrowing books, regardless of what language the books were written in, from the library to read. Those who borrowed books actually had borrowed one to two English books over the past three months (before the commencement of the ER intervention) simply because they had to submit a book report to their teacher.

After the researcher had made an evaluation of the school library, two new venues were therefore suggested by the school authority after taking the researcher's comments into consideration. Eventually the activity room in the main building was selected as the new venue for the comparison group of the 12-week ER intervention programme due to its easy access for the participants to return to their classrooms for attending the lessons after lunch-time. Moreover, the library in the school Annexe was finalised as another venue of the 12-week ER programme for the experimental group owing to its quiet and relaxed environment and because the participants would not be interrupted during the process of reading even when the other students were reporting the story to the researcher orally or drawing prizes after the completed oral report in another corner of the very spacious room. Comparatively, the activity room of the main building was a bit smaller than the library in the Annexe and students could not move as freely as they could but it was already the next best alternative available resource room when compared with the existing library of the main campus.

In order to encourage the participants to do more reading in the 12-week scaffolded ER programme, having a nice environment for the programme was essential. To set up a library in both the activity room during lunch-time and the Annexe library after school, the researcher arrived at the school an hour before lunch-time and then set up the library by taking all the books in various boxes of different colours from the library in the school Annexe to the activity room of the main building. Then she placed all the books with their cover (not the book spine) facing the readers on different long tables since many of the well-designed book covers with vivid colours were appealing and could always arouse the reading interests and also serve as a trigger for those reluctant L2 readers to make an attempt in reading the books. On each book cover, there was also

a coloured label showing its level of difficulty to guide the participants in selecting an appropriate book apart from applying the five-finger rule<sup>13</sup> suggested by the researcher before the commencement of the ER treatment. In this way, the participants could have an idea of what books they should choose by reading the number on the small coloured label of the book cover. There was also a notice on the wall informing the participants what different coloured labels represented.

Subsequent to that, the researcher set the table for the student-helper by placing a reward machine, a reward list as well as various kinds of rewards on the table so that the student-helper could take immediate action when the participants approached him or her for a reward. Finally, when the school bell rang, the researcher put paper-clips next to pieces of paper with each participant's name written on them on the table near the entrance of the activity room.

The participants of both the comparison and experimental groups had two different sets of big paper-clips: the yellow ones were for the comparison group whereas the green ones were for the experimental group. The use of the paper-clips served two purposes: firstly, when a participant had not finished that book yet, s/he could put the paper-clip on the book cover to indicate to other participants of his/ her group that this book had not been finished yet. Hence when the other participants saw the paper-clip of the same colour on the book cover, s/he would choose some other books without the same paper-clip instead. Moreover, the paper-clip could help the researcher counter-check if all the participants had attended the ER programme that day within the first five minutes since after counting the number of attendees each day, the remaining paper-clips would imply that participant had been absent that day and the researcher needed to approach him/her when s/he returned to school the next day.

When the participants entered the room, the first thing they did was either taking their own paper-clips and then selecting a book they would like to read or finding the book with their paper-clip and carrying on with the reading. When no student reported the story orally to the researcher, she spent 2-3 minutes doing the reading to act as a model for the students and help them settle their minds in the reading. Following that, she took a walk around the room in an undisruptive manner so as to monitor the participants to ensure that they were all on tasks doing the reading or

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<sup>13</sup> The five-finger rule is a method adopted when a student selects a book from the library for independent reading. For every unknown or unrecognised word found on a page, the student raises a finger. If s/he raises five fingers before completing the page, the book is probably too hard and the student should choose another (Allington 2006).

provide the necessary assistance to any participants in need.

Once the participants finished reading the graded or levelled readers during lunch-time, they put the books back to the original place. If any participants finished reading the book that day, s/he put the paper-clips on the table upon departure. When all the students left the room, the researcher started counting the number of paper-clips to double-check if all the participants had not taken away their paper-clips. In the first two weeks of the ER intervention, there were a few careless students who had forgotten to leave the paper-clips on the table before they left the room and the researcher had to approach him/her after school or the next day. To ensure the reliability of the whole ER programme, the researcher kept strict attendance record of all the participants in the comparison and experimental groups each day.

After that, the researcher started collecting the graded and levelled readers by putting them back into the appropriate coloured-boxes and then carried everything including the reward stuff back to the school Annexe library. Following that, the researcher took the similar procedures as what she did in the activity room in setting up the library in the school Annexe.

There were four main differences between the comparison and the experimental groups. The first two differences were the venue and time for holding the silent extensive session – Comparison group began reading in the activity room of the main school building during lunch time and Experimental group started reading after school in the school Annexe library, which was relatively more spacious. The third difference was that only the experimental group could have access to the electronic dictionaries whereas the comparison group could not. The fourth difference was about the organisation of the scaffolded activity after the 30-minute extensive reading session: Comparison group participants simply read their story books and then made an oral report to the researcher but experimental group participants had to attend the scaffolded activity for 15-30 minutes each time after the 30-min silent ER was over. These details of the treatment are summarised in Table 3.6.

**Table 3.6 - Similarities and Differences between the Comparison and Experimental Groups**

Group	Venue	15-min scaffolded ER Activity after reading	Reading Duration	Time	Reading materials & Rewards
<b>Comparison Group</b>	Activity Room	<b>NO</b>	<b>3 times/week</b> 20-22min silent reading + 3-5min selecting books + 5-min oral reporting for 11 weeks (one week for other related reading activities)	12:45-1:15pm (silent reading)	<b>Same (but no access of e-dictionaries while reading)</b>
<b>Experimental Group</b>	Annexe Library	<b>YES</b>	<b>3 times/week</b> 20-22 mins silent reading + 3-5 mins selecting books + 5 mins oral reporting for 11 weeks (another week for other related reading activities)	3:45-4:15pm (silent reading) 4:20-4:35pm <b>OR</b> (vocabulary learning activity) 4:20-4:50pm (reading strategy training activity)	<b>Same</b>

After confirming with the school principal that many of the books in the existing school library were not suitable for the students of low English proficiency to read, the principal kindly offered a budget of HK\$5000 to purchase some new books for the participants of the current research study to read. On the basis of the experience accumulated from organizing a pilot study of the ER intervention for the students of the previous 2014-15 cohort, the researcher had a good idea of what kinds of books the students of the relevant age group would find interesting to read. Hence the researcher knocked on the doors of different publishers and selected some interesting books with more pictures and words of a larger font which were suitable for the local higher primary students (Grade 4-6) to read since the aim of this ER programme was to help students boost their confidence in reading English and also encourage them to read more.

After the purchase of graded and levelled readers, the researcher put a coloured label on the cover of each item of reading material to help students find the most appropriate books easily and quickly. Since the graded and levelled readers were chiefly from six different publishers, each of these publishers had adopted a different way or system in grading the story books or dividing the levels according to headwords as well as the syntactic complexity and hence not all the books at the same level graded by different publishers are equally easy or difficult. For instance, Oxford

University Press grade the readers with 400 headwords as Level One but Stanford House grade the readers with 400 headwords as Level Three. Thus, it was necessary for the researcher to re-grade all the books in a more systematic way so that the participants could find the most appropriate books easily and quickly while they were choosing the books.

Since conducting the pilot study of the similar ER intervention study with the students of the previous 2014-15 cohort until the start of the similar ER programme with the students of 2015-16 in the same participating school, the researcher had read almost all of these newly-purchased graded readers since the level of these books was relatively low and most books are just less than 50 pages printed in large or medium-sized font. Using the brochures and headwords reported by different publishers, the information on the Extensive Reading Foundation website ([www.erfoundation.org](http://www.erfoundation.org)) and the researcher's own experience after reading almost all the books, the researcher re-categorised the books into four levels: Level 1 beginner, Level 2 elementary to pre-intermediate, Level 3 intermediate and Level 4 mid-intermediate by making use of various coloured labels with the number of different levels written on them. Then each level of books was placed on different long tables which were quite distant from one another.

In the first two months of the intervention study, not all four levels of books were put on the long tables for the participants to choose but only books of Level One and Two. This was because the researcher expected all the participants in both comparison and the experimental groups would need to increase their confidence of reading in English as well as their speed plus fluency of L2 reading incrementally and gradually. Hence, to many weak or struggling readers who had not developed any habit of reading in English in their academic repertoire, the books of Level One and Two would appear appropriate or even a bit difficult for some of the extremely weak readers when considering their current reading ability. In the third month of the intervention study, the researcher added the books of Level Three and Four onto the tables for the participants to choose.

Prior to the start of the ER programme, there was a briefing session for all the participants. In the briefing session, the participants were informed of the new arrangement during lunch-time and after school together with the procedures and the routine work after entering the activity room of the main building and the library in the school Annexe. In addition, some of the weak students in the previous 2014-15 cohort mentioned in the semi-structured interviews with the researcher after the pilot study of the ER programme that they did not like reading in English mainly because

many of the words in the English books are difficult. In view of this, how to select an appropriate book to enable them to read independently was also introduced. In other words, all the participants were supposed to understand, after attending the briefing session, how to choose a book of an appropriate level for themselves on the first day they joined the ER programme by asking themselves a question as they were flipping over to any pages of the selected book randomly, that is, “Can I read the book without using any dictionary?” Subsequent to that, they should apply the five-finger rule (Allington 2006) which implies that if there were five words or more on a page which the participants had no idea of, then the book might be considered too difficult for them and they should choose an easier book instead.

### **3.5.2 Oral or Written Reporting to the Researcher**

Initially while planning and organising the study, the researcher intended to use the M-reader website (Robb 2011), which is a convenient and relatively less time-consuming way to keep track of readers' progress and the number of words read in books (see <https://mreader.org/mreaderadmin/s/>). However, the readers selected for the study were not included in M-reader and could not be added onto the website. So, to make the weak readers accountable for their reading as suggested by Reutzel & Juth (2014) in their study, the researcher eventually had to ask the participants to report the story in oral or written format instead. By asking them to do so, the researcher, on one hand, tried to make the students feel like they were just sharing the story with somebody after reading and help them reduce their affective filter or at least feel less stressed in the whole reading process and, on the other hand, the researcher could judge if the students really had read the story by asking them a few questions such as:

- (i) Briefly could you share with me what the story is all about ? OR/AND
- (ii) Who is your most or least favourite character in the story ? OR/AND
- (iii) Which part of the story impressed you most and why ? OR/AND
- (iv) If you had to buy a birthday present for the main character in the story, what would it be and why ?

To help the researcher understand whether the participants had enjoyed the story, students were required to report to the researcher in the oral or written format either in English or their native language. Every time a participant finished reading the story, s/he had to come forward to the researcher to report the story orally. Each time only one student was allowed to report the story

orally in English or Cantonese to the researcher and any other students who wanted to also give an oral report to me were given a number card (No. 2, 3 or 4...) which indicated to him or her that s/he might need to wait for about 5/10/15 minutes and s/he could continue choosing another book to read while waiting to give the oral report. Each student was required by the researcher to spend five minutes reporting the story orally, with the help of her questions guiding them in the process of making the oral report. There was a timer (with five minutes set ahead) adjacent to the researcher to control the reporting time and the next student would be called upon by the researcher when the first student finished the oral reporting. When possible, if the researcher was too busy or there were a number of students waiting to report the story orally, the student helper took the researcher's place.

Alternatively, if there were too many students (e.g. more than five students who finished reading a book simultaneously), then the participants could also choose to share their book with the researcher in a written report by filling in a form prepared for this (See Appendix F) and the students had to write similar things they would have said to the researcher as they had to share in the oral report. There was no maximum word limit for the written report. On the form, students had to write at least 50 words in whatever language, L1 or L2, they preferred, to the researcher about the book they had read. However, from the beginning of the ER intervention study up till the end of it, only a few students used the written book report. The vast majority preferred reporting the story orally as they could get immediate feedback after that.

Every participant was informed before the commencement of the ER programme that a book would only be counted as read if s/he did the oral or written report, in any language they preferred. After the oral report was given/ the written report submitted, the researcher took a mobile phone photo of the book cover with the participant's name on a slip of paper clipped to the book not only to make sure students read books but also to find out if there was a problem. If a student was found lagging behind the others in the number of books read when compared with his/her peers, then the researcher would have a brief discussion with that particular participant to see if s/he needed any further assistance to enable him/her to read more efficiently. The top 10 highest readers among all the participants were given prizes so as to encourage them to read more and more. These prizes were book coupons funded by the researcher's savings.

This process resulted in data with records of number of total words read by each student after the end of the 12-week intervention study. Every week the researcher updated on her log for each student the titles as well as the dates of all the books which s/he had read. In general, the researcher observed that the vast majority (90%) of students reported the story orally and they obtained a reward right away. Once every participant finished reporting the story to the researcher, s/he went to the student helper to collect the reward. For the written reports, the researcher had to check them, which sometimes meant the student got their reward a day later - drawing an M&M chocolate in one of five different colours from a candy machine.

Each colour of the chocolate represented a different additional reward. This motivated the students by the excitement of not knowing what they would get eventually and in fact, according to what the students expressed in the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix H), getting a reward was the most exciting part of the whole ER treatment. The colours operated as follows, with the student helper assisting: a green M&M chocolate meant a can of a popular drink; a blue one meant choosing a snack (eg. potato crisps/ chocolate bars/ biscuits) from the student helper's table; a yellow one meant the student could finish the reading session five minutes earlier that day or receive an alternative of cup noodles (available in the last month); a brown one resulted in a food coupon for a McDonald's restaurant or the tuck shop and the red one (of limited supply in the machine) led to a 20-dollar book coupon for the participant to buy any books or stationery in a bookshop of one's choice. The researcher funded all these rewards.

The reward was considered something very attractive by the participants - as was clear from what they mentioned in the interview protocols (see Appendix H). This was simply because the reward is something which satisfies the basic physiological needs of a participant at that moment. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), on his pyramid the most basic are those of a physiological nature: food and shelter. In the case of this intervention study, almost all of the participants had to attend school from 8 am till 3:40 pm. These teenagers were hungry after school as well as during lunch-time (despite having finished their lunch-boxes in the classroom) and probably more than usual because they had to attend the Extensive Reading programme either after school or during lunch-time. Normally they would have bought snacks at those times of the day but now the participants could receive them (as a reward after reading a graded reader), which was indeed motivating. Moreover, according to what the participants said in the

semi-structured interviews, giving them such rewards in the form of a game added fun to the entire ER treatment since they did not know what colour they would draw and also what reward they would get.

If, unfortunately, they drew a colour which could not help them get what they had been hoping for, the candy machine could act as a kind of motivation to keep the participants reading more in order to obtain another chance for drawing another M&M from the machine again to get their desired reward. To avoid students getting bored with the same kind of game, there was a change of game in the last month. The M&M machine was replaced by a candy grabber which had long been a popular game among youngsters in Hong Kong. That the choice of introducing a new game was a good one was confirmed when some participants mentioned this reward game in the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix H).

In addition, as observed by the researcher in encountering various kinds of weak or struggling L2 readers in different low-banding schools, almost all of the weak readers tend to have lower reading proficiency and hence, as noted above, the Matthew Effect applies (Stanovich 1986). Owing to the impoverished basic or high-frequency lexicons acquired by the struggling readers, they seldom take the initiative in L2 reading as they reckoned they would not understand the content of the book and would, therefore, be discouraged from reading or not bother to waste time on such meaningless plus time-consuming reading activities at all.

Moreover, if a teacher intends to enhance the reading fluency or even proficiency of those weak L2 secondary school learners (Grade 8), who are most probably entering the puberty stage physically and some may even be preparing themselves to approach the adolescent stage mentally, s/he may opt to encourage them to keep reading those easy story books with easier lexis plus simpler syntactic structures like fairy tales or fables which were supposed to have primary school kids as their intended reader. As a consequence, this appeared to be a dilemma: the majority of the weak L2 secondary school learners, who are cognitively or affectively developing, probably may not appeal to those simple or ‘childish’ story books with naïve or not challenging enough contents in L2 or may fail to sustain interests in reading those easy books. Ironically, for those books or magazines with more sophisticated or interesting contents, most of the lexis and sentence structures being employed in them very often are relatively more

complicated and are deemed difficult in the eyes of the weak readers. As a result, even though the weak learners may appear to be more curious in reading the contents of those books, they will surrender eventually as they neither understand nor find pleasure in reading those authentic books or magazines due to a weak linguistic foundation in their L2. Consequently, they may resort to playing online games instead of reading those English books.

Hence to address the dilemma in such a reading situation, the researcher realised that it was of utmost significance to add pleasure, which is an essential ingredient that can fuel the intrinsic motivation to read, into the entire reading experience so that the reading interests of these weak learners could be sustained before they had grasped or learnt more basic or high frequency words to enable them to read books with relatively more ‘difficult’ or ‘sophisticated’ contents.

### **3.5.3 Scaffolded Reading Strategies and Vocabulary Learning**

As mentioned above, prior to the commencement of the intervention study, all the participants were given reading and vocabulary pretests to determine their vocabulary level as well as their reading proficiency in English (see Chapter 4). Once the researcher calculated their scores, (10%) seven of the weak students and three top-scorers, as revealed in the average marks gained in the reading comprehension tests, were invited to participate in a think-aloud experiment. This aimed to help the researcher to explore more about their problems or strengths amid the reading process and guide her in designing the scaffolded materials to support the experimental group learners.

Generally speaking, scaffolding can be defined as some sort of temporary or short-term instructional assistance (eg. explanations of difficult vocabulary items) which teachers provide to aid learners in acquiring some new concepts, skills or levels of understanding and later the scaffolding or support can then be removed or withdrawn gradually and incrementally until the learners are able to perform independently on task (Hammond & Gibbons 2005, Hogan & Pressley 1997).

Haynes & Baker (1993) concluded that the greatest barrier to reading comprehension was largely attributed to an inadequacy of the amount of lexis known and hence learners without steady and sufficient amount of vocabulary growth will experience severe difficulties in comprehending successfully thanks to the robust connection between lexical development and reading comprehension. Hunt & Beglar (2005) and Alemi & Tayebi (2011) echoed such notion by

recommending a multifaceted framework or approach, which included:

1) incidental or implicit learning, 2) intentional or explicit instruction and 3) development of independent learning strategies, to facilitate learners in expanding their lexical size systematically and tackling their reading problems strategically, resulting in an overall improvement in reading proficiency. Hence all these three elements formed the basis of the scaffolded extensive reading (SER) intervention which aimed to assist weak L2 experimental group learners in achieving the aforementioned targets.

### **3.5.3.1 Implicit or Incidental Learning**

Recall from Chapter 2 that incidental or implicit learning is defined as “without learners’ awareness of an upcoming retention test, or without learners’ deliberate decision to commit information to memory” (Laufer & Hulstijn 2001:11) and reading extensively is one example of incidental or implicit learning as learners are required to attend to and then notice input (Schmitt 1994b).

Over the past three decades, a vast amount of previous research studies has indicated the massive benefits of reading extensively in improving reading, writing, speaking and, in particular, vocabulary acquisition. Since “the heart of language comprehension and use is the lexicon” (Hunt & Belgar 2005:24), engaging in more extensive reading activities provides a myriad of opportunities for more repeated exposures in contexts which are, in fact, the prerequisites for developing one’s vocabulary size, consolidating new lexical knowledge<sup>14</sup> and elaborating the semantic knowledge of usage as well as collocations and also building up fluency (Hunt & Beglar 2005).

In light of all these benefits, all the 70 participants in the current study were divided into comparison and experimental groups participating in the ER activities by spending about 30 minutes three times per week in reading the book(s) they had selected during lunch time or after school respectively for 11 weeks. Moreover, in the case of the current study, where most, if not all, participants had low or no motivation in L2 reading, some extra motivational elements (such

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<sup>14</sup> Lexical knowledge is often classified into breadth and depth (Milton 2009, Wesche & Paribahkt 1996). Milton (2009:13) defines breadth of lexical knowledge as “the number of words a learner knows” or has some superficial knowledge of or resemble of one’s vocabulary size (i.e. how many words one can recognize, recall or produce) whereas depth of lexical knowledge as “what the learner knows about these words” and also how well (in terms of form, meaning & use) the learner knows about a word (Wesche & Paribahkt 1996).

as extrinsic rewards via the use of a candy machine) were included to act as a kind of scaffolding, add pleasure into their monotonous reading processes and also sustain the reading interests of the weak L2 participants.

### **3.5.3.2 Explicit or Intentional Instruction**

Explicit or intentional instruction entails “conscious attention to, and awareness of, the specific skills or language knowledge that a reader is focusing on. It requires rehearsal (in working memory) to establish a first memory of the information which can then be registered in long-term memory and reactivated for subsequent explicit processing. For instance, this can be learning word meanings by practising with flash cards” or teaching learners “about word parts and word roots in order to (help them) remember word meaning” or how to “use conscious strategies while trying to understand a difficult text” (Grabe 2009:61).

Ellis (1994) proposed two hypotheses in processing new lexis: the implicit/incidental vocabulary learning hypothesis and the explicit/ intentional vocabulary learning hypothesis. For the former one, lexis learning is not planned by either the learner or the instructor and is actually the by-product of the reading activity. During the reading process, the meaning of new vocabulary is acquired from the context without the learner being conscious or aware of it, which is, in fact, the dominant mode of how native speakers or L1 learners acquire vocabulary (Nagy & Herman 1985, Nagy 1997). In contrast, the latter one refers to the explicit instruction or deliberate efforts made by the learner or the instructor to intentionally learn or teach some lexis with a view to expanding the lexical knowledge of the learners and hence it may require learners to memorize or recite the meaning of the target words by means of various sorts of conscious vocabulary learning or teaching strategies (Nation 1990).

Specifically speaking, if a L2 learner is going to adopt the implicit/ incidental hypothesis in L2 vocabulary learning by means of extensive as well as multiple exposures to the lexis while reading extensively, which resembles the way or follow the same route of how a L1 learner learns (Nagy & Herman 1987), s/he can simply engage him/herself more in doing plenty of reading, then s/he should naturally acquire more lexis since incidental/ implicit hypothesis maintains that lexis learning in L2 is largely acquired from reading in contexts. However, Laufer (2003, 2005a, 2005b) contended that an underlying fault was identified in the default hypothesis, that is, those

L2 learners are assumed that they can always have adequate reading input as new vocabulary items should have appeared repetitively in the reading process and learners are also under the assumption that they can notice some unfamiliar lexis in the text and then infer the meaning of the unknown lexis successfully, which can result in word retention or memorization in the long run. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in reality.

According to Laufer (2003, 2005a, 2005b) based on empirical evidence, the aforesaid phenomenon may not occur all the time, especially in the case of the participants in the current study who have little stamina plus limited vocabulary power in reading as well as comprehending an English text and since these L2 learners have a weak linguistic foundation, they may experience ‘beginner’s paradox’ (Coady 1997) while beginning to read extensively.

In other words, they may encounter the paradoxical situation of having to learn an abundance of vocabulary items via extensive reading, yet they may not actually know sufficient lexis themselves to start with reading extensively, and hence not to mention obtaining any benefits from the incidental learning which took place during ER activities (Coady 1997). As a consequence, these weak learners may not necessarily locate those unfamiliar words in the reading text as those unknown words may not necessarily appear repetitively in different texts and even if the learners can, they may not make the expected inference of meaning from the context. Finally, when they can really guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words correctly, this may not lead to the retention of the “guessed” words necessarily as that really depends on whether the L2 learner has applied any appropriate vocabulary learning strategies which will be conducive to his/her word retention in the long run. In view of these, it is crystal clear that incidental/implicit vocabulary learning always has its own shortcomings which requires, to a certain extent, the intentional/ explicit vocabulary instruction or learning to complement with.

In addition, recall from Chapter Two that numerous previous research studies which examined the role of incidental as well as intentional vocabulary acquisition indicated the power of explicit instruction or learning over the incidental/ implicit one. As mentioned previously in Chapter Two, Zimmerman, who reported on a research study in 1997, discovered that learners accomplishing a number of interactive lexis exercises after participating in the ER activities outperformed those who plainly read.

Paribakht & Wesche (1997) also obtained similar findings when they asked the participants in the ‘reading plus’ group to read a text and then complete a list of vocabulary exercises, such as recognising form and meaning as well as producing morphologically related words. On the other hand, they asked the participants in another group, the reading-only group, to simply read additional texts without doing any lexical exercises after reading. A comparison of the performances of both groups in the vocabulary tests later indicated that the ‘reading plus’ group learned more lexis than the ‘reading only’ group.

Hence, in the case of the current study, since numerous participants were found to be weak in vocabulary after the vocabulary pretest had been administered prior to the commencement of the study, the experimental group was eventually provided explicit instruction of some selected lexical items in addition to the silent extensive reading and implicit learning of lexis. In this way, the researcher could further investigate the effectiveness of the explicit instruction in aiding the weak learners to acquire more basic or fundamental vocabulary items, thereby facilitating them in making more improvement in reading comprehension.

### **3.5.3.3 Independent Strategy Development**

In the present study, independent strategy development involves providing an abundance of reading strategy training to learners so as to enable them to select from an array of strategies which are most appropriate in facilitating them to read more efficiently and effectively (Oxford 1990, Nation 2001).

Precisely speaking, reading strategies refers to any deliberate or purposeful actions or cognitive procedures which readers take consciously or at least partially conscious to develop an understanding of what they read (Griffiths 2008). These reading strategies include skimming, scanning, predicting, guessing, rereading, making inferences, activating general or previous knowledge, following references as well as identifying the main ideas from other subordinate ideas (Barnett 1988).

As indicated in section 3.4.4, prior to the start of the ER intervention, think-aloud experiments were conducted to explore the different strategy uses by the proficient and non-proficient L2 readers while reading a text. Overall, the results of these think-aloud experiments corroborate

with the previous research findings (Hepburn 1992, Vann & Abraham 1987) that strong L2 readers tend to have more consistent and greater varieties of strategy use whereas weak learners tend to have very limited and non-consistent use of strategies in the process of language learning.

When those non-proficient L2 readers comprehended a text, most of them simply resorted to translating those English words into their native language. However, since most weak learners usually have impoverished lexical knowledge, they may inevitably encounter a lot of unknown words amid the reading process, thereby failing in translating the meaning of many L2 words into their L1. In addition, some of them solely engaged in some bottom-up strategies or even had no knowledge at all about strategies. Eventually, they skipped all the unfamiliar words and never went back to re-read the whole sentence or paragraph so as to guess the meaning of the unknown words with the help of the context. As a result, they could not grasp the overall meaning of the text.

On the other hand, when the proficient L2 learners read a text, they employed greater varieties of strategies during the reading process, such as skimming, scanning and predicting the content of the reading passage by looking at the title (if any) and/or the comprehension questions of the text. What is more, they used some previous knowledge in the process of interpreting some difficult parts of the text, questioning the meaning of a clause or a sentence, rereading, integrating information, making an inference, guessing the meaning of the unknown words and monitoring their comprehension. Aside from these, when the proficient L2 learners met some unfamiliar words in the reading process, they would eliminate those irrelevant difficult words, make an attempt in identifying the parts of speech of those challenging words and guess their meanings either from other parts of the sentence or via their background knowledge. All these, by and large, echo with the research findings of Hosenfeld (1984) who identified similar strategy uses among the learners with higher proficiency while processing a text.

As aforementioned in section 2.7.4, since the 1970s, Rubin (1975) has pioneered in investigating the strategies employed by those successful language learners as she held the assumption that, once identified, such strategies could also be applied to help the weak language learners in enhancing their language proficiency. In the same vein, Palincsar & Brown (1984) and Bereiter & Bird (1985) believed that strategy instruction with a focus on comprehension monitoring could

facilitate weak L2 readers in overcoming their reading difficulties. For instance, according to Bereiter & Bird (1985), teachers can give some weak readers direct instruction of various good reading strategies adopted by those proficient L2 readers one by one so that those weak participants can identify when a particular strategy can be applied in solving their comprehension problems. Following that, with reference to Palincsar & Brown (1984), teachers can model a particular strategy in front of the weak readers followed by providing them some practice in the form of pair or group work.

Recall from Chapter Two that a myriad of research studies advocated the positive effects of strategy training, which are conducive to building effective as well as independent learning habits among L2 learners in the long run (O’ Malley & Chamot 1990, Wenden & Rubin 1987). Seen in this light, an independent reading strategy training was conducted in the third/ last month of the scaffolded ER intervention in the hope that this would help the weak L2 readers become aware of the benefits and significance of the strategy use, thereby encouraging them to learn how to select and employ strategies which are most useful and appropriate to them in their learning contexts.

### **3.5.3.4 Schedule and Content of the Scaffolded ER Activities**

As mentioned earlier, grounded on the framework for developing reading vocabulary for EFL learners proposed by Hunt & Beglar (2005) together with the multifaceted approach suggested by Alemi & Tayebi (2011), the researcher designed the scaffolded reading materials so as to broaden the weak L2 learners’ lexical knowledge and enhance their reading comprehension ability.

These materials were designed to equip the weak or struggling readers with several reading skills or strategies and some vocabulary knowledge based on those 1000- and 2000- high frequency lexis as suggested by the vocabulary lists developed by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong (Curriculum Development Council [CDC] 2012). The lexical items in these lists were initially chosen according to the sources of information relating to English word frequency in (a) “*a general service list of English Words*<sup>15</sup>(GSL)” (West 1953 in CDC 2012:273) and (b) “*the British*

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<sup>15</sup> “This list, popularly known as the GSL, contains around 2,000-word families and is regarded as the classic list of the 2,000 most useful words for second language learners. Although the list was compiled over fifty years ago, most of the items are still regarded as essential for language learners” (CDC 2012:273).

*National Corpus<sup>16</sup>(BNC)*”(2007 in CDC 2012:274) plus (c) “*the Academic Wordlist<sup>17</sup>*” (Coxhead 2000 in CDC 2012:274). Later, some further editing of the vocabulary lists was made after analysing the word content of the different English coursebooks on the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) Recommended Textbook List in Hong Kong together with the modules as well as communicative functions recommended in the CDC Curriculum Guides prepared and compiled by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong. Furthermore, numerous primary plus secondary school language practitioners were invited to attend some meetings where they had to select the more appropriate lexis to be included into the vocabulary lists which could cater for the learning needs, interests plus the cognitive aspects for the varied levels of L2 learners (CDC 2012).

As shown in Table 3.7, these activities took place with the experimental group three times a week for a total of 45 minutes weekly in the first two months and a total of 90 minutes in the third month. Each time after the experimental group had finished their silent extensive reading and reporting the story, obtaining their reward and choosing another book to read next, they had to stay behind in the Annexe library and then the researcher spent another 15 mins with them in the first two months teaching them some new basic vocabulary knowledge or another 30 mins in the third month providing them some training in reading skills and strategies. These were as follows:

**Table 3.7 – Contents of the 3-month Scaffolded ER Activities**

<b>Lexis</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> +2 <sup>nd</sup> months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing the meaning of about 100 high-frequency 1000 to 2000 word</li> <li>Introducing the concept of parts of speech for some high-frequency vocabulary</li> <li>How to guess the meaning from the prefix or suffix of a new or unknown word</li> </ul>
<b>Reading skills</b> (3 <sup>rd</sup> month)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skimming</li> <li>Scanning</li> </ul>
<b>Reading Strategies</b> (3 <sup>rd</sup> month)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previewing and locating main ideas</li> <li>Sentence chunking and rereading</li> <li>Backward (Anaphoric) and Forward (Cataphoric) References</li> <li>How to guess the meaning of the words from the context</li> <li>How to make inferences from the text</li> </ul>

<sup>16</sup> “The BNC is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken English from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of current British English, both spoken and written. The 4,000 most frequent words from BNC were considered for inclusion in the Hong Kong lists” (CDC 2012:274).

<sup>17</sup> “This list contains 570 words that occur frequently across disciplines in academic texts. The items were identified from a study of the textbooks used to teach first-year undergraduate students at English-medium universities” (CDC 2012:274).

The first two months were set to have some explicit instruction of common vocabulary items by the researcher with the aim of helping the experimental group learners expand their lexical knowledge since the performance of all the participants in the vocabulary pretest administered before the scaffolded ER activities was not satisfactory at all. Also, it depicted the fact that they could not completely recognize the past form of some irregular verbs, not to mention their meanings. Apart from this, their lexical knowledge of those 1000- and 2000- high frequency words was found to be insufficient as revealed in the vocabulary pretest.

According to Laufer (1997), a learner needs to acquire at least 95% lexical coverage or lexical threshold<sup>18</sup> level in reading so as to achieve minimal reading comprehension. With reference to Hirsh & Nation (1992:690), this is the first threshold “where there is one unknown word in every two lines”, and entails a vocabulary size of 3,000 word families that amounts to approximately 5,000 lexical items/ running words/ tokens in total since a word family equals to the base form plus the derived and inflected forms (e.g. hike, hikes, hiker, hiking). As Laufer (1997:21) opined that for L2 learners the “threshold for reading comprehension is, to a large extent, lexical”, once a learner has acquired sufficient basic words, Laufer (1997) maintains that capable L1 readers are probably able to transfer their reading strategies to their L2.

On the other hand, Hu and Nation (2000; Schmitt, Jiang & Grabe 2011) advocated that most learners need to attain 98% lexical coverage or threshold level (i.e. to know about 98% of the running words in a L2 passage for lexis not causing any obstacles in comprehension). In accordance to Hirsh & Nation (1992:690), this is “the second threshold where the density of known to unknown words becomes significantly less” and is similar to acquiring a vocabulary size of 5,000 word families (or 8,000 lexical items/ running words/tokens in total) for adequate or optimal comprehension, thereby helping learners to guess more unknown vocabulary items from the context more correctly (Coady 1997). Hence, in such a way of deduction, when learners have lexical coverage lower than 95%, it will aggravate their problems in reading owing to a deficient amount of vocabulary known amid the reading process. Ironically, even if they have learnt some reading strategies like making inference from the context to help guess the meaning of the unknown lexis, yet they do not have adequate lexical knowledge to help them make the right

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<sup>18</sup> Lexical coverage or threshold level refers to the percentage of vocabulary items a reader should know to help him/her to comprehend successfully most parts of the reading text being read, which is largely related to the learners' vocabulary size (Laufer 2013).

guess of the word meaning. This can be ascribed to the fact that the words surrounding the unknown lexis are also difficult for the L2 learners with a view to their impoverished lexical knowledge (Hirsch 2003).

With reference to Coady (1997), he proposed that for L2 learners, lexis in input can be categorised into roughly three groups: (1) sight vocabulary items, whose forms or meanings can be easily or automatically recognised without any context; (2) lexis which the learner has partial knowledge of the spelling as well as the meaning and is only recognized with the aid of a context; and (3) words which the learner has no idea of the meanings and may require him or her to make an inference of the unknown word meaning from the context or check the meaning from a dictionary.

Coady et al. (1993) indicated that sight vocabulary items (groups 1 & 2) which are of high frequency in nature should be learned via explicit instruction or by means of repeated exposure in reading. However, for those less frequent or low frequency words, such as those in group 3, they should be best learned incidentally through strategic reading while reading extensively with the help of a context because these low frequency words can merely be learned after building a sound lexical knowledge (ie. with a considerable amount of high frequency words being learnt), thereby developing a significant level of automaticity in word decoding and enabling incidental learning to occur via reading extensively. Hence, according to Coady's framework (1997), the first 1000- and 2000- high frequency vocabulary items should be acquired through explicit instruction.

Seen in this light, it was of pivotal importance for the weak learners in the present study to learn more 1000- and 2000- high frequency words (something which they should have acquired a lot during their elementary school years) so as to broaden their lexical knowledge. Then the automatic recognition of an enormous amount of those 1000- and 2000- high frequency lexis, which often appear in any reading texts, would free the cognitive resources required to make an inference of the unfamiliar word meaning and the general meaning of the text (Coady 1997).

Thus, in the first seven weeks of the first two months, the participants in the experimental group, due to the time constraints, were given explicit lexis instruction by means of colourful flashcards about 100 common or high-frequency English words coupled with the various dimensions of the

lexis or parts of speech. Aside from these, the concept of word formation, such as the meaning of some common prefixes and suffixes, was taught via PowerPoint. Moreover, the participants were advised to install a Dictionary App on their mobile phone to help them record the words learnt for memorization of the word meaning so that they could revise them, whenever necessary, for the upcoming revision quiz per week. In addition, all these new vocabulary items were presented in a contextualized manner, that is, in the form of a sentence on the worksheet and they had to finish it after the word-card presentation by filling in the correct word in the appropriate blank.

Furthermore, to avoid overloading the weak learners, only 10-15 new lexical items were introduced to the participants in each scaffolded ER activity per session. Once the fundamental competence of those high frequency words was achieved, the reading input could become more comprehensible in the eyes of the struggling L2 learners. Then this acted as the basic scaffolding which assisted the researcher to further ‘scaffold’ the weak readers by means of including some motivational elements (eg. the candy machine) into the programme to enhance the motivation level of those non-engaged or low-motivated readers to read, thereby fostering more engaged or involved reading to develop their reading fluency (Taboada & McElvany 2009).

Finally, another kind of scaffolding provided to the weak learners was having quizzes as a form of spaced revision and consolidation of the new vocabulary items they have learned throughout the week. With reference to Schmitt (2010), “it is also important how the students revise their vocabulary. It seems that when learning new information, most forgetting occurs soon after the end of the learning session. It is (, therefore,) critical to have a review session soon after the learning session, but less essential as time goes on”. In view of this, a brief revision of all the lexis was held every time before the end of the explicit instruction session and, after a few days, the participants in the experimental group would be given a short revision test to facilitate them in remembering the newly-learnt lexis plus a better retention in their long-term memory.

However, one exception was that there were 35 new words introduced during the whole week five. Participants were reminded that there were no quizzes or revision at the end of the day or week and it was not necessary to use their mobile phone to record the words learnt for memorization since the researcher wanted to find out the answer of the second research question: *which approach(es), the intentional or the incidental or a combination of both, is/are more effective in aiding the weak L2 readers to enrich their vocabulary banks* by investigating if the

benefits of explicit/ intentional instruction received by the experimental group regarding vocabulary learning could outweigh those of the implicit/ incidental vocabulary learning adopted by the comparison group via the use of a vocabulary knowledge scale test developed by Paribakht and Wesche (1993) as a pretest and a posttest. All the 35 words on the word cards were introduced once only in the scaffolded ER activities.

Subsequent to the explicit learning of some basic lexis, in the third month of the scaffolded ER activities, the participants in the experimental group had to undergo a reading strategy training and were instructed explicitly how to employ an array of strategies (major emphasis) as well as how to activate the metacognition (minor emphasis) in aiding them to read more efficiently and effectively. After that, some golden opportunities were provided for them to practise, discuss and describe those strategies already learnt recently before showing them some other available new strategies which they can employ (Salataci & Akyel 2002).

Hence from Week Nine to Week Twelve, after finishing the ER activity each time, the learners were asked to stay behind for an extra 30 minutes three times a week and they would be introduced a new strategy (via PowerPoint sometimes plus a worksheet embedded with that new strategy) for about 20 minutes on Day I of the week followed by a brief 10-min session about practising how to employ the learnt reading strategy independently in a short reading text. On Day II of the week, another new strategy was instructed, with the aid of a few instructional materials and PowerPoint again, followed by the same procedure as that on the first day. Finally, on Day III of Week 10 to Week 12 (except Week 9), the researcher would demonstrate or model how she employed some of the strategies taught during the week while reading a short text. Following that, a collaborative consolidation practice in the form of a pair-work activity was provided, which resembles a short or mini think-aloud protocol, to the learners so that they could have a chance to describe to an audience or a partner and discuss the strategies they utilized in accomplishing the brief reading tasks so that both of them could compare the differences between them and also evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies adopted, thereby consolidating the learning of the new strategies during the week.

To start off, in the first week of the third month (Week Nine), the participants were intentionally taught some reading strategies, which could improve their lower-order identification skills, such as sentence and text chunking and rereading/repetition in order to help them understand the ways

to deal with long sentences and extended texts so as to read better and more rapidly.

On Day I of Week 9, the researcher first highlighted in the scaffolded ER activity that a connected text is made up of meaningful phrases which can be read in a fluent way and that readers can always chunk long sentences into smaller phrases which create meaning so as to understand a text better with loads of long sentences. Following that, the researcher demonstrated how she chunked a long sentence into smaller meaningful phrases by putting a slash after the noun(s), then the verb(s), followed by a prepositional phrase or adverbial phrases which state(s) the time or the place of the action. After that, she gave two more examples and then she read aloud a short text with a few long sentences and asked the participants to put slashes on the words where she paused on the worksheet distributed to them earlier.

Finally, before the end of the activity, the researcher divided the participants into pairs and gave each of them Texts A & B. Student A had to chunk the long sentences in Text A into smaller meaningful phrases & student B had to chunk those in Text B. Subsequent to that, student A had to read aloud Text A and paused a bit where s/he had put a slash on (since a slash indicated a pause) to student B and while listening, student B had to put slashes on the phrases on the same Text A where student A paused while reading aloud Text A. When student A finished his or her reading-aloud, student B could check his or her answers on student A's worksheet. Subsequent to that, student B took turns to follow exactly the same procedure.

Apart from sharing with the participants how to deal with long sentences by means of sentence chunking into shorter meaningful phrases, on Day II of Week 9, the researcher emphasised the significance of *rereading* in aiding those weak readers, who tend to have limited amount of available attentional resources, to build up more automatized as well as accurate word recognition. According to Horst and Meara (1998), since comprehension will be improving by means of re-reading, the increasing number of encounters with unfamiliar items in the reading passage can somehow enable the weak readers to increase their potential of inferring those challenging or unfamiliar words successfully. Other than this, the reading rate as well as fluency can also be developed so that the weak L2 participants can successfully cope with any difficulties in grasping a clearer idea of what they are reading after the initial reading of a text. Hence when they reread for the third or fourth time, their reading speed will become faster and eventually automaticity in lower-level comprehension can then be developed (Gorsuch & Taguchi 2009).

Subsequent to that, according to the participants' average scores in the pretests, the researcher divided 35 participants, with homogeneous reading ability, into groups of four. Then eight sixth-formers, whom the researcher had invited in advance, sat among each group with worksheets containing four multiple-choice (MC) comprehension questions plus an answer key in hand. Then each participant was given a timer and the same short reading text to read silently. To start reading each time, every participant had to press the provided timer on his/her own desk and stopped it after finishing reading and put the reading text inside the drawer. Following that, the student helper would give each student the MC worksheet when they finished reading. Every student had to first record the reading time spent on the worksheet and then answer the MC questions by circling the correct answer A, B, C or D since "comprehension is very important when developing fluency in reading" (Nation 2009:141). After that, s/he gave the worksheet to the student helper to check the answers and the student helper would simply tick the correct answer(s) only. If the participant could not answer 75% of the comprehension questions correctly (that is, three out of four correct answers), s/he had to press the timer and read the text again, followed by making some changes to the wrong answer(s) after the second attempt.

Unfortunately, if the participant still could not obtain 75% correct or three right answers on the worksheet, s/he had to make the third attempt to read the same short text again. If, however, the participant still failed to achieve 75% of the correct answers, s/he still had to keep reading for the fourth time, which was the maximum number of times each participant was allowed to read. In that case, the participant had to read another custom-made text again which was actually made easier than the previous one so as not to discourage him/her from reading.

On that day, all the participants had to read two selected short reading texts since the level of both texts was a little below the participants' reading competency and the same procedures were adopted for the second reading text. In this way, those weak L2 participants could be more aware of the benefits of rereading when they observed their improved performance, which was reading faster and comprehending better, after rereading. Furthermore, it can help the participants to familiarize themselves with the need of rereading once they found themselves unable to comprehend a longer sentence upon the initial reading. The researcher was in charge of the group with all the lowest-achievers included on that day and any participants who finished reading the two texts with 75% of the comprehension questions correct could leave earlier upon the completion of the reading tasks.

On the last day of Week 9, all the participants were given the same sort of training about re-reading again as a kind of consolidation practice and eight sixth-formers were, again, invited to give help. However, this time the participants had to finish reading three different texts ranging from the most difficult (with about 5 difficult words in total, similar to i-1 level) to the easiest (with just one or two difficult words, similar to i-2 level) owing to the fact that these weak readers were observed to be losing their stamina rather easily and they still had to achieve 75% correct answers among the four questions so as to help develop their automatised word recognition and enhance their reading fluency.

In the second week of the third month (Week 10), the fundamental reading skills like skimming and scanning were introduced. Skimming and scanning are quick forms of reading and are essential skills to enable readers, in particular, the weak ones, to skip over numerous unimportant words and search for some information as fast as possible so as to get an overall idea of what the text is all about. In this way, it can further assist the weak readers to read and understand the text more rapidly, paving the way for them to develop fluent reading (Mikulecky & Jeffries 1998).

In the third week of the third month (Week 11), the reading strategies like predicting and previewing plus locating the main ideas were explicitly instructed, with a few worksheets provided, to facilitate readers in making some guesses about what they were going to read. This was done by requesting them to look at the title/ heading as well as sub-headings and also read quickly the first and the last lines of each paragraph to locate the main ideas and get a brief idea paragraph by paragraph. Thus, these strategies can enable the weak L2 participants to read more fluently and understand the overall ideas better (Mikulecky & Jeffries 1998).

In the fourth week of the third month (Week 12), the participants were given explicit instruction of the reading strategies, such as how to guess the meaning of the unknown words from the context and make inferences since it is natural that the writer may not inform the readers everything and readers need to learn how to infer the meaning of the writer themselves. This can be achieved by guessing more from the information available in the text, thereby gaining a more detailed understanding of the text as well as the writer's point of view (Mikulecky & Jeffries 1998).

Subsequent to that, the backward and forward references were introduced via the use of

PowerPoint plus the instructional materials. At the end of the scaffolded ER activity, students were expected to understand the functions of using pronouns by the writer in the text, which are to help tie or link ideas together more closely and prevent readers from getting bored when the same ideas or wordings occur repetitively in the text (Mikulecky & Jeffries 1998).

Finally, on the last day of Week 12 which was a revision session, students were given six sentence strips in each round of the activity (the first sentences are always in blue and the second sentences are often in yellow and either the blue or the yellow sentence strip must contain a pronoun) and had to work collaboratively with a partner to match the blue and the yellow sentences together correctly. There were two rounds in total and the first round was all about matching sentences with anaphoric/backward reference. The second round was a mixture of both backward and forward references. In each round, when the students finished matching the sentences, they could raise their hands to let the researcher check their answers and if any mistake was found in the process, they had to rectify it by rearranging the sentence matching. Finally, the researcher checked the correct answers with them via PowerPoint and whoever could produce the most perfect sentence match quickly without any mistake in less than 3 minutes would be awarded a small prize.

All in all, additional activities or exercises were provided for the participants in the experimental group on the last day of each week to help them familiarize themselves with the new concepts or knowledge of a particular kind of reading strategy or new vocabulary items learnt on the first two days of the week. If, unfortunately, any participant was absent on the day when the ER activity was held, then s/he had to stay during lunch-time or after school on the next day to do the reading independently for another 30 minutes (for comparison group) or 45-60 minutes (for experimental group with 30 minutes spent on silent reading and 15-30 minutes on scaffolded ER activities).

### **3.5.4 ‘Big-book’ Story Sharing Session**

To arouse the students’ interest in reading and also demonstrate to them how to comprehend the story better and resolve the reading problems on their own while reading independently, there was a story sharing session for about 30 minutes in Weeks 0 and 7. During each story sharing session, a high interest book was selected by the researcher and then the book together with some relevant pictures were scanned and the text as well as pictures were projected on a screen for

students in both groups.

In the process of sharing the story with the participants of both the comparison and experimental groups during lunch-time and after school respectively (which acts as a kind of scaffolding for the weak readers), the researcher demonstrated how to comprehend a text effectively by means of a few reading strategies. Following that, she asked the students some comprehension questions to ensure that they were following the story in the sharing sessions. Both of the books showed in the story sharing session were not included in the selection made available to the students.

### **3.5.5 Book Blurb Activity**

In order to let the participants know more about the collection of books in the scaffolded ER programme and help them select an interesting book or a book which was of an appropriate level to them, a book blurb activity was held in the Introductory Week (Week 0) of the 12-week ER programme. This activity was adapted from Bamford & Day (2004). The researcher wrote the book blurbs on a worksheet in advance and then students had to hold the worksheet in finding the book that matches the ten book blurbs on the worksheet which were, in fact, extracted from the back cover of the ten different graded readers.

### **3.5.6 Reading Board Games**

As nearly all the participants in this intervention study were weak or unmotivated readers who rarely read books in English, this activity aimed to help the participants tune-in with the whole ER programme by familiarizing themselves with the minimal amount of reading (about 50 English words) to be done on the cards while playing the board game in groups of three or four in the Introductory Week (Week 0).

In this intervention study, the vast majority of participants were weak or struggling readers who tended to lose their reading stamina rather easily than those high-proficient readers. Hence, three different sets of board games altogether with a die, a board, 50 reading cards of various kinds of contents plus an answer key were included. Each box set was played by the L2 learners in Weeks 0, 8 and 13 and the focal points of these three box sets are different as shown in Table 3.8 below:

**Table 3.8 – Extracts of the Three Reading Board Games**

Week	Box	Name - box set	Reading skills involved	Contents (extracted from one of the cards in the board games)
0	1	<i>Space Voyage</i>	<b>Finding main ideas (50 reading cards) + Noting details (50 reading cards)</b>	<p><i>“Brandon loves going to the beach. Building sandcastles is his favorite thing to do. The only thing he doesn’t like about going to the beach is having to put on sunblock. He says that he doesn’t like the way it feels. One day, Brandon was playing at the beach for hours without wearing any sunblock. He realized later that wearing sunblock felt a lot better on his skin than the awful sunburn he got from not wearing it. Now he wears sunblock every time he goes to the beach.”</i></p> <p><b>What is the main idea?</b></p> <p>A. Brandon doesn’t like the way sunblock feels on his skin.      B. Brandon’s favourite thing to do at the beach is building sandcastles.      C. Brandon learned the importance of wearing sunblock after getting a bad sunburn</p>
8	2	<i>Robot Rescue</i>	<b>Making Inferences (50 reading cards) + Predicting outcomes (50 reading cards)</b>	<p><i>“Melissa sees many patients each day at her office. Bill, her first patient today, came to see her because he has a rash on one of his legs. His other three legs are fine. Melissa asked Bill if it itches but Bill didn’t answer her question. She also noticed that Bill’s eyes are red, so she decided to take a closer look at them. Melissa prescribed some medicine for Bill and said that he should come back to see her in two weeks.”</i></p> <p><b>Most likely, who is Melissa ?</b></p> <p>A. an eye doctor      B. a veterinarian      C. a skin doctor</p>
13	3	<i>Jungle Journey</i>	<b>Sequencing (50 reading cards) + Cause &amp; Effect (50 reading cards)</b>	<p><i>“Everyone in the movie theatre was wondering what was going on. The movie was skipping every few seconds. <u>The theatre manager stopped movie and turned on the lights.</u> He gave coupons to everyone. They can go back and watch the movie for free when it’s working correctly.”</i></p> <p>The <u>underlined</u> statement is the EFFECT. What is the CAUSE ?</p> <p>A. The movie was skipping      B. He forgot to pass out coupons      C. He was showing everyone how to skip</p>

The three box sets of board games targeted to give readers some reading skill practice in the form of a game so that they would have less anxiety in reading English during the process. In the game, what the students had to do was throw a die and when they landed on a square which required them to pick a reading card (40-80 words only), they had to read it quickly, with a tiny sandglass indicating them the amount of time left, and then choose the correct option A, B, C or D for the question asked. Any members in the group could help them check the answer from the answer key provided in the reading board game.

If the answer was correct, they could proceed with the game but if not, they would be punished and stopped from throwing the die once. Whoever reached the end the most quickly on the board would be a winner and could get a small prize from the student helper. During the whole process, the researcher walked around the room to check if all the participants were playing the games according to the rules set and observation notes were made, too. Also, assistance was provided to any students who sought help.

The reading board games cover various aspects of the skills involved in the process of reading. Hence, the contents are different in each box of board game. In the introductory week (Week 0), all the participants in both experimental and comparison groups played the board game which placed a great emphasis on facilitating players in understanding the main ideas and noting details of various short paragraphs. In Week 8, another box of board game was played by the participants, which focused on making inferences from the text. In Week 13, the participants were given another kind of board game which aimed to help players differentiate cause and effect. These board games were also a lot of fun in the eyes of the participants as was evident from the interviewees' comments on them in the semi-structured interviews and by introducing L2 reading in the form of a game prior to the actual extensive reading programme in the forthcoming 11 weeks, it was hoped that the game element could create a stress-free setting, which rendered the process of reading English a less daunting task to those struggling readers.

### **3.6 Instruments for Measuring the Effect of the ER Intervention**

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaire 2 – Opinions about the 3-month ER Intervention**

Finally, right after the end of the scaffolded ER programme, an additional questionnaire was also disseminated to the participants to discover what opinions they had regarding the 3-month intervention plus any benefits gained or improvements needed in this study (See Appendix D2).

#### **3.6.2 Reading Comprehension Posttests and Delayed Posttests**

To explore any changes in the reading proficiency of the participants and further investigate the impact of the ER intervention on both comparison and experimental groups, the identical reading comprehension tests were given to each participant as posttests in Week 13 and also five months after the end of the intervention as delayed posttests with some question numbers being altered.

#### **3.6.3 Semi-structured Interviews**

After the end of the scaffolded ER intervention, the participants who were chosen randomly were invited to attend a short semi-structured interview for about 20-30 minutes. The participants, again, were informed that their interview would be audio-recorded on a digital recorder. In their interviews, the participants were asked about their opinions of the overall ER intervention including (1) what things they were most happy or satisfied with in the ER programme, (2) what things they thought should be improved if such a kind of scaffolded ER activity had to be held

again in the future and finally, (3) whether the ER intervention had changed their views slightly towards reading in their L2 and (4) if they would attempt doing more reading independently in their L2 in the future. Following that, the recordings were transcribed and coded.

Again, after obtaining all the protocols of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants, the qualitative data were transcribed. Following that, to ensure there was good reliability of the data, the researcher invited one of her ex-colleagues, who is an English panel head in the high school, to listen to the audio-recordings to double-check if anything in the transcriptions could be further improved or adjusted in order to elicit the interviewees' ideas precisely in the protocols. Other than this, upon the completion of the data transcription, the researcher read the whole long transcripts meticulously at least five times and then labelled, numbered, underlined and highlighted all the main ideas that seemed to be highly relevant to the question asked or previous literature about ER or appeared repetitively or sounded interesting. Subsequent to that, she began coding the rubric development of the post-intervention interviews.

### **3.6.4 Vocabulary Knowledge Scale Posttest**

The identical Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) test was given to the 70 participants again in the same format after the end of the scaffolded ER programme but the sequence of the word cards shown was different from that of the VKS pretest. Finally, the two results of these unannounced vocabulary pre-and-posttests were compared to explore any difference in the number of lexical items learned as a consequence of implicit and explicit learning, thereby assessing whether the incidental or intentional vocabulary learning approach or a combination of both approaches would best facilitate weak readers in enhancing their lexical knowledge.

To ensure more reliability of the data collected, the total scores of each vocabulary pretest and posttest were counter-checked at least twice with the help of the researcher's ex-colleague who is a high school teacher teaching Mathematics.

This chapter has presented the methodology adopted in the current study. The next chapter delineates results from both the qualitative and quantitative data analyses of the participants' semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and their vocabulary knowledge scale test as well as reading comprehension pretests, posttests and delayed posttests.

## **Chapter 4 – Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyses & Results**

### **4.1 Participants**

This research study was conducted between 3 January 2016 to 31 March 2016 for about 3 months. In this study, the 70 participants who voluntarily joined the scaffolded ER intervention programme were a homogeneous group of similar ages, 13 to 15 years old, with a similar level of English proficiency (ranging from elementary to pre-intermediate). They were from three different classes (B, C, D) studying in Form Two (Grade 8) in a co-educational low-banding school in Hong Kong. All of them speak Cantonese as their first language and English as their second language. They had studied English for about seven years as a compulsory subject and had no experience of travelling to or living in any English-speaking countries. Originally there were 72 participants but two of them quitted after the first month of the ER activities. All the participants were then divided into the comparison and experimental groups equally and randomly according to their self-discipline and own preferences of joining either one of the groups.

### **4.2 Study Design**

The entire study adopted a mixed methods research design to answer the research questions indicated in Chapter Two. Basically, mixed methods research was adopted in the present study because according to Denscombe (2008), mixed methods research has an array of strengths such as enhancing the accuracy of the data and giving a more complete picture or an objective view of the phenomenon under scrutiny, thereby compensating the limitations and overcoming biases of any single approaches. A quasi-experimental research design was used in analysing the results of the three groups: a control group (G0), a comparison group (G1) and an experimental group (G2).

The control group (20 participants – 12 males and 8 females) was designated to be the intensive reading group and the students received intensive reading instruction during their regular English lessons without any extensive reading practice inside or outside the classroom, that is, the control group did not join the school morning ER session or have any additional extensive reading in English outside their lesson time. Since the participants' test performance would not only be affected by the extensive reading training they received, the inclusion of the control group was to ensure that the learning effect during the regular English lessons, which actually emerged among the three groups (G0, G1, G2), did not affect the overall performance of the comparison and

experimental groups. Without the control group, it would be difficult for the researcher to determine whether the improvement on reading comprehension or vocabulary knowledge is the result of taking part in the ER intervention or not. Hence, the significance of setting up the control group in the present study was to inform the researcher of the learning effect or a difference in treatments that had taken place.

Moreover, almost all the students in the control group obtained at least a pass (with 50 marks set as the official pass score) in the school uniform test and exam, which somehow revealed that the students in the control group have higher proficiency of English than those of the comparison and experimental groups who always failed in the school English uniform test and exam prior to the commencement of the actual study.

The comparison and experimental groups (70 participants - 51 Males and 19 Females) were designated to be extensive reading groups and the students also received intensive reading instruction which was the same as that in the control group, aside from participating in the extensive reading practice and the scaffolded ER training respectively. Their overall English proficiency is relatively lower than that of the control group before the start of the actual study.

#### **4.2.1 Quantitative Data Collection**

##### **4.2.1.1 Reading Comprehension Tests and Vocabulary Knowledge Scale Test**

The quantitative data collected for the research study obtained from three tests: two reading comprehension tests, a vocabulary knowledge scale test and an extensive reading motivation questionnaire. Prior to the commencement of the scaffolded ER programme and immediately after the end of it, two questionnaires were distributed to all the 70 participants to investigate the motivational factors which drove them to read more English and also evaluate their opinions towards the scaffolded ER programme. In addition, the reading comprehension tests were administered at three different times to all the three groups – before and immediately after the end of the 3-month ER intervention and also five months after the ER intervention.

Apart from this, the participants in the experimental group were given a weekly vocabulary revision quiz in the first four weeks of the scaffolded ER programme and they simply needed to, at least, obtain a pass in all the quizzes since retests were made compulsory to any of the

participants who failed. All the quiz scores were recorded but would not be analysed. What is more, the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale pre-and-posttests were administered to both the comparison and experimental groups before and after the ER intervention without informing any of the participants about an upcoming vocabulary knowledge test. In this way, it would deter the participants from reciting or memorising any lexis they came across in the scaffolded ER training or while reading books.

#### **4.2.1.2 Extensive Reading Motivation Questionnaire**

Concerning the reading motivation questionnaire, the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1985), which entails the essential ingredients of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, coupled with Day and Bamford's model (1998) of L2 reading motivation both informed the construct of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was primarily developed on the basis of a previous study relating to L2 reading motivation (Komiyama 2009a). There were a total of 18 statements which consisted of items pertinent to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Half of the statements were added by the researcher herself to investigate whether the extensive reading motivation factors and the extrinsic drive to receive incentives were some of the crucial factors which could motivate the struggling or weak L2 readers to engage more in English reading.

Another nine statements with high factor loading covering four dimensions (*i.e. Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Academic Compliance, Extrinsic drive to excel and Extrinsic Test Compliance*) and a 4-point Likert scale (*1 = very different from me; 2 = a little different from me; 3 = a little like me; 4 = a lot like me*) on Questionnaire One were adopted in the way which largely resembled to those in Komiyama's (2009a) research study so as to avoid any unexpected confounding variables affecting the outcome variables which was chiefly attributed to the big change of wording on the Likert scale or any of the statements on the questionnaire (Suk 2015).

The questionnaire was administered prior to the start of the ER intervention and these students' self-reported data were then analysed and interpreted using the bar chart to delineate the strongest motivational factor(s) which could drive those weak L2 learners to pick up an English book and embark their reading journey. To ensure the reliability of the data, factor analysis, as mentioned

in section 3.5.6.1, was adopted so as to find out which items or statements on the questionnaire were reliable and could help the questionnaire reach its optimum of reliability (Suk 2015).

## **4.2.2 Qualitative Data Collection**

### **4.2.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews**

Regarding the qualitative data for the research study, it was obtained from the semi-structured interviews with six groups of the participants (a total of 35 participants) for about 20 minutes before and after the ER intervention. The 12 interviews, with six different groups of participants each time before and after the 3-month ER intervention, were audio-recorded.

### **4.2.2.2 Data Transcription of the Semi-structured Interviews**

Once the semi-structured interviews were done before and after the ER intervention, the data were transcribed by the researcher. After the ex-colleague of the researcher, who is an English panel head in a high school, had counter-checked the accuracy of the transcription to ensure its reliability, the researcher started to read the entire transcription very carefully at least five times. Following that, the interview data were analysed via thematic analysis method. Braun and Clarke (2006:87) indicated that thematic analysis is comprised of six steps: “1. familiarising yourself with your data, 2. generating initial codes, 3. searching for themes, 4. reviewing themes, 5. defining and naming themes, 6. producing the report.” Hence, a detailed analysis of the semi-structured interview data brought about a data-driven coding approach by means of locating the main themes via the inspection of most frequently used phrases and words in the interviews (Creswell 2013). Then all the key ideas which appeared to be of relevance to the questions asked in the interviews or issues pertinent to ER were labelled, numbered, underlined and highlighted. Once various categories and labels from initial coding were identified, similar categories or categories which carried the same or similar theme, were grouped together first.

To conceptualise the semi-structured interview data, the researcher read the transcription multiple times to go through the coding system developed earlier. After that, the researcher categorised, combined and deleted any irrelevant codes to arrive at a whole new set of codes where she further followed the coding rubric<sup>19</sup> and sorted these new codes into similar themes, sub-themes and also

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<sup>19</sup> The coding rubric means that numeric codes with decimal numbers (eg. 3.1, 3.2) were given to every code. The number after the decimal point represents each of the sub-themes under the same theme of Number 3.

gave each code some descriptors and then quoted some examples from the transcription. Finally, every theme was labelled with a descriptive code so as to match with its intended meaning. Eventually, 16 major themes emerged.

These major or key themes involve the participants'(1) extent of enjoyment in learning English, (2) previous English knowledge, (3) aspects of English for improvement, (4) past attempts in improving English, (5) frequency in reading L1 or L2 books, (6) preferred reading genre (in English or in general), (7) leisure activities, (8) perceived effectiveness of learning English via ER, (9) suggestions for improvements on the ER session, (10) opinions on writing English book reports, (11) comments on school library books, (12) challenges faced when reading English books, (13) positive feedback on ER intervention, (14) negative feedback on ER intervention, (15) change in views towards reading and (16) self-initiatives in reading English books. All the results are presented in line with the 16 themes derived from coding. Almost all sets of results were supported by quotes from the interviewees and translated into English by the researcher.

#### **4.2.2.3 Reliability and Validity Issues**

To ensure reliability of the data, all the scores in the reading comprehension pretests, posttests, delayed posttests as well as the vocabulary knowledge scale test, were, at least, double-checked for the calculation of marks. Regarding the input of statistical data (including both the scores and the questionnaire results), the researcher first learned how to use SPSS to analyse the data from the university IT staff. Later an assistant, who delivered instruction of statistics in a local tertiary institution, was hired on an hourly-basis to ensure all the data were input as well as analysed correctly using the right procedures as well as methods and were also cross-checked to identify if any mistakes had been made.

To ensure validity of the ER treatment and that everything included in the ER treatment was executed promptly as planned earlier, the researcher also implemented the fidelity checks of the treatment by checking the daily attendance of each participant, making observation notes during each ER session held at lunchtime and after school, making a checklist of all the items to be instructed during the scaffolded ER training sessions and got it verified when done, checking as well as updating each participant's reading records each week to make sure everyone was reading in good progress.

Since the application of triangulation, which entails the adoption of multiple external data collection sources or methods concerning the same topic or phenomenon, could help validation of data through cross verification from more than two external analysis methods or sources and also test the consistency of those findings gathered through various instruments, the data from the interviews were then analysed as well as triangulated to strengthen the findings (Denzin 1978).

In the present study, the semi-structured interview data were triangulated with the reading records plus the data from the questionnaires which the interviewees completed before and after the ER intervention study in order to enhance the validity of the questionnaires and also “limit the likelihood of misinterpretation in interviews” (Richards et al. 2012:124), thereby increasing the reliability of the entire study.

#### **4.3 Independent and Dependent Variables of the Study**

The quantitative part of the current study included some independent variables and dependent variables. Independent variables imply the researcher can have some control over the variables or input. In the current study, they include the reading time set officially for the 3-month intervention and the duration of the treatment or the ER intervention and the method of the study or groups (G0, G1, G2). Dependent variables are affected by the change of independent variables which included reading comprehension test results, vocabulary test results, the reading ability revealed by the reading tests, the amount of reading done and the reading motivation level in English in the present study.

A between-subjects independent variable consisted of group with three levels, one group without any extensive reading treatment (control group), another group with the extensive reading treatment (comparison group) participating in only the reading of levelled and graded readers, the other group with extensive reading treatment plus scaffolded ER training (experimental group), such as participating in both graded plus levelled readers for 30 minutes and scaffolded ER training after the 30-minute reading.

A within-subjects independent variable involved time with three levels, pre-, post- and delayed posttests. To analyse the data for the two reading comprehension tests, first the total scores of the

two reading comprehension tests were averaged. Following that, the data were input using the statistical device, SPSS, to analyse the performances of the three groups in the reading pretests, posttests and delayed posttests.

Regarding the questionnaire, the scale of measurement of the two independent variables of the questionnaire is categorical: ‘strongly agree to the statement (the statement is a lot like me)/ agree to the statement (the statement is a little like me)/ disagree to the statement (the statement is a little different from me)/ totally disagree to the statement (the statement is very different from me)’. The independent variable is those six dimensions from the questionnaire involving (1) Intrinsic Motivation; (2) Extrinsic drive to receive incentives like rewards and praise; (3) Extrinsic drive to excel; (4) Extrinsic academic compliance; (5) Extrinsic test compliance; (6) Extensive reading motivation. The independent variable was operationalised to be the average scores on each dimension on a 4-point Likert scale with the range from 1 (the statement is very different from me) to 4 (the statement is a lot like me) whereas the dependent variable was operationalised to be the reading motivation level of the L2 readers.

A portrait of different kinds of variables in the quantitative data of the present study is shown below in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 - Description of the Variables in the Quantitative Data of the Present Study**

Type of variables	Name of Variables	Operationalization	Range of scores	Scale of measurement
<b>Independent Variables</b>	Group	Control, comparison and experimental	1/3	Categorical
	Time	Pre-treatment, post-treatment & delayed-post-treatment	1/3	Categorical
	6 dimensions of extensive reading motivation	Scores of 3 items on 1-4 scale per dimension in an 18-item questionnaire		Categorical
<b>Dependent Variables</b>	Reading comprehension	Scores on reading comprehension test	0-100	Continuous
	Vocabulary Knowledge	Scores on vocabulary knowledge test	0-140	Continuous
	Extensive reading	Number of graded readers read	Number of words read	Continuous

#### **4.4 Quantitative Data Analysis**

This section explains quantitative data analysis. The first section delineates the statistical procedures adopted for each research question. The second section describes assumptions of statistical procedures. The third section examines the quantitative analyses of the data pertinent to the reading comprehension tests, vocabulary knowledge scale tests and the questionnaire.

***Research Question 1:*** *Whether or to what extent can the implementation of a new scaffolded extensive reading programme improve the reading comprehension ability of weak learners in the second or foreign language learning context?*

This research question examines the difference in reading comprehension ability among the three groups (G0, G1, G2). T-test was employed to investigate whether there is any significant improvement concerning the combined dependent variables (i.e. reading comprehension test scores) across the independent variables (i.e. time as well as group).

***Research Question 2:*** *Which approach(es), the incidental or the intentional or a combination of both, is/are more effective in aiding weak L2 learners to enrich their vocabulary banks?*

This research question investigates the difference in vocabulary knowledge among the two groups (G1, G2). The comparison group (G1) was the group using incidental approach to acquire some vocabulary items (i.e. by merely reading graded and levelled readers without any dictionary use) whereas the experimental group (G2) read graded readers and attended the scaffolded ER training (i.e. by receiving explicit vocabulary instruction from the researcher and reading books with the help of an e-dictionary). Again T-test was adopted to explore if there are any significant changes in the scores regarding the combined dependent variables (i.e. vocabulary knowledge test) across the independent variables (i.e. time plus group).

***Research Question 3:*** *What comprises the reading motivation of L2 junior secondary students of low English proficiency in Hong Kong?*

This research question examines the factors which drove weak L2 learners to read some English books. To analyse and disseminate the data collected from the reading motivation questionnaire, several bar-charts were used to demonstrate the findings of the questionnaire.

Before analysing the raw data, the procedures for checking the normality of the data were administered. The skewness<sup>20</sup> and the kurtosis<sup>21</sup> of the data were examined and outliers were identified by using boxplots (see Figure 4.1). Then outliers were removed from the researcher's data and the data was checked again for normality.

The skewness and the kurtosis of the normal distribution are 0 and 3 respectively. As a rule of thumb, the skewness of a distribution which is between -0.8 and +0.8, (or -1 and 1 instead) and the kurtosis which is between -2 to 2 can be considered as the normal distribution. To check for normality, the test of outliers was conducted. However, the determination of outliers would be different in the case of normally-distributed data and skewed data.

For the normally-distributed data, the data points which fall below mean  $-3 \times (\text{standard deviation}/\text{sigma})$  or above mean  $+3 \times (\text{standard deviation}/\text{sigma})$  are outliers. For the skewed data, the Inter-Quartile Range (IQR) proximity rule should be used. The data points which fall below  $Q1 - 1.5 \times IQR$  or above  $Q3 + 1.5 \times IQR$  are outliers.

Hence, for the data of control group 0, the skewness is -0.216, it should be considered as normal. For the normally-distributed data, any data above or below mean with 3 standard deviation is considered as outliers. For the data of comparison group 1 and experimental group 2, the skewness is 0.85 and 0.862 respectively. The high positive skew values indicate that the students have improved towards the lower side of the distribution. Therefore, the Inter-Quartile Range proximity rule should be used to estimate the outliers.

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<sup>20</sup> In statistics, "skewness is a measure of asymmetry or distortion of symmetric distribution. It measures the deviation of the given distribution of a random variable from a symmetric distribution, such as normal distribution. A normal distribution is without any skewness, as it is symmetrical on both sides. Hence, a curve is regarded as skewed if it is shifted towards the right or the left."

(<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/skewness/>)

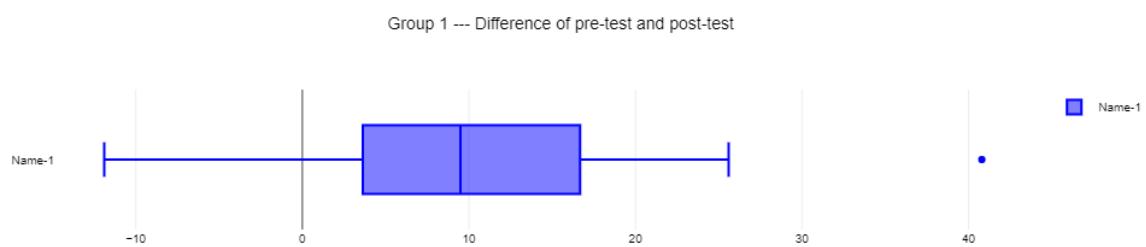
<sup>21</sup> "Kurtosis is a measure of the tailedness of a distribution. Tailedness is how often outliers occur. Tails are the tapering ends on either side of a distribution. They represent the probability or frequency of values that are extremely high or low compared to the mean. In other words, tails represent how often outliers occur."

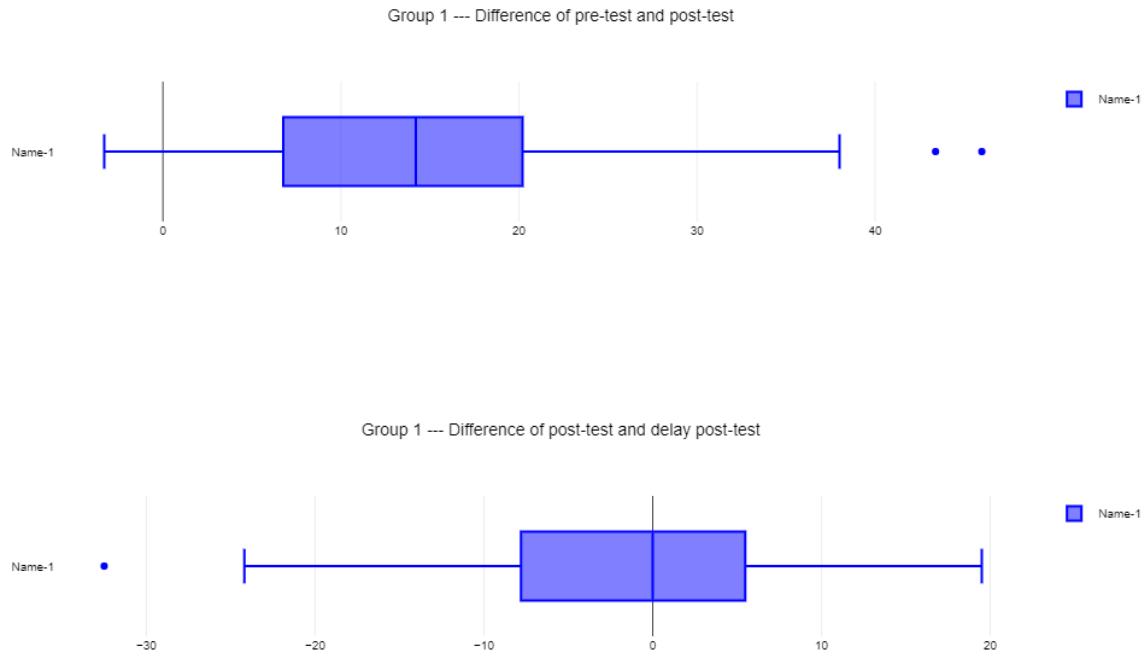
(<https://www.scribbr.com/statistics/kurtosis/>)

**Table 4.2 - Comparison between the Control Group (G0), the Comparison Group (G1) and the Experimental Group (G2) in the reading comprehension pretests and posttests (BEFORE removing the outliers)**

	Group 0 (n=20)	Group 1 (n=35)	Group 2 (n=35)
Mean	6.99	6.937	15.3
SD	10.129	10.715	12.177
Median	8.75	7.5	14.2
MIN	-8.4	-11.9	-3.3
MAX	20.8	40.8	46
Q1	-4.275	-0.7	7.1
Q3	16.175	11.5	20.1
Inter-quartile range	20.45	12.2	13
Skewness	-0.216	0.850	0.862
Kurtosis	-1.467	1.710	0.532

Applying the outlier tests, the difference of pretests and posttests, one datum (data g121) from group 1 and two data (g118 and g221) from group 2 are considered as the outliers. For the difference of delayed-posttests and posttests of group 1, a datum (g121) is considered as outlier. As a result, all the aforementioned data should be removed.





(Figure 4.1 - Boxplots: data with outliers) (<https://www.statskingdom.com/boxplot-maker.html>)

#### 4.4.1 Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge Scale Tests

**Table 4.3 - Comparison between the Control Group (G0), the Comparison Group (G1) and the Experimental Group (G2) in the Reading Comprehension Pretests and Posttests (AFTER removing the outliers)**

	Group 0 (n=20)	Group 1 (n=34)	Group 2 (n=33)
Mean	6.99	5.941	13.518
SD	10.129	9.084	10.007
Median	8.75	7.100	13.000
MIN	-8.4	-11.900	-3.300
MAX	20.8	25.600	38.000
Q1	-4.275	-1.750	6.400
Q3	16.175	10.750	19.200
Inter-quartile range	20.45	12.500	12.800
Skewness	-0.216	0.123	0.534
Kurtosis	-1.467	-0.325	0.201

Table 4.3 displays the descriptive statistics of the mean score difference of the pretests and the posttests for different kinds of extensive reading training or practice received by the comparison and experimental groups (after removing the outliers). The score difference is calculated by the score of the posttests minus the score of the pretests in order to reflect the improvement of the reading ability between the pretest and posttest periods.

There are 20 students in the control group (G0) which were not involved in any extensive reading activities from January to March 2016. Hence the reading proficiency or ability of these students may be the results of self-study or the English instruction received during the regular English lessons. The mean score difference between the posttests and the pretests for group 0 is +6.99. It represents that the score of the reading test has been improved by 6.99 marks after 3 months (the time difference between the pretests and the posttests). Also, the median is 8.750 and 70% of group 0 students have recorded a positive improvement (positive score difference). The skewness is -0.216 and the negative skew indicates that the students have improved towards the higher side of the distribution. The kurtosis is -1.467. This negative excess kurtosis ( $-1.467-3 = -4.467$ ) indicates that the data have light tails or lack of outliers.

34 students in group 1 belonged to the comparison group and participated in reading graded and levelled readers only for 3 months. The mean score difference between the posttests and the pretests for group 1 is +6.93. It represents that the score of the reading test has been improved by 5.941 marks after 3 months. Also, the median is 7.1 and 74% of group 1 participants have recorded a positive improvement. (The score difference is positive). The skewness is +0.123, the data are symmetrical. The negative excess value of kurtosis ( $-0.325-3=-3.325$ ) indicates that a distribution is flat and has light tails - it is platykurtic distribution. It is less likely to have outliers.

For the experimental group (G2) (which participated in the scaffolded ER training after school, in addition to merely reading graded and levelled readers), the mean score difference between the posttests and the pretests for group 2 is +13.5. It represents that the score of the reading test has been improved by 13.5 marks after 3 months. Also, the median is 13.0 and 94% of group 2 students have recorded a positive improvement (The score difference is positive). The minimum score difference is -3 and the maximum is +38. It reveals that almost all students have improved their test scores during the pretest and the posttest periods. The skewness is +0.534 and the

positive skew indicates that the students have improved towards the lower side of the distribution. The negative excess kurtosis ( $0.201-3=-2.799$ ) shows that the distribution is flat and has thin tails like the data of group 1.

**Table 4.4 - Comparison of the Mean Score Difference of the Pretest and Posttest between groups**

	Mean Difference of posttest and pretest	Combined SD	DF	t-stat	P-value
G0 and G1	-0.053	2.749	52	-0.382	0.3523
G0 and G2	8.310	2.857	51	2.285	0.013262
G1 and G2	8.363	2.337	65	3.242	0.000937

The second part is to compare the performance of different groups by testing what effects different training have on improving the reading proficiency or ability of the students.

The test results have showed that the reading proficiency or ability has been improved for the comparison group (G1) after reading graded and levelled readers only for 3 months. The mean score of the posttest is 5.94 marks higher than that of the pretest in average with the maximum improvement of 25.6 marks. It indicates the reading proficiency or ability of the comparison group (G1) has been improved. However, such improvement may be the results of various factors, such as the effect of implicit or incidental learning approach (i.e. reading the graded readers) or the duration of regular English lessons.

In order to reflect the effectiveness of implicit/ incidental learning approach, the improved score has to be compared with the control group (G0) in order to eliminate the learning effect of attending the regular English lessons. Therefore, the hypothesis testing of comparing the mean score of the control group (G0) and that of the comparison group (G1) has been conducted. The details of the hypothesis testing are as follows.

H0: the mean score of group 0 = the mean score of group 1

H1: the mean score of group 0 < the mean score of group 1

The alternative hypothesis is one tailed and it means if the null hypothesis is rejected, the mean score of group 1 is then statistically and significantly higher than that of group 0.

As shown from table 4.4, the mean score difference between group 0 and group 1 is -0.0529 with combined standard deviation 2.749. Under the t-test with the degree of freedom 52, the p-value

of the test is 0.3523 which is higher than 0.05, it is, therefore, not significant. The null hypothesis is not rejected and it shows that the mean score of the comparison group (G1) is not statistically and significantly higher than that of the control group (G0). It represents that the implicit/ incidental approach (that is, merely reading the graded readers) cannot significantly improve the reading proficiency or ability of the students in the comparison group, who have a very weak foundation in English.

In addition, the learning effect of reading graded and levelled readers coupled with participating in the scaffolded ER activities are also investigated among the experimental group (G2). The test results show that the proficiency or ability of reading has been improved for the experimental group (G2) after joining the scaffolded ER intervention. The mean score of the posttests in average is 13.5 marks higher than that of the pretests in average with the maximum improvement of 38 marks. It unveils that the reading proficiency or ability of the experimental group (G2) has been improved after participating in the 3-month scaffolded ER intervention. Nevertheless, the improvement may be the results of various factors, such as the scaffolded ER intervention and/or the duration of regular English lessons.

In order to reflect the learning effectiveness of the scaffolded ER training, the improved score has to be compared with that of the control group in order to eliminate the learning effect of having regular English lessons in a standard class. Therefore, the hypothesis testing of comparing the mean score of the control group (G0) and that of the experimental group (G2) has been conducted, the details of the hypothesis testing are as follows.

H0: the mean score of group 0 = the mean score of group 2

H1: the mean score of group 0 < the mean score of group 2

The alternative hypothesis is one tailed and it shows that if the null hypothesis is rejected, the mean score of group 2 is statistically and significantly higher than that of group 0.

From the hypothesis testing, it reveals that the performance of the experimental group in the scaffolded ER training was also satisfactory. The mean score difference between group 0 and group 2 is 6.53 with combined standard deviation 2.86. Under the t-test, with the degree of freedom 51, the p-value of the test is 0.013262 which is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected and it shows that the mean score of the experimental group (G2) is statistically and

significantly higher than that of the control group (G0). It represents that the scaffolded ER activities can help to improve the reading ability of the involved students to a greater extent.

Finally, the learning effectiveness of merely participating in the scaffolded ER training is also explored. The result can be investigated by finding the mean score difference between the comparison group (G1) and the experimental group (G2). Since group 1 students only read graded readers for 3 months but group 2 students also joined the 15-min scaffolded ER training after reading the graded readers for 30 minutes each time, the mean score difference between the comparison group (G1) and the experimental group (G2) can reflect the learning effectiveness of the scaffolded ER training only.

The mean score of the posttests of group 2 is 7.58 marks higher than that of the posttests of group 1 in average. It seems that the reading ability of group 2 students has been improved after participating in the scaffolded ER intervention. The hypothesis testing of comparing the mean score of the group 1 and the mean score of the group 2 has been conducted, the details of the hypothesis testing are as follows.

H0: the mean score of the group 1 = the mean score of the group 2

H1: the mean score of the group 1 < the mean score of the group 2

The alternative hypothesis is one tailed and it shows that if the null hypothesis is rejected, the mean score of group 2 is statistically and significantly higher than the mean score of the group 1.

From the hypothesis testing, it shows that the performance of the experimental group after the 15-min scaffolded ER training was also satisfactory. The mean score difference between the comparison group (G1) and the experimental group (G2) is 7.58 with combined standard deviation of 2.34.

Under the t-test, with the degree of freedom 65, the p-value of the test is 0.000937 which is smaller than 0.05 and it is, therefore, significant. The null hypothesis is rejected and it shows that the mean score of the experimental group (G2) is statistically and significantly higher than that of the comparison group (G1). Again, it represents that the 15-min scaffolded ER training can greatly and effectively improve the reading proficiency of the G2 participants.

The third part is to compare the posttest and the delayed-posttest results between group 2 students

(who had the 15-min scaffolded ER training and the 30-min reading of the graded readers included for 3 months) and group 1 students (who merely read graded and levelled readers for 3 months). A delayed-posttest was conducted five months after the end of the 3-month ER intervention to investigate the termination effect of the scaffolded ER training. The difference of the score between the delayed-posttests and posttests can show the change of the learning ability of the participants after the 3-month scaffolded ER intervention had come to a halt.

**Table 4.5 - Comparison between Control Group 0 and Comparison Group 1 and Experimental Group 2 in the Reading Comprehension Delayed-posttest and Posttest**

	Group 0 (n=20)	Group 1 (n=34)	Group 2 (n=35)
Mean	1.025	-0.753	-6.551
SD	9.113	9.915	9.786
Median	-1.25	0	-5.8
MIN	-13.3	-24.2	-28.6
MAX	18.6	19.5	7.2
Skewness	0.794	-0.421	-0.443
Kurtosis	-0.144	0.363	-0.738

Table 4.5 displays the descriptive statistics of the mean score difference between the delayed-posttests and posttests for different groups which received different kinds of training on extensive reading. The mean score difference is calculated by the score of delayed-posttests minus the mean score of posttests in order to reflect the change of the reading proficiency or ability after both the scaffolded ER training and the ER activities have terminated.

There are 20 students in control group 0 who were not involved in any training about extensive reading. The mean score difference of the delayed-posttests and the posttests for group 0 is +1.025, which represents that the mean score of the reading comprehension tests has been improved by 1.025 marks after five months (the time difference between the posttests and delayed posttests). However, the median is -1.25, it represents more than half of the group 0 students have recorded loss of the reading ability. The skewness is 0.794 and the positive skew indicates that the students have changed towards the higher side of the distribution. This negative excess kurtosis (-0.144-3=-2.856) indicates that a distribution is flat and has light tails. It is platykurtic distribution. It is less likely to have outliers.

34 students in the comparison group 1 only read graded and levelled readers for three months and the mean score difference between the delayed-posttests and the posttests for group 1 is -0.753. It represents the mean score of the reading comprehension tests has been decreased by 0.75 marks in average after five months. Also, the median is 0, which indicates that half of the students have the score increased but half of the students have the score decreased. The skewness is -0.421. The negative skew indicates that the students have improved towards the higher side of the distribution. The negative excess kurtosis (0.363-3=-2.637) indicates that the distribution is flat and has light tails. It is less likely to have outliers.

The experimental group 2 participated in the 15-min scaffolded ER training in addition to the 30-min reading of graded and levelled readers for three months. The mean score difference between the delayed posttests and the posttests for group 2 is -6.55. It represents that the mean score of the reading comprehension tests has been decreased after five months. Also, the median is -5.8, and only 25% of group 2 students have recorded a positive improvement (the mean score difference is positive). The maximum improvement is +7.2. The skewness is -0.44. The negative skew indicates that the students have improved toward the higher side of the distribution. The kurtosis is -0.73. This negative excess kurtosis indicates that the distribution is flatter than the normal distribution.

**Table 4.6 - Comparison of the Mean Score Difference of the Delayed-posttests and Posttests between groups**

	Mean Difference of delayed-posttest and posttest	Combined SD	DF	t-stat	P-value
G0 and G1	-1.778	2.654	52	-0.670	0.253
G0 and G2	-7.576	2.625	53	-2.887	0.002816
G1 and G2	-5.798	2.372	67	-2.445	0.008582

The table 4.6 shows the mean score difference of the delayed-posttests and posttests between groups. The mean score difference between delayed-posttests and posttests is positive for the control group 0 but negative for comparison group 1. The hypothesis testing of comparing the mean score difference of the control group 0 and the mean score difference of the comparison group 1 has been conducted and the details of the hypothesis testing are as follows.

H0: the mean score difference of the delayed-posttests and posttests of group 0 = the mean score difference between the delayed-posttests and posttests of group 1

H1: the mean score difference of the delayed-posttests and posttests of group 0 > the mean score difference between the delayed-posttests and posttests of group 1

The alternative hypothesis is one tailed and it shows that if the null hypothesis is rejected, the mean score difference of group 1 is statistically higher than the mean score difference of group 0.

As shown from the table 4.6, the mean score difference between group 0 and group 1 is -1.78 with a combined standard deviation 2.65. Under the t-test with the degree of freedom 52, the p-value of the test is 0.252911 which is higher than 0.05 and it is, therefore, not significant. The null hypothesis is not rejected and it shows that the mean score of the group 1 is not statistically and significantly higher than that of group 0. It represents that after stopping the 3-month ER intervention and having no more graded readers to read during lunchtime, the change of the reading proficiency or ability of the experimental group 1 statistically equals to that of the control group 0 who have not joined the ER activity before. The termination effect of the 15-min scaffolded ER training plus having no more graded readers to read among the experimental group 2 students are also investigated.

The test results show that the ability of reading has been weakened for the experimental group 2 after the termination of the scaffolded ER training and students could neither read any graded readers nor learn any basic vocabulary plus reading strategies after school. The mean score of the delayed-posttests is 5.8 marks which is lower than the mean score of the posttests in average.

In order to reflect the ‘termination’ effect on the reading comprehension proficiency or ability of the experimental group, the reduced score has to be compared with the control group in order to eliminate any learning effect on the experimental group (G2) which participated in the scaffolded ER training after school, apart from having regular English lessons in a standard class. Therefore, the hypothesis testing of comparing the mean score difference between the control group 0 and that of the group 2 has been conducted, the details of the hypothesis testing are as follows:

H0: the mean score difference of delayed-posttest and posttest of group 0 = the mean score difference of the delayed-posttest and posttest of group 2.

H1: the mean score difference of delayed-posttest and posttest of group 0 > the mean score difference of delayed-posttest and posttest of group 2.

The alternative hypothesis is one tailed. It shows that if the null hypothesis is rejected, the decrease of the score of G2 is statistically higher than the decrease of the score of G0.

As indicated from the hypothesis testing, the mean score difference of the delayed-posttests and posttests between group 0 and group 2 is -7.58 with a combined standard deviation 2.62. Under the t-test, with the degree of freedom 53, the p-value of the test is 0.002816 which is smaller than the 0.05, and it is, therefore, significant. The null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that the mean score difference of the delayed-posttests and posttests of the experimental group (G2) is statistically and significantly lower than that of the delayed-posttests and posttests of the control group (G0). It represents that after terminating the scaffolded ER training, the reading proficiency or ability of the experimental group 2 has dropped statistically and significantly when compared with that of the reading proficiency or ability of group 0.

Finally, the termination effect of merely the scaffolded ER training among group 2 is also explored. The result can be investigated by finding the mean score difference of the delayed-posttests and posttests between the comparison group 1 and the experimental group 2. Since group 1 read graded and levelled readers for three months only and group 2 had the scaffolded ER training in addition to reading graded readers for three months, the mean score difference between group 1 and group 2 can reflect the learning effect of the merely scaffolded ER training.

The mean score difference of delayed-posttests and posttests of the comparison group 1 is 5.80 marks higher than that of the delayed-posttests and the posttests of group 2 in average. It seems that the reading proficiency or ability of group 2 has been weakened a lot more than that of group 1 after the termination of the 15-min scaffolded ER training. The hypothesis testing of comparing the mean score of group 1 and that of group 2 has been conducted and the details of the hypothesis testing are as follows.

H0: the mean score difference of the delayed-posttest and posttest of group 1 = the mean score of the delayed-posttests and posttests of group 2

H1: the mean score difference of the delayed-posttests and posttests of group 1 > the mean score

of the delayed-posttests and posttests of group 2

The alternative hypothesis is one tailed. It shows that if the null hypothesis is rejected, the drop of the mean score in group 2 is statistically higher than the drop of score in group 1.

As indicated from the hypothesis testing, the mean score difference of delayed-posttest and posttest between group 1 and group 2 is -5.80 with a combined standard deviation 2.37. Under the t-test, with the degree of freedom 67, the p-value of the test is 0.008582 which is smaller than 0.05, and it is, therefore, significant. The null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that the mean score of group 2 statistically and significantly decreases a lot more than the mean score of group 1. It represents that the termination effect of the scaffolded ER training on the experimental group 2 is significant. In other words, the termination effect of the 15-min scaffolded ER training has a significant impact on the reading proficiency or ability of the experimental group 2.

**Table 4.7 - The descriptive statistics of the vocabulary test of group 1 and group 2**

	Group 1 (n=35)	Group 2 (n=35)
Mean	12.2	20.857
SD	9.071	11.748
Median	11	20
MIN	0	5
MAX	28	45
Skewness	0.335	0.340
Kurtosis	-0.938	-0.940

The fourth part is to show the improvement of the vocabulary learning between groups 1 and 2. The vocabulary test has been administered to all the students in comparison group (G1) and experimental group (G2). The mean improvement of the vocabulary scores is calculated by the vocabulary posttest minus vocabulary pretest.

The results of the vocabulary test have been summarised in Table 4.7.

35 students in the comparison group 1 employed implicit/ incidental approach (via reading graded and levelled readers only without any dictionary use) in vocabulary learning. The mean score of the vocabulary test increases by 12.2 after 3 months. It shows that the minimum

difference is 0, and the scores of the vocabulary known by all the students do not decrease after the 3-month ER intervention. It shows that the incidental learning approach improves the scores of the vocabulary test among the comparison group.

The mean score of the vocabulary test among the experimental group 2 is 20.86. The median is 20 and the minimum difference is 5, which indicate that the experimental group 2 has the scores increased in the vocabulary test after the 15-min scaffolded ER training. It implies that the scaffolded ER training has helped to improve the scores of the vocabulary test among the experimental group.

The skewness of the vocabulary test of group 1 and group 2 is slightly positive (0.0335 and 0.34 respectively), and it indicates that the increase of vocabulary score is towards the lower side of the distribution and should be considered as normal distribution. The kurtosis of both tests is negative and this negative kurtosis indicates that the distribution is flatter than the normal distribution.

By conducting the outlier test, no outlier was detected between the vocabulary tests of comparison group 1 and experimental group 2. Also, the comparison of the vocabulary learning ability between group 1 and group 2 has been conducted.

**Table 4.8 - The descriptive statistics of the vocabulary test of group 1 and group 2**

Comparison	Mean Difference	Combined SD	DF	t-stat	P-value	Result
G1 and G2	8.657	2.509	68	3.451	0.000483	Significant

The hypothesis test has been summarized below.

H0: the mean increase of vocabulary scores in group 1=the mean increase of vocabulary scores in group 2

H1: the mean increase of vocabulary scores in group 1<the mean increase of vocabulary scores in group 2

The alternative hypothesis is one tailed. It shows that if the null hypothesis is rejected, the mean increase of the scores in group 2 is statistically higher than the mean drop of scores in group 1.

The mean difference of the vocabulary scores between group 1 and group 2 is 8.66, with a combined standard deviation 2.51. Under the t-test with the degree of freedom 68, the p-value of the test is 0.0000483 which is smaller than 0.05 and it is, therefore, significant. The null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that the mean score of the vocabulary test of the experimental group 2 is statistically and significantly higher than that of the vocabulary test of comparison group 1. It represents that the scaffolded ER training (with the additional explicit instruction of vocabulary for 3 months and the use of an e-dictionary included, i.e. adopting the intentional or explicit approach of vocabulary learning) helps to improve the scores of the vocabulary test of the experimental group 2 when compared with that of the comparison group 1 who solely read books to learn some vocabulary items (i.e. adopting the incidental approach).

**Table 4.9 - An overview: Comparison between the comparison group and the experimental group in the reading comprehension pretests, posttests and delayed posttests**

Comparison between two groups	Group 2 (n=33)	Group 2 (n=35)	Group 1 (n=34)	Group 1 (n=34)
	Difference Pre- and Posttests	Difference Delayed Post- and Posttests		Difference Pre- and Posttests
Mean	13.518	-6.551		5.941
SD	10.007	9.786		9.084
Median	13.000	-5.800		7.100
MIN	-3.300	-28.600		-11.900
MAX	38.000	7.200		25.600
Skewness	0.534	-0.443		0.123
Kurtosis	0.201	-0.738		-0.325
	Pre- Post			
	Mean Difference	Combined SD	DF	t-stat
G0 and G1	-1.049	2.749	52	-0.382
G0 and G2	6.528	2.857	51	2.285
G1 and G2	7.577	2.337	65	3.242

#### 4.4.2 Reading Motivation Questionnaires

Prior to the commencement of the 3-month ER intervention, 70 Reading Motivation Questionnaires were administered and received on the same day to find out the answer of the third research question: *What composes the reading motivation of L2 junior secondary students of low English proficiency in the context of Hong Kong?* The results were analysed and are presented in the form of bar charts.

##### A. Intrinsic Drive

###### Introduction

In the reading motivation questionnaire, statements 5, 7 and 17 were categorised under the group: Intrinsic Drive and they attempted to investigate students' intrinsic drive towards reading English books. The questionnaire entailed some statements which attempted to test the students on whether reading English books is a fun activity to students, whether students are willing to read difficult English books with interesting topics, or whether students are willing to learn something new from reading English books respectively.

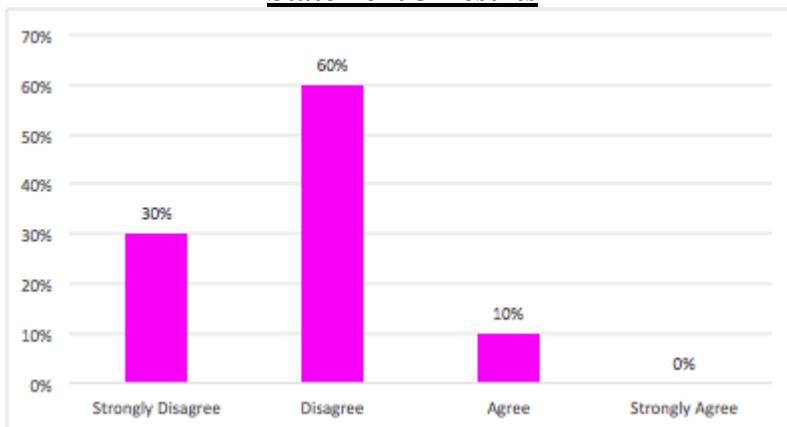
**Statement 5 – “It’s fun for me to read something I like in English”**

**Statement 7 – “When the topic is interesting, I am willing to read a bit difficult English materials”**

**Statement 17 – “I like reading English to learn some new words or something new about the people and things that interest me”**

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 5.

**Statement 5 Results**

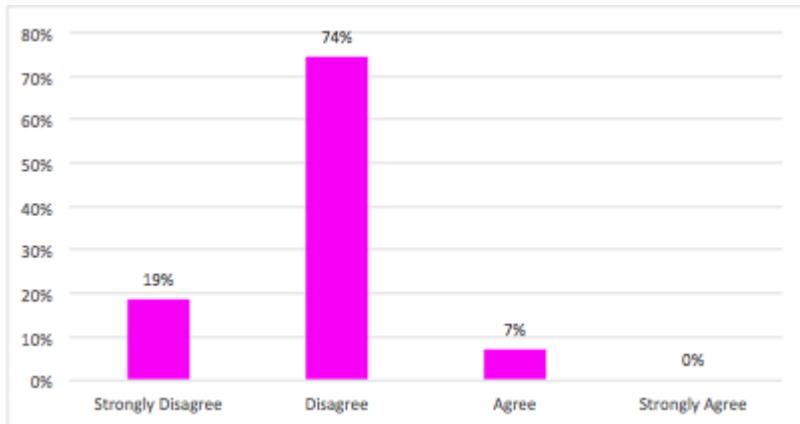


The rather negative questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents disagree to it or do not feel the questionnaire's statement is. A vast majority (60%) strongly disagree to the statement and believe that the statement is very different from them, a larger minority (30%) disagree and believe that the statement is a little like them, another smaller minority (10%) that agree, or feel that the question is a lot like them, and no responded record shows anyone that strongly agrees.

This shows that most respondents are not interested in reading anything in English, let alone enjoying them as a fun activity. Such a lack of motivation in reading may be attributed to their potential English language barriers they may have in the reading process due to a low English language proficiency. Not being able to comprehend English sentences and complicated sentence structures may discourage those low-proficient students from reading in English during their leisure time. Respondents of this questionnaire clearly do not have any English reading habits cultivated, as a vast majority strongly disagree to statement 5. Most respondents demonstrated a strong sense of dislike towards the reading of English language by opting for the "Strongly disagree" option in this questionnaire.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 7.

#### **Statement 7 Results**

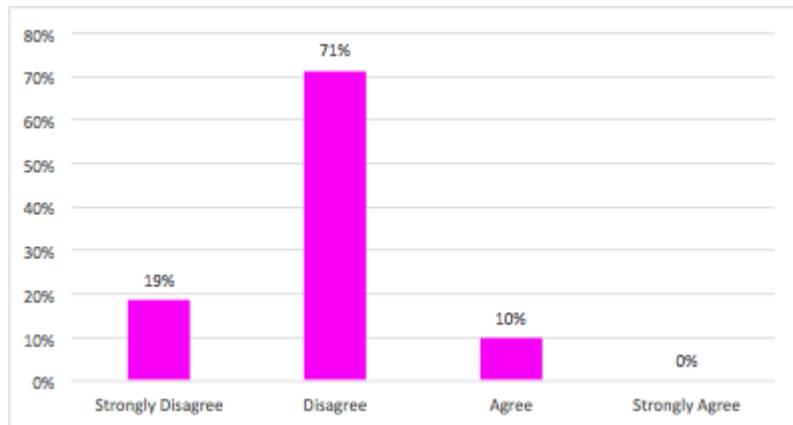


The rather negative questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents disagree to it or do not think that the statement describes them accurately. A vast majority (74%) disagree to the statement and believe that the statement is different from them, a larger minority (19%) strongly disagree, another smaller minority (7%) agree and nobody strongly agrees to the statement at all.

Overall, the respondents are not willing to read English books with interesting topics, especially when slightly difficult English is used. Most of the respondents disagree, or even strongly disagree, to what the statement suggests. This may be attributed to the potential English language barriers they may have due to a low English language proficiency, thereby deterring them from doing any reading in English. Results of this question clearly denote that the respondents are discouraged when they encounter difficult English, rather than the opposite, to go and read more so as to tackle harder sentence structures and lexical items. Having an interesting topic cannot compensate for the fact that the hard English persists, forming a huge barrier for respondents to pursue reading.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 17.

### **Statement 17 Results**



The rather negative questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents disagree to it. A vast majority (71%) disagree to the statement, a larger minority (19%) strongly disagree, another smaller minority (10%) agree and no respondent strongly agrees.

Overall, the respondents are not willing to read English books to learn some new English words or something new about people and things that interest them. Most of the respondents disagree, or even strongly disagree, thinking that the statement does not describe them accurately. Most students are not willing to learn new English words and vocabulary from English books, or some new knowledge and fun facts from people and things around them, such as current affairs. None of the respondents are strongly willing to gain new knowledge from reading English books.

The results display an overall negative attitude of students towards learning and improving themselves from reading English books. The statistics has shown that the respondents are actually not totally reluctant to read English books, but rather, they are afraid of the difficult content and the huge amount of English words they have to process when reading the English books.

## **B. Extrinsic drive to academic compliance**

### Introduction

In the reading motivation questionnaire, statements 6, 10 and 13 were categorised under the group: Extrinsic drive to academic compliance and they covered the relationship between reading English books and future jobs or studies and also attempted to investigate whether students would be motivated to read English books with a view to improving English for their future career or academic development.

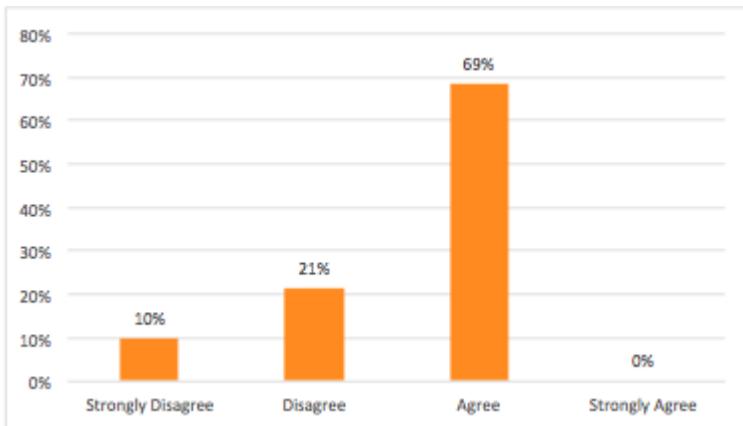
**Statement 6 – “I read more English books so that I can develop better reading skills for my future job or studies”**

**Statement 10 – “I try to finish my English reading assignments on time”**

**Statement 13 – “I read in English so that I can do my English assignments (eg. writing book reports) exactly as what the teacher tells me to do”**

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 6.

**Statement 6 Results**



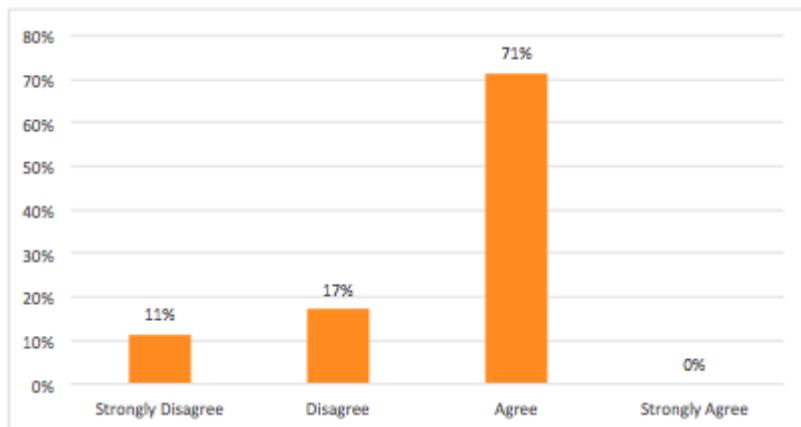
The rather positive questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents agree to it. A majority of respondents (69%) agree with the fact that they read English more because they want to develop better reading skills for their future jobs or studies and feel that the statement describes them correctly. On the other hand, a minority (10%) strongly disagree to the statement, and another minority (21%) disagree, and no respondent strongly agrees at all.

These results reflect that the respondents hold, in general, extrinsic compliance academically, especially those that may affect their future career opportunities. The relationship between the respondents reading more and wishing for better reading abilities as well as better career opportunities is rather strong. Their academic compliance is heavily driven by factors related to future jobs or studies. The respondents of this questionnaire should believe that better reading skills in English can increase their competitiveness in job seeking or future studies. They have a rather high desire or drive to excel in their future careers, and have also given thought about their future career or study paths.

Hence, they recognise the importance of having good English reading skills to maintain their personal competitiveness. It may also be deduced that the respondents are able to realise the relationship between good academic performance and future academic as well as career opportunities. It is thus useful to motivate the respondents of this questionnaire to read more if the importance of English reading skills in finding future jobs or pursuing further studies is reiterated. The conclusion is that it should be effective in encouraging reading English by targeting one's extrinsic academic compliance related to future job or study opportunities, as it is proven to be existent.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 10.

### **Statement 10 Results**

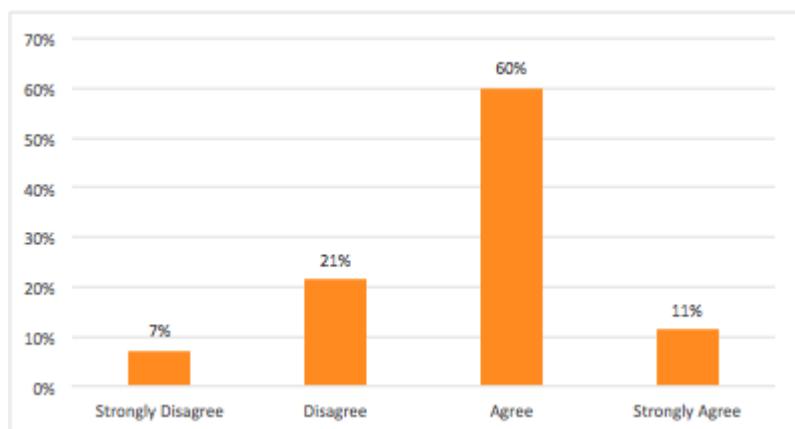


The rather positive questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents agree to it and feel that the statement describes them correctly. A majority of respondents (71%) agree to the fact that they try to finish their English reading assignments, such as writing English reports on time, with a minority (11%) strongly disagreeing to the statement, another minority (17%) disagreeing, and no respondent strongly agreeing at all.

These results reveal that, in general, respondents of this questionnaire hold a positive attitude in dealing with the English subject, no matter how difficult or easy the learning materials are. The results show how respondents cultivate respect to their teachers for the English subject by acknowledging their agreement in being punctual when handing in their homework. It can be concluded that respondents of this questionnaire hold a positive learning attitude to this English subject in general.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 13.

### **Statement 13 Results**



The rather positive questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents agree to it. A majority of respondents (60%) agree to the fact that they try to read in English so that they can do their English reading assignments, such as writing English reports, exactly as what the teacher tells them to do, with a larger minority (21%) disagreeing, a very small minority strongly agreeing (11%) and disagreeing (7%).

In general, these respondents agree that doing English assignments exactly like what their teacher tells them to do is the correct behaviour. This demonstrates how the respondents of this questionnaire will be willing to read in English when they are required by their teachers to hand in certain academic work. Such behaviour affirms that the respondents of this questionnaire understand the importance of cultivating a sense of respect to their teachers. They are rather willing to follow their teachers' instructions and guidance for their academic studies in English. Thus, for the respondents of this questionnaire to read more English, direct guidance or modelling behaviour from their English teachers should appear to be quite an effective way in endorsing such behaviour.

### **C. Extrinsic drive to receive incentives, such as rewards or praise**

#### Introduction

In the reading motivation questionnaire, statements 4, 9 and 15 were categorised under the group: Extrinsic drive to receive incentives such as rewards or praise. The three questions below all attempted to investigate the effectiveness of the incentives by providing tangible and intangible rewards (from verbal praises to real gifts like food or coupons) to the participants after reading books and whether it is a useful means to motivate the weak L2 learners to read more in English.

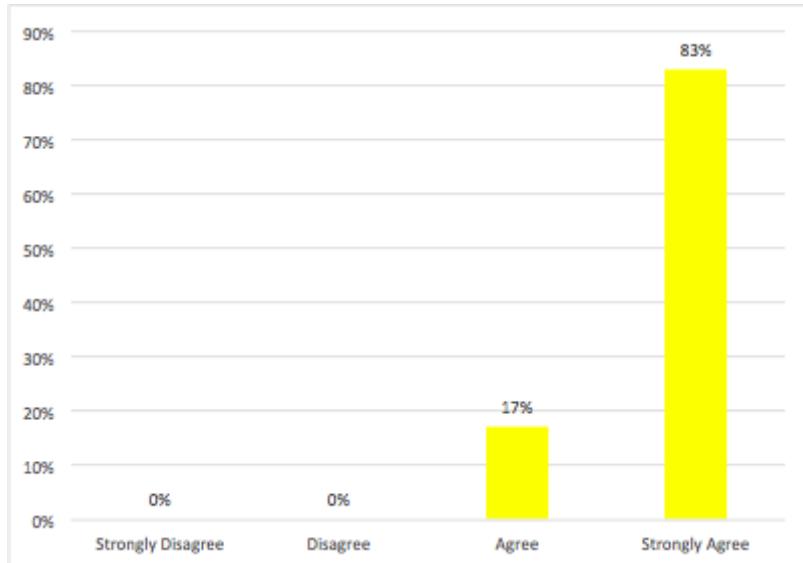
**Statement 4 – “I like reading English when I can get some rewards (eg. food or coupons) after reading”**

**Statement 9 – “Getting some rewards after reading can motivate me to read English more”**

**Statement 15 – “I like reading English when I have to share my reading with my teacher or friends/ peers instead of writing book reports”**

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 4.

### **Statement 4 Results**

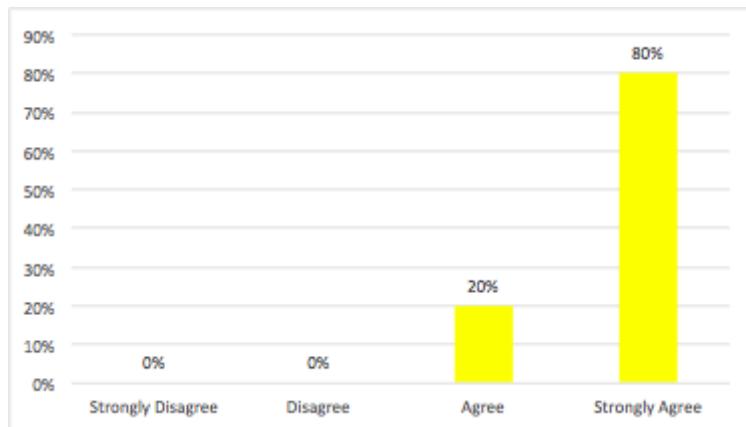


The very positive questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents strongly agree to it, thinking that the statement describes them correctly. The majority of respondents (83%) agree to the fact that they will enjoy reading in English when they can receive some rewards, such as food or coupons after reading. The rest of the minority (17%) also opt for the “Agree” choice, strongly indicating the fact that rewards and incentives can impose a very powerful effect on inducing an English reading habit for the respondents of this questionnaire. None of the respondents disagrees to this statement at all.

Without a shadow of doubt, all the respondents of this questionnaire are clearly highly motivated to read English when there are attractive rewards such as food or coupons, which they can use to satisfy their basic human needs or invest in their other interests. Their high motivation to read when there are incentives clearly overcomes their worries on their probable language barriers they may have in reading English, especially in the case of the present study when all the participants were found to have a low English proficiency. The respondents surely enjoy the small sense of achievement after reading, if they were to receive rewards at the end of it. Therefore, it can be concluded that using rewards is one of the most reliable ways to cultivate an English reading habit for the respondents of this questionnaire, as perfectly revealed in the questionnaire results.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 9

### **Statement 9 Results**



The very positive questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents agree to it, believing the statement describes them properly. The majority of the respondents (80%) agree to the fact that they will enjoy reading in English when they can receive some rewards, such as food or coupons after reading.

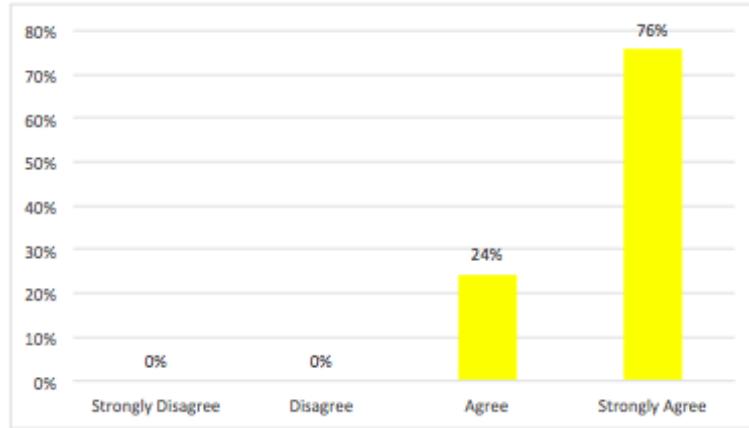
The rest of the minority (20%) all opt for the “Agree” choice, strongly indicating the fact that rewards and incentives can be one of the powerful means in igniting the motivation of those readers who have a low English proficiency and are rather reluctant to embark on their reading journey. None of the respondent disagrees to this statement at all.

It is crystal clear that the respondents of this questionnaire are highly motivated to read English when there are attractive rewards such as food or coupons since these incentives would be regarded as a kind of recognition of their efforts or contribution in the eyes of the interviewees. They will tend to have a higher motivation to read as their intrinsic need for being recognised or appreciated could be satisfied with those tangible or intangible rewards given and, definitely, this would help to overcome their fear on the language barriers they may face while reading English.

Seen in this light, it can be concluded that using rewards is one of the most reliable ways to cultivate an English reading habit for the respondents of this questionnaire, as perfectly mirrored in the questionnaire results.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 15.

### **Statement 15 Results**



The very positive questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents agree to the statement, thinking the aforementioned statement describes them accurately. The majority of respondents (76%) strongly agree to the fact that they will enjoy reading in English when they have to share their reading with teachers, friends or peers verbally instead of writing book reports. The rest of the minority (24%) all opt for the “Agree” choice, strongly indicating the fact that reporting or sharing the story with peers or teachers can be a very encouraging factor in adding fuel to the motivation of the respondents to develop an English reading habit. None of the respondents disagrees to this statement at all.

These results reveal that students, in general, prefer producing a verbal or oral report to tedious paperwork, which appears to be a more straightforward and simpler task than writing words in their book reports. It can strongly be deduced that respondents of this questionnaire clearly find more joy in actively and orally presenting or sharing the findings of a book than having to write them out. It is highly recommendable to create tasks that only require oral sharing instead of a written format, if one is also in hope of motivating a group of weak learners to read more in English because only in this way can the weak readers directly obtain some feedback on their reading performance or to make some improvement for themselves. Hence, it can be concluded that having an oral presentation task will be of greater interest to those low-proficient readers than using the written ones.

## D. Extrinsic drive to excel

### Introduction

In the reading motivation questionnaire, statements 3, 8 and 16 were categorised under the group: Extrinsic drive to excel and the respondents were asked about their extrinsic drive towards reading English books and excelling in the English Language. All these questions investigate whether the followings are effective extrinsic drives: working hard in the English language to be better than peers, to receive compliments on their English language proficiency and having a desire to be the best in reading the English Language.

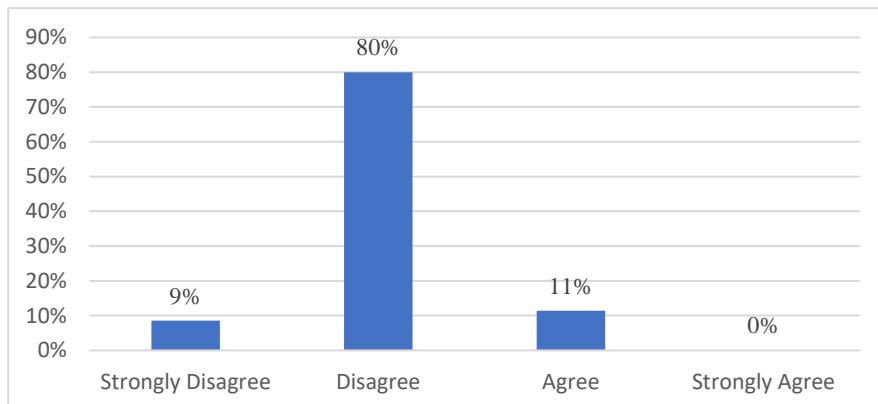
**Statement 3 – “I am willing to work hard to read better than my friends/classmates in English”**

**Statement 8 – “I like my teacher or my friends to say that I read well in English”**

**Statement 16 – “I want to be the best at reading in English”**

Below is a bar graph displaying the Questionnaire results of statement 3.

### Statement 3 Results

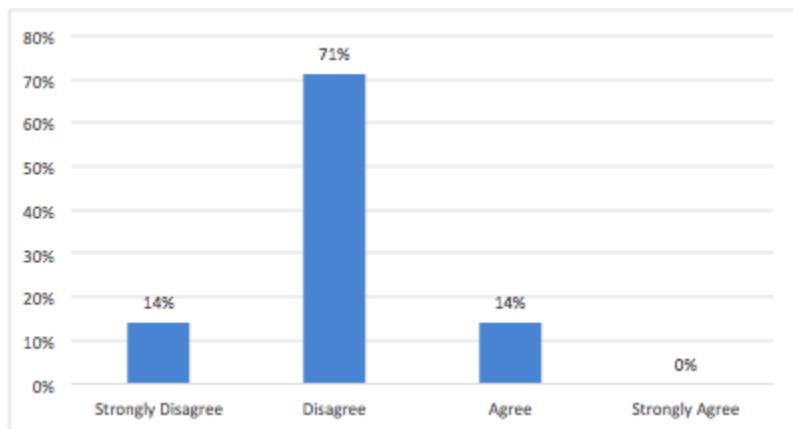


The rather negative Questionnaire results collected on this statement denotes how most respondents disagree to the statement, thinking that the statement does not describe them properly. Working hard to read better than one's friends or classmates in English is not an effective extrinsic drive to encourage weak students to read English. A staggering majority (80%) disagrees to the statement, while a minority agrees (11%), an even lesser minority (9%) strongly disagrees, and no responded record shows a “Strongly Agree” answer.

Overall, these results imply that students are not motivated to work hard and read English just to be comparatively better and more fluent in the English language than their peers in general. The respondents of this questionnaire clearly do not form much comparison between their own and their peers' English language abilities possibly because they are aware of the fact that their English proficiency is not good at all and if they try to compare themselves with the others in terms of the L2 abilities or proficiency, they are actually placing themselves in an embarrassing situation or a disadvantaged position. Hence, it is not an effective extrinsic drive.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 8.

### **Statement 8 Results**

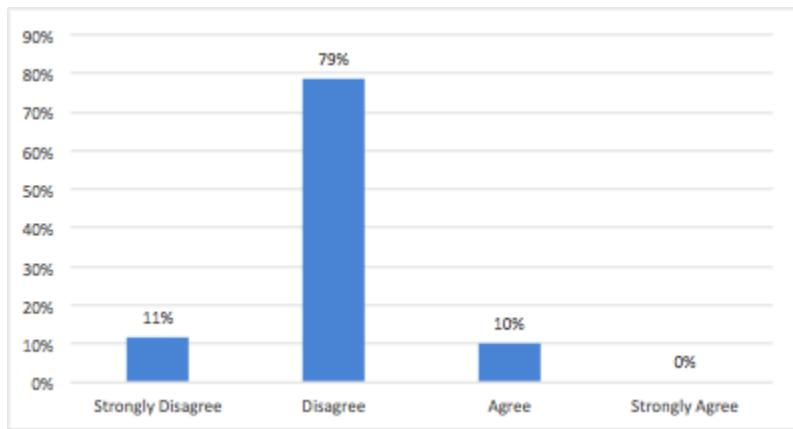


The rather negative questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents disagree to it and do not think the statement portrays them. A majority (71%) disagree with the statement, while a minority (14%) strongly disagree, another minority (14%) agree, and no responded record shows a “Strongly Agree” answer.

A vast majority of the respondents disagree to the fact that they enjoy compliments from their teacher(s) or friends that they read well in the English language. The fact that the respondents clearly do not care very much about other people’s perception on their English language abilities is possibly attributed to the weak learners’ own awareness or understanding of their low language proficiency. Compliments regarding their excellent proficiency in the English language is hence proven not to be an effective extrinsic drive to read more English.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 16.

### **Statement 16 Results**



The rather negative questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents disagree to it, believing that the statement does not correctly describe them. A majority (79%) disagree to the statement, a minority (11%) strongly disagree, another minority (10%) that agree and no responded record shows anyone that strongly agrees.

These results reflect that the respondents have a low desire to excel their language abilities and be the best at reading in English. They do not show any hope or desire in improving their English proficiency in general, as obtained from the results of this questionnaire. In view of this, to be the best at reading in the English language is not an effective extrinsic drive for them to read more English.

## **E. Extrinsic drive to test compliance**

### Introduction

In the reading motivation questionnaire, statements 1, 12 and 18 were categorised under the group: Extrinsic drive to test compliance. Overall, these three statements attempted to explore for whether the respondents read more to see reading scores improve in exams or try to read in English because they need a good score on English tests or exams or they think it is important to receive a good English reading score on reading tests or exams for his or her future job.

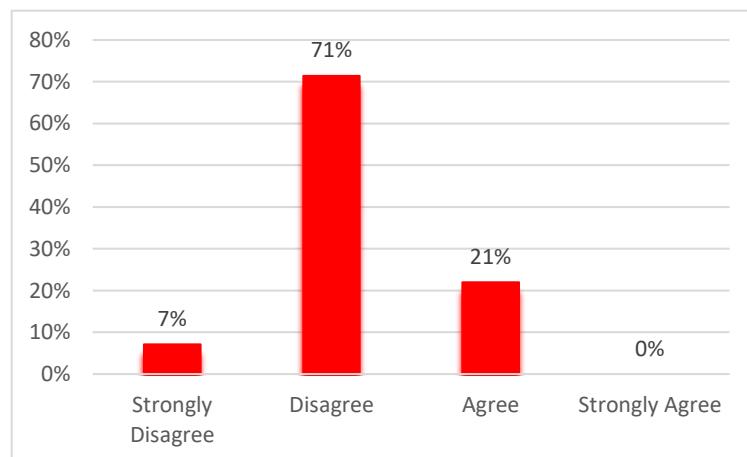
**Statement 1 – “I like seeing my reading scores improve on tests/exams”**

**Statement 12 – “I try to read in English because I need a good score on English tests/ exams”**

**Statement 18 – “It is important for me to receive a good English reading score on reading tests/ exams for my future jobs”**

Below is a bar graph displaying the Questionnaire results of statement 1.

### **Statement 1 Results**

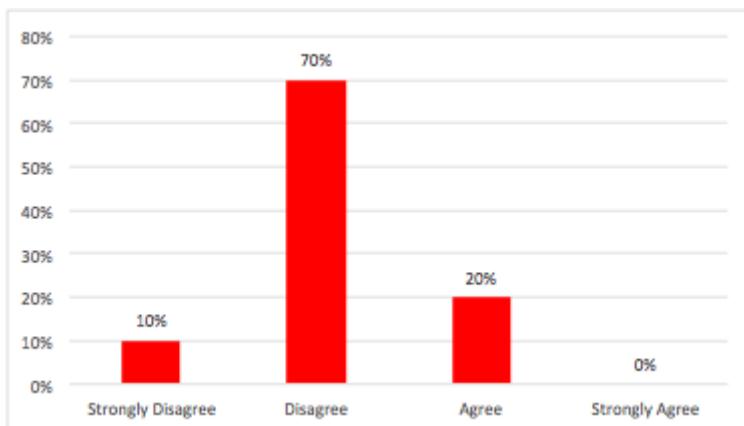


The rather negative questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents disagree to it, thinking that the statement does not portray them clearly. A notable majority of respondents (71%) disagree to the fact that they read English more to see reading scores improve on tests or exams, a minority strongly disagree (9%) to the statement, another minority (20%) agree to it, and no respondent strongly agrees at all.

These results reveal that the respondents do not hold, in general, any extrinsic compliance on tests and exams. The relationship between respondents reading more and wishing for a better grade in tests and exams is very minimal. Their extrinsic compliance on tests is very weak. Such a phenomenon can be possibly attributed to the fact that most respondents in this questionnaire have low English proficiency and they are more conscious of their incapability while reading and writing in English, followed by repeated failures in the school tests and exams. Seen in this light, it can be concluded that if one plans to encourage those weak L2 learners to read more English by targeting one's extrinsic compliance on tests and exams, s/he will not achieve anything.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 12.

#### **Statement 12 Results**



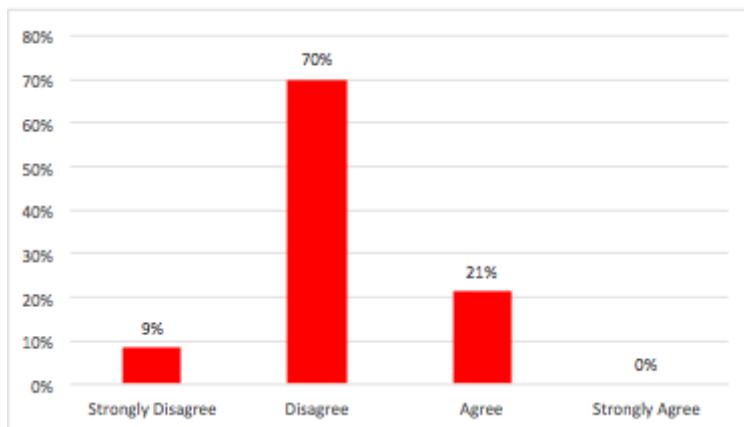
The rather negative questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents disagree to it, believing the statement does not accurately portray them. A majority of respondents (70%) disagree to the fact that they read English more because they need a good score on English tests or exams, a minority (10%) strongly disagree to the statement, another minority (20%) agree, and no respondent strongly agrees at all.

These results reflect that the respondents of this questionnaire either do not believe that reading in English can improve their exam scores, or that they do not read in English in general because they have well understood the fact that they always fail to comprehend the meaning in a myriad of reading texts, no matter how many books they read, it will not help them achieve anything at all.

Hence, the conclusion is that it should be ineffective to encourage reading English by targeting one's extrinsic compliance on tests and exams, as it is proven to be barely existent.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 18.

**Statement 18 Results**



The rather negative questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflect how most respondents disagree to it, believing that the statement does not describe them properly. A majority of respondents (70%) disagree to the fact that they read English more because they need a good score on English tests or exams, a minority strongly disagree (9%) to the statement, another minority (21%) agree, and no respondent strongly agrees at all.

These results exhibit that the respondents do not hold, in general, any extrinsic compliance on tests and exams that might affect their future career opportunities. The relationship between the respondents reading more and wishing for a better grade in tests and exams for better career opportunities is very minimal.

Some of the respondents of this questionnaire may have a low desire or drive to excel in their future careers, or have not ruminated about their future career paths since they are just 13-15 years old. It may also be deduced that some respondents fail to realise the relationship between good academic performance and future career or academic opportunities. In view of these, it should be an ineffective means if one attempts to motivate those weak L2 learners to read more English by targeting one's extrinsic compliance on tests and exams, even if these would affect their future job opportunities.

## **F. Extensive reading motivation**

### Introduction

In the reading motivation questionnaire, statements 2, 11 and 14 were categorised under the group: Extensive reading motivation. The following statements attempted to investigate whether the respondents like reading interesting graded readers in English when there are more colourful illustrations or pictures, or bigger fonts and words inside the book, whether they enjoy reading easy stories or shorter contents with more autonomy in choosing the English books, or whether they like reading easy English books with shorter sentences or easier words.

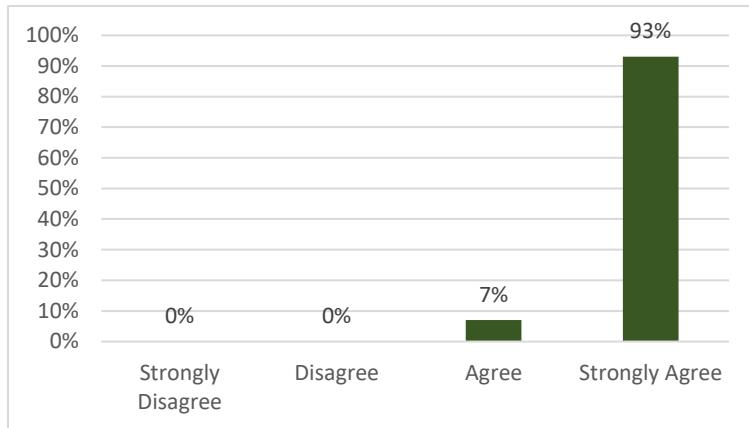
**Statement 2 – “I like reading interesting books or graded readers when there are more colourful pictures or bigger fonts/ words inside the book”**

**Statement 11 – “I like reading English books of shorter contents & the autonomy to choose any kind of books I like”**

**Statement 14 – “I like reading easy English books with shorter sentences or easier words”**

Below is a bar graph displaying the Questionnaire results of statement 2

**Statement 2 Results**



The very positive Questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents strongly agree to it, feeling that the statement portrays them.

A vast majority of respondents (93%) strongly agree, not only agree, to the fact that they will enjoy reading more interesting graded readers in English when there are more colourful illustrations or pictures or bigger fonts and words inside the book.

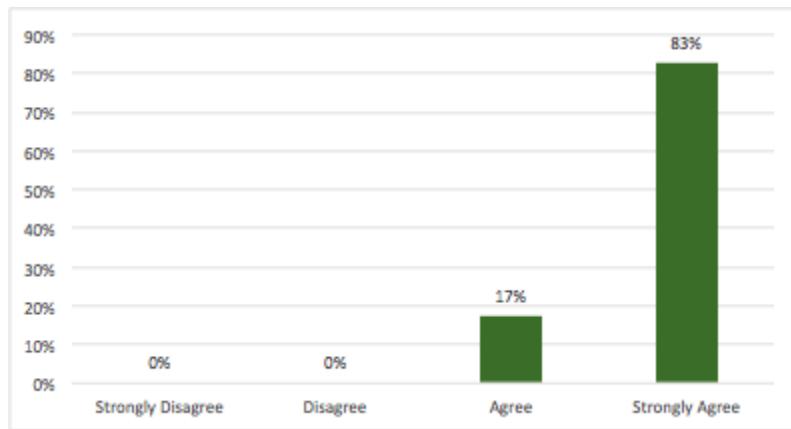
The rest of the respondents (7%), which is a minority, all agree on the statement too. No respondent disagrees or strongly disagrees with what this question depicts.

The statement is thus an attractive, impressive and widely approved method among all the respondents of this questionnaire. It is held to be an effective motivational method to induce a reading habit on the respondents of this questionnaire.

What is more, it can be deduced that the respondents will definitely be encouraged to read more extensively if more books can include increasingly colourful illustrations with bigger fonts and words.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 11.

### **Statement 11 Results**



The very positive questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how most respondents strongly agree to it, feeling that the statement describes them correctly.

A sizable majority of respondents strongly agree (83%), not only agree, to the fact that they will enjoy reading easy stories or shorter contents and with more autonomy in choosing the books to read.

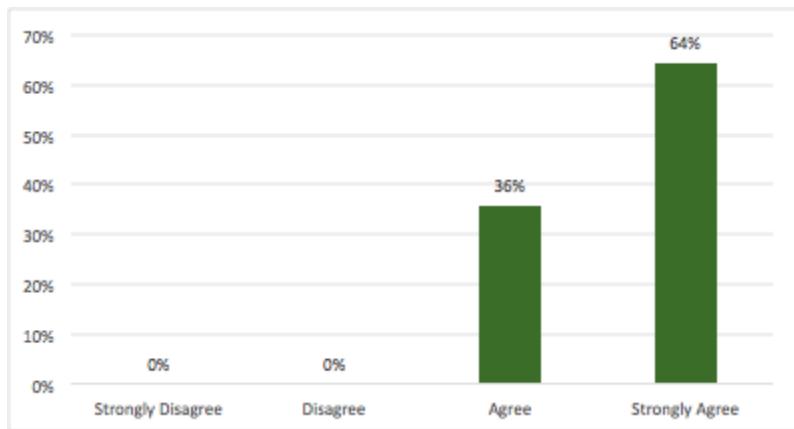
The rest of the respondents (17%), which is comparatively a minority, all agree on the statement too. No respondent disagrees or strongly disagrees to what this statement depicts.

The statement is thus an appealing and well-approved method among all respondents of this questionnaire. With respondents having a very positive response in relation to accepting reading books that are easier, it may be that they do not have confidence in their English reading abilities, or they have poor English proficiency to begin with. Their poor English proficiency may, therefore, only allow them to feel interested in reading easier English books where they encounter less language barriers.

When they feel more confident that their limited English abilities allow them to comprehend the story content, they will feel motivated to read more extensively. Aside from these, numerous respondents were found to enjoy having more autonomy in selecting the English books they like to read but not are assigned to read. Hence the degree of autonomy seems to be a decisive factor in determining whether the weak L2 readers can be motivated successfully or not.

Below is a bar graph displaying the questionnaire results of statement 14.

**Statement 14 Results**



The positive questionnaire results obtained on this statement reflects how a great deal of respondents agree to it. A rather vast majority of respondents (64%) strongly agree, not only agree, to the fact that they will enjoy reading easy English books with shorter sentences or easier words. A minority (36%) agree to it. No respondent disagrees or strongly disagrees to what this statement depicts.

The statement thus reveals that this is quite a popular and widely approved method among all the respondents of this questionnaire. With respondents having a very positive feedback in relation to accepting reading books which are easier, it may be that they have poor English proficiency to embark on their reading journey. To overcome this, they may prefer reading books of easier levels so that they could build up more confidence in the process of reading and pave their way to read more extensively in the future. In light of this, it can be deduced that the respondents will definitely be encouraged to read more extensively if the content in the English books are easy ones with shorter sentences or easier lexis.

## 4.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

### 4.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews I - Analysis

*Prior to the commencement of the 3-month scaffolded ER intervention*, six different groups of students (a total of 35 students) were interviewed for the first time to explore more about their past learning experiences, their reading habits and preferences, comments about the existing ER practices at school and also difficulties encountered in the reading process. The audio-recordings were fully transcribed, coded and analysed as indicated below:

## *A.1 Do you enjoy learning English? Why or why not?*

### **1. Enjoyment in learning English**

#### ***1.1. Enjoy learning English***

There are merely a few positive opinions about learning English, yet they are based on pop culture or music, limited to only during a student's free time and not on academic English. A few respondents have attempted various ways to learn English outside of the lessons, such as listening to foreign pop songs, watching foreign movies, but most showed no intention to do so. During the primary schooling, they also enjoyed the easy access of English learning, such as playing games in the English lessons. The interviewees preferred learning English in a lively way and were sick of certain boring aspects in the lessons, such as "merely reading books in the lessons", when they did not actually understand what the book was all about due to their impoverished knowledge of lexicons.

#### ***1.2. Dislike learning English***

Around two third of the interviewed groups provided negative opinions about learning English. Most groups explicitly expressed aversion towards learning English. There are both external barriers and internal barriers leading to such negative views in learning English.

The external barriers entail rigid and inflexible teaching mode during the English lessons, heavy workload assigned to students, inability to read independently, or past English lessons focused on discipline instead of academics where "teachers usually only knew how to manage various discipline problems or punish other students." These factors have limited students' access to learning English and deepened their misunderstanding in ways to acquire English well.

The internal barriers to learning English include lacking language foundation as well as reading skills, misunderstanding of vocabulary, inability to pronounce English words, fear of making mistakes, or even having embarrassment during the lessons. Most groups expressed similar views on the point that they were highly influenced by how others perceive them during the learning process. Most of them were set back to learn English as they were afraid of making mistakes and getting teased by other classmates. One student indicated that "it annoyed me a lot when I pronounced the word wrongly and I felt silly when I tried to speak English". In general, most groups had a lot of negative experiences in learning English, such as fearing the need of memorising vocabulary, and fearing others' comments during attempts in reading, writing, or speaking English which discouraged them from learning English.

As shown, all the attendees in the interview believe that they do not enjoy learning English in the school environment because of the classroom activities that are always considered boring and redundant. With the uninterested attitude towards English learning in class, they cannot enjoy the English learning process properly.

### **1.3. *Overall comments***

A majority of the groups expressed little or no interest in learning English mainly due to challenges they encountered during their learning process. The respondents mainly showed negative emotions towards learning English or attending English lessons. Only a few attendees from each group showed little interest in learning English, but only limited to English unrelated to academic or studies. No student has shown any positive feedback about the English lessons.

A.2 *Did you read much English when you were a primary school kid? OR*

*Do you think you learned English well in your primary school?*

## **2. Previous English Knowledge**

### **2.1. *Minimum exposure to English***

There is only little positive feedback about learning English, but only limited to learning English through reading basic and easy English books, such as comic books and textbooks. Most groups have tried developing interests in English but most lack reading skills, or are hesitant in reading more difficult and thicker books and they “always feel frustrated when...open an English book because...feel like it is a waste of time.” The only exposure to English in their primary schools was when they engaged in English learning activities, such as group games or board games conducted in lessons.

### **2.2. *Lack of exposure to English***

Most groups believed that they had little exposure to English in primary schools due to various reasons, such as their primary school teachers using Cantonese to teach English, or not understanding the importance of English. “In my primary school, all the lessons were mostly taught in Cantonese and we rarely spoke to each other in English.” In terms of reading, with the prolonged habit of not reading any English books, most feared reading English books, with too many words and too few pictures. For exposure of English in lessons, the respondents did not like attending English lessons, so they would not be able to learn much out of them. The main reasons include lacking assistance in reading, not being able to play fun games in English, and struggling to reach their teachers’ targeted English standard, or failing English exams. With all the above reasons, most interviewees lack confidence in speaking or reading English in their primary schools and also English learning time during English lessons, due to the discipline problems handled during the English lessons.

### **2.3. *Overall comments***

A majority of the groups had limited exposure to English in their primary education, leading to a lack of basic understanding of certain English knowledge like grammar and vocabulary. This has a direct impact on their level of English proficiency. The reasons for their limited exposure mainly range from external to internal problems. The external problems entail weak family support or unpopular mode of English lessons in the primary schools whereas the internal problems include feeling uninterested or stressed in English, or not understanding the importance of English.

*A.3 Do you want to improve your English or learn English better?*

### **3. Aspects of English for improvement**

#### **3.1. *Spoken English***

One to two groups would like to learn basic communication skills in English, such as improving pronunciation, communications with native speakers, or use of slang. Some are interested in expanding their own vocabulary bank when speaking English. For students who are eager to improve spoken English, they have extrinsic motivation for improvement, hoping to increase competitiveness, get a good job, or communicate with potential customers in the future as they believe that “learning English better can definitely increase my competitiveness in the future.” Overall, most students want to improve in English fluency, reduce the use of broken English, learn more vocabulary in spoken English, and learn more conversational English.

#### **3.2. *Reading***

Most of the groups want to improve their reading skills, especially when they lack sufficient techniques to understand different reading passages, such as in newspapers, reading exercises in textbooks, exams, story books, or even online passages. Some raised concern in difficulties in analysing passage structures effectively, and are interested in learning skills in comprehension, such as reading the passages in a shorter time, guessing the meaning of the unknown words in passages, or even breaking long sentences into smaller fragments to understand a full sentence. Most of them showed concern in improving their vocabulary and comprehension skills as they identified a relationship between them.

### **3.3. *Vocabulary***

Most of the groups have a common weakness of lacking a rich vocabulary bank. This is also the root or crucial factor hindering their English reading, writing and speaking abilities. Most respondents “wish to improve my English in vocabulary” and expand their vocabulary bank. They experienced a lot of difficulties in reading passages and stories, or even daily newspapers, and the problem originates from not knowing most of the words in the passage and the interviewees believed that they are not “skilled at reading passages because I do not have a rich vocabulary list in my mind.” Through improving their own vocabulary bank, reading passages would be smoother, easier, and more convenient for them. It is suggested that the respondents should prioritise tackling this problem in view of its significance.

### **3.4. *Overall comments***

A majority of the groups expressed their will to improve English as they believe that it is beneficial for them to enhance their English proficiency. Most interviewees recognised the importance of learning English for their career development and communication skills.

#### *A.4 Did you make any attempt to achieve this?*

#### **4. Past attempts in improving English**

##### **4.1. *Never***

A few groups had no idea of what methods to improve their English as they were unwilling to leave their comfort zone, or they were stressed and lost in learning English, or even lack the courage to start improving English. “I am scared of initiating a conversation in English as I feel embarrassed.” Some had no motivation at all to follow any previous advice from teachers, such as reading books. The main reason why many students did not attempt to improve English is due to their busy schedule with packed schoolwork and timetable.

##### **4.2. *Through entertainment***

A few groups have tried to improve English through entertainment, such as movies, comics, story books and TV dramas. They tried learning the daily conversation or dialogues with subtitles and some commonly-used slangs or words in spoken English. Some interviewees would sometimes “watch some English TV dramas, like ‘Friends’ to learn more about how to communicate with others in English.” Most of them attempted to follow the speed of the characters in movies, or learn the characters’ dialogues, accent, choice of words, but usually in vain due to the quick disappearing subtitles and quick transition from scene to scene. Therefore,

it is agreed that watching English films or dramas is not an effective method in improving English.

#### **4.3. *Through extensive reading***

The minority of the groups have had several attempts to read books but soon to give up. The reasons include inability to understand the content of the book, high time consumption in checking the meaning of the unknown words from the mobile phone dictionary Apps or a dictionary, losing interests in reading and lacking motivation, feeling distracted after starting to read any books. The interviewees might not have chosen books that suit their ability level, leading to such a phenomenon: “The English books are too difficult for my level, so I gave up on reading them eventually”. Most do not agree that extensive reading is an effective method in improving English.

#### **4.4. *Tuition***

One or two groups have sought assistance from outside school tutors before to improve their English, mainly reading, writing and grammar. The assistance was mainly targeted in academic English, in exam-oriented skills, grammar, and vocabulary learning. However, no immediate or long-term improvement was observed, so it can be concluded that joining a tuition course is not an effective method in improving English.

#### **4.5. *Overall comments***

A majority of the groups have paid effort or attempted to seek ways to improve their English, though limited results are seen. It is commonly seen that the interviewees found it difficult to sustain the habits of improving their English knowledge in the long run. The respondents mostly preferred learning English through entertainment to extensive reading. In addition, out of the three ways of improvements, tuition is the least preferred.

*B.5 How often do you read an L1 book and an L2 book respectively as a secondary school student now? OR can you recall when you last read an L1 and L2 book (not the English coursebook) or something in English on the website?*

## 5. Frequency in reading L1 or L2 books

### 5. *Never/Seldom*

This question received a rather negative response: All groups seldom or never read an L1 or an L2 book for extensive learning. Most students only read books for finishing an assignment, none read them out of their own will, “My last reading of an L1 and L2 book was when I was forced to finish my homework -- a book report.” “Other than that, I would not read an English book in my free time...” Most groups encountered difficulties in understanding the content and needed to seek help from the online dictionary but easily got distracted, feeling troublesome and time-consuming to look up words in the dictionary Apps or online dictionary. Some groups experienced problems in concentrating to read a complete book. All groups showed little or no interest, and lack initiative or motivation in reading English books, as most interviewees pointed out that they would only read an English book if they had to hand in assignments, such as book reports. A few groups even explained how they only briefly read or stitched different parts of the story together during a mandatory book reading for the sake of writing book reports. This reflects that most students do not have the habit of reading.

*B.6 If you can choose anything in English to read, what would that be? Why?*

*B.6 What kinds of storybooks are you more interested in reading when you have some spare time? Why?*

## 6. Preferred Reading Genre (in English/in general)

### 6.1. *Short Stories*

A few groups preferred reading short stories or fairy tales, emphasising the need of vivid pictures and less packed words in the book. The short stories should have a low difficulty for readers to understand the content easily. “I like to read comics in English since English comics usually have less words and more pictures on each page. As a result, the whole book seems less scary to me.” Some interviewees preferred short stories with interesting plots, such as detective stories with a lot of interesting events in the storyline, which is entirely different from the informative passages from textbooks.

### 6.2. *Informative contents*

A few groups preferred reading newspapers or magazines, which provide them more new information in reading. They are attracted to a wide range of topics, from current affairs, to technological inventions, astronomy, or even Space exploration, most of which are of the interviewees’ interests. A few interviewees also claimed that newspapers or magazines are useful for them “to improve the analytical skills and keep [them] updated with current affairs”.

### **6.3. Comics**

Most groups preferred reading comics as they have less words and more illustrations, overall, are easier to read. The level of difficulty is lower than that of thick novels, with simple and straightforward English used in the context. Comics is a rather popular genre among all the interviewees, especially with the appealing cover page, interesting content, various jokes, and hilarious illustration on every page. Most viewed comics as an escape from academic passages.

### **6.4. Sports**

Some groups raised a strong interest in reading the bibliography or some short stories on famous football stars or basketball stars, like LeBron James, or Ronaldo. These books, which contain their favourite stars, tips in playing the sports well, and the interesting fun facts about the stars, interest the respondents a lot.

### **6.5. Overall comments**

In conclusion, most interviewees preferred books with less words and more illustrations. They found these types of books more suitable to their reading ability, hence showing greater interest in reading them. Comics seems to be welcomed by many of the respondents.

*B.7 What do you usually do to kill time leisurely?*

## **7. Leisure Activities**

### **7.1. Entertainment**

A vast majority of groups preferred indoor activities as an entertainment, such as playing online games or watching TV dramas, both being exciting and stress relieving. "Personally, playing video games can alleviate my stress in schooling." Some preferred watching movies, playing the piano, listening to music and reading comic books, as an escape from the stressful school life. None preferred reading English books or academically related materials in their leisure time.

### **7.2. Sports-related activities**

A few interviewees preferred outdoor or sports-related activities, such as playing basketball. They treated it as a leisure activity for alleviating stress and bonding with friends. In their eyes, reading books is considered as a stressful activity.

### **7.3. *Overall comments***

To sum up, most of the interviewees prefer indoor entertainment to kill time as a way to alleviate stress from schoolwork while only a few prefer reading comic books or engaging in outdoor or sport-related activities. This reflects that a staggering majority of the interviewees do not prefer doing anything related to improvements in English-related skills.

*C.8 Do you think the ER morning session held once every two weeks is effective in helping you learn some English?*

## **8. Perceived Effectiveness of learning English via ER**

### **8.1. *Effective***

For the effectiveness in ER English morning session, there was positive feedback from only one group. Some interviewees believe that the ER session poses a positive effect of exposing students to English-related materials, given that most of them seldom read books, “Without this ER session, I wouldn’t read any English books on my own.” The supporting group also provided suggestions to hold more ER morning sessions to help sustain a reader’s long-term English reading habit.

### **8.2. *Ineffective***

Negative feedback from the majority of the groups reflected that it has limited effectiveness, mainly with the short duration and lack of assistance during the ER English morning session. Half of the interviewees believed that having ER sessions is a waste of time, and most of them would not pay attention to the content of the books while reading but attempt to revise or do homework instead. “I will pretend reading the English books, but actually I will be working on my assignments or revising for my dictation”, or to pretend to be reading books attentively but actually felt lost while reading. Most of the respondents agreed that it was an ineffective way to improve English learning progress and could only bring limited effect due to the low frequency and duration of the ER morning sessions, they even asked “What is the point if the session is just held once every two weeks?”. Hence some of the respondents suggested cancelling the ER morning sessions and increasing the number of English lessons instead.

### **8.3. *Overall comments***

To sum up, the data collected reflects that the ER morning sessions only have little effectiveness in raising the interviewees’ level of reading ability in terms of the inadequate session time and lacking of assistance. Amendments can be made with reference to the suggestions provided by the interviewees in section 9.3

C.9 Do you think it is enough? Do you prefer the school increasing the frequency of the ER morning session from once every two weeks to at least once every week OR increasing the length of the ER session from 15 minutes to 20/25 minutes? Why?

## 9. Suggestions for improvements on the ER session

### 9.1. *Support extending or increasing ER sessions*

A few groups believed that the ER morning sessions were not sufficient. Some suggested the inadequate duration per ER session was not useful for reading books and require longer time to complete reading or digesting the content of a book. They stated that “If the ER session is about 20/25 minutes, I can read the English books for a longer period and try to deepen my understanding towards the book in the extended period.” In addition, a few students preferred increasing duration per session to frequency of ER session so as to facilitate slow readers who needed more time to read books.

### 9.2. *Disagreements in extending or increasing ER sessions*

The majority of the responses are negative. Responses from most groups are on decreasing the frequency or duration of ER sessions. Most lack assistance in reading the books and lack sufficient vocabulary to understand an entire story, believing that it is a waste of time to grind on difficult vocabulary. Some preferred and suggested using ER sessions for other purposes, such as doing English homework or revising for upcoming tests. The respondents would rather “do some homework or revise for any upcoming tests during that time.” As they lack time in completing other school work, they cannot fully concentrate in the ER morning sessions. A few students even raised the dissatisfaction towards forced reading and not truly enjoying the book during the ER session as one of them stated that “I don't think I enjoy the book that I am reading. I don't think that is the correct way to learn something.” Overall, most of the interviewees do not enjoy the ER morning session and prefer cancelling or reducing the amount of time.

### 9.3. *Suggestions for improvements (Both Positive and Negative)*

Both positive and negative feedback are collected from students. The positive feedback is mainly on extending the duration and increasing the frequency of the ER morning sessions, such as adding 5 to 10 minutes to read more per session or increasing the frequency of organising the ER morning sessions to once per week. The negative feedback is mainly on the cancellation or dissatisfaction with the ER morning session, considering it as a waste of time. Alternatively, the respondents preferred using the period to do other meaningful and urgent activities, like homework or test revision.

### 9.4. *Overall comments*

In short, the majority of the interviewees hold negative opinions towards the amendments suggested in the questions.

*C.10 What do you think when your English teacher asks you to write a brief report after reading an English book? Do you think the ER morning session could help you learn some English? Why or why not?*

## **10. Opinions on writing English book reports**

### **10.1. *Positive***

There are only a few positive opinions from a few groups on writing book reports. Some interviewees believed that writing book reports enable readers to attain skills to summarise the stories, understand more about the content as well as the background of the book, encourage them to think beyond the content of the book and rethink about the themes or morals. With reference to the interview, only a few respondents stated that “the morning ER session could help [them] learn some English.” All the interviewees agreed that writing book reports is better than not doing anything in English, as it forces them to pick up any English books and start reading the stories.

### **10.2. *Negative***

A majority of the opinions of writing book reports are negative opinions. Some groups showed negative presumptions on the teacher's marking attitude, believing the task as a gesture in their work. Almost all students believed that it was extremely time consuming to read an English book out of a student's abilities, with complicated words and plot. Most students also pointed out that book reports exacerbated the heavy workload on students, “I think it just increases my workload in schooling and it is completely unnecessary for students. I do not think the ER morning session could help me learn some English”, making them stressed and annoyed when dealing with this assignment. Few did not understand the use of the tasks, and explained how they practised copying from different parts of the story and stitch a book report out of mere copying. Most students believed that book reports made reading a stressful activity when reading should be relaxing, and detained them from writing the book report, with much stress in digesting the content in the story.

### **10.3. *Overall comments***

All in all, the majority of groups held a negative view on writing English book reports after reading an English book. Though some held positive views, students mainly expressed their doubt on the effectiveness of completing such tasks in helping them to improve their English.

D.11 Do you think the English books in the school library interest you? Why or why not?

## 11. Comments on School Library Books

### 11.1. *Outdated/ Poor Maintenance*

Most groups showed negative comments on the school library books. Some students pointed out that most books were outdated and not updated, and the library lacked interesting trendy genres, such as magazines, comics, and manga. A few students pointed out the poor condition of books, with yellowing of pages, dusty cover, making them unfavourable to touch, “The book cover has even turned yellow. It is unappealing for me to dig through piles of old books.” Most students believed that there was insufficient supply of popular books, such as updated magazines on pop cultures, or even comics. All students expressed frustration in the lack of updated books, and a few updated books were usually borrowed by others, and they never had an opportunity to read the books.

### 11.2. *Unsuitable Difficulty*

All groups believed that the difficulty of the books was too high. Most books from the library were over 100 pages per story, and contain a large number of advanced vocabularies as “Most of which are reference books, only some of them are fiction and comics.” A majority of the students expressed frustration in searching for easier books in the library, especially when they had to complete book reports. Few students expressed that the school library was not user-friendly for weaker students, who did not know most of the words in a line in most stories.

### 11.3. *Appearances of the books*

Some students commented on the appearance of the books. The unfavourable conditions detained students from choosing the books, such as the yellowing of pages and old appearance “The condition of some English books is poor and seems to be broken if someone is going to read it.” Thickness of the books also becomes a judging criterion for students to choose books: the thicker the book, the less likely they are to choose the book.

### 11.4. *Ratio of pictures to words in a book*

All groups emphasised on the importance of more pictures and less words in the books. All students preferred choosing books with less packed words or “books with more fancy covers and illustrations”, as they believed that such books must be easier and suitable to read. All preferred choosing books with more colorful illustrations, as the colorful illustration would not bore them halfway into reading the book. All groups preferred books with easier vocabulary, as they could not concentrate on reading the stories if they do not know too many words.

### **11.5. Overall comments**

In conclusion, the majority of groups expressed dissatisfaction towards the conditions of books and limited genres of books available in the school library. It is suggested that the school library can replace books that are rarely borrowed by students and conduct regular inspection on the conditions of books.

*D.12 What difficulties did you usually face while reading an English story book? OR what discouraged you most of the time while taking out an English book to read?*

## **12. Challenges faced when reading English books**

### **12.1. Unable to comprehend the text**

Most groups found it difficult to understand the content of the books, as they were not able to understand every single word, so they might be stuck halfway through a sentence and not knowing what the author means, “Sometimes, I understand every single word in the sentence but when they are being placed together, I could not put together what the author is trying to say.”

Some students were also confused by the sentence structure, as the sentence structure in English was slightly different from that of their everyday language. Some believed that it was time consuming to look up the dictionary for the meaning of some difficult words, so they preferred to skip the words they do not understand, which made it difficult to grasp the idea of the content.

A few stated that they lacked reading skills, “I don’t know how to break a long sentence into pieces to understand and cannot grasp the main idea if I encounter a long sentence”, to analyse the whole meaning. Some students may face some short-term memory problems and found it hard to memorise the previous plot of the book, as they mentioned in the interview, “most of the time, I forget the beginning of a passage by the time I get to the end.” So, when they continued reading the story the other day, they would be confused with the ongoing plot. They also expressed frustration when they had to reread the previous texts, they were easy to get off track of the plot. Most of them lost interest in continuing to read the book halfway as they grew bored of the plot soon. Such problems were aggravated when students encountered unfamiliar words in the story.

#### ***12.2. Difficulties in concentrating over a long period***

Some groups found it difficult to concentrate for a long period of time as they were easily distracted by other matters. Since some students might take a long time to process the words and the meanings in the story, they might soon daydream and forget about reading the book. Most students also showed difficulties in understanding the meaning of words and memorising the words for future uses. Overall, most students lost interests in reading English books easily.

#### ***12.3. Slow reading pace***

Some groups expressed that it took them a long time to finish a book, showing that they had a slow reading pace. Most students found it challenging to read at a faster speed as they faced various difficulties when reading the book. They have limited exposure to various types of vocabulary, yet they frequently encounter unfamiliar words, so they usually struggle in processing the meaning of words. “The more I read, the more I encounter unfamiliar terms, which takes me more time to finish an English book.”

Most students do not know how to use reading skills to speed up their reading pace. For instance, they might not be able to guess the meaning of the word using the nearby sentences, or they could not grasp the main ideas of different paragraphs, skim through the lines and notice the keywords, or understand the structure of the passage. Some also showed a lack of sense in sentence patterns, for example, they were not able to read different sentence patterns or divide the sentence into different parts for analysis.

#### ***12.4. Overall comments***

In conclusion, most students are facing similar challenges when reading books. They mainly struggle to understand the content of the book. This may be due to the limited vocabulary bank and lack of reading skills.

#### 4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews II – Analysis

Upon the end of the 3-month scaffolded ER intervention, six different groups of students (a total of 35 students) were interviewed for the first time to explore more about their opinions of the entire intervention so that the researcher could gain a better understanding of both the strengths and weaknesses of the ER programme and what improvements were needed.

The audio-recordings were fully transcribed, coded and analysed as indicated in Appendix H:

*Q.1 Throughout the three-month ER intervention, which parts are you satisfied with?*

##### **1. Positive feedback on ER intervention**

<b>1.1 Motivation to read</b>
<p>All groups showed satisfaction towards the candy machine part in the ER intervention as they generally felt motivated to participate in the ER session for the candy rewards. The prizes and rewards which the participants received served as an incentive to drive them to read more English books as some students indicated in the interview, “I was always hyped to see if I could get the prize which I wanted the most after each reading task. The prizes I got after the ER intervention was the best incentive for me to join the ER activity.” Some students believed that under such a rewarding system, reading English books became a fun and exciting activity. Most groups displayed a positive attitude towards the candy rewarding part and they all looked forward to the next ER session.</p> <p>Prior to the ER intervention, a 3-month pilot study was held where candies or other prizes were directly rewarded to the participants after they had completed a story. The method worked well at first, but the students soon had grown tired of the prizes. In the ER intervention, the candy machine would drop an M&amp;M, and the colour of the M&amp;M would determine the gift which the participant would be receiving. In this case, the M&amp;M candy machine served as an important incentive for the participants to read books that could help them to improve their English, and was also packed with surprises and unexpected results, given that the participants might not attain what they desire the most. As a result, they would be motivated to participate in the ER session and look forward to receiving the prizes they like.</p>

A few groups also expressed their satisfaction towards the sounding and successful end results after the session. Some participants were more inspired to read when they saw their own improvements in reading English books as they “felt particularly excited when [they] could recognise the words in the books from the vocabulary list that the teacher taught and explained the meanings to [them].” The accomplishment when being able to understand the passage had motivated the participants to read other simple English materials of their level.

### ***1.2 Acquiring new skills***

Some groups showed satisfaction towards their end result, specifically from the participants in the after-school session, who learned some reading skills and vocabulary. Some students pointed out the useful techniques, such as the 5-finger method, employed in choosing a suitable book. During the ER intervention, books were categorised into different levels with their respective colours, ranging from easy to difficult. The 5-finger rule method requires a participant to randomly pick a book from a level, then flip to a page and check if there are more than 5 words that s/he does not understand. If the participant cannot understand more than 5 words from the page, then the book is considered as too difficult to be comprehended and s/he would not be able to complete the book without help.

Some participants reflected that the 5-finger rule method was especially useful for them to choose a suitable book and not reading a book which would confuse them. With reference to a student, “using this 5-finger rule method allows me to waste less time when choosing books, as I would not be reading books that are too difficult for my level”. This allowed the participants to utilise the limited time in each ER session. Other students pointed out in the interview that “although I still struggled to memorise the meanings of some of the words taught in the scaffolded ER session, I could recognise some of the words I had learned from the scaffolded ER session while reading the stories. I felt very rewarding and my English skills had improved a lot, especially when I could understand a full sentence in a story more often than I did in the past”. Some other students also believed that the scaffolded ER techniques, such as skimming and scanning skills, were also extremely useful in helping them to read English books more fluently and efficiently.

### ***1.3 Learning new vocabulary***

Some groups believed that reading the books and looking up for the meaning of the words via e-dictionary were actually helping them to build their vocabulary bank. They were able to memorise a few of the vocabulary items they read from different books and apply their lexical knowledge (eg. knowledge of the meaning of some prefixes or suffixes) once again when they saw the words again in the next book.

Other students, especially those from the after-school session, believed that they learned more vocabulary items after the teacher had used some word cards to teach them different meanings of some basic English words. The word cards taught in the scaffolded ER intervention reappeared in the books that they read later, so they “felt very rewarding and [they] felt [their] English skills had improved a lot, especially when [they] could understand a full sentence in a story more often than they did in the past”.

### ***1.4 Usage of electronic dictionary***

A few groups from the after-school ER session showed satisfaction when using the electronic dictionary while reading books. According to some groups, they found the electronic dictionary “a convenient and quick tool for [them] to look for the meanings of the words immediately which enabled [students] to read the story more smoothly and efficiently.” The electronic dictionary served as a better tool than the traditional one, especially when it was a relatively novel product in the eyes of the participants. It is suggested that more assistive technology devices can be provided to students to enrich their reading experience.

### ***1.5 Reading in a new environment : the Annexe Library***

A few groups pointed out that reading in the Annexe library was actually more refreshing than reading in the classroom or in the main school library. This is because the environment in the Annexe library is more spacious and contains more books that are easier to read and more updated books that interest them. According to some of the participants, they believed that it was a better experience to “sit on more comfortable sofa seats and with easier books.” With a better and more comfortable reading environment, students displayed a higher level of concentration while reading. Most groups agreed that reading in the Annexe library could motivate them to read more books to a certain extent.

### ***1.6 Wider variety of books***

Some groups showed satisfaction towards the broader genres of the reading materials provided in the Annexe library, which was less boring and more suitable for them than those from the main school library. The main reason why the participants showed reluctance to read is due to the lack of interests in reading. They always have the problem of mismatching the books they have chosen to read with their actual ability levels and feel discouraged when they do not understand the content of the book. With the wider genres of books made available to them, the participants could have more options to choose according to their ability. For instance, some participants “think that the ER intervention was more useful than the regular morning reading sessions, especially when I could read books that I truly liked and understood.”

This shows that the participants recognised the importance of the ER activity and appreciated the books provided in the ER intervention programme.

Moreover, the books included in the ER intervention were mostly of students' interests and level of ability. For example, sports magazines which talk about some famous basketball stars like Lebron James and Stephen Curry, or story books which have interesting plots, or even famous English comics that have basic spoken English and hilarious plots. Some participants found it more motivating to read books that were “exactly [their] cup of tea.” Some groups were satisfied with the less boring tasks during the reading session, such as not forcing them to complete a book report after reading a book, and only requiring a 5-minute oral presentation from them. Most students enjoyed reading English books provided in the ER intervention, and felt more motivated to continue their reading afterwards.

### ***1.7 Overall comments***

In general, students displayed satisfaction towards the ER intervention programme. In terms of reading, most students felt that their reading comprehension had been improved with the techniques taught. They acquired skills like guessing the meaning from the context for some difficult words, thereby increasing their reading fluency or speed. It is seen that the greater the motivators provided, the greater the willingness to read.

*Q2. Which parts of the ER intervention are you not satisfied with?*

## **2. Negative feedback on ER intervention**

### ***2.1 Change of ER intervention duration/ schedule***

The duration of the ER intervention session was the most discussed. Half of the groups interviewed believed that the ER intervention should be shortened, while the other half believed that the duration of the ER intervention was suitable. Amongst the opinions on shortening the ER intervention, most of the groups had voiced out to shorten the ER intervention by 5 to 10 minutes. The reasons to shorten the ER intervention include the lack of concentration to read a book for a long time, or feeling a bit tired or stressful while reading in the ER session.

A few groups also raised the problem on the timing of the ER intervention, especially from those who participated in the after-school ER session. They found the timing of the ER session inappropriate as they “usually felt tired and hungry during the ER session and they could hardly concentrate a lot on reading those books”. The rest of the groups held neutral views towards the duration of the ER intervention, as the actual reading time might not actually be 30 minutes, after the time needed to choose and report the book, so the duration of the ER intervention should be sufficient for them.

### ***2.2 Limited variety of reading materials***

Despite including more interesting genres into the ER session, some groups were still not satisfied with the reading materials provided to them. Some groups preferred reading magazines on pop culture or music, filled with more pictures and simple English, since it was more familiar to them. Besides the magazines, some students who were interested in reading the sports-related stories and something about space were also not satisfied as they believed that there were only limited books with easier English in the ER intervention from this genre.

A few participants also raised their concern on the popularity of the comic books, Mr. Bean, from the ER intervention. As the comic series were everyone’s favourite, some students were not able to read them when they wanted to and therefore suggested increasing the number of books in that comic series plus other comic series on cartoon characters like Batman and Spiderman. In addition, one group suggested introducing “books with special interactive effects

or buttons" to arouse their interests in reading." It is also suggested that the number of copies of reading materials can be adjusted according to their popularity among students.

### ***2.3 Limited variety of rewards***

Around one-third of the interviewed groups expressed similar views on the range of rewards provided from the candy machine. These groups believed that more kinds of rewards and snacks e.g. pocky, energy bars should be included in the candy machine as "this can motivate [them] more to attend the ER session even more enthusiastically." Some also suggested advancing the reward system where students could collect the smaller prizes in exchange for a bigger one. It is also reflected from some groups that practical prizes were preferred over snacks, for example, stationary sets and tote bags. With reference to the data collected, it is concluded that the "candy machine part" plays an essential role in engaging the participants to read more. With a greater variety of prizes provided, students will be more motivated to read during the ER intervention.

### ***2.4 Inadequate assistance***

Some participants indicated that the assistance they could get during the ER intervention was inadequate or limited. As only one to two student helpers were on duty in each ER intervention, they might not be able to take care of every participant's needs at the same time. Some students from the group shared their experience that "it took a long time for the student helper to notice [their] need as there were not enough teachers or helpers to assist the class." It is advised that more teachers or helpers can be assigned to each class in order to cater for different students' needs more efficiently.

### ***2.5 Overall opinions***

Some students provided negative feedback on the ER intervention schedule or duration, with some dissatisfaction towards the ER intervention being held during the lunchtime or after school, or some towards lengthening or shortening the ER intervention. Some also expressed concerns towards the limited supply of reading materials, on quantity and genre.

3. Do you have any change of view towards reading after the ER intervention?

3. **Change in view towards reading**

**3.1 Positive**

A few groups had positive views towards reading English books. After acquiring skills in breaking down long sentences into shorter chunks, or learning new vocabulary, some participants had positive feedback on how they were able to read English more fluently and were less afraid of reading English books when they “could actually share these simple books with [their] friends and laugh about the interesting parts of the books together”. They were “braver to take the first step to try reading English books”, especially when they knew how to choose appropriate English books for themselves with one of the popular methods of choosing books taught in the ER intervention.

Some participants also felt accomplished when they “could recall the meaning of certain words taught in the scaffolded ER activities which they encountered while reading.” They have understood that reading is not always necessarily a boring task like completing a book report or a forced reading on some thick novels packed with difficult vocabulary. Instead, reading enjoyably can be merely done with a simple and straightforward book, packed with colourful illustrations and less words.

**3.2 Slightly positive**

Most groups displayed slightly positive views towards reading English books, though they were exposed to simple English books in the ER intervention since these participants have a lot of words which they cannot understand and “still struggle to apply those rules, especially in timed practices and exams.” Also, these participants are “still hesitant to read books that are thick and packed with words”.

A majority of these students, who were rather positive about the skills and the experiences acquired in the ER intervention, mostly conducted their extensive reading held at lunchtime where they were not required to learn vocabulary or reading skills during the ER intervention. These students mostly felt that the ER session had introduced them to a large variety of simpler books, but not necessarily showed them how to appreciate the joy in reading.

### **3.3 *No change in views***

One group showed no change in views before or after joining the ER intervention. They indicated that the ER intervention had not helped them much through reading the English books or the skills taught and one of the group members expressed that “I don’t really see much impact on me.” For instance, the group remarked that the teaching pace was too fast when the participants were taught 10-20 new words in 15 minutes, thereby failing to catch up with it. Some of them believed that it was more urgent to “tackle the root problem... such as the basic knowledge in English - correct grammar and tenses.”

### **3.4 *Overall comments***

All in all, most participants who have slight positive changes or no change in views towards reading English books mainly participated in the ER session at lunchtime whereas those who have a more positive change of views towards reading were from the experimental group who read English extensively after school. Although a majority of groups still find reading books a challenging task, they are more willing to make attempts in reading English more.

*Q4. Do you think that you will be willing to read more English books on your own after this ER intervention?*

## **4. Self initiatives to read English books**

### **4.1 *Motivated to read by themselves***

A few students from one of the groups expressed that they were motivated to read books on their own after the ER intervention. Most of them pointed out that the five-finger rule method taught in the ER intervention can facilitate them to choose the books that are suitable for their levels to read. However, these students would mostly pick some “short and easy pieces to read, something like comic books which are more interesting to read.” They also stated that they would only read them “once every two months”. Without any help provided by teachers, the students were still hesitant towards reading different new books, apart from the ones they have encountered during the ER intervention. In other words, they preferred starting their reading habit by reading the kinds of books they had read throughout the ER intervention.

#### **4.2 *Unmotivated to read by themselves***

A majority of groups believed that they were still not ready to read English books by themselves. Most students showed concern towards their ability in reading English books independently and the feasibility of doing so as they were “always occupied by a busy schedule even after school” and “cannot possibly spare time for reading English books”. Some students expressed that they were still not ready to read English books on their own because of mental unpreparedness: the stress brought to them with reading English books, or the time needed to plan for a reading schedule or habit, or the lack of teachers’ assistance or rewards during self-reading, the unavailability of easy books at school or even the environment at home, which was not particularly suitable for reading books. The rest expressed concerns towards the feasibility of reading English books in their free time, such as the packed schedule during school time, or feeling tired or lazy to start a book after a long school day, or even the need to attend supplementary lessons. All of the above reasons had led to the unwillingness of most interviewees in reading English books in their leisure time.

#### **4.3 *Neutral/ Uncertain***

Some participants were still hesitant towards reading English books independently. As most students felt stressed about the heavy school workload and were occupied by some extracurricular activities after school, they were not certain whether they would be able to have any spare time to read books. However, these participants were positive towards the idea of reading English books by themselves, under the condition that they have some spare time and do not feel tired after a long school day.

This chapter has presented results from the quantitative data analysis of students’ vocabulary knowledge tests and reading comprehension tests together with the qualitative data analysis of students’ semi-structured interviews as well as two questionnaires (i.e. extensive reading motivation questionnaire and questionnaire relating to the opinions about the 3-month ER intervention). The next chapter discusses the findings of the study.

## **Chapter 5 – Discussion**

### **5.1 Reflection on the Research Design of the Present Study in Relation to the Findings**

The entire scaffolded ER intervention took more than a year to undergo the planning, preparation and design processes after a three-month pilot study which was conducted a year before the actual research study. It is important to reflect on how this considerable effort contributed to the study's findings, and this chapter starts with a focus on the research design.

To begin with, having a pilot study was a highly appropriate decision because from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants prior to the commencement of the extensive reading activities in the pilot study, the preference and interests of the participants could be identified first and some interesting books were bought at that time. However, there was nothing like scaffolded ER activities when the pilot study was initially organised. At that time, for the sake of motivating the weak and unmotivated students in reading more, some candies and chocolate bars were directly rewarded to the students once they finished the verbal sharing of the story read with the researcher. Hence, after two months, such a way of rewarding students, according to the researcher's observation, seemed to have failed in motivating the participants or, at least, sustaining their interests in carrying on with the reading of more English. In light of this, the researcher read numerous books and articles so as to work out some feasible solutions in tackling these thorny problems.

One of the main goals of this research study was to investigate why the local weak L2 readers, in particular those secondary school learners who were studying in Form Two or Grade 8, were not motivated to read English books in order to enjoy the benefits which reading extensively in L2 brings. Hence, prior to the commencement of the entire extensive reading intervention, the reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge pretests as well as semi-structured interviews were administered in order to understand more about the participants' English proficiency, background plus interests/preference and, most important of all, their problems in reading. Then both reading and vocabulary pretest results were analysed. The data from the semi-structured interviews was also analysed, coded and triangulated with other data from the questionnaire on reading motivation.

The researcher needed to diagnose and gain a better understanding of the weak students' reading problems and designing as well as tailor-making the most appropriate contents for the

scaffolded ER intervention to cater for the varied learning needs and also enhance the reading proficiency of the weak participants. Therefore, the reading rate test was also administered so as to explore more about their reading speed as well as reading fluency, defined as “reading at an appropriate rate with adequate comprehension” (Anderson 2009:130). In addition, the think-aloud experiments were conducted to scrutinize the specific reading problems which the weak participants may have encountered while reading and also to identify some of the good strategies adopted by the more proficient readers so that the researcher could model these strategies in the scaffolded ER training to assist those low-proficient participants to read more efficiently and effectively than they did in the past.

During the semi-structured interviews, a majority of the interviewees opined that their major obstacle in reading comprehension was a lack of vocabulary knowledge. In light of this, the researcher adapted a vocabulary list developed by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong as a kind of vocabulary recognition test for a few voluntary students to complete at home. The long vocabulary list containing about 1800 words which were at the 1000-word level and 2000-word level. Also, these 1800 words were supposed to have been learnt by all the primary six school leavers during their elementary schooling and a great deal of the words on the vocabulary list are considered as sight words which are of utmost significance to the readers in automatic word recognition since these words are usually encountered and employed much more frequently in English. According to Coady (1997), sight words are always conducive in facilitating learners’ comprehension of the text better and faster. However, in the adapted word recognition test, the participants in the current study could merely recognize an average of about 400 out of a total of 1,800 words from the long vocabulary list.

In addition, several participants were invited to take the vocabulary size test voluntarily on the website ([my.vocabularysize.com](http://my.vocabularysize.com)) designed by Nation (2012) so that the researcher could have a clearer idea of the appropriate levels of books which the researcher should purchase or order for the new participants of the 2015-16 cohort from the same participating school.

What is more, questionnaires were distributed to all the participants with an aim to identifying the motivational factors which would serve to drive the weak students to read more independently or extensively so that the researcher could gain a better understanding of

what could be added into the 3-month intervention programme to motivate a new group of participants, i.e. those in the main study, in reading more English books.

Right after the end of the scaffolded ER programme, an additional questionnaire was also administered to all the 70 participants to find out their opinions regarding the scaffolded ER programme. Alongside, the identical reading comprehension tests and the vocabulary knowledge test were administered again so as to identify any improvements made by the 70 participants after attending the 3-month ER intervention.

Upon reflection and in connection with the findings (summarised below), the research design functioned well to shed light on the various facets of the present study. Let us delve into more details.

Through the think-aloud experiments, the semi-structured interviews and reading comprehension as well as vocabulary knowledge pretests conducted before the commencement of the scaffolded ER programme in the present study, the reading problems which these weak students commonly encountered were fourfold and are summarised below:

### ***1. Poor command of vocabulary:***

The weak or struggling readers did not have an abundant knowledge in some basic or high frequency English words, which were supposed to have been learnt or mastered when they received their 6-year primary education. This could be attributed to lack of reading culture in the school or to their not having yet developed a habit of reading English books due to the fact that English is their second language only and it is not ubiquitous in their daily lives. Aside from these factors, many students had limited or narrow scope of interests, so they tended to choose similar kinds or genres of books (either fiction or non-fiction) to read and thus they were merely exposed to a very limited amount of lexis.

There has been a plethora of previous research studies indicating a robust relationship between vocabulary and reading, so it is not surprising that the weak L2 learners were also found to have poor reading comprehension abilities. What is more, they often showed a strong reluctance in reading books of L2 more and they appeared to consider such L2 reading activity a boring task (rather than viewing reading as fun) when the

meaning of most words cannot be comprehended while reading those English books.

## ***2. Low or no motivation in reading books in L2***

Since the success of a stand-alone extensive reading scheme relies a lot on students' initiative or engagement in the reading activity itself but actually, as mentioned earlier, many primary and secondary students nowadays, in particular, the weak ones or the low-achievers, are obsessed in playing online games in their leisure time and they prefer such games to reading books irrespective of whether the books are in their L1 or L2.

In addition, as indicated in the semi-structured interviews, the participants did not have sufficient knowledge of how to select an appropriate book to read and merely formed an opinion of the book by quickly flipping through it to see the amount and quality of the images inside. Once they discovered small or medium-sized font condensed on a page with very few pictures or illustrations inside the book, they immediately had a strong desire to withdraw from reading those books.

## ***3. Lack of knowledge in reading strategies***

According to the results of the think-aloud protocols, many of these weak L2 learners did not possess some of the essential reading strategies or skills which the more proficient readers were found to have. Worse still, their knowledge of even high frequency words is impoverished and their decoding skills are poor. The combination of these two problems means that despite spending 6 years of primary education learning English, they had not developed the strategies needed in reading including guessing the meaning of the unknown word from the context and predicting the content of the text by means of looking at the title and sub-headings to enable them to comprehend faster.

## ***4. Lack of accountability for the extensive reading done***

In a myriad of local secondary schools in Hong Kong, many students have been solely asked to read silently in the classroom but not required to produce anything after reading or to be accountable for their reading. As a result, many teachers have lacked a clear picture of what has been going on in the minds of the weak readers while they are holding the book to read and whether they engage in the ER activity or not.

On the contrary, in some other schools, students were held accountable for their reading by being requested to submit a short book report or fill in a simple form after reading that story book once or twice in a school term. Those weak students, as reported in their semi-structured interviews with the researcher, remarked that they simply copied the description on the back of the story book or, alternatively, the whole chunks of language from somewhere in the story books and then stitched them together without much attention paid to grammatical rules. Eventually, many struggling readers were not actually reading the book and thus could not benefit from reading albeit they claimed they had done some reading of the story books already.

All of these problems prevent ER from realizing any benefits. With reference to Nuttal (1996), as time goes by, there will be two obvious reading cycles emerging between the weak readers and the strong readers. Since weak readers rarely enjoy the pleasure reading activities owing to any or all of the four factors identified above, they read slowly and encounter difficulties in following the ideas in the text and gradually they get more and more frustrated and do not read much. When they read less and less or try to read but do so reluctantly, they will be weak in developing the requisite linguistic knowledge as well as the essential skills required for reading comprehension, thereby gradually exacerbating their reading problems and remaining slow, weak readers who continue to be trapped in a vicious cycle.

On the contrary, good readers, who possess a sound knowledge of lexis and read fast, will read more and more and their success will lead to a passion for reading. They will find themselves in a virtuous cycle and take the initiative to increase reading more and eventually understand increasingly difficult L2 texts. Inevitably, the Matthew Effect (Stanovich 1986) applies here with the good readers staying strong in reading activities and increasing their motivation to read whereas the weak readers remain weak and are discouraged from reading due to their impoverished lexicon and poor decoding, thus decreasing their motivation to read, thereby reading less and less.

Seen in this light, to pull the weak readers out of the vicious cycle and move them to the virtuous cycle, the 3-month scaffolded ER intervention, with 30-min extensive reading plus 15-min vocabulary or reading strategy training as the main ingredients, was designed and implemented to scaffold those weak English learners to build a more solid linguistic foundation in L2. As evidenced by the results of both the reading comprehension

posttests and delayed posttests administered in the present study, the 3-month scaffolded ER intervention seems to be one of the appropriate ways out for weak L2 learners.

However, the problem became more complicated when the weak L2 students of the current research study were secondary school learners who were in their early teens and were still cognitively or affectively developing. As a result, those L2 books with easier English words or simpler sentence structures selected for the ER intervention may not have been appealing to those weak L2 learners since these story books with naïve or not challenging enough contents in L2 could have been regarded as ‘childish’ and may have failed to sustain the reading interests of the weak teenage readers in reading those easy L2 books. Ironically, those books or magazines with more sophisticated or interesting contents usually contain more difficult lexis and complex sentence structures which are often deemed challenging in the eyes of the struggling or weak readers who have poor vocabulary banks. As a result, even though the weak learners may have appeared to be curious in reading the contents of those books or magazines, eventually they will opt to withdraw from extensive reading because if they did not fully comprehend while reading those authentic reading materials with their weak linguistic foundation in L2 reading, they would not find pleasure in doing so.

Conceivably, there has been a dilemma in such a reading situation and in order to address such a dilemma, the researcher realised that it was of utmost significance to add pleasure, which is an essential ingredient that can fuel the intrinsic motivation to read, into the entire reading experience. In this way, it was hoped that the reading interests of those weak L2 learners could be sustained before they had grasped or learnt a basic or certain amount of high frequency vocabulary items so as to enable them to read books with relatively more difficult or sophisticated texts in the future.

In light of this, some fun gadgets, such as the candy machine and the doll grabber were introduced into the 3-month ER intervention. Hence, every time the weak L2 readers finished reading and verbally reporting on a book, they could go to the candy machine to try out their luck and obtain their desired reward. Such a process was expected to add pleasure and excitement to the monotonous reading journey of the weak L2 readers who might not have perceived reading itself as a fun and rewarding activity, unlike what Day and Bamford (2002:137) have claimed in their article that “reading is its own reward” in ER. Instead, with some fun gadgets included, the weak L2 readers could associate the

pleasure or excitement derived from the fun gadgets as an indispensable part of their reading processes.

## 5.2 Findings of the Research Study

The ultimate goal of the current study was to help those low proficient students who have no or low motivation in reading English to change their reading habits, their lives as well as vision and also enhance their reading proficiency since one of the salient benefits of reading English books is to facilitate them in sharpening their language skills and broadening their horizons.

The current study aimed to investigate the three research questions posed in Chapter Two and some findings would be discussed below:

***Research Question 1: Whether or to what extent can the implementation of a new scaffolded extensive reading programme improve the reading comprehension ability of weak learners in the second or foreign language learning context?***

As indicated from the results of reading comprehension pretests, posttests and delayed posttests performed by the control group (G0), the comparison group (G1) and the experimental group (G2), it revealed that the experimental group gained the most increase in the reading scores after the three-month ER intervention.

Under the t-test analysis, the p-value of the reading posttests (done immediately after the 3-month ER intervention) between the control group 0 and the experimental group 2 is 0.013262 which is smaller than 0.05. It is, therefore, significant and it reveals that the mean score of the experimental group 2 (which has engaged in both the 30-min extensive reading activity and the 15-min scaffolded training after school three times per week) is statistically and significantly higher than that of the control group 0 (which has solely attended the regular English lessons at school). It implies that the 30-min ER reading activity and 15-min scaffolded ER training helped improve the reading abilities of the students involved in experimental group 2 to a greater extent.

Moreover, to further explore the learning effect of merely participating in the scaffolded ER training, the posttest results of both the comparison group 1 and the experimental

group 2 were compared by finding the mean score difference of the posttests between both groups. Since the comparison group 1 only read graded readers for three months but the experimental group 2 also joined the 15-min scaffolded ER training after reading the graded readers for 30 minutes three times weekly, the mean score difference between groups 1 and 2 can reflect the learning effect of the scaffolded ER training only.

Under the t-test analysis, the p-value of the posttests is 0.000937 which is smaller than 0.05. It is, therefore, significant and it shows that the mean score of the experimental group 2 is statistically and significantly higher than that of the comparison group 1. Again it implies that the 15-min scaffolded ER training can greatly and effectively improve the reading proficiency or ability of the experimental group 2.

Hence the above findings reflect the present phenomenon among many low-banding schools where the weak students do not appear to show any gains from engaging in the ER sessions held at school. This resembles the case of the participants in the comparison group of the current study who were reading L2 books extensively three times a week, yet not much improvement in the reading proficiency can be seen in these weak L2 learners. In fact, such a phenomenon can be further explained by the beginner's paradox (Coady 1997) which was previously mentioned in Chapter 3. The weak participants in the current study may not have known sufficient lexis themselves to start reading extensively. Hence when they encountered some unfamiliar lexical items in the reading process, they failed to infer the meaning of those unknown words with the help of the context since most of them had a weak linguistic foundation and had an impoverished vocabulary bank. Eventually they would have experienced much frustration during the reading process and gradually lose interest in reading or perform less satisfactorily than expected.

In contrast, the results of the experimental group indicate that by introducing some high frequency vocabulary or sight words which those weak L2 learners should have mastered in their elementary schooling and some basic reading strategies to those weak L2 readers, their reading performance as well as proficiency can be enhanced to a certain extent since the practice of reading can help the participants to develop automaticity in recognising words which they may have learnt in the scaffolded ER training or encountered in previous reading. On the other hand, the reading strategy training can also facilitate the weak readers to develop better fluency in the process of reading.

In order to explore more about the termination effect of the 15-min scaffolded ER training on the experimental group 2, the posttest (done immediately after the 3-month ER intervention) and delayed-posttest results (5 months after the 3-month ER intervention) of different groups 0,1 and 2 were compared.

Under the t-test analysis, the p-value of the delayed posttests is 0.002816 which is smaller than 0.05. It is, therefore, significant and it shows that the mean score difference of delayed-posttests and posttests of group 2 is statistically and significantly lower than that of delayed-posttests and posttests of group 0. Hence it implies that after terminating the 15-min scaffolded ER training and the 30-min ER activity, the reading proficiency or ability of group 2 has dropped statistically and significantly when compared with that of the reading proficiency or ability of the control group 0.

In addition, the termination effect of merely receiving the 15-min scaffolded ER training three times weekly among the experimental group 2 was explored. The result was investigated by finding the mean score difference of delayed-posttests and posttests between the comparison group 1 and the experimental group 2. Since group 1 read graded and levelled books for three months only and group 2 had the 15-min scaffolded ER training in addition to reading graded readers for three months, the mean difference between group 1 and group 2 can reflect the sole termination effect of the 15-min scaffolded ER training.

Under the t-test analysis, the p-value of the delayed-posttests is 0.008582 which is smaller than the 0.05. It is, therefore, significant and it reveals that the mean score of group 2 statistically and significantly decreases a lot more than that of group 1. Hence, it implies that the termination effect of the 15-min scaffolded ER training has a significant impact on the reading proficiency or ability of the experimental group 2.

In a nutshell, all the above test results revealed the power of lexical knowledge and reading strategy training which are two crucial elements in aiding weak L2 learners to read more efficiently and effectively. The results of the delayed-posttests further indicate that without any additional vocabulary input and strategy training, the weak readers lack some kind of support which motivate them to carry on with further reading.

***Research Question 2: Which approach(es), the incidental or the intentional or a combination of both, is/are more effective in aiding the weak L2 learners to enrich their vocabulary banks?***

In the present study, the comparison group (G1) adopted the incidental approach of learning vocabulary as they were only requested to spend 30 minutes 3 days a week reading the graded and levelled readers and no e-dictionaries were provided for them to check the meaning of the unknown words. Hence, it was expected that they could learn some new lexis after 3 months incidentally via reading books.

On the other hand, the experimental group (G2) employed both the incidental and intentional approaches in learning new vocabulary items. So apart from learning some lexis incidentally from reading, they could learn some additional lexis intentionally from the explicit instruction after the 30-min extensive reading sessions 3 times a week.

As revealed from the analysis of vocabulary knowledge scale test results, the mean difference of the vocabulary test scores between the comparison group (G1) and the experimental group (G2) is 8.66. According to the t-test analysis, it reveals that the p-value of the test is 0.0000483, which is smaller than 0.05. It is, therefore, significant and it indicates that the mean score of the vocabulary test of the experimental group 2 is statistically and significantly higher than that of the vocabulary test of the comparison group 1.

Overall, such results have some implications. For some students, especially those who have higher English proficiency, the acquisition of word meaning from reading in context or any other incidental means is often possible. Yet for those struggling or weak L2 readers, they may not have developed a sound knowledge of some basic or high frequency vocabulary items which enables them to guess the meaning of the unknown words from the context. Hence, they may not learn any new lexis incidentally in the process of reading only.

In light of this, when some intentional means of vocabulary learning, such as receiving explicit instruction of some basic vocabulary items and using e-dictionaries in checking the meaning of unknown words, are made available to the experimental group during the 15-min scaffolded ER training in the current study,

these proved beneficial to them in acquiring more and more new vocabulary items or sight words. The reason behind lies in the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt 1990). In the process of language learning, input will not become intake unless it is made noticeable to the L2 learner or gain their attention of it. Hence when some lexical items were introduced to the weak L2 learners explicitly, it could help them notice the form and different parts of speech of the words.

Once the low proficient L2 learners have acquired more and more knowledge of some basic vocabulary items, they may find learning more new vocabulary items incidentally from reading extensively possible. Hence, it is crystal clear that the intentional learning of some basic vocabulary by group 2 during the 15-min scaffolded ER training together with checking the meaning of unknown words using an e-dictionary during the 30-min extensive reading activity significantly improve the score of the vocabulary posttest of group 2 when compared with that of group 1 who merely read English books for 3 months without employing any e-dictionaries in the reading process. Hence it can be concluded that a combination of both the intentional and incidental approaches sounds more effective in facilitating the weak L2 learners in enriching their vocabulary banks.

Moreover, these echoed with the findings of the previous research study conducted by Zimmerman (1997) which indicated that interactive vocabulary instruction had a significant positive effect on word scores and learners who completed some interactive lexis exercises after participating in ER activities outperformed those who simply read books. However, since the sample size of that research study was small with only 35 second language learners involved, the current study adopted a larger sample size with 70 participants included.

The present study, adopting a mixed methods research design, addresses all four weaknesses aforementioned through a scaffolded extensive reading intervention that was implemented consistently and systematically with L2 learners aged 13-15 at a low-banding co-educational school in Hong Kong for 12 weeks. Based on the above evidence, a summary of all the desirable attributes of the 3-month scaffolded ER intervention (30-min ER reading activity + 15-min scaffolded ER training) which contributed to an overall improvement in reading comprehension and vocabulary

knowledge among the weak L2 readers is delineated as follows:

First and foremost, to motivate those weak or struggling readers of low English proficiency to take the initiative to read some English books, books of an easier level (*i-1 or i-2 with 'i' being the level of learner's linguistic ability*) with controlled lexis and simple sentence structures were available for the participants to choose. What is more, they could exercise their autonomy to select what books they would like to read because from the semi-structured interviews and the results of the questionnaires, a myriad of participants always emphasized that they would make an attempt in reading English books provided that the book was easy without too many difficult lexis. Overall, the 70 participants read a total of 25 books and about 18,000 words on average during the 3-month ER intervention.

In addition, since there were 51 boys and only 19 girls participating in the 3-month ER intervention, the researcher purchased numerous new graded plus levelled readers with more colourful images like comic books and books with a reading pen because those colourful illustrations were prone to be more motivating and appealing in the eyes of the male participants who were found to be attracted by visual stimulus more easily than girls did, according to the mounting evidence in the research studies conducted by various educational psychologists.

Aside from this, the weak students were required to show accountability for their own reading by making it a compulsory act of verbally reporting the stories they have read to the researcher. Alongside this, a good reward system was also established to reward those struggling readers after sharing the story with the researcher since from the results of the reading motivation questionnaire, it revealed that all the participants liked being rewarded after reading a book and they opined that the reward could help to spike more of their engagement in reading.

One of the key features of weak readers is that they often lose their stamina more easily than those highly-proficient students do. In view of this, to sustain their interests in reading English books for about 11 weeks, some fun gadgets like candy/capsule machine and a doll grabber were also used not only act as a kind of scaffolding but also add excitement and pleasure, which derived from the unpredicted reward they may receive,

into the entire reading experience. Eventually, these may somehow help the participants form an association that reading is fun, thereby motivating those who rarely read in English to start reading some easy English incrementally.

To break the monotonous reading routine, the researcher also introduced board games and a few big book sharing sessions in the 3-month ER intervention so as to provide opportunities for the participants to practise some reading strategies they had learnt. These are all the key factors which lead to the success of the 3-month ER intervention.

***Research Question 3: What comprises the reading motivation of L2 junior secondary students of low English proficiency in Hong Kong?***

The results from the questionnaires have provided insightful information on the best driving force or motivation for students to read more English books.

In terms of intrinsic drive, most students are not willing to read English books provided to them, even when they are interested in the topics or believe that the people or the topics are fun. This may be attributed to how the language barriers they may have in the English language overrides the difficulty in comprehending certain English vocabularies and sentence patterns, and that they do not have the stamina to carry on reading. Interests in the topic clearly does not prevail over the fact that language barriers in the English language heavily drive off the motivation in the respondents to read more.

In terms of the extrinsic drive to academic compliance, most students are eager to read books to fulfill the purpose of completing a book report or other reading related assignments. This can be explained by the probable reason that they still cultivate a sense of respect to their English teachers and are willing to comply with the rules their English teacher has set up for their assignments. On the other hand, there is an impressive majority of students that are concerned about their English ability and their competitiveness in the job market or future studies. Most of the respondents, if not all, clearly demonstrated their understanding that learning English and reading more is of pivotal significance to their future work and studies. Yet, in the eyes of the weak L2 readers, this is always not a major motivator in motivating them to read English more.

In addition to that, for their extrinsic drive to receive incentives such as rewards or praise, tangible and intangible rewards are always proven to be a strongly useful and persuasive motivation to encourage students to read more English books, as a recorded 100% of the respondents agree to this approach since obtaining tangible rewards (eg. chocolate, drinks or coupons) or/ and intangible rewards (eg. praise or recognition) could help to satisfy some of the basic human physiological or psychological needs respectively. Hence, the respondents should really feel a sense of achievement if rewards and incentives await them when they finish an English read. The very encouraging result heavily mirrors and predicts the usefulness of these methods in inducing the respondents to engage in reading extensively more.

For the extrinsic drive to excel or extrinsic drive to test compliance, most respondents are not interested in excelling their classmates in English, therefore self-improvement or excelling others may not necessarily be the main driving force to read among the respondents. From the results of the questionnaires, it revealed that a vast majority of respondents of this questionnaire seem not to be recognising the need for better reading abilities in the English subject simply to ‘show off’ to the others. In general, they do not care much for their peers’ or teachers’ opinions on their English reading abilities possibly because they are also aware of their low English proficiency and may have already accustomed to that, and simply surrender to sort out any more alternatives or solutions in coping with their reading problems in L2.

Concerning the aspect of extensive reading motivation, all the respondents showed an absolute interest in reading English books with more colorful illustration, less packed words, and larger or clearer fonts. Definitely these colorful pictures can motivate the students to read more English books since colourful illustrations could help to wipe off the dull and boring feeling those English books may give off. Such types of books are also easier to be tackled by students who may have a rather low proficiency in English. Hence, it will be easier for students to comprehend the content of certain easier English books with less complex sentence structures and vocabulary items. Those learners of low reading proficiency will undeniably be motivated or encouraged and gradually they will be more interested in reading more English when they have fewer troubles in comprehending the English texts.

All in all, as revealed from the findings above, in motivating the weaker L2 learners, having some fun gadgets like the capsule machine, offering some tangible (eg. food or coupons) and intangible rewards (eg. praise and recognition) to the readers upon finishing reading the story can surely enhance their low level of reading motivation. Aside from these, if more varieties of books, more colourful illustrations with less words, more words of larger fonts and easier vocabulary items could be introduced into the book choices, then it would help alleviate the reading problems experienced by those weak readers of English and definitely keep the reading flame burning.

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study. The next chapter presents the limitations of the present study and some suggestions for future research and schools.

## **Chapter 6 – Limitations of the Study**

### **6.1 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research**

This research study aimed to dive deeper into the reading problems of the struggling or weak L2 readers, followed by proposing some effective or feasible solutions of enhancing the reading proficiency and vocabulary knowledge of the weak L2 learners. It is, by and large, a small-scale research experiment and is exploratory in nature. Despite a great deal of meticulous planning and researching was done prior to the commencement of the scaffolded ER intervention, a few limitations of this research study can still be identified.

To commence with, the sample size (i.e. 70 weak students studying in a low-banding school) of this study is relatively small and was only drawn from one local secondary school. In light of this, the findings could hardly be considered as generalizable to all local students in Hong Kong. Hence, it is proposed that in the future, a larger and more representative sample size should be employed in order to obtain more reliable and robust findings.

In addition, the duration of an ER intervention is always considered as one of the most crucial factors in determining how successful it can be. However, due to the busy schedule of the participants after school, finally the school only allowed 3 months for the study to take place. Hence, the short duration of the ER intervention has become one of the limitations of the current study because according to Nation (2009), multiple and constant exposures to meaningful input as well as implicit learning will result in automaticity and fluency in L2 reading but all these do require a longer duration to develop better among the weak L2 readers.

Overall, although some improvements in the reading comprehension posttests as well as the vocabulary knowledge test could be identified at the end of the 3-month ER programme in the case of the present study, further exploration of the issue is still needed. For example, if the duration of the entire ER programme could be lengthened to a longer duration, for instance, from 3 months to 5 or 6 months, would more positive effects of extensive reading on L2 reading or an even better improvements in reading comprehension and lexical knowledge still be found?

What is more, to further investigate the effectiveness of the scaffolded ER intervention for a longer duration, one more research group, e.g. experimental group 2 (instead of having merely one experimental group) could be sub-divided from the experimental group and then continue with the scaffolded ER intervention for five more months. In this way, when the reading comprehension delayed-posttests were done, this experimental group 2 could be checked again to see if their reading proficiency could still be immensely improved like what was identified in the 3-month scaffolded ER intervention.

Furthermore, in the present study, due to limited resources available, the researcher was the only one who devised a strategy classification scheme (with description of the strategy and examples of strategies on) extracted from a number of previous studies and also the only rater who coded and counted the data. This was also the same case for the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale Test and semi-structured interviews where the researcher was the only rater of the test and the only coder of the interviews respectively.

Though the researcher has already double-checked or triple-checked all the data to ensure its accuracy, it is suggested that more raters should be recruited and trained how to use that strategy classification scheme skilfully and also how to code the data accurately by providing coding training sessions to them. In this way, after each rater finished categorising the data, their categorisation could be compared with that of the researcher to counter-check if there are any big discrepancies so as to enhance the reliability of the coding of those strategies as well as the interview data.

Apart from this, in the vocabulary knowledge scale test, all the 35 target words were tested without the aid of a context, which was in a decontextualized manner. To a certain extent, this may have affected the participants' recall of the meaning of those words tested. If the target words could be put, at least, in the form of a sentence, the results might be slightly different.

Finally, possible future research needs to explore more about employing different varieties of motivation factors to motivate those struggling or weak readers and see what works best or effectively for different age groups?

In addition, possible future research areas can further investigate, in an extensive

reading activity or approach, what degree of difficulty of levelled and graded readers (i.e. reading at or below one's linguistic level with more of the vocabulary known, such as *i-1* or *i-2* with '*i*' being the level of learner's linguistic ability OR reading at a more difficult higher level with more unknown vocabulary, such as '*i+1*') would have more impact on the reading comprehension as well as vocabulary gains of weak L2 learners.

## **6.2 Recommendations for Schools Based on the Current Study**

All humans are born equal. Given the weak learners' helplessness in reading English better, it is imperative for language practitioners to work out at least some feasible or practical ways of dealing with it. It was hoped that, through conducting some think-aloud protocols, semi-structured interviews and some survey studies before and after the commencement of the scaffolded ER programme, any successful experience as well as problems located in this research study could shed some light onto a more efficient plus effective Extensive Reading practices in various secondary schools which are striving their best or making an attempt in assisting those weak L2 readers in enhancing their reading proficiency or increasing learners' autonomy in reading more independently.

As aforementioned, weak L2 readers are always in lack of stamina during the L2 reading process, in light of this, to sustain their interests in reading English books for about 11 weeks, some fun gadgets such as candy/capsule machine and a doll grabber were also used by the researcher in the current study to add pleasure, fun or excitement into the reading experience, which was regarded by the participants as boring and monotonous.

Alternatively, if the ER intervention was to take place in a normal-sized classroom for easier management, the researcher would opt to give chips to substitute the use of a capsule machine or a doll grabber and for every three chips collected after reporting the story verbally to the researcher, the participants could choose to obtain a reward.

What is more, a staggering majority of weak secondary school students were found in this research study to have very poor vocabulary banks, especially those 1000-2000 high-frequency words or sight words which were supposed to have been acquired in their primary schooling, thereby affecting their overall reading proficiency as a plethora of studies have indicated a robust relationship between reading and vocabulary.

Seen in this light, it is suggested that schools should really try to organise some frequent but short sessions (possibly 2-3 times per week and 15-20 minutes per session for better concentration and recycling of vocabulary knowledge) after school introducing the knowledge of prefixes and suffixes as well as parts of speech to those weak L2 learners so as to enhance their lexical knowledge and also pave ways for them to read some more interesting story books with more complicated plots or development of ideas in the future because many weak L2 learners may experience “beginner’s paradox” (Coady 1997) while beginning to read extensively. As most of them have a weak linguistic foundation, they may not actually know adequate basic vocabulary items themselves to begin with the extensive reading activities.

Last but not least, the past decade saw a proliferation in using technology in the education arena and many teens are actually tech-savvy nowadays. Hence, apart from reading story books, schools could also arrange students to take part in reading stories for a few weeks on the websites where rewards could also be given on the web to the active readers so as to break the monotonous reading routine via such a hybrid extensive reading programme.

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## **Appendix A1: English Reading Comprehension I : 2015-16**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Class : \_\_\_\_\_

Score : \_\_\_\_\_/20

**Read the 6 short passages below and circle the correct answer A, B, C or D**

### **Passage A**

Something is happening to kids or children in the United States of America today. They are getting more and more out of shape. Why ? Today's kids exercise less.

Many of them don't spend enough time playing sports and games outside. Instead, they sit inside watching TV or using the computer. This can be bad for their health. It's important to exercise. Exercise helps keep your body running smoothly.

Besides, exercise is fun. Playing a sport with other people is much more exciting than watching a TV show alone. So get off that couch and go outside. Join a soccer game or play hide-and-seek. Your body will thank you !

**1. According to the story, why are today's kids out of shape ?**

- A. They don't exercise enough
- B. They don't watch enough TV
- C. They play too many sports
- D. They don't eat well

**2. The aim or purpose of this story is to**

- A. inform you that computers are bad
- B. entertain you with fun and games
- C. inform you that kids today are in good shape
- D. persuade you that it's important to exercise
- E.

### **Passage B**

Are you letting too much water go down the drain in your house ? We all know that it's important not to waste water. But most of us use a lot more water than we think. Try these two simple ways to cut your water **consumption**. First, try taking a shower instead of a bath. Showers use a lot less water. You should also turn off the tap while you brush your teeth. Turn it on again to rinse.

**1. A good title for this story would be :**

- A. "How to Brush Your Teeth."
- B. "Saving Water"
- C. "Shower Power"
- D. "The World of Water"

**2. In this story, the word 'consumption' means**

- A. running
- B. bill
- C. action
- D. use

**Passage C**

Do you think a supermarket is only for shopping ? Well, think again. In fact, it's a good place to practise your reading skills. Try reading food labels. They are full of information. A label can tell you a lot about what you are eating.

For instance/example, a label will tell you the ingredients, or what is in the food. The ingredients are listed from greatest to least amounts. Is sugar first or second on the ingredient list ? That means the food has a lot in it.

Labels can also tell you how many calories a serving of food has. But be sure to also look at the serving size. A serving of your favourite cookies may have 100 calories. But the serving size may only be one cookie. If you eat 4, you are eating 400 calories !

**1. If a food has a lot of sugar, where will it be listed on the ingredient list ?**

- A. at the beginning
- B. at the end
- C. in the middle
- D. nowhere

**2. Why is it important to know a food's serving size ?**

- A. to know how much it costs
- B. to know how much to serve others
- C. to know how many calories are in what you eat
- D. to know what the food's main ingredients are

**3. This story will probably go on to talk about**

- A. more foods that are 100 calories a serving
- B. popular food ingredients
- C. people's favourite cookies
- D. other information available on food labels

**4. What can food labels tell you about a food ?**

- A. the size of a serving
- B. the number of calories in a serving
- C. the ingredients in a food
- D. all of the above

### **Passage D**

**Stella** : I wish I knew what to do for that art project about my neighbourhood.

**Tyrone** : I'm making a collage. I'm going to put in pictures of my neighbours and their homes.

**Stella** : That's a great idea. But I don't have any neighbours. In fact, I don't really have a neighbourhood. That's why I'm having such a hard or difficult time.

**Tyrone** : How can you not have neighbours or a neighbourhood ?

**Stella** : I live in the countryside.

**Tyrone** : Do you have wild animals where you live ?

**Stella** : Some. We have raccoons, horses and deer.

**Tyrone** : Well, then those are your neighbours.

**1. Why doesn't Stella think she has neighbours ?**

- A. She lives alone
- B. She lives in the countryside
- C. She lives with too many animals
- D. She doesn't live near Tyrone

**2. According to Passage C or the play, which of the following is probably true or correct ?**

- A. Tyrone lives in the city
- B. Tyrone lives in the countryside
- C. Stella and Tyrone are neighbours
- D. Stella and Tyrone go to different schools

**3. What/How are Stella and Tyrone different ?**

- A. One lives in the countryside and the other one doesn't
- B. One has an art project and the other one doesn't
- C. One is a raccoon and the other one is a deer
- D. One hates animals and the other one loves them

**4. What is Tyrone making ?**

- A. a painting
- B. a photograph
- C. a collage
- D. a picture

### **Passage E**

You are eating pizza at the food mall. A friend starts to choke. She is coughing and gasping for air. She cannot speak. Would you know what to do?

Carlos Barbosa Jr. did. He performed a lifesaving action called the **Heimlich maneuver** when he was only 7 years old. He did it after his daddy began to choke on some baby carrots.

“I got behind my father and gave his stomach two squeezes,” Carlos said. “The carrot popped out of his mouth and flew across the room.”

Dr. Henry Heimlich, an Ohio surgeon or doctor, developed the **Heimlich maneuver** 25 years ago. It **dislodges** food that gets stuck in the throat and blocks breathing and speaking. Pressing in the stomach forces air out of the lungs. This creates an artificial cough. The rush of air from the cough pushes out the food.

**1. What is the Heimlich maneuver ?**

- A. a lifesaving action
- B. a way of eating
- C. a deathly action
- D. a way of choking

**2. What happened after Carlos squeezed his daddy/father’s stomach ?**

- A. His daddy began to choke
- B. His daddy began to laugh
- C. Pizza popped out of his daddy’s mouth
- D. A carrot popped out of his daddy’s mouth

**3. In this story, the word *dislodges* means**

- A. removes
- B. chokes
- C. squeezes
- D. clogs

**4. From this story, you can conclude that**

- A. people choke all the time
- B. Carlos’s daddy should not eat carrots
- C. the Heimlich maneuver saves lives
- D. it is dangerous to eat pizza

### **Passage F**

The movie audience holds its breath. A kid or child is splashing around in the warm ocean. Suddenly, a shark's fin breaks the surface. It is heading for the unsuspecting swimmer. The background music rises. And then ? The kid or child escapes. And the audience leaves the movie the same way it came in, believing that sharks are evil, people-eating creatures.

The truth is that sharks are neither our enemies nor our friends. Sharks live in every part of the world's oceans, from warm, shallow waters to the darkest depths. They are not evil. But they are fierce **predators**.

In fact, one of the most amazing sights in nature is to watch a shark hunt its prey. First, the shark cruises slowly. When it has its target in sight, it explodes into action. It charges and attacks. Yikes ! No wonder sharks have the reputation they do.

But whatever people think of sharks, they must learn to live with these marine creatures.

**1. What happens first when a shark hunts ?**

- A. It cruises slowly
- B. It explodes into action
- C. It charges
- D. It attacks

**2. What is the best title for this story ?**

- A. "Scary Scary Sharks"
- B. "The Truth About Sharks"
- C. "Where Sharks Live"
- D. "Good Shark Movies"

**3. Which of these is NOT true or correct about sharks ?**

- A. They live in every part of the ocean
- B. They are good hunters
- C. They are evil
- D. They have fins

**4. In this story, the word predators means**

- A. hunters
- B. monsters
- C. swimmers
- D. divers

**~ END OF PAPER**

*Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability (Text 1): 84/100 (easily understood by 10-11 years old).*

*Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 3.7*

*Grade level: 4th Grade (745 words)*

## **Appendix A2: English Reading Comprehension 2 : 2015-16**

### **English Reading Comprehension Test II : 2015-16**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Class : \_\_\_\_\_

Score : \_\_\_\_\_/36

### **The Man and the Nightingale**

**O**nce there was a very wealthy man. He lived in a large, beautiful house. The man had more gold than he could ever spend, all the delicious food he could eat, and hundreds of servants to do his bidding.

Yet the man was not happy. He always wanted more.

One night, the rich man lay in his bed thinking about all the new things he would buy the next day. Suddenly, the man heard the most beautiful song. It was the song of Nightingale, a little bird singing a song so beautiful it was like magic music sprinkled in the night air. Nightingale was singing happily in the man's garden.

The rich man lay listening to Nightingale's song throughout the long summer night. Nightingale sang the beautiful song over and over during the night. The man was so afraid he would miss Nightingale's beautiful song that he would not allow himself to go to sleep. As morning approached, the man's eyes were very heavy from lack of sleep. Just before his eyes closed he knew he must capture Nightingale so he could listen to its beautiful song whenever

he wanted. The next night the rich, selfish man set a trap for Nightingale.



Sadly, Nightingale flew right into the man's trap.

"Now that I have caught you," the man cried, "you shall always sing to me."

But Nightingale had stopped singing. In fact, as soon as the door to the trap closed, Nightingale stopped singing.

"Sing! Sing!" cried the man.

"I never sing in a cage," said Nightingale unhappily.

The rich, selfish man was so angry he said, "Then I'll eat you. I have always heard that bird on toast is a tasty morsel."

"No! Do not kill me!" pleaded Nightingale. "Let me go free and I'll tell you three things worth far more than my poor body."

The man thought about this for a moment and then let Nightingale loose. Nightingale immediately flew up to a branch of a tree and said, "First, never believe a captive's promise. Second, do not sorrow over what is lost forever. My final piece of advice to you is to be happy with what you already have."

Then the songbird flew away and the rich man never saw him again.

**Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability (Text 2): 82.5/100 (easily understood by 11-12 years old)**

**Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 4.6**

**Grade level: 5th Grade (368 words)**

**Circle the correct answer A, B, C or D**

**FORMATIVE A**

**ASSESSMENT : Main Idea**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Class : \_\_\_\_\_

Score : \_\_\_\_\_

1. Choose and give another good name for this story:

- A. The Selfish Man and the Smart Bird
- B. The Smart Man and the Selfish Bird
- C. Nightingale's Big Day
- D. How to Fool a Friend

2. What is the theme (主旨) of the story ?

- A. Birds can provide happiness for only greedy people
- B. Possessions guarantee happiness
- C. Greedy people remain greedy
- D. Greedy people can learn to share

3. What is the main or important idea of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph ?

- A. The rich man wanted to become even wealthier
- B. The rich man heard the song of a bird with a beautiful voice
- C. The bird wanted to leave the man's garden
- D. The man planned to capture the Nightingale

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT : Inferences**

4. What lesson did the bird, Nightingale, want the man to learn?

- A. Nightingale wanted the man to learn to be patient.
- B. Nightingale wanted him to learn how to catch birds
- C. Nightingale wanted the man to learn how to sleep when it is noisy
- D. Nightingale wanted him to learn to be happy with what he already had

5. How did the bird know the rich man would let (准許) it go free from the cage?

- A. The bird knew the man was greedy
- B. The bird thought the man was stupid
- C. The bird thought the man was evil
- D. The bird thought the man could be easily tricked

6. Why would the rich man rather (寧願) eat Nightingale than (多過) set it free?

- A. The man thought if he could not enjoy eating Nightingale, the man may also enjoy Nightingale's singing
- B. Nightingale was small enough to be a snack
- C. Nightingale wanted to be a snack
- D. The man thought if he could not enjoy Nightingale's singing, the man may also enjoy the way Nightingale tasted

### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT : Supporting Details**

7. Can you find the information from the story which helps to show HOW beautiful the bird's voice sounded?

- A. The rich man lay listening to Nightingale's song throughout the long summer night.
- B. As morning approached, the man's eyes were so heavy from lack of sleep
- C. The next night the rich, selfish man set a trap for Nightingale
- D. Sadly, Nightingale flew right into the man's trap

8. What advice did Nightingale NOT give the rich man?

- A. Never believe a captive's promise
- B. Never sing in a cage
- C. Be happy with what you already have
- D. Do not sorrow or feel sorry over what is lost forever

9. According to (根據) the story, can you find the information which does NOT support the writer's idea that the man was rich?

- A. The man lived in a large, beautiful house
- B. The man thought about what he would buy the next day
- C. The man had more gold than he could ever spend
- D. The man captured the bird - Nightingale

10. What will the rich man do to Nightingale if the bird will not sing?

- A. He will free Nightingale
- B. He will reward Nightingale
- C. He will eat Nightingale
- D. He will forgive Nightingale

### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT : Cause and Effect**

11. The rich man was unhappy because \_\_\_\_\_

---

12. When the man first heard the song of the bird at night, he did not allow (准許) himself to sleep because \_\_\_\_\_

---

13. The rich man set a trap for Nightingale because he wanted to \_\_\_\_\_

---

14. The man let (准許) Nightingale go away because the man \_\_\_\_\_

---

### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT : Chronological Order**

15. What happened just BEFORE (之前) Nightingale flew away to other places?

- A. Nightingale sang one last song for the man
- B. Nightingale told the man 3 things
- C. Nightingale flew into the garden
- D. The man let Nightingale out of the trap

16. What happened FIRST in the story?

- A. The man was in his bed thinking about what he was going to buy
- B. Nightingale flew into the trap
- C. Nightingale told the man 3 things
- D. The man listened to Nightingale sing

17. What happened immediately AFTER (之後) Nightingale flew into the trap?

- A. Nightingale stopped singing
- B. Nightingale flew away to other places
- C. The man made Nightingale sing
- D. The man regretted the capture of Nightingale

18. What happened when the man heard Nightingale sing?

- A. He went to sleep
- B. He built a trap
- C. The man decided to let Nightingale go
- D. The man stayed awake listening to Nightingale

### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT : Compare and Contrast**

19. How are the characters (主角) of Nightingale & the rich man different (不同) from each other at the beginning of the story (故事開端)?

- A. Nightingale is quick to get angry and the rich man is calm
- B. Nightingale is happy and the rich man is mad
- C. Nightingale is satisfied with life and the rich man is NOT satisfied
- D. Nightingale is NOT satisfied with life and the rich man is satisfied

20. How are the characters (主角) of Nightingale & the rich man similar (相同)?

- A. Both Nightingale and the rich man think Nightingale sing too loudly.
- B. Both Nightingale and the rich man enjoy Nightingale's singing
- C. Both Nightingale and the rich man enjoy singing
- D. Nobody enjoys Nightingale's singing

21. How are the characters (主角) of Nightingale & the rich man different (不同) from each other when Nightingale is trapped in the cage?

- A. Nightingale is happy and the rich man is sad
- B. Nightingale is sad and the rich man is happy
- C. Nightingale is trusting and the rich man is suspicious
- D. Nightingale is suspicious and the rich man is trusting

22. How did the characters (主角) of Nightingale change (改變)?

- A. Nightingale did not change
- B. Nightingale was afraid at the beginning of the story and brave at the end of the story
- C. Nightingale was careless at the beginning of the story and careful at the end of the story
- D. Nightingale was careful at the beginning and end of the story

#### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT : Writer's Purpose & Perspective**

23. What is the writer's purpose or aim (目的) in writing this story?

- A. to teach (教導) you how to catch a bird
- B. to entertain (娛樂) you with a story about a man and a bird
- C. to persuade (說服) you to go out and catch birds
- D. to explain (解釋) why the rich man was unhappy

24. Which idea do you think the writer would most likely agree (同意)?

- A. Nightingale made a mistake but was smart and thought of a way to get out of trouble.
- B. The man knew he had made a mistake by capturing the bird
- C. Nightingale was not smart enough to get out of the trap
- D. The man was not smart enough to catch Nightingale

25. Which word best talks about the writer's view or idea about the rich man?

- A. smart
- B. selfish
- C. ignorant
- D. generous

26. Which word below is NOT suitable for talking about the bird - Nightingale?

- A. clever
- B. talented
- C. intelligent
- D. greedy

#### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT : Word Analysis**

27. Read this sentence from the story.

*The next night the rich, selfish man set a trap for Nightingale.*

What does the word 'selfish' mean?

- A. selfless
- B. caring only for one's self
- C. humane
- D. not thinking only for one's self

28. Read this sentence from the story.

*“I never sing in a cage,” said Nightingale unhappily.*

What does the word ‘unhappily’ mean?

- A. small happiness
- B. feeling delighted
- C. feeling upset
- D. feeling shocked

29. Read this sentence from the story.

*Sadly, Nightingale flew right into the man’s trap.*

What does the word ‘trap’ mean here?

- A. home
- B. cage
- C. garden
- D. room

### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT : Context Clues**

30. Read this sentence from the story.

*Just before his eyes closed the man knew he must capture Nightingale so he could listen to its beautiful song whenever he wanted..*

The word ‘capture’ means to ...

- A. trick
- B. lead
- C. remove / take away
- D. trap / catch

31. Read this sentence from the story.

*The man had more gold than he could ever spend, all the delicious food he could eat, and hundreds of servants to do his bidding.*

The word ‘bidding’ means the servants will do as the rich man ...

- A. asks
- B. suggestions
- C. commands
- D. pleads

32. Read this sentence from the story.

*It was the song of Nightingale, a little bird singing a song so beautiful it was like the magic music sprinkled in the night air..*

The word ‘sprinkled’ means ...

- A. enhanced
- B. dropped
- C. played
- D. scattered

### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT : Synonyms and Antonyms**

33. Which 2 words are ANTONYMS (反意詞) ?

- A. captive / prisoner
- B. captive / free
- C. captive / hostage
- D. captive / detainee

34. Which 2 words are SYNONYMS (同意詞) ?

- A. trap / catch
- B. trap / free
- C. trap / release
- D. trap / liberate

35. Which 2 words are SYNONYMS (同意詞) ?

- A. delicious / tasteless
- B. delicious / tasty
- C. delicious / dull
- D. delicious / flavorless

36. Which 2 words are ANTONYMS (反意詞) ?

- A. approach / retreat
- B. approach / advance
- C. approach / proceed
- D. approach / loom

*~ END OF TEST ~*

## **Appendix B1: Reading Rate Test – Version 1**

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Marco Polo, the world-known Italian traveller, saw many wonderful things in China. One of the things he discovered was money made of paper. He was intrigued by paper money as people in the West did not have such kind of money until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Chinese began to use it 8 centuries earlier.

Paper was invented by a Chinese called Cai Lun almost 2000 years ago. It was made from wood, and to be more exact, from the hair-like parts of certain plants. Then pieces of paper can be put together and they become a book.

Paper was not made in Europe until the year 1100. Four hundred years later, a German named Schaeffer discovered that he could make the best paper from trees. After that, countries abundant in forests, such as Canada, Sweden, America and Finland, became the most important ones in paper making.

Paper can be used in many ways. First things that come to your mind may include newspapers, magazines, books and writing-paper. These are common uses but do you know that paper can be used for keeping warm? You may sleep on a large pile of newspaper to insulate yourself from the cold. In Finland, the farmers wear paper boots to keep their feet warm in the snow. And even houses can be insulated from heat or cold with paper.

*\*Reading Comprehension Exercises – partly rewritten by the researcher*

*Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability (Text 1): 73.7/100 (easily understood by 13-14 years old).  
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 6.6 (230 standard words)*

**Choose the most appropriate answer after reading the text.**

**1. When was paper money first used in China ?**

- A. 15<sup>th</sup> century
- B. 8<sup>th</sup> century
- C. 7<sup>th</sup> century

**2. When paper was first invented, it was made from**

- A. trees
- B. wood
- C. books

**3. According to the passage, which of the following countries is NOT the most important in paper making?**

- A. Sweden
- B. Italy
- C. Finland

**4. Paper can also be used for**

- A. building houses
- B. making shoes
- C. keeping warm

## **Appendix B2: Reading Rate Test – Version 2**

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Marco Polo, the world-known Italian traveller, saw many wonderful things in China. One of the things he discovered was money made of paper. He was intrigued by paper money as people in the West did not have such kind of money until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Chinese began to use it 8 centuries earlier.

Paper was invented by a Chinese called Cai Lun almost 2000 years ago. It was made from wood, and to be more exact, from the hair-like parts of certain plants. Then pieces of paper can be put together and they become a book.

Paper was not made in Europe until the year 1100. Four hundred years later, a German named Schaeffer discovered that he could make the best paper from trees. After that, countries abundant in forests, such as Canada, America, Sweden and Finland, became the most important ones in paper making.

Paper can be used in many ways. First things that come to your mind may include newspapers, magazines, books and writing-paper. These are common uses but do you know that paper can be used for keeping warm? You may sleep on a large pile of newspaper to insulate yourself from the cold. In Finland, the farmers wear paper boots to keep their feet warm in the snow. And even houses can be insulated from heat or cold with paper.

*\*Reading Comprehension Exercises – partly rewritten by the researcher*

***Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability (Text 2): 73.7/100 (easily understood by 13-14 years old).  
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 6.6 (230 standard words)***

**Choose the most appropriate answer after reading the text.**

**1. When was paper money first used in China?**

- A. 6<sup>th</sup> century
- B. 8<sup>th</sup> century
- C. 14<sup>th</sup> century

**2. When paper was first invented, it was made from**

- A. trees
- B. books
- C. wood

**3. According to the passage, which of the following countries is NOT the most important in paper making?**

- A. Sweden
- B. Germany
- C. Canada

**4. Paper can also be used for**

- A. building houses
- B. keeping warm
- C. making shoes

### **Appendix B3: Reading Rate – Pilot Testing**

Dan's father bought a new car. It was blue and shiny. He took Dan to a trip one weekend. They were going to Grandmother's house. Dan liked Grandmother. She told him great stories. She baked tasty cookies. She made him feel special. Dan's father drove for a long time. Dan fell asleep in the car. When Dan woke up, it was late and also raining, but Dan didn't care. They had arrived.

**Answer the questions below after reading the text.**

**1. Where was Dan going to?**

- A. Father's house
- B. Grandma's house
- C. his house

**2. What was the colour of the new car?**

- A. Black
- B. Green
- C. Blue

**3. Grandmother baked delicious**

- A. cake
- B. bread
- C. cookies

**4. When Dan woke up in the car, it was**

- A. morning
- B. raining
- C. light

*\*Partly rewritten by the researcher (72 words)*

**Appendix C: Vocabulary Checklist – Filled in by Researcher** . Name : \_\_\_\_\_

**1. noise (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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**2. picnic (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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**3. dangerous (adjective)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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#### 4. save (verb)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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#### 5. place (noun) / (verb)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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#### 6. blind (adjective) / (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. magazine (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 8. thzomine (verb)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 9. prize (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. mirror (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 11. enough (adjective)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 12. rope (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **13. plane (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **14. castle (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **15. space (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **16. control (verb) / (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **17. medicine (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **18. sebhexion (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 19. adventure (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 20. reach (verb)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 21. forest (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 22. hero (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 23. competition (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 24. frightened / frightening (adjective)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 25. phvetic (adjective)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 26. robot (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 27. curtain (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 28. litter (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 29. pilot (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 30. mabexance (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **31. ghost (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **32. stage (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **33. grab (verb)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### 34. machine (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### 35. astronaut (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### 36. fuwero (noun)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **37. palace (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **38. stranger (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **39. lift (verb) / (noun)**

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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- D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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#### 40. suddenly (adverb)

- A. The participant has not seen this word before.
- B. The participant has seen this word before but has no idea of its meaning now.
- C. The participant has seen this word before and know that this word has some relationship with another word or is related to something or belongs to a particular group, i.e.,

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D. The participant has seen this word before and know that its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_

E. The participant can produce a grammatically correct sentence using this word in an appropriate context with at least five English words. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Appendix D1: Questionnaire 1**

This questionnaire aims to find out what makes you read more English.

Please fill in the blanks with 1, 2, 3 or 4 to share your views.

1. **Strongly disagree to the statement / This statement is very different from me.**
2. **Disagree to the statement / This statement is a little different from me.**
3. **Agree to the statement / This statement is a little like me.**
4. **Strongly agree to the statement / This statement is a lot like me.**

1. I read English as I like seeing my reading scores improve on tests /exams. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I like reading interesting books or graded readers when there are more colourful illustrations/ pictures or bigger fonts/ words inside the book. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I am willing to work hard to read better than my friends/classmates in English. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I like reading in English when I can get some rewards (eg. food or coupons) after reading. \_\_\_\_\_
5. It's fun for me to read something I like in English. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I read English books so that I can develop better reading skills for my future jobs or studies. \_\_\_\_\_
7. When the topic is interesting, I am willing to read a bit difficult English materials. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I like my teacher or my friends to say that I read well in English. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Getting some rewards after reading can motivate me to read in English more. \_\_\_\_\_
10. I try to finish my English reading assignments (eg. writing book reports) on time. \_\_\_\_\_
11. I like reading English books of shorter contents & the autonomy to choose any kind of books I prefer. \_\_\_\_\_
12. I try to read in English because I need a good score on English tests/ exams. \_\_\_\_\_
13. I read in English so that I can do my English reading assignments (eg. writing book reports) exactly as what the teacher tells me to do. \_\_\_\_\_
14. I like reading easy English books with shorter sentences or easier words. \_\_\_\_\_
15. I like reading English when I have to share my reading with my teacher or my friends/ peers verbally instead of writing book reports. \_\_\_\_\_
16. I want to be the best at reading English. \_\_\_\_\_

17. I like reading English to learn some new words or something new  
about the people and things that interest me. \_\_\_\_\_

18. It is important for me to receive a good English reading score on reading  
tests/ exams for my future jobs. \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX D2 - QUESTIONNAIRE 1**

*[70 questionnaires were distributed and collected on the same day.]*

1. Strongly disagree to the statement / This statement is very different from me.
2. Disagree to the statement / This statement is a little different from me.
3. Agree to the statement / This statement is a little like me.
4. Strongly agree to the statement / This statement is a lot like me.

(1). \*I read English as I like seeing my reading scores improve on tests/ exams, so I read English more.

**0 respondents chose (4). 15 respondents chose (3).**

**50 respondents chose (2). 5 respondents chose (1).**

(2). \*I like reading English when there are more colourful illustrations/ pictures or bigger fonts/ words inside the book.

**65 respondents chose (4). 5 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

(3). \*I am willing to work hard to read better than my friends/classmates in English.

**0 respondents chose (4). 8 respondents chose (3).**

**56 respondents chose (2). 6 respondents chose (1).**

(4). \*I like reading English when I can get some rewards (eg. food or coupons) after reading.

**58 respondents chose (4). 12 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

(5). \*It's fun for me to read something I like in English.

**0 respondents chose (4). 7 respondents chose (3).**

**42 respondents chose (2). 21 respondents chose (1).**

(6). \*I read English books so that I can develop better reading skills for my future jobs or studies.

**0 respondents chose (4). 48 respondents chose (3).**

**15 respondents chose (2). 7 respondents chose (1).**

(7). \*When the topic is interesting, I am willing to read a bit difficult English materials.

**0 respondents chose (4). 5 respondents chose (3).**

**52 respondents chose (2). 13 respondents chose (1).**

(8). \*I like my teacher or my friends to say that I read well in English.

**0 respondents chose (4). 10 respondents chose (3).**

**50 respondents chose (2). 10 respondents chose (1).**

(9). \*Getting some rewards after reading can motivate me to read in English more.

**56 respondents chose (4). 14 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

(10). \*I try to finish my English reading assignments (eg. writing book reports) on time.

**0 respondents chose (4). 50 respondents chose (3).**

**12 respondents chose (2). 8 respondents chose (1).**

(11). \*I like reading English books of shorter contents & the autonomy to choose any kind of books I prefer.

**58 respondents chose (4). 12 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

(12). \*I try to read English because I need a good score on English tests/ exams.

**0 respondents chose (4). 14 respondents chose (3).**

**49 respondents chose (2). 7 respondents chose (1).**

(13). \*I read English so that I can do my English reading assignments  
(eg. writing book reports) exactly as what the teacher tells me to do.

**8 respondents chose (4). 42 respondents chose (3).**

**15 respondents chose (2). 5 respondents chose (1).**

(14). \*I like reading easy English books with shorter sentences or easier words.

**45 respondents chose (4). 25 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

(15). \*I like reading in English when I have to share my reading with my teacher or my friends/ peers verbally instead of writing book reports.

**53 respondents chose (4). 17 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

(16). \*I want to be the best at reading in English.

**0 respondents chose (4). 7 respondents chose (3).**

**55 respondents chose (2). 8 respondents chose (1).**

(17). \*I like reading in English to learn some new words or something new about people and things that interest me.

**0 respondents chose (4). 7 respondents chose (3).**

**50 respondents chose (2). 13 respondents chose (1).**

(18). \*It is important for me to receive a good English reading score on reading tests/ exams.

**0 respondents chose (4). 15 respondents chose (3).**

**49 respondents chose (2). 6 respondents chose (1).**

1. Strongly disagree to the statement / This statement is very different from me.
2. Disagree to the statement / This statement is a little different from me.
3. Agree to the statement / This statement is a little like me.
4. Strongly agree to the statement / This statement is a lot like me.

#### **A. Intrinsic Drive**

5. It's fun for me to read something I like in English.  
**0 respondents chose (4). 7 respondents chose (3).**  
**42 respondents chose (2). 21 respondents chose (1).**
7. When the topic is interesting, I am willing to read a bit difficult English materials.  
**0 respondents chose (4). 5 respondents chose (3).**  
**52 respondents chose (2). 13 respondents chose (1).**

17. I like reading in English to learn some new words or something new about people and things that interest me.  
**0 respondents chose (4). 7 respondents chose (3).**  
**50 respondents chose (2). 13 respondents chose (1).**

#### **B. Extrinsic drive to academic compliance**

6. I read English books so that I can develop better reading skills for my future jobs or studies.  
**0 respondents chose (4). 48 respondents chose (3).**  
**15 respondents chose (2). 7 respondents chose (1).**
10. I try to finish my English reading assignments (eg. writing book reports) on time.  
**0 respondents chose (4). 50 respondents chose (3).**  
**12 respondents chose (2). 8 respondents chose (1).**
13. I read in English so that I can do my English reading assignments (eg. writing book reports) exactly as what the teacher tells me to do.  
**8 respondents chose (4). 42 respondents chose (3).**  
**15 respondents chose (2). 5 respondents chose (1).**

**C. Extrinsic drive to receive incentives like rewards or praise**

4. I like reading in English when I can get some rewards (eg. food or coupons) after reading.

**58 respondents chose (4). 12 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

9. Getting some rewards after reading can motivate me to read in English more.

**56 respondents chose (4). 14 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

15. I like reading in English when I have to share my reading with my teacher

or my friends/ peers verbally instead of writing book reports.

**53 respondents chose (4). 17 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

**D. Extrinsic drive to excel**

3. I am willing to work hard to read better than my friends/classmates in English.

**0 respondents chose (4). 8 respondents chose (3).**

**56 respondents chose (2). 6 respondents chose (1).**

8. I like my teacher or my friends to say that I read well in English.

**0 respondents chose (4). 10 respondents chose (3).**

**50 respondents chose (2). 10 respondents chose (1).**

16. I want to be the best at reading in English.

**0 respondents chose (4). 7 respondents chose (3).**

**55 respondents chose (2). 8 respondents chose (1).**

**E. Extrinsic drive to test compliance**

1. I like seeing my reading scores improve on tests/ exams, so I read English more.

**0 respondents chose (4). 15 respondents chose (3).**

**50 respondents chose (2). 5 respondents chose (1).**

12. I try to read in English because I need a good score on English tests/ exams.

**0 respondents chose (4). 14 respondents chose (3).**

**49 respondents chose (2). 7 respondents chose (1).**

18. It is important for me to receive a good English reading score on reading tests/exams for my future jobs.

**0 respondents chose (4). 15 respondents chose (3).**

**49 respondents chose (2). 6 respondents chose (1).**

#### **F. Extensive reading motivation**

2. I like reading interesting graded readers in English when there are more colourful illustrations/ pictures or bigger fonts/words inside the book.

**65 respondents chose (4). 5 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

11. I like reading English books of shorter contents & the autonomy to choose any kind of books I prefer.

**58 respondents chose (4). 12 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1).**

14. I like reading easy English books with shorter sentences or easier words.

**57 respondents chose (4). 13 respondents chose (3).**

**0 respondents chose (2). 0 respondents chose (1)**

## **APPENDIX D3 – Questionnaire: Re-Grouping for Factor Analysis**

### **Factor 1 : Reading for Extrinsic Rewards**

Statements : 4, 9, 15 (from Group C)

### **Factor 2 : Reading for Academic Achievement**

Statements : 1, 12, 18, 3, 8, 16, 6, 10, 13 (from Group E, D, B)

### **Factor 3 : Reading for Pleasure**

Statements : 5, 7, 17, 2, 11, 14 (from Group A, F)

## **Questionnaire Results Analysis:**

- C. Extrinsic drive to receive incentives like rewards or praise : statements 4, 9, 15
- F. Extensive reading motivation : statements 2, 11, 14
- E. Extrinsic drive to test compliance : statements 1, 12, 18
- D. Extrinsic drive to excel : statements 3, 8, 16
- A. Intrinsic Drive : statements 5, 7, 17
- B. Extrinsic drive to academic compliance : statements 6, 10, 13

## **Appendix D4 : Questionnaire 2**

Class & Class No: \_\_\_\_\_

This questionnaire is to collect your opinions of the entire extensive reading programme.

**A. Please read the following statements and use “number” to show what you think about each statement below.**

1. *totally disagree to the statement / the statement is very different from me.*
2. *disagree to the statement / the statement is a little different from me*
3. *agree to the statement / the statement is a little like me*
4. *totally agree to the statement / the statement is a lot like me*

### **After participating in the 3-month reading intervention,**

- a. my reading comprehension has been improved. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. my reading fluency/ speed has been increased. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. I have learnt more English words. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. for some difficult words, I can guess the meaning from the context. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. I like reading easy and short English books. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. I don't really dislike reading English so much now. \_\_\_\_\_
- g. my reading skills /strategies have been enhanced. \_\_\_\_\_
- h. I like sharing the stories verbally with somebody after reading. \_\_\_\_\_
- i. I'll read more English books according to my interests/ability in the future. \_\_\_\_\_
- j. I like reading the English books in the Annexe library / Activity room more than those in the main school library. \_\_\_\_\_
- l. I prefer reading English books in the classroom to reading in the Annexe library/ Activity room. \_\_\_\_\_
- m. I think it is a good idea to have e-dictionary while reading. \_\_\_\_\_
- n. Every time I read books in the Annexe library/ Activity room for 30 minutes, I really spend at least 20 minutes doing my reading seriously. \_\_\_\_\_
- o. I prefer playing board games to reading English books. \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Please circle the most appropriate answer**

4. Please write down one or two things you are satisfied with or you think it (they) should be improved in the 3-month extensive reading intervention.

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## **Appendix E: Book Lists [3-month Extensive Reading Intervention]**

Publisher	Level	<b>Book Titles</b> <i>[available in the 1st month]</i> <i>Non-fiction [marked with an asterisk*]</i> <i>Fiction [without an asterisk]</i>	Total no. of standard words
Nelson Cengage	12	The Donkey and the Wolf	221
Learning – PM	13	Wet-Day Popcorn	222
<b>Benchmark 1</b>	14	Molly's Tooth	246
	15	The Ice-Cream Dog	283
	15	Our Teacher, Mr Davis	252
	16	Emperor Penguins*	320
	16	The Lucky Kick	326
	17	The Swimming Race	376
	17	The Lantern Parade*	324
	18	BMX Bikes*	331
	18	The Bags by the Gate	417
	19	A Visit to the Aquarium	405
	19	Frogs	326
	20	Winter	397
	20	Amy's Song	454
	21	Scaredy-Cat	215
	21	Plastic in Our World*	220
	22	Bushfires*	219
	22	A Cure for Hiccups	226
	23	Water World*	221
	23	Flood in the Valley	234
	24	Why a River Floods*	227
	24	The Snowboard Lesson	223
	25	The Greatest Climb*	258
	25	Real Teamwork	234
	26	The Bigger Half	224
	26	Snowboarding*	222

Publisher	Level	<b>Book Titles</b> <i>[available in the 2nd month]</i> <i>Non-fiction</i> <i>[marked with an asterisk*]</i> <i>Fiction</i> <i>[without an asterisk]</i>	Total no. of standard words
Nelson Cengage Learning – PM	27	Dogs Should Be Kept on Leads*	228
<b>Benchmark 1</b>	27	The Stormy Night	220
	28	Charlie	204
	28	How a Parachute Works*	224
	29	Wind Power*	240
	29	The Wallet	242
Nelson Cengage Learning – PM	27	Preparation for a Hike*	257
<b>Benchmark 2</b>	27	The Nervous Passenger	261
	28	Robot Explorers*	221
	28	Sara's Invitation	258
	29	How Camels Survive in the Desert*	232
	29	Late Again	268

Publisher	Level	<b>Book Titles</b> <i>[available in the 1st month]</i> <i>Non-fiction [marked with asterisk*]</i> <i>Fiction [without an asterisk]</i>	Total no. of standard words
Nelson Cengage	12	My First Train Ride	226
Learning – PM	13	The Best Runner	234
<b>Benchmark 2</b>	14	Little Hen, Mouse and Rabbit	242
	15	Skip Goes to the Rescue	282
	15	Ants*	227
	16	The Treasure-Hunt Puzzle*	334
	16	Honey Escapes	331
	17	A Builder*	300
	17	The Greedy Dog and the Bone	342
	18	Earthquake	405
	18	Harvest Mice*	352
	19	A Supermarket*	389
	19	The Old Hut in the Forest	463
	20	Leo the Lion Cub	466
	20	My New Aquarium	424
	21	Carnival Time*	244
	21	Akito's Glasses	227
	22	Tricks with a Kite*	264
	22	Saving Fresh Water*	240
	23	How Seeds Spread*	242
	23	The Miller, His Son and Their Donkey	255
	24	A New Skatepark*	221
	24	Graffiti	248
	25	Just in Time	257
	25	Sea Turtles*	251
	26	Why Brown Bears Hibernate*	227
	26	Smoke*	245

Publisher	Level	Book Titles <i>[all the fictions here were available in the 1<sup>st</sup> month]</i>	Total no. of standard words
Oxford University Press – Oxford Reading Tree	6	In the Garden	443
	6	Kipper and the Giant	482
	6	The Outing	509
	6	Land of the Dinosaurs	483
	6	Robin Hood	612
	6	The Treasure Chest	738
	6	A Fight in the Night	480
	6	Rotten Apples	465
	6	The Laughing Princess	470
	6	Christmas Adventure	464
	6	The Go-kart Race	471
	6	The Shiny Key	492
	6	Paris Adventure	549
	6	The Stolen Crown Part 1	557
	6	The Stolen Crown Part 2	522
	6	Ship in Trouble	533
	6	Homework	519
	6	Olympic Adventure	518
	6	Dad's Grand Plan	534
	6	Mirror Island	547
	6	Don't be Silly	508

Publisher	Level	Book Titles <i>[all the fictions here were available in the 2nd month]</i>	Total no. of standard words
	7	Red Planet	904
Oxford	7	Lost in the Jungle	969
University Press	7	The Broken Roof	977
– Oxford	7	The Lost Key	1049
<b>Reading Tree</b>	7	The Willow Pattern Plot	928
	7	Submarine Adventure	889
	7	The Motorway	887
	7	The Bully	848
	7	The Hunt for Gold	906
	7	Chinese Adventure	879
	7	Roman Adventure	852
	7	The Jigsaw Puzzle	853
	7	The Power Cut	917
	7	Australian Adventure	887
	7	The Riddle Stone Part 1	911
	7	The Riddle Stone Part 2	937
	7	A Sea Mystery	934
	7	The Big Breakfast	849
	7	The Joke Machine	889

Publisher	Level	Book Titles <i>[all the fictions here were available in the 2<sup>nd</sup> month]</i>	Total no. of standard words
Oxford University Press – Oxford Reading Tree	8	The Kidnappers	852
	8	Viking Adventure	949
	8	The Rainbow Machine	993
	8	The Flying Carpet	1035
	8	A Day in London	889
	8	Victorian Adventure	919
	8	Pocket Money	1265
	8	The Evil Genie	1298
	8	Save Floppy	1246
	8	What Was It Like ?	1236
	8	Flood	1147
	8	Egyptian Adventure	1118

Publisher	Level	Book Titles <i>[all the fictions here were available in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month]</i>	Total no. of standard words
Oxford University Press – Oxford Reading Tree	9	Green Island	1446
	9	Storm Castle	1392
	9	Superdog	1490
	9	The Litter Queen	1268
	9	The Quest	1507
	9	Survival Adventure	1474
	9	The Blue Eye	1221
	9	Rescue	1297
	9	Dutch Adventure	1329
	9	The Finest in the Land	1275
	9	The Flying Machine	1274
	9	Key Trouble	1282

Publisher	Level	Book Titles <i>[all the fictions here were available in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month]</i>	Total no. of standard words
	10	Save the Animals	1170
Oxford	10	The Girl from the Sea	1224
University Press	10	The Elephant Rock	1091
– Oxford	10	Typhoon	1354
<b>Storyland</b>	11	How Sam Grew	1277
<b>Readers</b>	11	The School Ghost	1157
	11	The Younger Brother	1034
	11	The Fishing Hook	1306
	12	Happy and the Plums	1402
	12	Take It Away	1337
	12	The Snow Queen	1132
	12	The Story of Tea	1288

Publisher	Level	Book Titles <i>[the first 12 fictions were available in the 2nd month and the rest were in the 3rd month]</i>	Total no. of standard words
Mc Graw Hill		The Golden Touch	775
Macmillan		Three Naughty Ostriches	372
		A Hairy Story	803
		The Magic Barber	466
		Extreme Racer	697
		The Phantom Robber Mystery	787
		Three Funny Tales	908
Longman		Newspaper Chase	809
Stanford House		David and the Giant	333
Scholastic	2	Mr Bean - Toothache	602
	1	Ice Age	547
	1	Kung Fu Panda Holiday	577
	2	Kung Fu Panda	823
	2	Teenage Mutant Ninda Turtles – Kraang Attack	728
	2	The Blind Men and the Elephant	677
	3	Mr Bean – The Palace of Bean	905
	3	SpongeBob – Squarepants Doodlebob	894
	3	Kung Fu Panda 2	1127
	3	Kieran’s Karate Adventure	1068
	3	Puss in Boots – The Gold of San Ricardo	1250
	3	Madagascar 3 – Europe’s Most Unwanted	1118
Birmingham		A Garden in the Sky	1361
House		Albert Einstein and His Violin	755
		I want to be an Astronaut	2358
		My Olympic Dream	1456
This Candlewick	2	The Castle of Fear	907

Publisher	Level	Book Titles <i>[all the non-fictions here were available in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month]</i>	Total no. of standard words
Stanford House		Places Around the World* Next Stop: Canada* Make It: Chocolate* Games Around the World* Living in Space* What Do You Think?* How Do Penguins Survive the Cold?* LeBron James - Basketball Superstar* Robots* Comic Illustrators* Using a Computer* Training Like an Athlete* Diamonds* Festivals Around the World*	276 333 557 1279 1533 1601 788 495 530 962 1121 868 729 1269
Capstone Press			
Oxford University Press			
- <b>Fireflies</b>			
Oxford – <b>Read and Discover</b>			
National Geographic - Kids	3	Cats Vs Dogs* Titanic* Amazing Animal Journeys* Butterflies* Deadliest Animals*	1984 1263 1119 1299 1475

## **Appendix F – Let's Share !!**

**Name :** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please choose any of the question(s) below and feel free to share your ideas in about 50 words in any language you like.*

1. Could you share with me what the story or the text is all about ? OR/AND

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2. Which part of the story or the text impressed you most and why ? OR/AND

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3. Who is your most/ least favourite character in the story and why? OR/AND

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4. If you had to buy a birthday present for the main character in the story, what would it be and why ?

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## APPENDIX G - STRATEGY CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

(Man 2011:49-51, Davis & Bistodeau 1993, Anderson 1991, Kletzien 1991, Block 1986)

STRATEGY <i>(H/L – a strategy used by a high/low proficient learner)</i>	DEFINITION/CRITERIA	SAMPLE PARTICIPANT'S RESPONSE
1. “Scanning” <i>(3H)</i>	“Quick reading for identifying some key words”	“I scan for the names of the 5 cities mentioned in the article”
2. “Skimming” <i>(3H)</i>	“Reading quickly or briefly for a general understanding”	“I read quickly the article once to get an overall idea of what this is about”
3. “Predicting/Anticipating Contents” <i>(2H)</i>	“Predicting what content will occur in following portions of the article”	“I guess the article is about the future of Hong Kong”
4. “Integrating Information” <i>(3H)</i>	“Connecting new information with previously stated content”	“Oh, this relates or connects with the previous sentence.”
5. “Interpreting the text” <i>(3H)</i>	“Making an inference or drawing a conclusion about the content based on the reader’s own knowledge & information from the text”	“In music, Hong Kong will have a name for itself”, that means Hong Kong will be famous in music.”
6. “Using prior knowledge or association” <i>(3H)</i>	“The reader employs or associates his/her prior knowledge or experience to explain, extend, clarify and react to contents”	“I know that in 1947, there was a world war.”
7. “Skipping unknown or difficult words/sentence” <i>(3H, 7L)</i>	“The reader ignores those difficult words or sentences and continues reading”	“Since I don’t understand what this sentence means, I’ll just skip it”.
8. “Recognising the structure of passage or paragraph” <i>(3H)</i>	“The reader recognises the author’s organization of the passage or paragraph”	“This paragraph is talking about the problem, so all the difficulties will be listed below”

9. “Recognising the sentence structure” <b>(2H)</b>	“The reader recognises the author’s organization of the sentence or is aware of the grammar or part of speech in the sentence”	“This sentence starts with ‘Yet’, that means the ideas before the word ‘Yet’ are opposite to the ideas after “Yet”
10. “Confirming (or disconfirming) an inference” <b>(3H)</b>	“The reader expresses certainty about the things s/he has inferred”	“Yes, it should be this meaning”
11. “Referencing” <b>(3H)</b>	“The reader refers to the previous sentence or paragraph for more ideas”	“I’ll look back at the previous lines to find out what the word ‘it’ refers to.”
12. “Reacting to the text” <b>(3H)</b>	“The reader reacts to the text by giving evaluative comments or reacting emotionally to the information in the text”	“This paragraph seems a bit pointless.”
13. “Solving vocabulary problem” <b>(3H)</b>	“The reader uses context, a synonym or some other word-solving skills (eg. break lexical items into parts) to understand a particular word”	“happiness is the noun form & contented is the adjective form. Since ‘happy’ means ‘glad’, so ‘happiness’ should carry a similar meaning”
14. “Rereading” <b>(3H, 2L)</b>	“The reader mentions specifically going back and reading something again since s/he may not understand or needs time to reflect on a certain aspect of the text”	“I don’t quite understand what this sentence means, so I go back and read it again.”
15. “Questioning the meaning of a clause or a sentence” <b>(3H, 5L)</b>	“The reader does not understand the meaning of some parts of the sentences or a clause, so s/he starts asking himself or herself questions about it”	“What does this sentence mean ?”

16. “Questioning the meaning of a word” <b>(1H, 7L)</b>	“The reader does not understand a particular word”	“What is the meaning of this word ?”
17. “Commenting on own behaviour or reading process” <b>(3H)</b>	“The reader describes strategy use, and shows awareness of the components of the process, or states failure or success in understanding an aspect or a portion of the text”	“I like to reflect on what I have read so far and that’s why I read slowly”
18. “Monitoring comprehension” <b>(3H)</b>	“The reader assesses his or her extent of understanding the text”	“It doesn’t seem like what I’m thinking of”
19. “Correcting behaviour” <b>(1H)</b>	“The reader realizes that an assumption or interpretation is incorrect and changes that statement. This is a combination of the strategies of integration and monitoring, since the reader must connect both the new and the old information together and evaluate understanding”	“I think Singapore is not a city, so I have to write down Tokyo instead.”
20. “Translating” <b>(7L)</b>	The reader translates the meaning of L2 words into L1	

## **Appendix H1: Reading Test for the Think-aloud Experiment**

*Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow in short or long answers.*

Mrs. Chan was very proud of her beautiful flat, although it was quite small. She had decorated it with antique vases and paintings. Her most treasured possession was a carpet. The carpet had been a wedding present. It was made of fine wool and the pattern was pleasing to the eye.

Every month, for the past thirty years, Mrs. Chan would carefully clean her precious carpet. Now, however, she was getting older and suffered from backache.

One day, Mrs. Chan was walking home from the market when she saw two men coming out of a neighbour's flat. They were carrying a carpet. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"We work for a cleaning company," replied one of the men. "We're taking this carpet to be cleaned."

Mrs. Chan thought for a moment. She really could not clean her own carpet by herself any longer.

"Will you take my carpet to be cleaned too?" she asked.

"With pleasure," said the other man.

The men went with Mrs. Chan to her flat and took the carpet away. Half an hour later, there was a knock at the door. Mrs. Chan opened it, and found her neighbour there.

"Oh, Mrs. Chan," said the neighbour, "something terrible has happened! While I was out visiting my sister, some thieves broke into my flat."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Mrs. Chan. "Did they steal anything?"

"Yes," said her neighbour. "They stole my beautiful carpet!"

**21. How had Mrs. Chan decorated her flat to make it look beautiful?**

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**22. How long had Mrs. Chan owned the carpet?**

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**23. What did Mrs. Chan see on her way home?**

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**24. Why did Mrs. Chan ask the men to take her carpet to be cleaned?**

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**25. What were the men really?**

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## **Appendix H2: Pilot Reading Testing for the Think-aloud Experiment**

### **A Magic Stick**

Have you heard about the magic stick that walks?

It's not made of wood. It's a small animal. And it's called a walking stick.

Most walking sticks are as long as your finger.

But they're not as wide. They have long, thin legs. They look like small sticks!

When the walking stick is a baby, it's green. Then it turns brown.

Birds like to eat the walking stick. But it tricks them. It sits still for a long time.

The birds think it's a stick. They leave.

Something else is their lunch! That's the magic trick of the walking stick.



How Well Did You Understand?

Read each question. Circle a or b.

**1 What is this story about?**

- a a stick that can do magic tricks
- b an animal called a walking stick

**2. Where is a good place for baby walking sticks to sit to trick birds?**

- a on green leaves
- b on brown leaves

**3. What do birds not like to eat?**

- a walking sticks
- b sticks from trees

**4. How does a walking stick trick a bird?**

- a It makes the bird think it is a stick.
- b It makes the bird think it is lunch.

**5. What is the magic trick of the walking stick?**

- a It looks like a stick when it doesn't move.
- b It turns from green to brown when it wants to hide.

## **Appendix I: Transcripts of the Qualitative Data**

### **4.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews I - Transcripts**

#### **A.1. Do you enjoy learning English? Why or why not?**

**Group 1:** I do not enjoy learning English, because it is a very different language system to me, compared to Cantonese I speak every day. I do not like the complicated grammar and vocabulary in English. I do not understand a lot of English words in the textbook passages, so I always feel confused during English lessons. I also think that English is very boring. Whenever I have an English lesson, I wish that the English lesson could end as soon as possible as I do not understand even just a single word when the teacher is speaking English. I cannot read simple English properly at all because of my poor vocabulary bank. No teacher in the past has ever helped me to improve my understanding in English or English grammar. (1.2)

**Group 2:** I do not enjoy learning English because of the complicated grammar. Grammar is a tricky part for me in learning English. With the different rules in grammar, I think the grammar in English is really complicated. I always do not understand the mechanism of grammar which bothers me in learning English. My interest in learning English is languished because of the grammar. I also do not know how to build up English vocabulary, so it is always very difficult for me to read long passages in English. My lack of knowledge in grammar and vocabulary detains me from enjoying English and I feel like not learning English well in my primary school but it is too late for me to start all over again to learn the basic knowledge. I feel helpless when dealing with English-related subjects and I certainly don't enjoy learning English. (1.2)

**Group 3:** I do not love learning English. It consists of dreadful practices like writings, comprehensions, and dictations. In the past, during English lessons, teachers merely knew how to manage various discipline problems or punish other students all the time. We did not have much time or a lot of opportunities to play games related to English during the lessons. Teachers in the past usually would read aloud the whole textbook word by word and ask us to repeat after him or her. No teacher in the past has ever attempted to make the lessons more interesting and most usually just read aloud the passages in the textbooks. Moreover, I am not confident with speaking English because I have a heavy local accent. I am also scared of making mistakes when the teacher asks us to read aloud the passage in class, so learning English is not something that I enjoy. (1.2)

**Group 4:** I do not enjoy learning English. It is nice to learn a new language to pave a future career path, especially when English is an international language. However, it is another story under the education system in Hong Kong. I especially hate the English dictations, where I feel like having to memorize a lot of words in the textbook. However, I do not understand the meaning of the words and I always fail to spell the words correctly. Even if I can correctly spell the words, I tend to forget them after a day or two and I don't know how to use them correctly in real-life situations. Gradually, I found myself losing interest in English. I could not memorize any knowledge about English as I did not know the mechanism behind it. Therefore, I am not quite enjoying learning English. (1.2)

**Group 5:** I do not enjoy learning English. I lack vocabulary in expressing myself and I also lack assistance when reading English books. I always need to rely on dictionaries and I find it troublesome to check the definitions of every single word. Although it is useful for me in the future, the pronunciation loses me for being interested in learning English. I felt embarrassed when my English teachers corrected me during the lessons. It annoyed me a lot when I pronounced the word wrongly and I felt silly when I tried to speak English. Even if I wanted to practise speaking English, I don't have friends who can do this together with me as we communicate in Cantonese most of the time. People would treat you as an outcast if you tried to speak in English suddenly. Moreover, I feel nervous when I find many words I do not know while reading English books, but I do not know where to get help. (1.2)

**Group 6:** I do not enjoy learning English to a large extent. Actually, I think that I am not gifted at learning English and I am always confused about English grammar, tenses, and prepositions. I think that it is too difficult for me to understand the mechanism. Also, I think that I am learning English in a very boring way at school. I seldom have the opportunity to play English games with my peers, and I am usually doing boring tasks like merely reading books in the lessons, or memorising keywords for dictations, or just listening to teachers on how to write stories. However, I enjoy learning English in my free time, but only during my free time. It is so easy to learn everyday English in various ways, for instance, listening to pop songs, watching films, and listening to audiobooks in English. I enjoy chatting with people who have the same interest as me and at the same time, I can treat this as a way to improve my English skills, through knowing more pop songs in English. I usually listen to pop songs to learn some basic English and foreign cultures, which are popular in Hong Kong. Learning fun English is just at my fingertips, which is the main reason for my interest. (1.1, 1.2)

**A.2 Did you read much English when you were a primary school kid? OR**  
**Do you think you learned English well in your primary school?**

**Group 1:** I used to read a lot of English comics every week when I was a primary school kid. I had been interested in learning English since I was a kid. I believe that reading English as much as possible can improve my English, but at times I still struggle a lot in exams or tests. As I only read comics but no English books, I felt very happy when learning English in my primary school, but I do not think I learned a lot. The teachers in my primary school always gave us some free time to play or watch movies. The English we learned in secondary school is a lot more difficult than what I was taught in primary school, and I am not really comfortable with such a lot of English grammar taught in a single lesson. Also, I am not willing to read long English novels with packed words and no pictures. Such books were recommended or selected by my teacher to improve English, but I could never understand a word from these books, so I could not learn English well. (2.1) I wish I could have a chance to choose the kinds of books I like reading.

**Group 2:** I did not read much English when I was a primary school kid because I was not interested in learning English at that time. When I tried to read an English book, I discovered that the book was full of alphabets or letters that I didn't quite understand and those were meaningless to me. I always felt bored and frustrated when I opened an English book because I felt like it was a waste of time, especially when I could not read or understand a single English word inside. I would rather spend my time playing online games, as I am already very tired after a full day of school work and lessons. Therefore, I did not read much English when I was a primary school kid. (2.2)

**Group 3:** I did not read a lot of English books in my primary school because all the lessons were mostly taught in Cantonese in my primary school and we rarely spoke to each other in English. Our teacher even used Cantonese to teach English as most of the students could not comprehend simple English. When our class did not understand anything in English, our teacher would just explain everything in Cantonese and not in English. At times, our teacher even had to manage discipline problems, so we could not learn much English per lesson. Also, our teacher did not really recommend any English books to the class when I was in my primary school, and she told us that we should practise more exercises in the textbooks instead, so I did not really know what English books to read when I was a primary school kid. (2.2)

**Group 4:** I did not read much English when I was a primary school kid. My parents and teachers also did not force me to read any books, especially for my parents, who could not help me with my English homework when I was a primary school kid. I did not really know why I had to learn English, when it is not my mother tongue and when my family does not speak English. When I encountered difficult words in my primary school, I was too scared of asking my English teacher because I was afraid that it would embarrass me. None of my peers would ask questions in class or approach the English teacher, so I dared not do so. My primary school teachers only played group games with us during English lessons, like board games and card games, so I did not really learn a lot of English skills until I attended secondary school, with the overwhelming English grammar that I needed to know. The English I learned in my primary school was totally different from that in a secondary school. Also, I found that reading an English book was not as interesting as watching different dramas on TV. Therefore, I spent a lot of time watching TV when I was a primary school kid, rather than reading English books. (2.2)

**Group 5:** I did not think I learned English well in my primary school. Since I was a primary school kid, I did not have any interest in learning English. As the teacher always talked in long English words, I felt those English lessons were so boring that I could not understand anything. I recall how our teacher always punished us for being too noisy and lazy in class, so he would spend the whole lesson scolding the naughty students in front of the whole class. Also, our English teacher did not really like us because our English is not up to his expected standard, which made me hate English lessons and English more. My friends and I were too afraid to ask the English teacher for anything that we did not understand in his class, as he seemed to be furious all the time. That is why I did not learn English well in my primary school. (2.2)

**Group 6:** I do not think I learned English well in my primary school. English was an unfamiliar language for me when I was a primary school kid. There was rarely an occasion where I had to speak in English. Most of my family members did not know English, so they usually would speak in Cantonese to me, but not English. My parents also did not care about my grades either, so I did not try to learn any English well in my primary school or attend the lessons with full concentration. The teacher in my primary school was a native English speaker, so she spoke very fast in class and I could not catch even a single word she said. I was also frequently punished for not answering the questions she raised to me in class, so I felt embarrassed in English lessons and did not want to pay attention in class. As I was always failing English in my primary school, I used to escape from the need to study English and I did not recognise the importance of learning well in English. Reading English books was a very stressful experience for me as a kid. (2.2)

### **A.3 Do you want to improve your English or learn English better?**

**Group 1:** I want to improve my English. I only know how to speak some broken and basic English, there is still a lot of rooms for improving my English, in reading, writing, and speaking. Also, sometimes I do not understand some words when I read the newspaper. I wish I could improve my English in vocabulary. I have tried using the dictionary to help me with learning the vocabulary, but I still gave up after some time, because there were too many words that I did not understand. Sometimes I feel meaningless in searching the words in the entire sentence. What is worse, I always forget the meaning of the words the other day, so I cannot learn vocabulary effectively or build up a good vocabulary bank. (3.1, 3.2)

**Group 2:** I want to learn English better. It will be a benefit if my English is improved even though I do not enjoy learning English. I want to learn more vocabulary in English as I am always unable to read any stories or newspaper in English. I have cousins from other schools that can read newspapers in English well, so I am always embarrassed when I talk about English with them. Since then I have realised the importance of knowing more vocabulary and reading English well with skills. I also realized that learning English is very crucial not only in academic results but also in my future career path and in daily lives. Learning English better can definitely increase my competitiveness in the future. (3.1)

**Group 3:** I want to improve my English, especially in speaking and reading. At times, I need to communicate with the foreign English teachers at school. Sometimes I am scared of communicating with these native speakers because I am afraid that I will use some wrong expressions to express what I mean and may offend them without awareness. I hope that I can overcome my fear in speaking English, try to communicate smoothly and fluently with native speakers in the future when I am an adult. Also, I hope I can read passages more fluently in English, especially when I am always failing my English tests or exams. I always fail or barely pass the English exams or tests, so it would be great to learn some English skills or comprehension techniques. (3.1, 3.2)

**Group 4:** I want to improve my English in reading. My speed of reading an English article is quite slow, in which sometimes I cannot finish the whole reading test. This results in constant failing in test papers and exams. I have always wanted to improve my English reading, but I never know how. I tried reading storybooks but most are too difficult for me. I think that the biggest problem is that I cannot understand the vocabulary used in the writing and the structure of passages in exams, let alone analysing the passage for reading comprehensions and answering the questions. (3.2)

**Group 5:** I want to learn English better in reading. I think that I cannot understand some words properly and others make fun of me because I cannot explain the meaning of the words. During English lessons, I am always afraid that the teacher would ask me to read the passage or analyse the passage deeply. I cannot even understand most of the words from the passage, so how can I analyse the passage for the teacher? Through improving my comprehension and vocabulary skills, I will be able to overcome such fear in English and English lessons. (3.2)

**Group 6:** I want to improve my English reading skills. I think English is getting more and more important in every aspect of life. My English teacher once told us that English is very important in our future careers and loads of students were trained to reach a certain level of English skills. Therefore I am worried about my English proficiency. I am not really skilled at reading passages because I do not have a rich vocabulary list in my mind, and I do not know how to read long sentences, easily getting off track when reading long passages from textbooks. I hope I can accumulate more English vocabulary and comprehension skills since English has played a dominant role in my future career path. (3.2)

#### **A.4 Did you do something to achieve this?**

**Group 1:** No. To be honest, I do not know how to achieve that. I am just too lazy to get out of my comfort zone. I do not have a lot of time to improve my English as I have a lot of other school work to complete. Although I am determined to improve my English skill, it is difficult that I cannot find anyone to assist me with this. I've tried talking to my friends in simple English but I felt awkward and unnatural to talk to each other in English. I've tried to approach my English teacher for advice but I feel like my teachers' advice, such as reading more newspapers, is not useful to me. (4.1)

**Group 2:** Yes, I sometimes watch some TV dramas, like 'Friends', to learn more about how to communicate with others in English since there are many daily conversations between characters. Although I need to rely on the subtitles and find it very difficult to follow their speed in conversations, the television shows taught me some common words or phrases when communicating with friends in English. (4.2)

**Group 3:** Yes. I tried reading English books in the past but the English books are too hard and I cannot even finish one English book. I usually fall asleep after reading the first few pages of the English book. There are too many words that I don't understand on a single page, I'll have to look them up in the online dictionary from time to time which bothers me. The English books were too difficult for my level, so I gave up on reading them eventually. (4.3)

**Group 4:** Yes. I tried attending a tuition course to help me with improving grammar, reading skills, and learning vocabulary, but I gave up after a while because I found the course content too exam-oriented and boring, so I am not interested in learning them. I want to learn conversational English that can improve my communication skills. I think that tuition is as boring as English lessons at school, preparing you for reading dull academic articles, so I feel very tired and bored during my tuition. (4.4)

**Group 5:** No. In fact, I wanted to improve my English, but I have no idea on how to achieve this goal. I am scared of initiating a conversation in English as I feel embarrassed easily. I am always very lost whenever I start reading any English books. I feel that there are not sufficient materials for English learners, like me, to improve the vocabulary bank on my own. Materials like easier English books with simple explanations are rare. I feel ashamed when I don't understand simple English but I am scared of asking anyone else. (4.1)

**Group 6:** Yes, I tried to watch English TV shows and films with English subtitles. When the characters' dialogues began, the subtitles disappeared very quickly and the characters spoke very fast. I could not understand and I felt like I am always failing to improve my English as I would soon focus back on the characters' facial expressions but not the dialogues. After spending an hour or more finishing the show, I realised that I had not learnt any English at all. (4.2)

#### **B.5 How often do you read an L1 book and an L2 book respectively as a secondary school student now? OR can you recall when you last read an L1 and L2 book (not the English coursebook) or something in English on the website?**

**Group 1:** I seldom read an L1 book and L2 book respectively as a secondary school student. I find it crucial to achieve a better level in English by reading books in English as frequently as possible as I

can come across with more words. Yet, I struggle a lot when I start reading any books. I can barely manage to read through an L1 book but I can't handle an L2 book on my own and I usually spend a long time finishing reading them. I have to rely on my mobile or e-dictionary but I often end up getting distracted by other materials online. It is challenging for me to read an entire English book without any distraction, like playing online games or texting with friends. (5)

**Group 2:** My last reading of an L1 and L2 book was when I was forced to finish my homework - a book report, a few months ago. It was not a pleasant experience of reading an English book from my perspective. I failed to grasp some ideas of the English book as I had to skip many unfamiliar words that appeared in it. Other than that, I would not read an English book in my free time as it is a time-consuming task for me if I have to check the online dictionary for words I do not know all the time. (5)

**Group 3:** The last time that I read something in L1 or L2 on the website was a few weeks ago. At that time, I had to do an English book report about science subjects. I did not know how to read most of the words in the book so I ended up stitching different parts of the book to complete the book report. After submitting the book report, I still do not know what the story is about, but at least I have submitted the homework on time. (5)

**Group 4:** I cannot recall the time when I last read anything in L1 or L2, excluding the English course set book. It is difficult for me to read something in English. It's just like my brain would not process anything in English and it has been a struggle for me to learn English. I dislike reading books. Even when I need to write any book reports, I think I would only copy from several scattered parts of the story to finish my report. (5)

**Group 5:** I rarely read any L1 or L2 books because I do not like reading books. Whenever my teacher asks us to write a book report, I feel very stressed because I do not like reading. There are many English words which I have no idea of how to read, and I lack the reading skills to read the passage quickly, so I would rather not read any English books. (5)

**Group 6:** I cannot recall the time when I last read an L2 book. In fact, I did not read many English books in my primary and secondary schools. I discover that I cannot concentrate on reading an English book for a long period of time. There were a lot of lengthy and complicated character names in the book and I couldn't memorise them. I got distracted quite often when I tried to read something in English. For L1 books, I only have read a few passages online when I need to finish a book report recently. (5)

#### **B.6 If you can choose anything in English to read, what would that be? Why?**

**Group 1:** I like to read any comic series. Comics are quite popular in our school right now because it is easy to read, with a lot of pictures and very few words. My favourite comic series is Batman. I like any English book with as fewer words as possible because it is easy to understand. Also, the content is very funny and hilarious, even with little English knowledge, I can still understand the meaning of the comic because of the colorful pictures. Therefore, comic books have become the only genre I like. (6.3)

**Group 2:** I would choose an English detective comic to read. I prefer reading English books with more vivid pictures and less packed words. Besides that, I love how detective comics usually require me to think along with the detective, I feel as if I were the detective myself! Detective stories are less boring than other short fairy tales and exciting. (6.1)

**Group 3:** I want to read some newspapers. I like receiving different information from different sources. I feel like getting to understand the world more while reading different news articles. Also, I think that reading newspapers in English is actually more beneficial to me in terms of improving my English as I can learn more formal vocabulary. I have subscribed to SCMP so I can browse different articles on their website. Besides, it is also useful for me to improve the analytical skills and keep me updated with current affairs. (6.2)

**Group 4:** I like reading passages on new technological inventions, such as the latest updates on electronic devices or mobile phones. I am excited to hear any updates from Apple in particular. In addition, I also love reading passages related to astronomy. I can seldom witness these inventions in real life, so I am interested in learning about them. Recently, I downloaded an app called “My Moon Phase” on my phone to check the moon phase every day but I don’t quite know how the app operates as the settings are all in English. Indeed, it is upsetting because although I love reading them, if they are all written in English, I will not understand them at all. (6.2)

**Group 5:** I like to read any comic series. Comics have less words and more pictures on each page, so the whole book is easier for me to read and understand the plot. Besides comics, any book with less words and more pictures would appeal to me. Simple English books are easier to comprehend. (6.3)

**Group 6:** I like reading any sports-related magazines, such as news on different football matches, tips in doing sports, or even passages related to football stars or basketball stars. I often discuss the matches with my friends. I can learn some basketball or football skills too. I find it very rewarding and interesting whenever I am reading these passages because I can gain some useful knowledge in sports... Haha but what I can read actually for the above books has nothing to do with English. (6.2)

#### **B.6 What kinds of storybooks are you more interested in reading when you have some spare time? Why?**

**Group 1:** I would choose any English comics to read. This is because there are more pictures in the comics and I always prefer English books with more colourful pictures and less words. The words in English novels always give me headaches and I do not understand any of the vocabulary used in the stories. (6.3)

**Group 2:** I would choose any detective stories to read. This is because I think that it is interesting to solve cases from the detective’s point of view. I love how different detective stories set up a mysterious background. Also, I enjoyed the victory when the detectives solved the cases. (6.1)

**Group 3:** I want to read some stories or introduction to famous football stars, like Ronaldo and Messi. This is because I want to read English books that are in my field of interest, but not just the boring academic articles in the English textbooks. I am willing to read stories or passages that I am interested

in instead of reading educational ones. Stories that are related to sports, like basketball, football, or even the famous players in sports, interest me. (6.1)

**Group 4:** I like reading any story book related to Space, such as astronauts living in Space, or discoveries of aliens, or any fun facts about Space, through reading stories. I enjoy exploring different sides of the space and universe because they are so mysterious to us. These information are all exciting to discover, especially when they are not everyday life facts, but interesting knowledge about the world. Although there are a lot of technical terms used in the book, I still find them fascinating to read. (6.2)

**Group 5:** I like to read comics in English since English comics usually have less words and more pictures on each page. As a result, the whole book seems less scary to me. Besides comics, any books with less words and more pictures would work for me. The big thick novels with packed words, like Harry Potter, always scare me. (6.3)

**Group 6:** I like to read any English books, like comics, detective stories, or anything except the academic passages in the textbooks. Nevertheless, the English books must be easy to read, with words that I can easily understand, and more vivid and attractive pictures, and less words. Most of the time our teachers force us to read long English passages, which is not something I fancy.

### **B.7 What do you usually do to kill time leisurely?**

**Group 1:** I usually play online games and read comic books after school because it is very exciting. Reading comic books is far more interesting than reading a plain book in English. They contain intense visuals which can be easy for me to understand the plot and characters. I do not need to know the context before reading them. (7.1)

**Group 2:** I usually play online games to kill time leisurely. Personally, playing video games can alleviate my stress in schooling. I will team up with my classmates and play online games together. It is a great way to bond with my friends too. Also, it gives me the chance to think about a role I would ideally like to take and then get a chance to play that role, which is awesome for me to escape from reality and chill out. (7.1)

**Group 3:** I usually watch TV dramas to kill time leisurely. Watching TV dramas can always help me learn something new when I am not aware of it, such as fashion sense or beauty tips. I especially enjoy watching Korean dramas as the plot is always thought-provoking, they will touch on morals, mental illnesses and reflect social problems. Also, watching TV dramas is also a relaxing way to take a break from a long school day. Other than that, I will also play the piano and listen to music to kill time. By doing so, it can calm me down from the nervousness due to hectic stress. (7.1)

**Group 4:** I usually watch films to kill time leisurely. They allow us to feel different emotions which is a good way to release my emotions, such as feeling romantic from watching movies about romance, or laughing uncontrollably in comedies. It is also a great way to enhance my aesthetic sense by observing the colour themes of movies and the outfits of different characters. Also, I am able to discuss the films with my friends, as a common topic, to further bond our friendship. (7.1)

**Group 5:** I usually play basketball to kill time leisurely. Playing basketball is my favourite sport in the world and I am really good at it. Unlike English, I feel like I am always shining on the basketball field when I am playing basketball with my talents. It is also beneficial to my health after a long period of sitting in front of the desk revising and doing homework for a long period of time. I feel good to sweat a lot and enjoy the fresh air outside. Moreover, playing basketball is less boring as there are many interactions with others. It is more interesting than reading books and it also helps me bond with my friends. (7.2)

**Group 6:** I usually play online games to kill time leisurely. I feel accomplished when I win online matches and that is something I rarely get from schoolwork. For me, playing different kinds of online games is effective for relaxation and releasing stress that originates from schooling. They are more exciting than reading English books. (7.1)

**C.8 Do you think the ER morning session held once every two weeks is effective in helping you learn some English?**

**Group 1:** I do not think the ER session held once every two weeks is effective in helping me learn some English. I think that it is a waste of time when I do not understand so many words in the book. Moreover, I can barely stay awake during the reading session in the early morning. I often fell asleep during the sessions. Increasing the number of English classes would be more effective in helping me learn some English as we can learn more about the basics of grammar and tenses. (8.2)

**Group 2:** I think the ER morning session held once every two weeks is not effective in helping me to learn more English. The teacher will just assign us to read some books and that's it. There was not enough help from reading something that I could not understand. But since it is mandatory in school, I will pretend reading the English books, but I actually will be working on my assignments or revising for my dictation, as they are more urgent than reading books. ER morning sessions are just another self-studying period to me. (8.2)

**Group 3:** I do not think the ER session held once every two weeks is effective in helping me learn some English. As far as I know, learning English is a long process. You have to invest a lot of time on improving it. Spending such a little time on it is not very effective on learning English. Furthermore, I don't think it is adequate to just read books when we lack some basic knowledge on English. (8.2)

**Group 4:** I do not think the ER session held once every two weeks is effective in helping me learn some English. What is the point if the session is just held once every two weeks? The session is too short, I can't even finish reading the first chapter of the book. It is far not enough for me to continue reading in the long-term. (8.2)

**Group 5:** I think the ER session held once every two weeks is effective to a certain extent in helping me learn some English. Although it is a torture for me to read an English book, it will be effective in learning some English if I am being forced on reading something in English. Without this ER session, I wouldn't read any English books on my own. So, it's a good idea to hold more ER sessions to help develop our long-term reading habits in English. (8.1)

**Group 6:** I do not think the ER session held once every two weeks is effective in helping me learn some English. It is just pointless to have the ER session at that low frequency. I do not believe that my English can be improved if I just spend little time reading an English book. I think it is just a waste of my time. (8.2)

**C.9 Do you think it is enough? Do you prefer the school increasing the frequency of the ER morning session from once every two weeks to at least once every week OR increasing the length of the ER session from 15 minutes to 20/25 minutes? Why?**

**Group 1:** I do not think it is enough. I do not prefer either of those improvements of the ER session because the length of the ER session is still not adequate. It takes me a longer time to comprehend an English book without any help. If the ER session is about 20/25 minutes, I can read the English book for a longer period and try to deepen my understanding towards the book in the extended period. (9.1, 9.3)

**Group 2:** I think it is enough. During ER sessions, I cannot understand a single word on each page of the book. Although we can expose ourselves in an English environment, I do not think that it can improve my English when I lack assistance in understanding the story. I have no one to ask for help, so I am quick to give up. (9.2)

**Group 3:** I think it is not enough. I prefer the school increasing the length of the ER session from 15 minutes to 20/25 minutes. It is because it allows me to have more time to read an English book and also to look up difficult words from an online dictionary. I am quite a slow reader on English books. With more time, I can digest the content of the book better. I can take my time reading an English book without getting too stressful. (9.1, 9.3)

**Group 4:** I think it is enough. I do not prefer the school increasing the frequency or the time of the ER. There are so many words that I do not understand in the book, so I feel very bored when I read the English books during the ER session. I would rather do some homework or revise for any upcoming tests during that time. (9.2, 9.3)

**Group 5:** I think it is more than enough. I think reading English book once every two weeks is very stressful for me. I would rather spend the time finishing any homework that I have missed or revising for any dictations on that day. I do not have sufficient time in completing my school work, and I do not think I should spend time reading books which I cannot understand. (9.2)

**Group 6:** I think it is enough. I do not prefer the school increasing the frequency or the time of the ER session. I feel like being forced to read English books that I do not understand. Sometimes, I don't even think that I enjoy the book that I am reading. I don't think that is the correct way to learn something. (9.2)

**C.10 What do you think when your English teacher asks you to write a brief report after reading an English book? Do you think the ER morning session could help you learn some English? Why or why not?**

**Group 1:** I think it is useless when my English teacher asks me to write a brief report after reading an English book. The teacher does not read the report thoroughly when I hand it in to him or her. It is just a gesture for the school principal to see. I think the morning ER session could help me learn some English. During the ER session, I am forced to read some English books although I may not understand most of the words or the story at all. Yet, after all, reading some English books is better than not reading any books at all. (10.1)

**Group 2:** When my English teacher asked me to write a brief report after reading an English book, I think it is a waste of my time, but I will finish the report anyway. Although I may not understand the meaning of writing a brief report after reading an English book, I am certain that my English teacher's request has her purpose of enhancing my English. (10.2)

**Group 3:** I think it is troublesome when my English teacher asks me to write a brief report after reading an English book. I do not understand the point of doing this task. I do not think the ER morning session could help me learn some English. I may lose focus during the ER morning session and the session becomes useless. (10.2)

**Group 4:** I think writing a brief report after reading an English book is useful for me to understand the book itself and think beyond the content of the book. It helps me to summarize the book and think about its themes. I do not think the morning ER session could help me learn some English because the duration of the session is too short, and it is not enough for me to learn more English in this limited amount of time. (10.1)

**Group 5:** I felt annoyed when my English teacher asked me to write a brief report after reading an English book. Reading is supposed to be a leisurely activity. It becomes stressful when I need to finish an assignment after reading an English book. I think the morning ER session could not help me learn some English. I am afraid I am not fully awake in the morning and I may get sleepy during the ER morning session, so it is not easy for me to digest an English article or even an English book. (10.2)

**Group 6:** I think it is purposeless when my English teacher asked me to write a brief report after reading an English book. I just think it just increases my workload in schooling and it is completely unnecessary for students. I do not think the ER morning session could help me learn some English. If there is extra time, it will be better for us to leave school earlier or let us have a longer lunch break. I just cannot see how beneficial it is for us to learn more English in such a way. (10.2)

**D.11 Do you think the English books in the school library interest you? Why or why not?**

**Group 1:** I think the English books in the school library do not interest me because some books are old and boring. Many of the books I found in the library are novels from a decade ago. The book cover has even turned yellow. It is unappealing for me to dig through piles of old books. I prefer updated books like magazines or comic books, which have more pictures and less words, for us to read easily. Also, the content is less boring. (11.1, 11.4)

**Group 2:** I do not think the English books in the school library interest me. Many of the English books in the school library are thick with tiny words, which discourages me from picking up an English book and trying to read it. I feel those are not suitable for my level of reading and I am kind of intimidated by those English books in the school library. I prefer books with more fancy covers and illustrations. (11.2, 11.3)

**Group 3:** I think the English books in the school library do not interest me. The school library does not have sufficient easy books suitable for my level. Many of which are reference books, only some of them are fiction and comics. There are a few short stories suitable for me, which have more pictures and less words in the books, yet they are always borrowed by others. (11.2, 11.4)

**Group 4:** I do not think the English books in the school library interest me. Some of the collections are quite outdated. I have not heard about some of the new English books in the main school library and those existing books can hardly arouse my interest in reading them. (11.1)

**Group 5:** I do not think the English books in the school library interest me. English books in the school library are very limited and boring. There are not many options for you to choose from in the school library. Unfortunately, the school library has a lot of difficult and thick books, but there are not a lot of options or a variety of easier books available for weaker students to choose . (11.1, 11.2)

**Group 6:** I do not think the English books in the school library interest me. Some covers of English books are old which seem to be not interesting to read. The condition of some English books is poor and seems to be broken if someone is going to read it. (11.1)

**D.12 What difficulties did you usually face while reading an English story book? OR what discouraged you most of the time while taking out an English book to read?**

**Group 1:** While reading an English story book, I usually do not understand words by words. Some words in a story book are quite weird for me and I have not encountered those words before until I read an English book. Sometimes, I cannot grasp some ideas in the book because of my inadequate knowledge in vocabulary. I think that it is annoying if I have to check the difficult words from the dictionary every time when I encounter those difficult words. (12.1)

**Group 2:** When I try to read an English book, I find it very difficult to comprehend the passage. When I encounter vocabulary I do not know, I just skip ahead, which leaves blanks in the passage. The more blanks in a line of text, the harder it is to make meaning. The reading task becomes cognitively challenging and frustrating for me to even complete the whole article. (12.1)

**Group 3:** When I try to read an English book, it is difficult for me to focus on reading the book for a long period of time. With the overwhelming amount of vocabulary that I do not understand, I get off task easily and get into something else. Reading an English book does not arouse my interest and becomes a dreadfully dull task. (12.2)

**Group 4:** I struggle with speed when I read an English book. The more I read, the more I encounter unfamiliar terms, which takes me more time to finish an English book. Sometimes, I cannot process those English words quickly and I am struggling in finding out the meanings of those unfamiliar terms. Maybe I lack some reading skills in reading short stories, too, so I read English books slowly. (12.3)

**Group 5:** I cannot suspend ideas and information in the book while reading an English book further. I am not able to hold what I have read in my mind. Most of the time, I forget the beginning of a passage by the time I get to the end. I feel puzzled about the plot in the story and fail to sustain my interest in reading an English book. The problem is worsened when the story contains numerous challenging vocabulary. (12.1)

**Group 6:** When I read an English book, I am confused by the difficult sentence structures and the 'abstract' description methods. I am always confused by the use of words that appear to be irrelevant, maybe I just don't have enough imagination to process the meaning of the passage. Moreover, I am not sure about how word order shapes the meaning of a sentence. Sometimes, I understand every single word in the sentence but when they are being placed together, I could not put together what the author is trying to say. Also, in terms of reading skills, it is difficult for me to read a long sentence, I don't know how to break a long sentence into pieces to understand. I cannot grasp the main idea if I encounter a long sentence. (12.1)

## **Semi-structured Interviews II – Analysis**

### **Q.1 Throughout the three-month ER intervention, which parts are you satisfied with?**

**Group 1:** In the ER intervention, my favourite part was the rewards from the candy machine or the fun gadget. Every time, I felt very motivated to read at least one book during the ER activity because I was always looking forward to receiving the chocolate or drinks reward. The prizes remained mysterious and I was always excited to know which prize I was getting in each round, especially when I was always looking forward to the lemon teas or snacks after reading the books at the end of the school day.

In the past, I used to feel that I would never be motivated to read any English books, even under the teacher's guidance. With some pleasure being brought into the boring reading session, I believe I am now less resistant towards reading English books during lunch time and would pick up the books and read them with initiative.

Apart from the rewards, I think that the books provided in this ER intervention are better than those from the regular ER reading session in the morning or from the school library. I liked how easier books such as comics are provided in the ER intervention. Comics contain more pictures and less words, which are more appealing and less boring to me. I could easily finish reading the books in a single ER intervention. These comics, which were very hilarious, were definitely less boring because the story was not too long. They were usually not provided in the school library or in the classroom during the normal ER session. I loved the comic book series, "Mr. Bean", where the main character Mr. Bean does a lot of silly actions. My friends and I laughed about the weird faces of Mr. Bean and the stories even after the ER intervention session when I showed the book to them.

Last but not least, I liked reading in the Annexe Library than in the school library or in the classroom. The environment is more spacious and the books provided in the Annexe Library are easier than those in the main school library. I felt more comfortable to sit on more comfortable sofa seats and with easier books during the reading process. Overall, the candy machine or the gadget machine, and the books provided in the session were my favourite parts of the ER intervention. (1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6)

**Group 2:** I think I am most satisfied with the candy machine and fun gadget part. The candy machine part actually was the chief reason why I was so enthusiastic during the ER intervention

sessions. I felt very excited when I had the chance to get a prize from the M&M candy machine after reading a book. Since reading an English book was accompanied with an exciting game, I was more motivated to read and attempt to understand a single English book and report the summary to the teacher. The whole ER session was very rewarding and less boring with the board games, which motivated me a lot to complete the game.

Also, I liked how there are a larger range of books provided in the ER intervention programme. For example, new comic series such as Mr Beans were introduced in the ER intervention. Such comic series were more interesting than the existing novels in our main school library, especially when they had a lot of pictures and funny illustrations in the story.

In addition, I also loved how we could choose our books in the ER intervention on our own and how there were adequate copies of every genre of books provided to us, so all of us would be able to have a chance to read the books that we truly like, instead of randomly choosing a thick book from the class cabinets like the morning reading sessions.

I recall how the main school library usually has a limited supply of easier books with less words, so I usually do not have a chance to read them at all. The electronic dictionary provided to me during the ER intervention session was also extremely useful for me to look up the words I did not understand in the stories. The electronic dictionary was a convenient and quick tool for us to look for the meanings of the words immediately which enabled me to read the story more smoothly and efficiently. It was not something that I usually use during my English lessons, so it was an interesting experience for me to explore this novel tool. After all, I also think that the ER intervention was more useful than the regular morning reading sessions, especially when I could read books that I truly liked and understood. (1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6)

**Group 3:** Actually in the ER intervention session, my favourite part was not the reading books part, but the candy machine and fun gadget part. Before every ER intervention lunchtime session, I would be looking forward to the gifts that I will be getting after lunchtime. After reading the books, I was eager to queue up for the candy machine and know what gift I would be getting from the candy machine, especially when the prizes were usually unexpected and attractive. When I got the gifts that I liked, I would be exhilarated to share the joy with my friends; and when I got the gifts that I did not want the most, I would be looking forward to the next ER intervention session to get another gift in the next round. With this reward system, I

worked harder than usual to concentrate on reading the books, and I think I have learned some new lexical items from the scaffolded ER activities and also via using the e-dictionary.

Another part I enjoyed during the ER intervention than during other reading sessions was that I could choose the books that are suitable for me. I was finally not forced to read any boring and thick books selected by the teachers, which were usually books with no or few pictures and mostly words.

The e-dictionary from the activity also facilitated me in reading the stories. Using an electronic dictionary instead of the traditional one is more convenient as I did not have to flip through the pages or miss the word, and I could understand the meaning of the word quickly and continue with my reading. Even without any teacher's assistance during the ER intervention, I was still able to read the books and understand the meaning of the words, slowly and conveniently. Overall, I could increase my concentration in reading. (1.1, 1.3, 1.4)

**Group 4:** My favourite part from the ER intervention is the part where I could get M&M chocolate from the candy machine after the reading sessions. I always find reading English books a troublesome and boring task because I am not familiar with so many difficult vocabulary items. I always get off task easily when reading an English book, so I tend to give up on reading them in the end.

However, I was feeling more motivated to read English books during the ER activity for the candy rewards. Although there was still a lot of difficult words that I did not understand, I tried hard to concentrate on understanding the content of the books during the ER sessions because I was always looking forward to the gifts. The candy rewarding part made reading English books a more interesting activity to me, unlike the previous tasks that I was given.

Furthermore, I think that the books provided in the ER intervention were exactly my cup of tea. I was able to read books on my favourite basketball star - Lebron James, which talked about his journey to become a famous basketball star and the challenges he faced in becoming a basketball star. Although there were a lot of words which I could not understand in the book, I was still enjoying what I read because the book has included a lot of photos of my favourite basketball star and teams.

In addition, I thought that the time provided for me to complete the reading is just sufficient and meaningful. I spent 15 minutes reading the book, then 5 minutes choosing a book and the rest of the time reporting and queuing up for the prizes. I felt I had learnt a lot in the ER intervention and it was very rewarding.

Aside from the reading session, I think that it was very refreshing to read in the Annexe Library. The reading area in the Annexe Library is so much bigger than that of the main school library and contains more books suitable for my level, with more pictures and less words. I enjoyed reading the books in the Annexe Library with my classmates. (1.1, 1.5)

**Group 5:** My favourite part in the ER intervention was getting the prizes from the M&M candy machines or the fun gadget. I felt rewarded whenever I got the prize after reading a long English book, which was a difficult task for me. I was always hyped to see if I could get the prize which I wanted the most after each reading task. The prizes I got after the ER intervention was the best incentive for me to join the ER activity.

In addition, I think the activity was more meaningful and interesting than any reading activities I had participated in the past. For example, I learned about different vocabulary from the word cards the teacher showed us. The vocabulary cards were grouped into different aspects of my daily lives, so I could relate to them easily. Although I did not think that I have memorised a lot of words or even recalled them very well after the activity, I think I learned more simple English words that could help me with reading the comics from the ER intervention. I felt particularly excited when I could recognise the words in the books from the vocabulary list that the teacher taught and explained the meaning to me. After the activity, I felt I became more capable of reading books on my own and understanding a story.

Moreover, I am now not totally lost or confused when choosing books to read. I learnt the 5-finger rule method, where I randomly flip to a page of the book and count the number of words I do not understand. If I do not understand more than 5 words per page, then I can choose another easier book. Using this 5-finger rule method allowed me to waste less time when choosing books, as I would not be reading books that were too difficult for my level. (1.1, 1.2)

**Group 6:** My favourite part in the ER intervention was the candy machine. After school, when I was attending the ER intervention, I was usually very hungry. Therefore, I was always looking

forward to finishing a book and getting the snacks rewards. The snacks provided in the ER intervention session motivated me to read, especially when my tummy was growling.

What's more, the snacks were always unexpected and full of surprises. In addition, the books provided in the ER intervention were also suitable for my level. I realised that there are a lot of books with more pictures and not a lot of words on each page, and the characters are usually interesting, with a hilarious plot. I can enjoy these books with less stress and also laugh along as I read the story.

Reading fun books with a funny plot was definitely encouraging to join the ER intervention programme. I also appreciated the vocabulary and reading skills that our teacher has taught us in the ER intervention session. During the ER intervention session, I participated in the scaffolded English activity and learned a few special English skills, such as breaking a long sentence into smaller fragments and analyse them parts by parts, learning how to skim and scan in passages, trying to guess the meaning of difficult words using hints from the words nearby. These reading techniques are all beneficial to me and I am able to read English stories more fluently now.

I was also relieved when I only needed to provide an oral English report instead of writing a full report in English, unlike what I usually did in regular classes. Additionally, I learned some new vocabulary during the ER intervention. Although I still struggled to memorise the meanings of some of the words taught in the scaffolded ER session, I could recognise some of the words I had learned from the scaffolded ER session while reading the stories. I felt very rewarding and my English skills had improved a lot, especially when I could understand a full sentence in a story more often than I did in the past. (1.1, 1.2, 1.3)

## ***Q2. Which parts of the ER intervention are you not satisfied with?***

**Group 1:** I think that the ER intervention was too long for me. The ER intervention was overall 30 minutes long, and I think that it will be best to be modified into 20 to 25 minutes long. To be honest, I was not concentrating during the whole ER intervention session. At least half of the time I was struggling with the meanings of some words, and my mind would wander off, thinking about other things. The reason why I think that the ER intervention could be changed into 20 minutes maximum is that I really could not concentrate completely during the ER

intervention and I got bored easily a few minutes after reading the book. I never liked reading any books, so it is always a torture for me to read an English book even for a minute. Through reducing the duration of the ER intervention, I would feel less stressful and would be more willing to join the ER intervention next time. (2.1)

Also, I think that more genres can be included in the ER intervention. I actually noticed that a lot of comics and stories on famous basketball stars were included, but I think that even more books on technology, pop culture, and mobile phones can be included. I suggest adding some magazines introducing pop music or pop culture, or even technological magazines introducing different new inventions in iPhones or tablets. These topics are what I am interested in daily, so I would be interested in reading them in simple English. Such magazines or easy newspapers, if included in the ER intervention, are definitely more suitable to me. (2.2)

Furthermore, I think that books with special interactive effects or buttons can also be introduced in the ER intervention. There are some books with interactive buttons, which by pressing the buttons, some audio will be played. I think that these books are more interesting than the usual books that I read. (2.2)

**Group 2:** I think that more magazines about pop culture or pop music could be included in the ER intervention, but of course with less words and more pictures. I am particularly interested in listening to English pop songs, even though I do not know most of their meanings. Hence, it would be nice for me if I can try to read magazines which introduce pop cultures or pop songs of the latest season so that I can explore more pop songs in the future. (2.2)

Also, I suggest even more simpler books be introduced because most of the participants only chose those simpler books. Hence the options and the number of simpler story books could be further expanded to ensure that all the students can at least find an easy book they want to read. In the ER intervention, I recall how all the Mr. Bean comics were all taken away by my other classmates, and I was only left with the other books when I wanted to borrow a Mr. Bean comic the most. Although I could still read an interesting book on aliens or space during that session, I think that it would be the best if the number of simpler books can be increased. (2.2)

Furthermore, more prizes could have been included in the ER intervention session. The current prizes included candies or drinks from the candy machines, or the fun gadget. I think that they

were not particularly appealing to me, especially during lunchtime, when I had already finished my lunch before the ER intervention. Prizes like stationery or stickers can also be included as they are useful and essential to me in daily life. (2.3)

**Group 3:** I think that the books provided in the ER intervention were still not enough for me. Apart from the comics and story books provided, I think that some sports magazines on different basketball stars could have been included, or some articles on astronomy, technological items, or even on cartoon characters like Spiderman or Batman comics, in the ER intervention. These books are what I am usually interested in, so I believe I would be able to enjoy them if they are written in simple English. (2.2)

I tend to like more informative articles from different magazines and newspapers, so the majority of the English comics provided was definitely not my choice. The stories on Space or on basketball stars were very interesting, but I did not think that there were enough from the pile of books we could choose from in the ER intervention. After a month or two, I had already completed most of the stories on Space or on basketball stars within the pile. (2.2)

Furthermore, I hope that more prizes could be included. The prizes originally included different drinks or candies from the candy machine or doll grabber, like lemon tea, chips, or chocolates. I think that there should have been more varieties of candies or snacks in the prize list. Halfway through the three-month ER intervention, I had already won most of the prizes and hence the prizes were not as appealing as before anymore. To keep me motivated in reading English books in the ER intervention, I think more varieties of prizes should be included, or the prizes could be changed from time to time, so I would still be motivated to join the ER intervention and win the rewards. (2.3)

**Group 4:** I wish there were less educational reading materials but more story books or comic books. There were only a few types of books that interested me, I preferred reading short stories and comic books to magazines as there were a lot of technical terms in those reading materials which I didn't understand. I had tried to read one of those educational magazines before, such as the National Geographic magazine for children, which was recommended by my primary school teacher, but I stopped after struggling with understanding the complicated terminologies for the entire ER intervention. (2.2)

Moreover, I think the ER interventions could be extended. It was almost impossible for me to finish reading a book in 30 minutes, as I needed to spend time looking up the dictionary to check the meaning of the vocabulary and also to understand the content of the passage. If I could not finish reading the book I have chosen, I would have to continue my reading in the next ER session. However, it was hard for me to memorise the plot and character names, I always could not recall the details of the book I read last time. Therefore, I think it would be better if the ER intervention was extended to 45 minutes so that I can have more time to read the book. (2.1, 2.2)

**Group 5:** I think that I am not too satisfied with the timing of the ER intervention. The ER intervention was usually held during lunchtime or after school. As I attended the after-school session, I think that I was always weary and hungry during that time. I felt exhausted after classes and it was worse if I had to attend an additional ER session after school on top of that. I could not concentrate much during the ER session because I was too sleepy to listen to the vocabulary the teacher was teaching me. I also felt very hungry after school, so I was always distracted and thinking about food during the ER session. If the ER intervention was switched to lesson time or became a lesson itself, I think I would feel more comfortable in reading the stories and try to concentrate a bit more during the ER session. (2.1)

In addition, I think that more resources could be provided to assist our learning or book reading session. I always encountered some difficult words I did not understand and it was troublesome to look up the definitions of those words every time. However, there was only one teacher and just one or two student helpers in each ER session while there were many of us in a class, the teacher might not be able to cater for different students' needs at the same time. I would raise my hand when I needed help but most of the time it took a long time for the student helper to notice my need as there were not enough teachers or helpers to assist the class, the teacher was helping other students, or listening to the oral book reports. I think it would be better if a few more teachers or teacher assistants were in the class to help us. (2.4)

**Group 6:** In general, I think I am quite satisfied with the ER intervention but I think I will be more motivated to participate in the ER sessions if there were more prizes and rewards given to us. Every time I attended the ER sessions, I particularly looked forward to getting candies from the candy machine at the end of the session. Therefore, I think there could be more

varieties of snacks and candies for us to choose from the candy machine e.g. pocky, chips, energy bar etc. I think I would be even better if there were bigger prizes other than snacks, I think this can motivate us more to attend the session even more enthusiastically. For example, we can get stickers or chips if we perform well during the session and we can exchange them for different prizes if we have collected a certain number of stickers. (2.3)

I think the prizes can be more practical so that we can use them in our daily lives, such as stationary sets, files, tote bags etc. Other than that, I think the ER sessions can be shortened. As I joined the after-school session, I usually felt tired and hungry during the ER session and I could hardly concentrate on reading those books. I think it would be better if the session were to be shortened by 5-10 minutes. (2.1, 2.3)

***Q3. Do you have any change of view towards reading after the ER intervention?***

**Group 1:** I think that I am now less scared of reading English books after the ER intervention. The ER intervention has allowed me to discover that there are actually many simple English story books with less words and more pictures that are suitable for me to read. In the past, I was forced to read some thick English books that I didn't even know most of the words in each line. Now I discovered books that are suitable for me to read and that actually interests me from the ER intervention, such as the comics series, Mr. Bean, which consist mainly of characters with exaggerated facial expressions, funny dialogues and hilarious situations.

Moreover, I realised I could actually share these simple books with my friends and laugh about the interesting parts of the books together after the ER session. The ER intervention has taught me that learning English or reading story books does not always have to be boring or through academic drilling. (3.1)

**Group 2:** Now I am not afraid to read some simple English books in the ER intervention. I am more willing to read books which contain simple English and colourful illustration, but I am still hesitant to read books that are thick and packed with words. (3.2)

The ER intervention was a great start for me in reading English books because I used to hate any reading material provided to me, no matter how easy or hard it was. The reading materials in the ER intervention have showed me that there are actually many interesting stories for me

to discover at my level, and they are not necessarily difficult or wordy. I think I can read English more fluently and finish reading a book within a shorter period of time, so I am more motivated to read some simple English books with less words and more pictures now.

**Group 3:** I do not think I have much of a change in view towards reading English materials even after the ER intervention. I still find reading English books an extremely challenging task. I simply don't think English is the right subject for me, I always perform badly in English-related subjects and I am scared of reading, writing and speaking English. Although the teacher taught us more English vocabulary items during the session, I found it difficult to memorise or recite them, let alone use or apply them later in my assignments.

Also, I found the teaching pace too fast for me, and I prefer teaching with a slower speed. We were taught 10-20 new lexical items in 15 minutes and I found it difficult to catch up with. I had been struggling to revise the English words I learned from regular lessons, but I did not think I could handle any extra information handed to me, so I failed in some of the quizzes.

I do appreciate what the teacher has done for us to improve our reading skills and vocabulary knowledge but I do not really see much impact on me. I still struggle a lot when I have to read any lengthy passages or books in English. I think it'd be better to tackle the root problem which is confusing to many of us, such as the basic knowledge in English - correct grammar (3.3)

**Group 4:** I think reading English books is more enjoyable than I expected after the ER intervention. I used to feel annoyed whenever I had to read an English passage or book as I did not understand the content and the meaning of most of the words and it also took me a long time to finish reading a short passage. I felt frustrated when reading English books, so I always gave up on reading them. Now I realise that this is because I lacked reading skills and I learned a lot more from the ER sessions.

Reading is a lot more fun when I get to know what the author is trying to tell from the stories, I can now read books that I am interested in on my own. Recently, I have started reading some comics and magazines I have always wanted to read but was scared to read before. Although I still find the content a bit hard to understand, I am now braver to take the first step to try reading English books. I felt good when I could recall the meaning of certain words taught in the scaffolded ER activities which I encountered while reading English books. (3.1)

**Group 5:** I felt slightly more comfortable with reading English books or passages after the ER intervention. Throughout the three months of ER intervention, I learned more about the basics of English, such as the sentence structures, signposting, and vocabulary. At first, I was scared of English as I was not familiar with it and I rarely use English in my daily life except for doing English assignments. With my limited exposure to English, I feared that I could not catch up with what the teacher would teach us in the ER sessions. However, out of my expectations, I found it easy to follow in the scaffolded ER activities. The difficulty of materials taught was adjusted according to our abilities to make sure that we would not get lost. (3.2)

Also, I found the reading skills taught to us really helpful. I could successfully apply the same method when I attempted to read an English book on my own. Now I learned how to break down a longer sentence into separate shorter chunks and I can read quicker during exams and tests. I feel accomplished whenever I can read an English passage smoothly.

However, sometimes I still struggle to apply those rules, especially in timed practices and exams, when I am very stressed and cannot think about what I have learned before. Still, I found reading English materials less scary than I used to think before, and now I would even try to read news articles in English, recommended by my teacher. It is a slow process, even now I cannot understand most words from there, but I feel satisfied when I can recognise a few words I have learnt. Even though there are still a lot of words that I don't understand, my attitude has slightly changed and I am now more willing to read English books. (3.2)

**Group 6:** I think now I am less hesitant to read simple English books more as I find it an easier task by applying what I have learnt from the ER sessions. At the beginning of the ER intervention, I was reluctant to read any English books and I seldom borrow any English books from the main school library. Halfway through the ER sessions, I learned about more useful reading skills, like skimming as well as scanning and guessing the meaning of words from the context. I also learned more vocabulary and expanded my vocabulary bank, so I was able to understand more vocabulary than I used to.

Although I rarely spend time reading English books seriously in my leisure time, I do not feel as annoyed as I used to feel when I read English books now. Moreover, I can now concentrate for a longer period of time when reading English books after the ER sessions. Nevertheless, I am still reluctant to read passages from textbooks or from thick novels. (3.2)

**Q4. Do you think that you will be willing to read more English books on your own after this ER intervention?**

**Group 1:** I do not think that I will try to read a lot of English books after the ER intervention. I will only try to do so if I have some free time as I have quite a lot of schoolwork to handle and I am also a member of different school clubs being occupied by a busy schedule even after school. With a busy schedule, I cannot possibly spare time for reading English books.

Frankly speaking, even if I have some free time, I would not prioritise reading books. Instead, I would rather choose to take a nap or play online games with my friends, to release my stress after a long school day. I feel stressful whenever I have to read books and I would not want to do something which exacerbates my level of stress even in my free time. I may try to read books that are easier, but I would not take the initiative to read on my own. But still, I think I am more willing to read books on my own than before as I have a greater level of understanding about different words now, after reading so many books in the ER intervention in the last three months. (4.2)

**Group 2:** I think I will not be willing to read books on my own. I think I am still relying on teacher's assistance and reading activities to read and explore books that I am suitable to read. I can always ask for help from the teacher during the ER sessions, but I do not think that I can be confident enough to choose my own books and read them on my own, without any teacher's help or rewards, which I received in the ER intervention. Moreover, I don't have the habit of reading, so I don't keep any collections of books at home and I am not bothered to buy any new books to read. The only time I would read a book is during the ER session. I just don't have any motivation to read those difficult and boring books in the main school library in my own time. Most of the time I think I am quite passive in reading. (4.2)

**Group 3:** I think I will be willing to read some books, but only limited to the ones I have read in the ER intervention session. I will use the five-finger rule method that was taught in the ER intervention and choose the books that are suitable for us to read. The method is useful for us to choose books that do not contain too many difficult vocabulary items. However, I am not ready to leave my comfort zone completely and try new books alone. I think I will only pick some short and easy pieces to read, something like comic books which are more interesting to read though I think I will only read them once every two months. After learning some words in the ER intervention, I think that I am able to comprehend some basic English and understand

the complete meaning of a sentence but I am still hesitant when it comes to reading without any assistance from teachers. (4.1)

**Group 4:** I am not really sure about this actually. I think it really depends on whether I have the time to do so. Most of the time, I have to attend tutorial classes after school. It is already tiring enough for me to finish the assignments and revision. I don't think I have the energy to flip through a book. Another thing is that I still find it difficult to concentrate for a long period of time when reading books. That's why I enjoy reading in the Annex library more than reading in the classroom. People always chatter and play around in the classroom during the break time and I could not focus on reading books even if I wanted to. I would rather go and play with my friends instead of reading books. (4.3)

**Group 5:** I think I need more time to get comfortable with reading books on my own, so I can't really be certain if I am capable of doing so at this early stage. Indeed, I have read more books during the ER intervention but this is only because I can seek support from the teacher. For instance, I can count on the teacher or the student helper to explain some complicated parts in the book for me. More importantly, it is all due to the prizes I could get from the sessions which motivated me to read. However, in my own time, I don't really have any reasons to read books when I won't be rewarded for reading. At this stage, I still find reading intimidating to me, especially when no one is guiding me by my side. (4.2)

**Group 6:** I think I am not really willing to read books on my own after the ER intervention. I still think that reading English books is only limited to lesson time and doing book reports. Although I have tried enjoying English books in the ER intervention in these three months, I would not take the initiative to choose the books I like. My schedule is still packed with schoolwork, revision, or even supplementary lessons conducted by different teachers. There is just too little time for me to rest, let alone try to read a single English book. If I had the time to rest, I would only be playing online games instead of reading an English book on my own and giving myself headaches. (4.2)





