

## Application of E-books and ERP and its Impacts on EFL Under Graduate Students' Reading Attitudes.

Sahar Shahi\* - University

### **Abstract:**

The electronic books, offer the educational society an additional medium or tool of instructions that can enhance the learning process. The aim of this paper is to find the impacts of e-books application in an extensive reading program (ERP). For this purpose, 115 students were selected from Science and Art University in Yazd. They were selected from three different classes from English Majors. A twelve-week extensive reading program of e-books was designed for the selected participants. For each class, some sites and a list of e-books were introduced. The participants were encouraged to read e-book after their University schedule. Data was collected through Stokmans's Reading Attitude questionnaire, observation, and feedback. feedback taken, was oral and written and were analyzed to be triangulated with the quantitative data. Before and after the e-book extensive reading program the degree of changes in reading attitude was evaluated by applying Reading Attitude Scale (Stokmans, 1999). The outcome revealed a meaningful positive impact of e-books on the students' attitudinal changes. This attitudinal change was noticed in all four dimensions of reading attitudes that is utility, development, enjoyment, and escape, and there were also changes in all the cognitive, affective and conative components. In addition, the results indicated oral reading, music, and animation, which are the features of e-books had a significant impact on attitudinal changes.

**Keywords:** *E-books; EFL; extensive reading; reading attitudes; reading program*

## 1. Introduction:

Due to nature and extent of e-books the main definition of e-book differ. Armstrong et al. (2002, p. 217) comes up with the definition used by many scholars for e-books:

[. . .] any piece of electronic text regardless of size or composition (a digital object), but excluding journal publications, made available electronically (or optically) for any device (handheld or desk-bound) that includes a screen.

In addition, teachers use the computer technology as an intervention strategy to change students' negative attitudes toward reading in a foreign language (Adam and Wild, 1997), and the appearance of texts with multimedia support or e-books may aid for the changes. E-books are electronic tools which provides new chances and challenges for both teachers and learners. Internet technology has become a vital part of our lives and has got an important role in education (Lissitsa & Svetlana, 2016). This technology is used to teach students the knowledge and skills, which they will need in this age.

Researchers also intuitively claimed that e-books are good for outside reading (Anderson-Inman & Horney, 1999) and other forms of reading materials, for example, highly interactive audio or digitalized text, should be adopted to provide students with multiple input (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989). E-books, therefore, are potentially-appropriate materials in an ERP. With e-books as a new medium in an ERP, the aim of this study is to see if e-books and its impact on EFL learners' change their reading attitudes.

In this digital age, the usage of e-textbooks in the classroom is becoming increasingly popular (Woody et al. [2010](#); Shepperd et al. [2008](#); Tees, [2010](#)). E-textbooks can be seen as e-books that contain educational materials and functions, and which can be used for educational purposes (Landoni & Diaz, [2003](#)). There are several studies involving the use of e-Books in the classroom as a medium of teaching (Tan, 2009; Christine, 2007; Carty, 2000; Springer, 2007). Most of the studies discuss the effectiveness of e-books in enhancing the learning process. To develop efficient (accurate and fast) reading skills, second language (L2) learners require massive amounts of reading practice (Day & Bamford, 2002; Grabe, 2009).

## 1.1 Extensive reading

Extensive reading involves learners reading texts for enjoyment and to develop general reading skills. It is relaxing, interesting and students have the opportunity to select materials based on their English proficiency level and their interests. In addition , it entails reading vast quantities of text for general understanding of content with the goal of having pleasure, and entails individualized and independent reading, which provides the students the opportunity to choose the materials based on their own interest without the discussion of texts in class (Bamford & Day, 2004; Brown, 2009; Chun, Choi, & Kim, 2012; Green, 2005; Hashimoto, & Okazaki, 2012; Kirin, Poolsap, & Plongthong, 2012; Lituanas, Jacobs, & Renandya, 2001; Safaeia, & Bulca, 2013; Susser & Robb, 1990; Takase, 2007; Yamashita, 2008). Research on the use of electronic readers (e-readers) and their effects on reading in authentic classroom settings is required to provide instructors with research-based best practices for using these devices effectively in EL reading programs.

Extensive reading is the ideal companion for teachers who would like to add the substantial benefits of extensive reading to their language programs. It shows how reading for pleasure helps learners to improve their English, and guides teachers through the different approaches they can use. According to Day and Bamford (2002) and Nation (2013), when implementing an ERP, teachers should try to appreciate students to read a vast range of easy reading materials, on different topics, not only for pleasure and fun but also for information, comprehension, fluent rate, and without the fear of test. Teachers should also explain the purpose and benefits of ER, allow students to select materials, and encourage them to “read as much as possible” (Day & Bamford, 2002, p. 138), silently at their own pace, without the need of a dictionary.

### 1.3: The E-book ERP

An ERP has been recognized as one of the most effective ways to fasten reading in reading comprehension and reading rate (Asraf & Ahmad, 2003; Davis, 1995; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Hitosugi & Day, 2004; Mason & Krashen, 1997). E-books as well have proved particularly beneficial to young learners with reading difficulties (Chera & Wood, 2003) in supporting the developing literacy in children with reading difficulties (Labbo, 2000), helping them improve reading comprehension

(Doty, Popplewell & Byers, 2001), enhancing their phonological awareness (Chera & Wood, 2003), and encouraging reluctant students to read (Adam & Wild, 1997). Nevertheless, not every study of ERPs or e-books has positive results. Technological advances have the potential to improve instructional approaches for developing learners' reading skills in the ESL/EFL classroom (Chapelle, 2003; Grgurović, Chapelle, & Shelley, 2013).

#### **1.4 Characteristics of Successful ERPs:**

ERPs should stimulate students to read, read in vast quantity and provide enjoyment fun therefore, the philosophy underlying ERPs lies in the word “enjoy” (Bamford & Day, 2004, p.5). Williams (1986) believes that, in ERPs, what students read does not matter much as long as they enjoy and have fun reading and the only way to learn to read is through reading. Asraf and Ahmad (2003) in addition stated that, only when students read more reading will become easier. By encouraging students to read more to make reading easier, the ultimate goal of ERPs to develop reading habits and to encourage a liking of reading (Yamashita, 2004) can be achieved.

#### **2. Literature review:**

The electronic books, or e-Books, offer students, teachers and schools an additional medium or tool of instructions that can support or enhance the learning process. Most research conducted on e-textbooks to date has been on undergraduates (Sun, Flores & Tanguma, 2012; Quan-Haase & Martin, 2011; Rose, 2011; Nicholas, Rowlands & Jamali, 2010),. there is major ongoing confusion on the definition of e-books (Lynch, 2001; Tedd, 2005; Edwards & Lonsdale, 2002). Vassiliou and Rowley (2008) define e-books as digital objects with textual and/or other content –semiotic resources, in a multimodal approach–, which arise as a result of integrating the familiar concept of a book with features that can be provided in an electronic environment. Dillon (2001a, 2001b) stated that e-textbooks are relatively cheap, easy to handle, and capable of obtaining usage statistics because of that school administrators might be interested in it. Even researchers skeptical of the replacement of analogue to digital reading technologies in schools acknowledge that ‘printed textbooks are heavy, quickly outdated, expensive to produce and purchase, and less exciting than the sexy digital content available via devices such as the iPad’ (Thayer, 2011: 2). In fact, at least part of the interest on e-textbooks is justified in terms of the need to identify ways to decrease the cost of college textbooks and supplemental resources, while

still supporting academic freedom of faculty members to select high quality course materials for students (Reeves & Sampson, 2013).

Chen et al.'s (2013) study revealed that reading e-books enhances tertiary-level EFL learners' motivation and increases their reading comprehension and vocabulary. Lin's (2021) research found that using e-books in reading classes improves students' reading and writing skills, which positively impacts their overall language proficiency. Al-Balqa Applied University's (2023) examination of EFL students' use of e-books for e-learning demonstrated positive beliefs among both teachers and students regarding the benefits of e-books in language learning. In a Taiwanese junior high school, a study by Huang (2013) showed that incorporating e-books into an ERP had positive effects on EFL learners' attitudes toward reading in English. Chen et al.'s (2015) investigation of the impact of using e-books in secondary English classrooms found that e-books can enhance EFL students' reading and listening development, particularly among students with different levels of English proficiency.

These studies provide valuable insights into the potential benefits of using e-books and ERP in EFL learning contexts, suggesting that incorporating these tools can lead to improved reading attitudes and overall language development among undergraduate students.

### **3. Methodology:**

This study had a research plan of twelve week e-books extensive reading. Each week four to five e-books were selected by the students under the supervision of a teacher from the collection of online books. The students spend nearly an hour daily. After finishing reading the books they were asked to participate in a discussion class on every Sundays for half an hour about what they read and what they liked in the previous week. They exchanged their ideas.

As mentioned before three EFL classes were selected from Science and Art University of Yazd. The total number of the participants selected were 115, six of them dropped out and the study continued with 109 participants.

#### **3.1 Participants:**

Total participants were 109 entailing both genders. Their age was about 19 to 20 years. Most of them were just used to reading school books.

For this study about ten six websites were selected from where the e-books were selected. The websites selected were Oxford learners bookshelf, English Club, Extensive reading Activities for EFL students using e-books, Novels for EFL students, BBC, Clifford Interactive Storybooks, Fairy tales.com

### 3.2 Instrument:

A reading attitude scale (Stokmans, 1999) was used entailing the teacher's class notes about the students' reading behavior, responses and their feed back. The instruments include a reading attitude scale (Stokmans, 1999), the teacher's class notes of the participants' reading behaviors and responses, and their spontaneous feedback.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Reading Attitude Scale Results

A paired-sample *t*-test was performed, whose results (Table 1) showed significant positive changes in all aspects of reading attitudes.

**Table 1. Results of the Reading Attitudes**

Items	M	SD	M		
<u>Utility</u>	<u>17.17</u>	<u>2.805</u>	<u>19.01</u>	<u>2.339</u>	<u>7.455**</u>
1. In my opinion, English book reading is useless.	3.22	0.672	3.49	0.502	4.290**
2. If I want to succeed in society, I have to read a lot of English books.	2.80	0.717	2.96	0.732	2.332*
3. I do not read English books to improve my ability to converse about particular topics.	2.43	0.762	2.77	0.702	4.106**
4. By reading a lot of English books I can improve my ability to comprehend difficult texts.	3.14	0.700	3.39	0.651	3.405**

5. Reading English books increases my knowledge of the meaning of words.	3.15	0.718	3.50	0.571	4.606**
5. Sometimes I read English books to improve my writing style.	2.44	0.751	2.90	0.666	5.334**
<u>Development</u>	16.90	3.040	18.23	2.391	4.992**
6. I don't learn anything by reading English books.	3.51	0.603	3.61	0.489	1.734
7. I read English books to find out more about matters that interest me.	2.71	0.724	2.91	0.688	2.626**
8. English book reading is of importance in molding an individual's personality.	2.46	0.834	2.64	0.687	2.408*
9. English book reading helps me to form an opinion about different issues.	2.79	0.746	3.08	0.611	3.903**
10. English book reading improves my self- knowledge.	2.59	0.796	2.94	0.705	4.114**
11. English book reading is a way to learn about other people's customs and practices.	2.84	0.772	3.04	0.607	2.635**
<u>Enjoyment</u>	14.72	2.937	16.60	2.925	6.900**
12. Reading English books is generally boring.	2.87	0.862	3.43	0.583	6.837**
13. Reading English books is an exciting pastime.	2.23	0.675	2.66	0.710	5.023**
14. My imagination is barely if at all stimulated by reading English books.	1.94	0.650	2.39	0.782	5.058**
15. When reading an English book, I enjoy identifying with a character in the book.	2.33	0.806	2.65	0.725	4.113**
16. I enjoy daydreaming about the things I have read.	2.66	0.819	2.70	0.822	0.476
17. I enjoy transporting myself mentally into another world I've read about.	2.69	0.813	2.76	0.732	0.985
18. <u>Escape</u>	11.64	3.167	14.85	3.234	9.814**
19. When I am bored I read an English book.	1.99	0.616	2.49	0.675	6.983**



20. I often read English books to kill time.	1.83	0.586	2.32	0.637	6.532**
21. I often read English books when I have nothing else to do.	1.86	0.600	2.37	0.619	7.236**
22. Reading English books helps me to momentarily forget my worries.	2.07	0.778	2.70	0.752	7.233**
23. By reading an English book, I can briefly escape from the drag of daily routine.	2.09	0.752	2.64	0.739	7.409**
24. I often read an English book when there is nothing interesting on TV	1.79	0.625	2.34	0.710	7.526**
Total	60.44	9.229	68.69	8.724	10.398**

1. N=109; \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01.

2. Items 1, 3, 7 and 13 with negative descriptions are reversely scored.

The gain of the total mean score after the intervention is significant ( $t=10.398$ ,  $p<.01$ ) with

There was an increase of 8.25 in the total mean score, while there was a decrease in the standard deviation at 0.505. The four dimensions of the mean that is utility, development, enjoyment, and escape all of them revealed a meaningful difference in the gain between pre and post-test at the increased value of

Breaking down the grand mean into four dimensions, Utility, Development, Enjoyment, and Escape, all showed significant differences in gains between the pretest and the posttest at the increased value of 1.84, 1.33, 1.88 and 3.21, respectively. From the figure it is clear that there was a positive change in all aspects of the students' reading attitude. As seen in the table the higher mean score is for utility and development, which is related usefulness and helpfulness of English books. Regarding enjoyment and escape in the pre-test got low mean score but in the post-test there was a big increase. On the whole the results show that the students think that e-books are helpful and useful and they also had the idea that they enjoy reading e-books which help them to improve and develop reading habits.

All the items were examined with total care, the meaningful confidence level was at .01 for 79.16% of them, excluding the following items, two, seven, nine, 17 and 18. This point confirms that there was a change in the participants' positive attitude toward reading in English with the help of e-books. In addition, in terms of items 2 and 9, a substantial improvement was detected



( $p < .05$ ). Items 7, 17 and 18, did not show any meaningful difference, there was a positive increase as well. 0.1 was the gain of item seven, but its mean score in pre and post-test in all the items was the highest. Items 17 and 18, were directly connected with personal traits, which in a short period is not changes easily.

## 4.2 Results of the observation and Feedback

The behavior and reactions of the students were observed by teachers while they were reading e-books. The teachers took the notes of the observation in their note books. Every Sunday they had a discussion class here they discussed their ideas and exchanged information. The teacher asked questions regarding the e-books, by this the teachers stimulated the students to read more and exchange their ideas about reading in the discussion. The teacher usually asked questions related to their favorite e-books and its particularities or what was the reason of selecting that book? what did they understand? How did they feel? What do they think of reading e-books now?

The e-books the participants indicated were usually their favorite e-books were those with interesting and impressive content, and books with well-designed features, historical content, interactive games, memorable poetries, and short stories, e-books with clear themes and target sentence patterns so that they could easily learn from reading in English. As for the features, they favored oral reading and animations most. As far as their selection of e-book was examined, many participants liked to select short stories, fairy tales one with oral reading and animations. In terms of their opinions about reading in English, they thought their English had improved in all four skills, for the e-books trained their listening as they not only read but also listened to the stories. Speaking was improved as they had discussions and exchange of information in the class. Reading skill improved through reading simultaneously. In addition the students were happy that they have found a good way for their leisure time they were enjoying and also they were learning. Moreover, they felt happy and easy about participating in this reading program. When they read, they got totally involved in the e-books by reciting the text, laughing at funny animations and sharing opinions with their friends now and then.

As for the participants' oral feedback, it was in an environment of natural chatting, it was not pre-planned like an interview but it was in a very normal chatting pattern in a classroom. Most of the participants said that they like English e-books and some of them told the teacher that they enjoyed

reading e-books as a pastime at home. They also stated that this reading experience was completely new for them and also interesting and exciting, they said they also enjoy exchanging their opinions and attitudes about reading in English in the discussion classes. Many of them had the idea that they have become more confident and interested in English, those who used to be afraid of reading in English were no longer so. Of course there were some participants who were weak but after the treatment they were surprised to find that they could also understand some part of the text, which was quite encouraging to them. At the beginning of the research some participants idea was that there should also be translation in Persian but they were not allowed, and later on they felt easy in trying to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context or with the help of animations.

## 5. Discussion:

As the outcome showed, there was difference in participants' attitudes and regarding the changes it can be said without any doubt that the changes were clear, they could be seen obviously in the participants. Scores of all the four dimensions, Utility, Development, Enjoyment and Escape were encouraging, increased at a meaningful level. From another viewpoint about reading attitude (Yamashita, 2004), it can also be detected that the participants had a positive change in terms of all the three components, cognitive, affective and conative aspects. Cognitively, they believed that English e-books were beneficial for them and they had the desire and enthusiasm to continue reading. Affectively, because of these English e-books they achieved their confidence and interest in English and they began to love and enjoy reading in English as a leisure activity. Conatively, they took actions by spending their free time reading these English e-books and started to develop a reading habit to do outside reading in English at home by themselves regularly with an increasing amount of reading. As Anderson-Inman and Horney (1999) suggested, e-books are particularly good for outside reading.

The attitudinal changes occurred gradually. How the attitudinal changes happened was observed in three aspects. It is interesting that at the beginning many of the participants did not believed that they could improve or develop their self-knowledge, they did not highly value English books in terms of the dimensions of Utility and Development. But fortunately they could see the result at the end of fifth week, they experienced that they are not only learning language but also

knowledge and they are improving their language skills. which gradually convinced them of the usefulness and helpfulness of English books.

Affectively, novelty of e-books, in the beginning, gave way to their curiosity in e-books and enhance their interest in reading in English, but gradually this passion was replaced by the pride of achievement. This achievement could be seen in their faces whenever they learned something, comprehended the text, finished an e-book or achieved the weekly goal of reading four e-books. Finally, they could really feel and understand the fun of English reading and enjoyed reading English e-books in their leisure time at home. Later in the last two weeks it was observed that they were just looking in for free time from their busy schedule to read English e-books for fun, enjoyment and learning, which can be regarded as manifestation of the dimension, Enjoyment.

Conatively, some of the participants had the experience of reading English e-books at home voluntarily. They had the idea that reading e-books helped them to forget bad events and enjoy their which was identical to the dimension of Escape. They also strongly wished that this e-book ERP could be extended longer, and then it might be possible that most of them would develop habits of reading in English at the end. As Adam and Wild (1997) and Hafiz and Tudor (1989) believe, outside reading can help the development of automatic reading habits.

The participants had positive attitudinal changes and this is because of the unique nature of e-books. Using e-books give them the sense of novelty and excitement. Janssens (1977) claimed, a change from routine lectures in the classroom was welcome to students and could therefore stimulate their interest in learning. They enjoyed reading, reading was fun, they easily learned from reading enjoyably, so it is predictable that they had a positive attitudinal change. Third, e-books which were introduced for the participants were relatively short, compared with authentic English novels or graded readers, so they could finish one e-book in less time. As in Iran English is started from sixth grade some of them are weak and when you are going to give a heavy book for this sort of student he will lose his interest. When short stories were introduced for them in the beginning for example woman in white, the lost lamb, etc. they could finish it very fast and when they finished they had a feeling of triumph. For most of them, this was a great achievement and encouragement, especially for those with lower proficiency, who had never imagined that they could finish one English book within such a short time.

The top ten principles for implementing ERPs also contributed to the success of this e-book ERP. This is discussed in three parts: materials, the reading activity itself, readers and the teacher. First, the teacher gave a list with features. With this list, the participants could easily find the e-book they were interested in and linked to the web page. Reading activity was purposeful, task-based and interactive with the aim of pleasure, information, and general understanding, as Williams (1986) and Bamford and Day (2004) suggested. The primary activity was the participants' reading texts individually without any kind of exercises or practices. To encourage the students for reading Hitosugi and Day's suggestion (2004) of giving extra credit was applied. As readers, the participants were free to choose what they want to read, read as much and fast as possible and needed to use their two sense at one time that is ears and eyes at the same time. They liked the way of implementing the e-book ERP which had no tests, no excersises to be done, was free from pressure, limitation, and post-reading activities etc. The teacher too had an important role in here, she learned to be quiet and calm to be just a role model of a reader in class, but oriented and guided them when they faced problems or difficulties in reading. In addition, the participants idea was that as they read more the readings become easier for them so we can say that the amount of reading also plays a role in the attitudinal changes. Asraf and Ahmad (2003), the more one reads, the easier reading becomes. The participants stated that the read, learned and acquired confidence. It can be stated that more they read, the more they learned; the more they learned, the more confident they became. They enjoyed reading in English and develop lifelong reading habits (Adam & Wild, 1997; Gambrell, 1996; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989). Four stages can conclude the process of reading: read increasingly, read easily, read happily and, read regularly.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigates the effects of e-books on EFL University students' attitude about extensive e- book reading in English. The findings showed that in the first place, e-books can effectively reinforce EFL learners' attitudes toward reading in English; secondly, the features of e-books, such as oral reading, highlighting, animations, sound effects, may support and reinforce their reading attitudes.

## References

- Adam, N., & Wild, M. (1997). Applying CD-ROM interactive storybooks to learning to read. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 13, 119-132.
- Anderson-Inman, L., & Horney, M. A. (1999). Electronic books: reading and studying with supportive resources. Retrieved March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 from [http://www.readingonline.org/electronic/elec\\_index.asp?](http://www.readingonline.org/electronic/elec_index.asp?HREF=/electronic/ebook/index.html)
- Asraf, R. M., & Ahmad, I. S. (2003). Promoting English language development and the reading habit among students in rural schools through the Guided Extensive Reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 15(2), 83-102.
- Bamford, J., & Day, R. R. (Eds.). (2004). *Extensive reading activities for teaching language*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, C. (1995). Extensive reading: An expensive extravagance? *ELT Journal*, 49(4), 329-336.
- Day, R., & Bamford, J. (2002). Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 14(2), 136-141.
- Hafiz, F., & Tudor, I. (1989). Extensive reading and the development of language skills. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 43, 4-13.
- Labbo, L. D. (2000). 12 things young children can do with a talking book in a classroom computer center. *The Reading Teacher*, 53 (7), 542-546.

- Mason, B., & Krashen, S. (1997). Extensive reading in English as a foreign language. *System*, 25(1), 91-102.
- Matthew K. I. (1996). The impact of CD-ROM storybooks on children's reading comprehension and reading attitude. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia*, 5(3/4), 379-394.
- Stokmans, M. J. W. (1999). Reading attitude and it is effect on leisure time reading. *Poetics*, 26, 245-261.
- Williams, R. (1986). Top ten principles for teaching reading. *ELT J*, 40, 42-45.
- Yamashita, J. (2004). Reading attitudes in L1 and L2, and their influence on L2 extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 16(1), 1-19.