

Extensive Reading and TOEFL ITP scores



6th World Congress
on Extensive Reading
Denpasar, Indonesia



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My context

- Liberal arts department (university)
- Mostly intermediate students
 - Wide range (TOEFL ITP 330-610)
- Liberal arts content CLIL program over 2 years
- 180 hours in first year
- TOEFL ITP prominent

Streaming

- Students streamed upon entry into 16-17 classes in 3 groups: low (5-6), intermediate (8-10), high (2)
- TOEFL ITP used for streaming and monitoring
 - Given pre-matriculation (Apr.)
 - Given again in Dec. after 150 instruction hours

Our program

- First year students had 4 90-min classes per week
 - (transitioning to 5 this year and 6 next year)
- Liberal Arts modules (Health & Medicine, Zoology, Natural History, Earth Science, Sociology, Economics)
 - 2-5 reading passages; 3-5 listening passages per module
- Heavy focus on vocabulary (Quizlet, vocabulary notebooks)
- Test strategy instruction building towards the test

➤ Module content

Reading for Knowledge 1 Zoology Overview



<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/wildebeest-migration/>

Annotate here

1. **Zoology** is the branch of **biology** that studies animals. Zoologists carefully examine the structure of **organisms** and place animals into groups based on their **characteristics**. They also study how animals **interact** with each other and how they live within their ecosystems by examining their habits and **instincts**. One of the chief goals of zoology is to understand the **evolution** and development of particular **species**. The creatures which zoologists study range from large **vertebrate mammals** and **reptiles** such as the **elephant** and the **alligator** to small **invertebrates** such as the **worm** and **coral**.

2. A good deal of the work that zoologists do involves the analysis of animal **anatomy**—the study of the shape, form, and structure of animals and their parts, for instance, how the head structures of alligators differ from those of **crocodiles**, or how the skeleton of an elephant

ER in our program

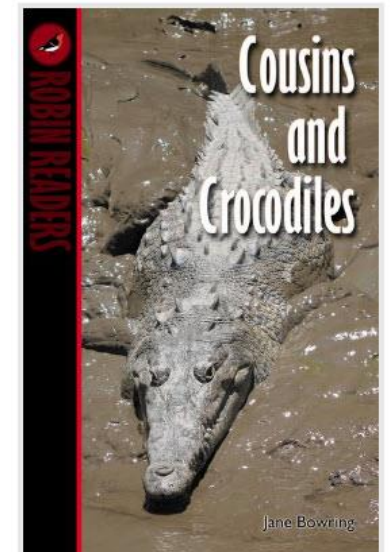
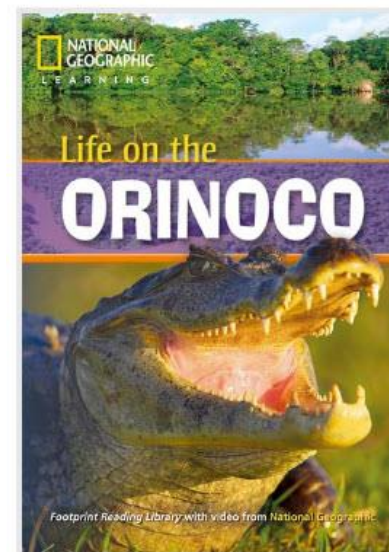
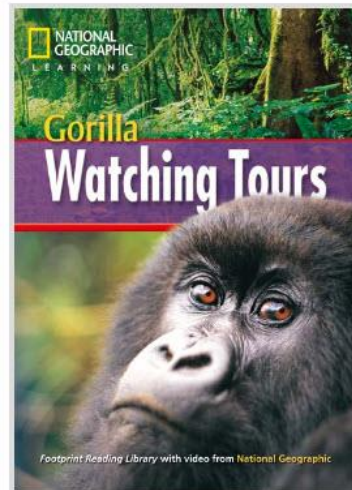
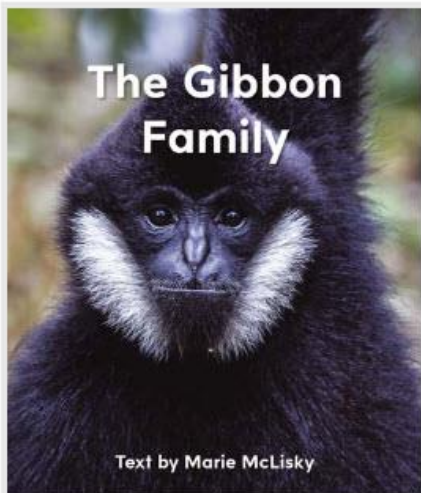
ER in our program:

- 2-year program using XReading
- Regular term assignments
 - Onboarding during orientation period
 - Worth 10% percent of grade per term
- Word count targets for first year:

Level	Term 1 (Apr. –July)	Term 2 (Summer-Jan.)
High	100,000	100,000
Intermediate	80,000	80,000
Low	50,000	70,000

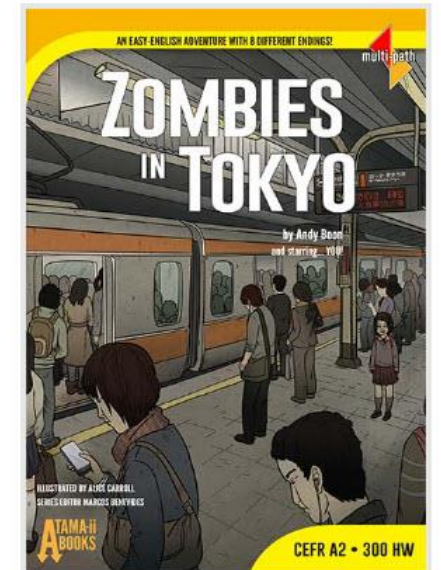
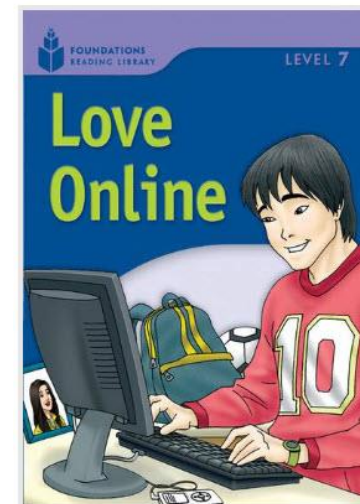
ER in our program

- Semi-integrated
 - Students are asked to read 2 books per week: one teacher-selected and related to the module content (chosen for content and level); one self-selected



ER: Narrow and wide fluency

- Narrow fluency: higher chance of repeated encounter with target language and concepts
- Wide fluency: unrelated content, but better aligned with student interest and level.



The TOEFL ITP

The TOEFL ITP test

- Listening (50) (Short dialogs; long dialogs; lectures)
 - Requires a reading speed of 120-215 wpm
- Structure and Written Expression (40) (incomplete sentences; error identification)
- Reading Comprehension (50) (5 passages with vocabulary, comprehension, cohesion questions)
 - Total volume of reading = roughly 3000 words
 - ERCentral text editor: Level 17 (early near-native level -6000)

Previous research: ER and Test Performance

Nishizawa, Yoshioka, & Fukada (2010) and Nishizawa, & Yoshioka (2016) : TOEIC: 350,000 to start to see improvement; 628,000 to exceed TOEIC 400

Gobel (2011): Positive effect for reading while listening; it is a “solid predictor” of TOEFL ITP improvement; small targets (10,000-100,00); little effect of levels

O’Neill (2012): additional gains made through student participation in the ER program were not reflected in their TOEIC reading section scores

Carney (2016): “almost no statistically significant relationship between increased reading and improvement in TOEIC reading scores”

Lyddon, P. A., & Kramer, B. (2019): Positive correlation between word count and TOEIC scores but ER reading might indicate general compliance rather than being a direct cause of TOEIC reading score

Van Amelsvoort (2019): No correlation with raw ER reading or listening volume and TOEFL ITP scores; small correlation with reading points (word count × reading level) and total score (.24) and reading section (.26)

Milliner (2019): Reading while listening gave good gains on TOEIC, but control group also improved; small groups

Previous research

Carney's 2016 Questions:

Question 1: Are TOEIC reading scores a poor measure of reading and therefore not a worthwhile focus of extensive reading research?

Question 2: If extensive reading does positively affect TOEIC reading scores, is it possible to have a research study controlled enough to show it?

Question 3: If extensive reading is done often enough and for a longer period of time, will TOEIC scores increase?

Question 4: Will a well-designed extensive reading program increase TOEIC reading scores even when a poorly designed program does not?

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Does the amount of reading (word counts achieved and time on task) affect TOEFL ITP score gains?

Research Question 2: Does the amount of listening affect TOEFL ITP score gains?

Research Question 3: Are reading speed, book level, or quiz results associated with TOEFL ITP score gains?

ER research challenges

Inaccuracy of data and attempts to control for it

1. TOEFL guessing

→ Many students guess on the pre-test

→ **Two cohorts (N=400)**

2. ER cheating

→ Many students cheat on ER

→ **TOEFL given before ER deadline**

Control of treatment and tests

→ Span of treatment; English exposure

→ **Study-abroad students removed**

→ **Unified syllabus**

The current study

Subjects: Two cohorts of first-year students (n= 400) over two years (three levels?)

Treatment: Two terms of ER in a scored assignment, aiming for a total word count of a minimum between 120,000 and 200,000 (students were encouraged to read more for bonus points)

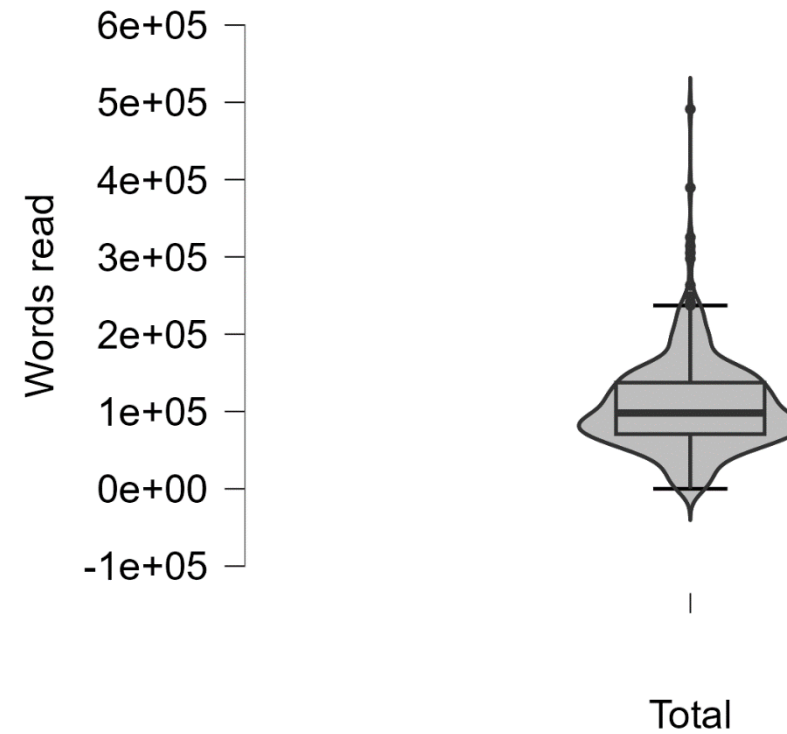
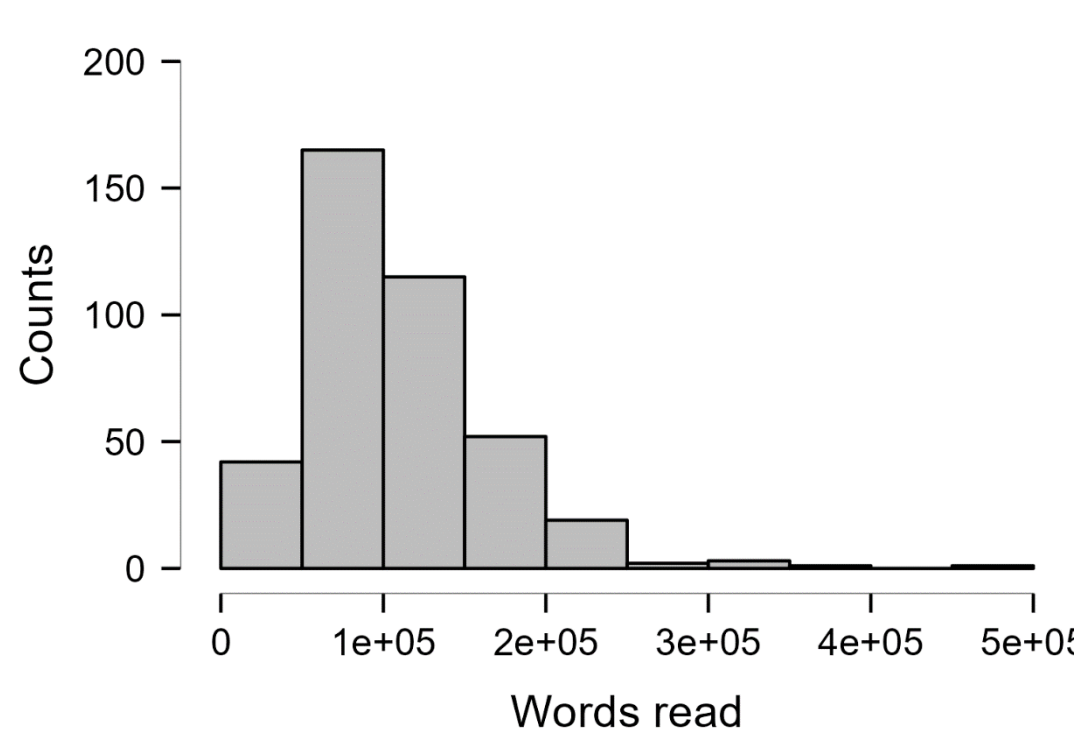
Progress measure: TOEFL ITP administered in April and December (students removed from the study if they did not take both tests)

Results: Descriptive statistics

	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Words read	400	0	107891.852	59729.606	0.000	491154.000
Bk level	400	0	5.447	1.471	0.000	9.000
Read Time(mins)	400	0	993.503	577.255	0.000	4038.000
Listen Time(mins)	400	0	245.310	369.456	0.000	2428.000
Read Speed(Word/Min)	400	0	116.266	38.058	0.000	400.600

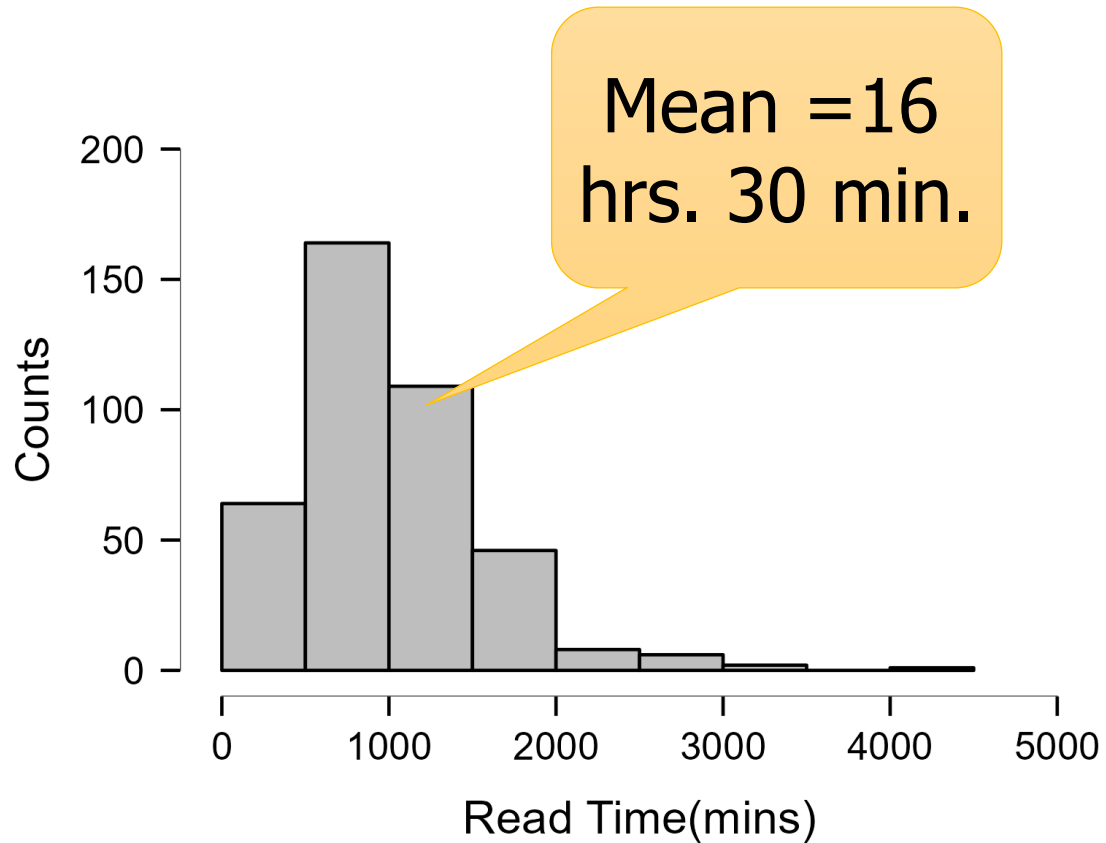
Results: Descriptive statistics

Words read

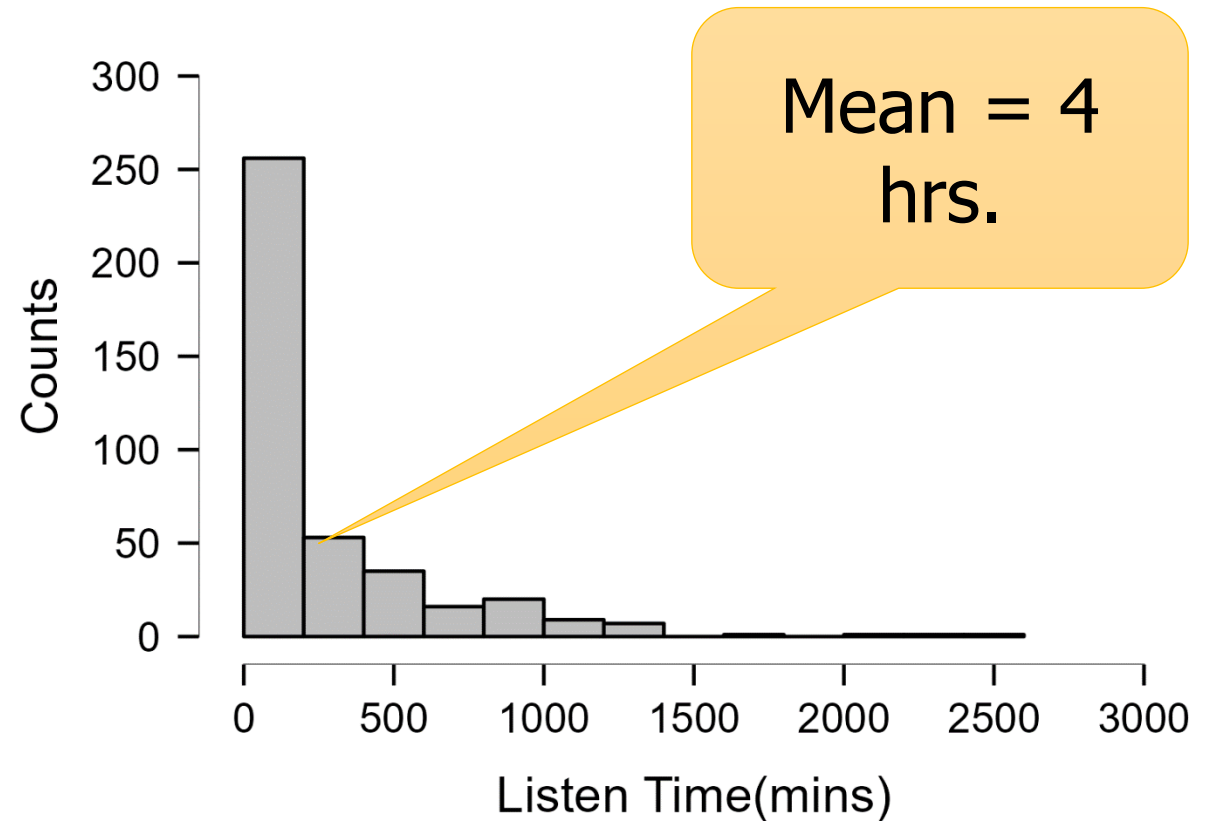


Results: Descriptive statistics

Reading time

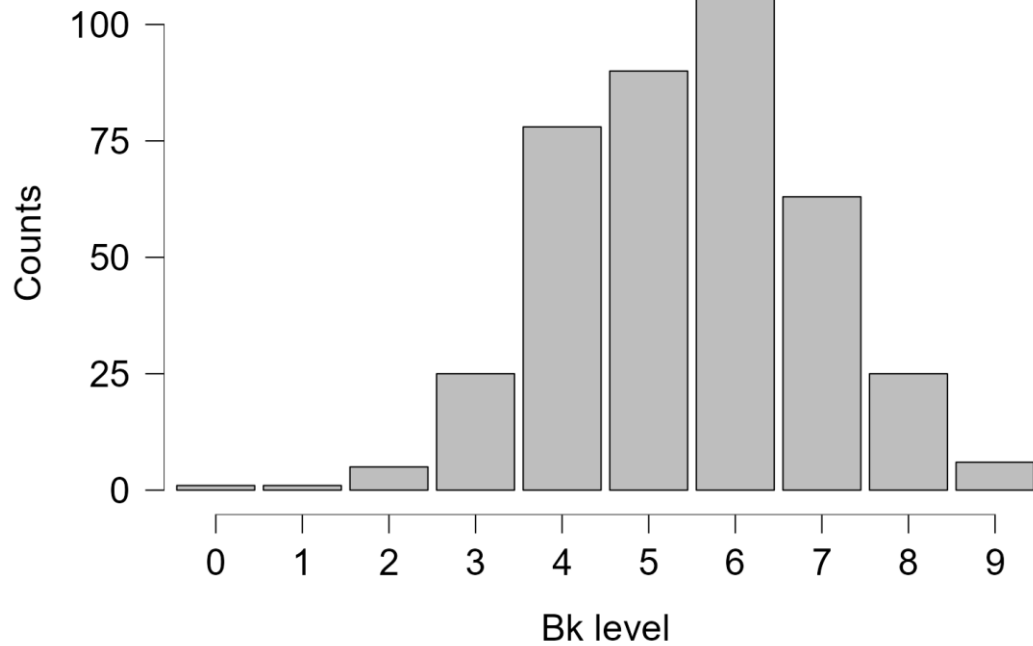


Listening time

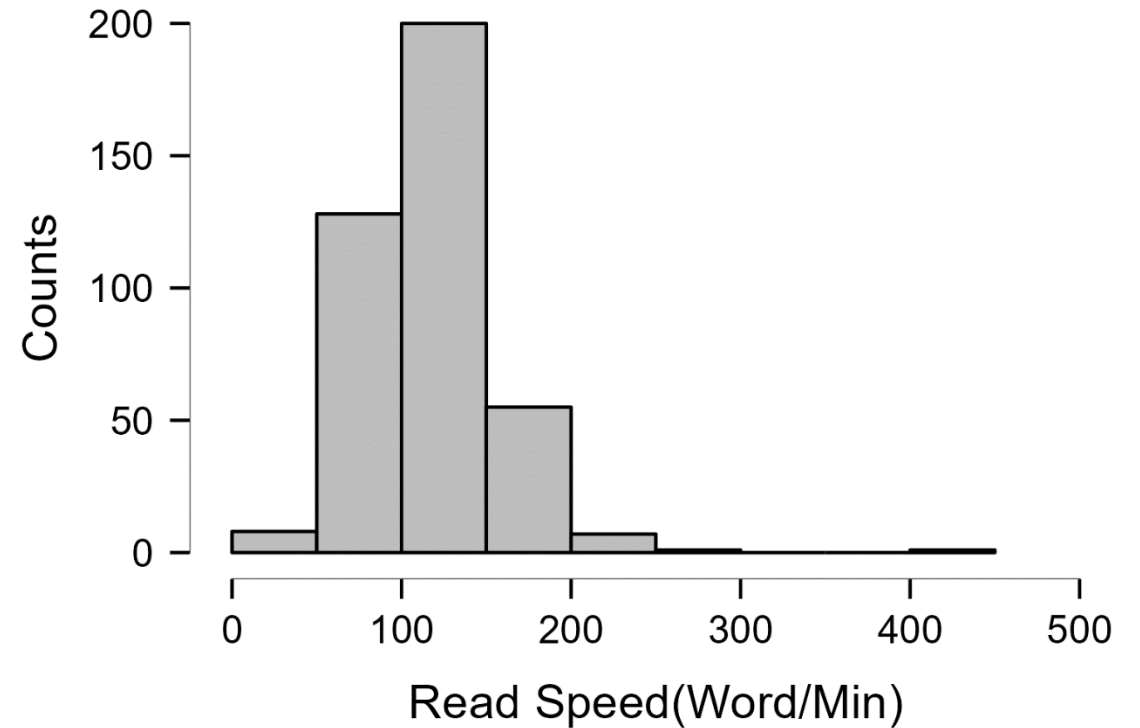


Results: Descriptive statistics

Book level



Reading speed



Results: Linear Regression

Covariate	R	R ²	Percentage of the variance in TOEFL score change predictable by this covariate
Word count (total at time of TOEFL)	0.223	0.050	5% of variance
Reading time (total at time of TOEFL)	0.254	0.065	6.5% of variance
Listening time (total at time of TOEFL)	0.185	0.034	3.4% of variance
Quiz results (average for all books read)	0.193	0.037	3.7% of variance
Reading speed in Dec. (average for all books read)	0.022	0	0% of variance
Book level in Dec. (most recent average)	0.016	0	0% of variance

Interpreting the results

The different covariates likely overlap in their effect (for example, reading time and reading amount); listening amount may be different

No strong or even moderate correlation or predictors emerged from the study

Back to Carney's 2016 questions

Question 4: Will a well-designed extensive reading program increase TOEIC (TOEFL) reading scores even when a poorly designed program does not?

Question 3: If extensive reading is done often enough and for a longer period of time, will TOEIC (TOEFL) scores increase?

Just for comparison...

Reading achievement: Top 50 readers vs bottom 50 readers

Sub-group	Word count avg. (Read time / List. Time)	TOEFL ITP score change avg.
Top 50 readers	219,090 words (29.1 hrs. / 10 hrs.)	30.8 points
Bottom 50 readers	29,237 words (4.7 hrs. / 0.7 hrs.)	11.5 points

TOEFL point increase achievement: Students with score increases vs. students with score decreases

Sub-group	Word count avg.
Scores increased (10+ points) (N=281)	115,170 words
Scores decreased* (N=86)	88,629 words

*(86/400 students saw a decrease in points between Apr. and Dec.)

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Does the amount of reading (word counts achieved and time on task) affect TOEFL ITP score gains?

→a little, though it more likely indicates general compliance rather than being a direct cause of TOEFL reading score (as with Lyddon & Kramer, 2019)

Research Question 2: Does the amount of listening affect TOEFL ITP score gains?

→unable to answer this clearly; regression analysis showed a small correlation; a comparison of higher and lower scorers suggests a possible effect

Research Question 3: Are reading speed, book level, or quiz results associated with TOEFL ITP score gains?

→only quiz results showed any correlation

Discussion

- Extensive reading, in its purest form, will not likely result in large TOEFL ITP gains
- A liberal arts program with intensive reading and semi-integrated ER produced reasonable gains
- An effective TOEFL ITP program will likely feature: intensive reading with narrow fluency; ER for both narrow and wide fluency; and test familiarization and strategy instruction

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Thank you very much



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