



**A STUDY ON THE INCORPORATION OF BLENDED LEARNING IN AN
EXTENSIVE READING PROGRAM: THE IMPACT ON TERTIARY LEVEL
EFL LEARNERS
MA THESIS**

Zeynep Yadigar TOSUN

Eskişehir 2023

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MA THESIS

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MA in English Language Education Program

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Graduate School of Educational Sciences

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ÖZET

SINIF DIŐI BİR OKUMA PROGRAMINA HARMANLANMIŐ ÖĞRENMENİN DAHİL EDİLMESİ ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŐMA: İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENEN ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİN ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

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Danışman: Doç. Dr. Safiye İpek KURU GÖNEN

Mevcut çalışma harmanlanmış öğrenmeyi kapsamlı okumaya (KO) entegre etmiş ve Türkiye'deki özel bir üniversitede İngilizce hazırlık programında öğrenim gören 14 yabancı dil öğrencisiyle harmanlanmış bir KO programı uygulamıştır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, katılımcıların İngilizce okumaya yönelik tutumlarındaki değişiklikleri izlemek ve harmanlanmış KO programına ilişkin görüşlerini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Katılımcıların okuma tutumlarındaki değişimi araştırmak için ön ve son test yoluyla nicel veriler toplandı. Niteliksel veriler, harmanlanmış KO programından sonra haftalık yansıtıcı günlüklerden ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden elde edilerek katılımcıların görüşlerini ortaya çıkartmıştır. Niceliksel sonuçlara göre, katılımcıların İngilizce okumaya yönelik tutumları, program boyunca önemli ölçüde değişti. Niteliksel bulgulara gelince, katılımcılar programı büyük beğeniyle karşıladılar ve okuma deneyimleri gelişti. Niteliksel sonuçlar da katılımcıların okumaya yönelik tutumlarındaki olumlu değişimini destekledi. Katılımcılar ayrıca programın tasarımı, dijital okuma ve dil zorlukları gibi programın bazı zorluklarını ve zayıf yönlerini de belirttiler. Araştırmanın bulguları, harmanlanmış KO programının İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenenler üzerindeki etkilerine ışık tutacaktır. Pedagojik çıkarımlar ve ileriki çalışmalar için öneriler sunuldu.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Harmanlanmış kapsamlı okuma, Dijital okuma, Yabancı Dilde kapsamlı okuma, İkinci Dilde okuma tutumları.

ABSTRACT

A STUDY ON THE INCORPORATION OF BLENDED LEARNING IN AN EXTENSIVE READING PROGRAM: THE IMPACT ON TERTIARY LEVEL EFL LEARNERS

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The current study integrated blended learning into extensive reading (ER) and implemented a blended ER program with 14 EFL learners studying in an English preparatory program at a private university in Türkiye. The primary aim of the current study was to trace any changes in the participants' attitudes towards reading in English and to unearth their views of the blended ER program. To investigate the change in the participants' reading attitudes, quantitative data were collected through a pre- and post-test. Qualitative data were obtained from weekly reflective logs and semi-structured interviews after the blended ER program to explore their views. Based on the quantitative results, the participants' attitudes towards reading in English changed significantly throughout the blended ER program. As for the qualitative findings, the participants greatly appreciated the blended ER program, and their reading experiences were enhanced. The qualitative results also supported the positive change in the participants' reading attitudes. The participants also stated some challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program, such as the design of the program, digital reading, and language difficulties. The findings of the study would shed light on the effects of the blended ER program on EFL learners. Pedagogical implications and suggestions for further studies are presented.

Keywords: Blended extensive reading, Digital reading, Extensive reading in EFL, Reading attitudes in L2.

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STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND RULES

I hereby truthfully declare that this thesis is an original work prepared by me; that I have behaved in accordance with the scientific ethical principles and rules throughout the stages of preparation, data collection, analysis and presentation of my work; that I have cited the sources of all the data and information that could be obtained within the scope of this study, and included these sources in the references section; and that this study has been scanned for plagiarism with “scientific plagiarism detection program” used by Anadolu University, and that “it does not have any plagiarism” whatsoever. I also declare that, if a case contrary to my declaration is detected in my work at any time, I hereby express my consent to all the ethical and legal consequences that are involved.

Zeynep Yadigar TOSUN

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	:English as a Foreign Language
ESL	: English as a Second Language
ER	: Extensive Reading
LMSs	: Learning Management Systems
FL	: Foreign Language
L1	: First Language
L2	: Second/Foreign Language

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into the following five sections: the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, and the definition of key terms. In the *background to the study* section, an overview of reading in English as a foreign language (EFL), extensive reading (ER), and ER through blended learning is introduced by referring to the relevant literature. In the second section, the *statement of the problem*, the research gap in ER literature is mentioned by referring to the current studies and their recommendations. Then, the *purpose of the study* section addresses the reasons why the current study took place and the research questions guiding the study. In the next section, the *significance of the study*, the study's potential contribution to the existing body of research is stated. Afterward, the *scope and limitations of the study* section presents the limitations hindering the study from achieving more generable and deeper results. Lastly, the key terms and their abbreviations are explained in the *definition of key terms* section.

1.1 Background to the Study

Language development is seen as a complex dynamic system evolving continually through the events of learning (Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007). That is, language learning is a non-linear and active process involving various components connected to one another. Likewise, second/foreign language (L2) reading is a complex process involving linguistic and cognitive skills (Bernhardt, 2005) and an interactive skill requiring learners to stay active during an act of reading to comprehend and interpret the meaning of a text profoundly by engaging in various demands of reading, namely, using cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001). In other words, reading entails not only the denotative meaning but also the connotative meaning of a text, which requires reading between the lines through a range of linguistic, strategic, lexical, and metalinguistic processes (Grabe, 2009). Therefore, reading cannot be regarded as a linear and passive activity (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). As a dynamic strand of language learning, reading involves active engagement, requiring interaction and coordination among numerous processes. It leads readers to critical reading, requesting analysis, evaluation, interpretation, and synthesis skills through these processes (Kuru

Gönen & Kızılay, 2022). In this regard, reading is “a dialogue between the reader and the text” (Grabe, 1988).

Along with its complexity and dynamism, reading is considered an indispensable part of foreign language (FL) learning since it is one of the primary ways to provide learners with a large quantity of language input, especially in input-poor EFL contexts where language learners have limited exposure to L2. In other words, as a fundamental input resource in language classrooms, reading is regarded as one of the most essential and critical skills for learners to advance (Yukselir, 2014). Krashen stated (1985) that receiving comprehensible input from the target language fosters development in language learning by referring to the Input Hypothesis. Comprehensible input refers to the input that is slightly above learners’ current level of language competence. The Input Hypothesis suggests that reading can effectively and conveniently provide learners with the input they need to improve their language skills. According to the existing body of research, constantly being exposed to a substantial amount of comprehensible input enhances learners’ word recognition skills, vocabulary knowledge, fluency in spoken and written language, and overall language skills (Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). Krashen (2011) also proposed the Compelling Comprehensible Input Hypothesis which suggests providing learners with input within their linguistic levels and interests based on their choices. The compelling comprehensible input allows learners to focus on reading in L2 as if they were reading in their first language (L1). In other words, the compelling input enables learners to keep the ‘flow’ of reading. ‘Flow’ is referred to as a state of mind where a person is completely immersed in a particular task or activity by Csikszentmihalyi (1992) (Krashen & Bland, 2014).

With the growing technology use in education, digital media has gained significant value due to its easy access to a large amount of input (Alexander, 2012), underlining the importance of reading in digital realms. To use digital resources effectively, language learners need to develop their digital L2 literacy skills, defined as reading, writing, and communication practices on digital media (Hafner, 2019; Hafner et al., 2015; Soyoo et al., 2023). However, the extensive array of digital resources requires additional reading skills, such as critical evaluation of the reliability and quality of the resources and analysis of the information gathered from different resources. Teacher guidance in L2 digital reading is significant since the Internet is a vast resource of information, and digital reading requires experience in finding appropriate materials

(Arnold, 2009). In order to foster language learners' L2 digital literacy and digital reading experiences, it is essential to provide learners with a myriad of digital input and encourage them to engage with this type of input (Gilbert, 2017). In addition to various reading resources, the use of technology has brought advantages in facilitating interaction and encouraging active participation through synchronous or asynchronous learning management systems (LMSs). LMSs can be defined as easily accessible, flexible, cost-effective, and user-friendly digital platforms that facilitate the administration, documentation, monitoring, and communication of learning contexts to achieve effective learning results (Chaubey & Bhattacharya, 2015; Ellis, 2009; Putri & Sari, 2020). Thus, the use of LMSs might enable teachers to be more organized, guide their learners, deliver the content of a class, and facilitate learning (Palfreyman, 2019; Terzioğlu & Kurt, 2022). That is, LMSs can help teachers share diverse reading materials in an organized way, monitor learners' reading activities, and provide learners with help and guidance whenever it is necessary in a digital environment.

Notwithstanding its significance to learners' language learning development, FL reading is not without challenges. As the course schedule is tight and there is insufficient time for critical reading, learners may not be given sufficient support to improve L2 reading by reading a lot and regularly (Grabe, 2009). Since EFL reading classes generally emphasize testing learners' understanding of a text with comprehension questions rather than teaching how to read effectively through the intensive reading approach, learners might not be given sufficient support to become better critical readers (Anderson, 2009). In other words, due to the requirements of testing situations and the tight schedule of a typical EFL reading class, learners might not be given adequate opportunities to practice critical reading, such as uncovering the author's point of view, identifying and analyzing thoughts and ideas, reading between the lines, etc. Because of the time restriction and curriculum issues in FL reading classes, teachers may not benefit from the advantages of the ubiquity of digital technologies and find time to guide learners in reading digital texts. Furthermore, reading in English might be intimidating for learners since they are assigned to read challenging and compulsory texts in the restricted reading time in class, which may cause learners to have negative attitudes towards reading in English (Nation, 2013; Schmitt et al., 2011; Stoller, 2015). Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis suggests that intervention of learners' negative attitudes hinders their learning progress. In L2 reading, a high affective filter acts as a block to compelling comprehensible input and

reading comprehension, which prevents and distracts learners from reading. The hindrance may be overcome by fostering interest and providing an anxiety-free atmosphere, which highlights the role of cultivating a supportive environment with minimal obstacles in L2 reading along with the role of compelling comprehensible input (Huang, 2012).

In a nutshell, reading is regarded as a nonlinear adaptive system since it involves not only comprehending the direct meaning of a text but also critical analysis and evaluation of the information in the text with the previous knowledge of a learner through a sequence of states (Grabe, 2009). Since L2 reading offers a large amount of language input, it increases the exposure of L2. To be proficient readers in L2, learners need to be frequently exposed to rich and meaningful input (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). In particular, EFL contexts in which L2 exposure is deficient are in need of reading materials as a significant input resource. With increasing digitalization, teachers can provide a variety of easily accessible input resources by guiding their learners to find relevant materials through the use of LMSs. Nevertheless, most traditional L2 reading courses cannot meet the qualifications for supporting learners to become digitally literate, fostered by increasing digitalization (Tavakoli et al., 2019). The drawbacks in FL reading classes might be caused mainly by the restrictions and administrative requirements of technology-enhanced reading courses. To diminish the effects of the mentioned issues, learners should receive additional support and flexible reading options that cater to their interests. They also need to be encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards reading in English. Furthermore, they should be provided with ample reading input during language learning classes to facilitate their learning process. Thus, there is a need for a more flexible and contemporary approach to be implemented in language classrooms rather than the intensive reading approach in which a passage and its comprehension questions from a course book serve as the focal objective of a regular EFL reading class.

Regarded as an effective way to foster language learners' reading skills and reading attitudes and recognized as a solution to the challenges of EFL reading, extensive reading (ER) has been discussed for its effects on various domains of language learning by many researchers (e.g., Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002; Krashen, 2004; Stoller, 2015). Although ER definitions vary in the literature, it is defined as a reading approach in which learners read self-selected and engaging reading materials within their linguistic levels to decrease their reliance on dictionaries and without the concern of being evaluated to

conceive reading as its own reward (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002). Since ER aims to encourage learners to establish a reading habit and foster positive reading attitudes by giving opportunities to read for pleasure within their comfort zone and interest, this approach may result in enhanced reading experiences and increased engagement in reading (Day, 2015). Therefore, ER has gained importance as an input resource and approach to improving language skills and fostering positive attitudes towards reading in English (Yamashita, 2013).

Due to the prevalence and advances in technology, the availability of digital materials has increased options for language learners to access a variety of materials and provided several opportunities for teachers and learners to use its benefits in integrating digital materials into ER (Bui & Macalister, 2021). As the digital world requires experience and autonomy to find relevant and useful reading materials, teacher guidance is vital to make the most use of digital resources and ER. The use of LMSs can be promising in guiding and monitoring learners outside the class and delivering the content. Additionally, building interaction and collaboration is necessary to prevent learners from feeling isolated during their individual acts of reading. Integrating blended learning, which refers to the purposeful integration of the advantages of face-to-face and online learning modalities (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Xiong, 2022), into the ER approach can be advantageous to encourage students to actively engage in pleasure reading. Learners can receive teacher guidance, effective interaction, and collaboration through the face-to-face aspect of an ER program while being exposed to a large amount of input through digital texts (Chantap & Wasanasomsithi, 2019). Combining blended learning and the power of ER may be helpful to overcome the obstacles to L2 reading and meet the need for a more flexible and contemporary approach to be implemented in language classrooms.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

As a complex and dynamic skill, it is crucial to consider reading as a dynamic process involving the reader, text, and activities while putting many strategies into action at once (Koda, 2005). According to recent research, reading can be seen as a process of making connections between the reading material and the reader rather than merely deriving meaning from a text (Pardede, 2008). In other words, reading involves not only comprehending the explicit meaning of the text but also applying critical thinking by

analyzing and evaluating the text. However, it is often regarded as a passive activity by learners and teachers since reading is generally regarded as a tool to answer comprehension questions or learn new vocabulary or a grammatical item in a text above learners' linguistic skills. It is opined that learners rarely state their comments and ideas on reading materials in English and seldom question the writer's thoughts by passively accepting without searching the literature and the Internet for further information (Zhou et al., 2014). Although there may be a concern for critical reading since learners are not accustomed to reading in English and need to focus on decoding more, Wallace (2003) asserts that "the notion of criticality cannot be linked to innate linguistic competence but is socially and educationally learned.". Unfortunately, giving opportunities to read only during EFL reading courses through the intensive reading approach is insufficient to find a useful solution to this issue and change learners' L2 reading habits and attitudes (Tomlinson, 2000). Arnold (2009) notes that intensive reading serves as language instruction without daily life experiences. Thus, a new approach is needed to promote learners' critical reading skills and enhance their affective domain by helping learners learn and experience how to read in English efficiently.

Implementing ER in language classrooms has been suggested widely to enhance learners' reading experiences with a vast amount of rich and meaningful input within their interests and linguistic skills (e.g., Aka, 2019; Fatimah et al., 2020; Pongsatornpiat, 2021; Renandya et al., 2021). The positive impact of ER on cognitive and affective factors in FL reading has been revealed by many researchers (e.g., Al-Hamoud & Schmitt, 2009; Lee, 2015; Liao & Wang, 2020). Day (2015) also stated that ER functions as a way to offer more authentic reading experiences. However, there is a need for further research in ER, especially in the digital era, to provide deeper insight into its effect on FL readers. The absence of triangulation of the mixed data with qualitative methods, such as conducting interviews and obtaining diaries, is stated in several ER studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2013; Mikami, 2017; Park, 2020). Only a few studies have explored the effect of ER on participants both before and after the program; thus, prospective studies should investigate the outcomes of ER by analyzing the before and after treatment results (Chien & Yu, 2015). Revealing the weaknesses and strengths of an ER program is also significant for other researchers and teachers to take caution while implementing their own ER programs (Stoeckel et al., 2012). The views of learners and teachers on ER and the program should be addressed to deepen our understanding of ER (Wang & Kim, 2021).

With respect to the achievement of an ER program, one of the key components of a successful approach is enhancing not only linguistic proficiency but also positive attitudes towards learning and reading due to the crucial role of the learners' attitudes in the establishment of a behavior (Lee & Schallert, 2014). Therefore, several researchers have investigated the impact of ER on learners' FL reading attitudes and yielded positive results. Park (2020) suggested exploring the ER's effect on L2 reading attitudes in different contexts due to insufficient research on its influence on learners' reading attitudes, which is one of the crucial affective components in L2 reading. Furthermore, considering the main feature of an ER program as the availability and accessibility of abundant materials for reading for pleasure (Renandya et al., 2021), a large selection of reading materials with a wide range of genres is required in further ER studies (Bakla, 2020; Ferrer & Stanley, 2016). Liao and Wang (2020) pointed out the insufficiency of reading materials in promoting an ER program. Although Day (2015) has suggested that the Internet should be a noteworthy feature of ER due to its potential as an important and convenient source of reading materials, ER programs have scarcely employed digital reading resources. The influence of technology-integrated ER studies on learners is rarely discussed in the literature despite the frequency of technology use and technological advancements in language learning and real life (Zhou & Day, 2021). Given increasing globalization and digitization in the 21st century, this suggestion is of great value because the Internet provides learners and teachers with its cost-efficient, flexible, and easily accessible features to foster learners' reading experiences (Puripunyavanich, 2021).

Because of the vastness of the digital realm, language learners need guidance to be experienced enough to read digital materials within their interests and proficiency level. To promote ER, particularly among less autonomous readers, an environment enhanced by teacher guidance is required to increase the effectiveness of this approach (Chantap & Wasanasomsithi, 2019). However, ER studies often ignore teachers' role in ER as a guide and role model (Day, 2015). One way to address this issue can be creating a list of recommended reading websites without directly affecting or restricting learners' choice of texts in order to help them gain some experience in navigating the Internet for reading purposes and selecting appropriate resources (Arnold, 2009). Along with teacher guidance, the involvement of interactive follow-up activities in ER programs is recommended by many researchers to facilitate learners' interest and confidence in reading, reduce anxiety and isolation, and prevent less experienced learners from feeling

overwhelmed and frustrated towards ER (e.g., Can & Baştürk, 2016; Stoller, 2015; Suk, 2015). According to Nation (2007), these activities may help students gain knowledge of the content and enjoy participating in the program by sharing what they read with the other learners through these follow-up activities.

All in all, there is a need for an ER program that includes a wide range of reading materials offered to learners' choice of interest, provides real-life reading experiences, and uses the advantages of the Internet with teacher guidance by helping learners to be more autonomous in reading extensively and digital reading. What is more, the change in learners' L2 reading attitudes, if any, and their views of ER should be addressed to present a deeper understanding.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Considering the aforementioned needs in the literature, the current study integrated ER with blended learning through a blended extensive reading program. In this study, 'blended extensive reading' refers to an extensive reading program in a blended learning modality. The study involved the use of digital reading materials and learning management systems (Google Classroom and Padlet) that were easily accessible to the participants. Along with the online delivery of learning, face-to-face delivery of learning was employed through weekly meetings conducted with teacher guidance to create an encouraging environment. In other words, the blended learning modality in this study included online learning with digital reading and LMSs and face-to-face learning with weekly meetings. In the study, digital reading is used for any electronically generated reading that is not printed, such as from a web page, hypertext, online post, and PDF (Pardede, 2020).

This study sought to investigate the impact of the blended ER program on the reading attitudes of Turkish EFL learners at the tertiary level and explore their views of the blended ER program. Therefore, the following research questions were addressed:

RQ1: Is there any effect of the blended ER program on the tertiary level EFL learners' L2 reading attitudes?

RQ2: What are the tertiary level EFL learners' views of the blended ER program?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant due to its contribution to the existing body of ER research by presenting a blended ER program to reveal the participants' L2 reading attitudes after

ER and their views of the program. Regarding the study design, the current study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research tools, which helped shed a more profound light on ER in the digital era. As the gap in the literature signifies the lack of qualitative and mixed-method research to obtain a deeper insight into ER (e.g., Chen et al, 2013; Mikami, 2017; Park, 2020; Wang & Kim, 2021), this study may contribute profoundly to the outcomes of the existing body of research. Since learners' affective state influences their reading involvement, understanding how the affective domain affects reading is vital to getting the most out of ER (Yamashita, 2015). Considering attitude as a significant affective component due to its influence on learners' willingness to read, establishment of an L2 reading habit, and success in L2 reading (Ng et al., 2019), this study set out to investigate the participants' reading attitudes towards before and after the blended ER program. To gain a more profound understanding of the quantitative results, the study explored the participants' views and the effects of the blended ER program on their reading experiences qualitatively.

Unlike many ER studies (e.g., Al-Hamoud & Schmitt, 2009; Jeon et al., 2017; Ramonda, 2020; Puripunyanich, 2021), the current study did not rely on a grading system to encourage learners to read. Instead, the study focused on instilling the idea of reading as a rewarding activity in and of itself, independent of any impact on the learners' grades. The availability of reading materials is essential and significant in ER studies. However, the cost of establishing a library may be possible only in some educational contexts. Digital reading materials may offer learners numerous easily accessible materials at a lower cost. Previous ERO studies generally employed a subscription-based virtual library (e.g., Cote & Milliner, 2015; Puripunyanich, 2021; Tagane et al., 2018; Zhou & Day, 2021), which is also not affordable in most teaching contexts. Another issue related to reading materials used in ER is the unavailability of different types of texts, such as posts on social media, film/book reviews, recipes, blogs, and magazines. Except for Arnold's (2009) and Fatimah et al.'s (2020) studies, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no prior study included reading materials other than graded readers. Considering these issues, the current study benefited from the various open-access resources on the Internet without any cost, excluding the Internet access fee. Google Classroom was used as a virtual library to organize and publish links to various digital reading materials. With these features, the participants were given the opportunity to find interesting materials within their proficiency levels among a vast array of digital reading

resources. Besides, the participants were allowed to read not only digital texts but also printed materials as learners' choice matters in ER.

Another LMS called Padlet was used as reading logs since monitoring the progress is significant for both teachers and learners in an effective ER program to promote reading and enhance their motivation with their progress (Chien & Yu, 2015). The design of the reading logs was not like a book report; its content included only date, title, reading time, and difficulty and interest levels to keep track of their reading activities without giving a burden to the learners. Additionally, weekly face-to-face meetings where the participants performed a task they chose from a list of tasks to share what they read were held to foster positive reading attitudes and motivation by giving responsibility as suggested in the literature (e.g., Chen, 2018; Green, 2005; Hadiyanto, 2019; Suk, 2015).

Overall, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no comprehensive prior study adopting all these features and insufficient ER research in the tertiary level Turkish EFL context. The current study contributed to ER research with its suggested digital reading resources, research design, and program features. This study delved further into ER by employing quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments and investigating the change in the participants' L2 reading attitudes and their views of the blended ER program. Moreover, the study presented a meticulously designed blended ER program by integrating blended learning, digital platforms, digital reading, face-to-face meetings, and follow-up activities into ER, along with teacher guidance.

1.5. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The current study was conducted in an English preparatory program at a private university in Türkiye with 14 B1 level EFL learners during the spring term of the 2022-2023 academic year. Thus, the findings are limited to this tertiary-level context and the EFL learners who voluntarily participated in the study, and they cannot be generalized to all EFL learners in all tertiary-level EFL contexts. Instead of a parametric test, which is more powerful in detecting the effect, a non-parametric test was run to analyze the results of the pre- and post-test due to the study's small sample size. Furthermore, the participants may not have found enough external motivation to continue or engage in ER since the program was not in the curriculum, the participation was voluntary, and their involvement in the study did not affect their grades. In further studies, the use of external motivation sources may affect learners' L2 reading attitudes in a blended ER program. In addition,

focus group interviews could have been held to reveal the motives behind the learners who read extensively more than the others. The duration of the study, lasting seven weeks in total, may need to be longer to reveal effective and permanent results. Therefore, the program's short duration may have hindered the potential impact on the participants. A delayed post-test might have been administered to reveal the blended ER program's effect on participants' L2 reading attitudes in the long term. Due to the limitations caused by the severe earthquakes hitting Turkiye, the switch from face-to-face learning to online learning, and difficulties reaching out to the participants after the earthquakes, the duration of the blended ER program had to be shortened, and a delayed post-test could not have been administered.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

Intensive Reading refers to an L2 reading approach widely implemented in EFL teaching contexts. The intensive reading approach requests learners to read a pre-determined text attentively to build the precise meaning of the text and focus on the linguistic features of the text under the control of the teacher (Park, 2020).

Extensive reading (ER) refers to an L2 reading approach involving a large amount of reading within learners' interests and linguistic skills (Day & Bamford, 1998).

Blended learning refers to the integration of online and face-to-face learning modalities to enhance the benefit of both kinds of instruction. (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). In this study, the blended learning components were digital reading materials and LMSs (Google Classroom and Padlet), and the face-to-face learning components were weekly meetings and optional printed reading materials.

Digital reading refers to any reading material that is not printed and can be read on-screen, such as from a web page, hypertext, online post, or PDF (Pardede, 2020).

Learning Management Systems (LMSs) are the digital tools used to establish a virtual classroom, monitor and organize the class, and support the learning process of learners by providing them with additional resources and chances to improve their digital skills (Adams, 2010; Coates et al., 2005; Dogoriti et al., 2014).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter aims to summarize, classify, compare, and evaluate the research in ER under five main sections. To begin with, the *Reading in L2* section delves into L2 reading and its role in learners' language development. The next section, *Extensive Reading and L2 Learning*, presents an overview of ER, ER studies, and some current issues in ER. The following section, *Reading Attitudes and Extensive Reading*, outlines the impact of ER on reading attitudes since the primary objective of the present study lies in enhancing the participants' reading experiences and attitudes. Afterwards, the *Online L2 Extensive Reading* section proposes a new approach to ER by emphasizing the advantages of using digital platforms. The last section, *Blended Learning and Extensive Reading*, explains why the integration of blended learning and ER is promising and how blended learning modality and extensive reading approach have been integrated into the ER studies.

2.1. Reading in L2

Reading is a multifaceted and interactive skill that requires the integration of several higher-order thinking skills. This dynamic process involves receiving and interpreting information from a text in multiple dimensions (Nassaji, 2014). Contrary to first language (L1) reading, second/foreign language (L2) reading includes two languages called dual-language involvement, referring to a consistent engagement between two languages along with continuous adaptations to meet the various needs of each language (Grabe, 2008). Multiple factors, such as the interference of L1, learners' proficiency in L2, word-recognition skills, sociocultural knowledge, and past reading experiences and attitudes, are involved in L2 reading (Nassaji, 2014). In other words, L2 reading incorporates all the contexts for L1 reading and L2 learning and reading dimensions (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Hence, L2 reading might be more challenging and complex than L1 reading (Koda, 2005).

To understand the complexity of L2 reading, two main hypotheses are proposed in relation to the interference of L1 reading skills with L2 proficiency level: the linguistic interdependence hypothesis and the linguistic threshold hypothesis (Alderson, 1984). While the linguistic interdependence hypothesis refers to the transfer of L1 reading ability to L2 reading ability, the linguistic threshold hypothesis emphasizes the necessity of a threshold level of L2 linguistic proficiency before the transfer between L1 and L2 reading

abilities (Cummins, 1979). In other words, learners should be at a threshold level of L2 proficiency to be more proficient in L2 reading and be able to transfer their L1 reading skills and strategies, and background knowledge (Carrell, 1988). Although the threshold level may differ from reader to reader, it is suggested that the foundation of this hypothesis is that L2 readers may not be able to read effectively until they have a certain level of competency in the target language (Lee & Schallert, 1997; Qian, 2002; Schmitt et al., 2011; Van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). Yamashita (2002) asserted that the linguistic threshold hypothesis should be given priority due to the significant influence of L2 linguistic proficiency on the transition of L1 reading skills to L2 reading. However, the linguistic interdependence hypothesis should also be considered to understand the relationship between L1 and L2 reading.

Reading has been proven to be potent in various language contexts - L1, EFL, and ESL- with diverse groups of learners at a range of educational levels, from primary level to tertiary level, and in a variety of settings, such as in school programs or voluntary reading for pleasure (Krashen, 2004). Krashen's input and reading hypotheses (1982, 1993) prioritize the significance and necessity of input through reading due to its benefits in various dimensions of language learning (Yamashita, 2013). Particularly for input-poor EFL environments, reading is of paramount importance since it provides a means of input for language development (Al-Hamoud & Schmitt, 2009). That is, increasing the amount of exposure to a target language is necessary for enhancing learners' language development. As language learners are exposed to a great deal of input, they make up for the absence of a target language environment (Krashen, 2004). Therefore, reading is a crucial language skill and an effective instruction method in various language learning and teaching contexts. However, most EFL reading courses are insufficient in terms of engagement in a large amount of reading in or out of class since the emphasis of such courses is mainly not on meaningful reading, which keeps learners from becoming better and critical readers.

In intensive reading classes, to comprehend the detailed meaning of the text, enhance their reading skills, and improve their linguistic knowledge, learners spend lots of time reading texts determined by teachers (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). They often deal with reading texts to develop strategies and skills for following comprehension questions and exams as part of a comprehensive curriculum with time constraints, hindering an increase in class reading (Norman, 2023). Day and Bamford (1998) assert that this

overemphasis on the intensive reading approach may help learners focus on skills and strategies but may not help them become real readers in L2. It becomes difficult for L2 learners to be skilled and motivated readers when they read too little or are required to read an excessive amount of complex reading texts. Therefore, they should be exposed to comprehensible input through reading both in and outside of class and across the curriculum to be better readers (Stoller, 2015).

Furthermore, learners may refrain from reading in and out of the classroom and not consider reading as a way to improve their language skills when reading materials are tiresome and tedious (Pongsatornpiat, 2021). As Nuttall (2005) suggests, this situation may lead learners to ‘the vicious circle of the weak reader’ in which learners read slowly and do not enjoy and understand a text because of the excessive burden of reading challenging texts with unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar on their working memory. On the other hand, Nuttall (2005) describes ‘the virtuous circle of reading’ where learners comprehend a text better, enjoy reading more, and read faster when they read across different genres and formats more based on their interest and understanding, as shown in the following figure.

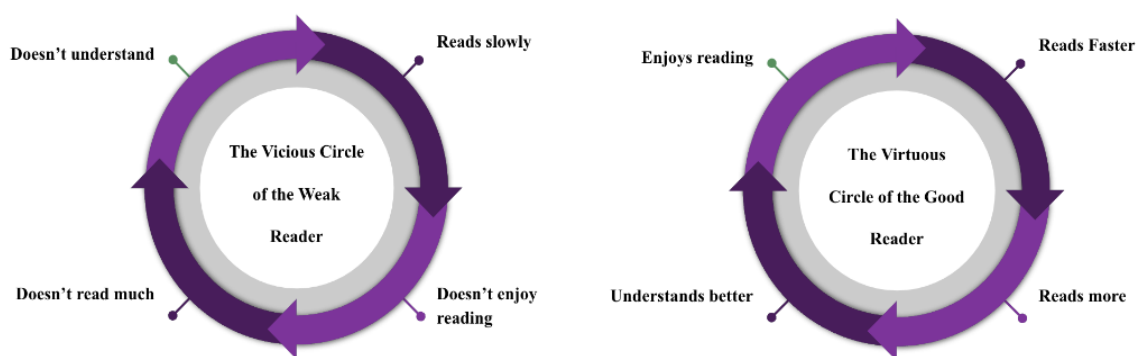


Figure 2.1. *The vicious circle of the weak reader and the virtuous circle of the good reader retrieved from Nuttall (2005)*

Extensive reading (ER), a reading approach that provides a large amount of compelling comprehensive input and enables learners to read based on their interests, is supported and recognized in the L2 field to help readers enter the virtuous circle (Yamashita, 2013). ER is an excellent approach to promoting rich input in L2, particularly in the EFL contexts where the input is very scarce (Jeon & Day, 2016). That is, engaging language learners with the ER approach by providing a diverse selection of reading

materials within their linguistic skills may help learners develop positive reading attitudes and become better L2 readers.

2.2. Extensive Reading and L2 Learning

Extensive Reading (ER) has been defined by various researchers under different names, such as ‘sustained silent reading (SSR),’ ‘free voluntary reading,’ and ‘pleasure reading.’ Bamford and Day (2004, p.1) have defined ER as “an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy materials in the new language. They choose their own reading material and read it independently of the teacher. They read for general, overall meaning, and they read for information and enjoyment”. Likewise, Richards and Schmidt (2002, pp.193-194) defined ER as “reading in quantity and to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, build up vocabulary and structure knowledge, and encourage a liking for reading”. Accordingly, ER stands for not only a teaching approach but also a long-lasting habit that brings the strength and abundance offered by reading in large quantities in L2 (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002, pp. 229-300). With the emphasis of ER on general comprehension and a large amount of reading within readers’ interests and linguistic level, learners are more autonomous and responsible for becoming good readers and monitoring their own progress than they are in an intensive reading class, which focuses on a detailed understanding of a text and its linguistic features.

The theoretical concept of the ER approach is supported by Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (1989) and Reading Hypothesis (1993) since these hypotheses emphasize the substantial contribution of comprehensible input through reading to several aspects of language acquisition and learning, such as vocabulary, grammar spelling, and language skills. Accordingly, Krashen’s Compelling Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (2011) is compatible with ER since it assumes the most effective L2 input should be captivating to an individual. The Verbal Efficiency Model also offers support for the concept of extensive reading (ER) by proposing that the ability to recognize words automatically and at a lower level is essential for enhancing reading in L2. This is because these skills allow for cognitive resources to be freed up for more intricate tasks such as syntactic processing and comprehension of what is being read. (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Perfetti, 2007; Zhou & Day, 2021). According to research, learners’ knowledge of 98% of the

words in a text is required for comprehension; otherwise, learners tend to have difficulties comprehending the text and guessing the unknown vocabulary from the context because of too many unfamiliar words (Hu & Nation, 2000; Nation, 2015; Schmitt et al., 2011). Therefore, ER prioritizes a large amount of exposure to L2 through written input by reading texts within readers' interests and language proficiency.

Of the ER pioneers, Day and Bamford (1998, 2002) have led the expansion of studies and theoretical discussions on ER (Renandya et al., 2021). Even though there is no consensus on how ER should be implemented in language classes, Day and Bamford (2002, pp. 137-141) have posited the top 10 ER principles as the basic ER steps to guide teachers and researchers in ER. The principles are demonstrated in the following figure.



Figure 2.2. Top 10 principles of ER retrieved from Day and Bamford (2002, pp. 137-141)

As can be seen in Figure 2.2., The first principle emphasizes reading materials within learners' competence since unassisted comprehension and reading motivation are achieved when learners know at least 98% of the words in a text (Hu & Nation, 2000). The second principle suggests providing learners with a variety of reading materials on a

wide range of topics for self-selected reading, which evokes a desire to read in L2 and an embracement of a flexible attitude to reading. In this regard, learners can read any genre/type of text for different purposes. Similarly, by proposing a wide range of materials to learners, they are encouraged to choose their own texts within their comfort zone, making extensive reading in L2 more personal and autonomous than intensive reading. Another critical principle is reading as much as possible, which aims to increase reading time to become better readers. Although there is no limit or exact time allocated to reading and no consensus about this matter in the literature, Day and Bamford (2002) have stated that reading a book a week may be enough to benefit from ER and establish a good reading habit.

The fifth principle addresses reading for pleasure, general understanding, and information, encouraging learners to read in L2 as if they read in L1 in daily life. Reading should be perceived as its own reward since the goal of ER is to turn reading in L2 into a real-life experience. Therefore, comprehension questions are usually not required after ER. Nonetheless, some follow-up activities and tasks, such as sharing the best part of the text they read, are recommended to monitor learners' reading experiences and attitudes (Bamford & Day, 2004). The seventh principle related to faster reading speed suggests that ER promotes reading fluency when learners read interesting and appropriate level materials for enjoyment, referring to Nuttall's (2005) vicious circle of the weak reader and the virtuous circle of the good reader. The eighth principle highlights the importance of individual and silent reading to allow learners to read at their own pace and interact with the text personally.

The ninth principle underlines teachers' role in guiding and orienting students. Since most learners are inexperienced in reading extensively and used to reading challenging texts followed by comprehension questions, teachers must meticulously introduce ER in their classroom by explaining how easy and enjoyable ER can be and presenting a variety of reading materials divided into difficulty levels. Unlike teacher-dependent intensive reading activities, teachers must guide their learners without interfering with their choices until they are accustomed to reading extensively and become fully autonomous readers in L2. However, orienting and guiding learners is insufficient to influence them to read extensively. Hence, the last principle underscores the importance of teachers' role as a model of a reader in ER programs.

Despite Day and Bamford's widely recognized ten principles (2002) for a successful ER program, researchers have developed different ER programs by considering the principles and their applicability, as ER is not a one-size-fits-all approach (Macalister, 2008). Green (2005) has opined that prioritizing the involvement of all the suggestions, principles, and definitions could only produce a satisfying design of a reading program rather than a satisfying and effective program for learners. Suk (2017) stated that three significant features have become prominent in ER research. One of the key elements of ER is reading texts within learners' language proficiency to foster comprehension without a constant interruption of dictionary use and keep the flow of reading. Another essential feature is the emphasis on the significant amount of input through reading, leading to improved reading fluency and comprehension in the long term (Grabe, 2009; Nation, 2009). A third essential feature is reading self-selected and interesting reading materials to enhance learners' motivation to read and allow them to read based on their needs, such as reading for pleasure or reading to gain knowledge. Reading materials in ER includes not only a series of graded readers with more than 100 pages but also a variety of genres without the concern of length, such as magazine articles and blogs (Green, 2005). Although there is no consensus on the definition of ER, how to implement it in language classrooms, and whether to adhere to all the ER principles suggested by Day and Bamford (2002), ER programs can be put into two broad categories, namely stand-alone and integrated ER programs. The former is independent of the curriculum and does not assess learners' performances. Instead, reading is seen as its own reward without grading. Integrated ER programs are involved in the curriculum and assessment, and they can be a course itself, a part of a course, outside the class, or a combination of these (Renandya & Day, 2020).

A myriad of ER studies has demonstrated ER's positive impact and benefits on reading comprehension, general language proficiency, reading rate, and motivation and attitude towards reading. Numerous studies revealed that learners enjoy reading for pleasure and general understanding for their own purposes in L2 by choosing their own materials and reading at their own pace (Day & Bamford, 2004). The literature on language acquisition and ER suggests three main factors in ER: a) language acquisition and/or learning develops slowly and gradually; b) meaningful input in ER, through which learners are exposed to comprehensible input with self-selected and interesting reading

materials, is an essential element in language learning; c) ER fosters incidental learning promoting improvement in learners' implicit language knowledge (Renandya et al., 2021). Implementing these features and the principles mentioned earlier, various studies have explored ER's influence on learners' language development throughout the years. The benefits of ER in language learning involve many aspects, such as compelling comprehensible input, improvement in overall language competence, maximized exposure to L2 and vocabulary knowledge, enhanced writing skills, increase in motivation to read, reinforcement in previously covered language items, confidence with reading longer texts, and exploitation of background knowledge and recognition of recurring elements in texts.

As for the ER's impact on linguistic skills and proficiency, Nuttall (2015) claims that ER is one of the most effective approaches to gaining vocabulary knowledge and developing reading skills. Schmitt (2008) highlighted that with large amounts of reading texts at appropriate levels, learners' exposure to vocabulary increases, and their knowledge of vocabulary usage in contexts is improved. Reading simplified texts or graded readers can build new vocabulary and assist in developing and activating already-known vocabulary knowledge (Waring & Takaki, 2003). Jeon and Day (2016) published a meta-analysis examining the effect of ER on reading proficiency among 49 ER studies. They reported a small to medium effect for both experimental and control groups ($d=0.57$) and pre-post-test study designs ($d=0.79$) on the positive impact of ER on reading comprehension, reading rate, and vocabulary, which indicates the greater effectiveness of the ER approach compared to traditional reading approaches. The highest mean effect size was found in the studies with adult participants, followed by studies with children and adolescents. The studies conducted in EFL contexts demonstrated a greater effect than in ESL contexts, and curriculum-integrated ER programs have the highest mean effect among other types of ER programs, namely ER as a reading course, ER as an extracurricular activity, and ER as a part of a reading course. They concluded five core factors leading ER programs to success and effectiveness: providing reading materials within learners' interests and comfort zones, reading as much as possible and individually, and teacher guidance.

ER studies have also yielded positive results of improved reading skills in various aspects, such as reading comprehension and reading rate. In an experimental EFL study

conducted with 70 EFL university students for ten weeks, Al-Hamoud and Schmitt (2009) revealed that the extensive reading group demonstrated significantly greater development in their reading rate compared to the intensive reading group. Suk (2017) initiated a quasi-experimental study with EFL university students in Korea employing two control (n=88) and two experimental groups (n=83) in order to investigate ER's impact on reading comprehension, reading rate, and vocabulary learning. While the control groups had a 100-minute intensive reading class every week, the experimental groups had a 30-minute extra extensive reading class every week along with usual intensive classes. After a semester lasting 15 weeks, the findings of subsequent analyses of variance indicated a significant effect of ER on all three variables. Since ER involves a considerable amount of input, it is also assumed to foster overall proficiency and language skills other than reading skills. To illustrate, Wang and Ho (2019) carried out an ER program in an English-major program where learners were required to read graded readers in class for a year. Based on pre-and post-test results, they revealed ER's significant effect on participants' overall proficiency level. Therefore, Hunt and Beglat (2005) have emphasized the role of ER in implicit language learning as it increases the volume of meaningful input in a context available to learners.

In terms of ER's effect on affective factors, such as attitudes towards L2 reading and L2 reading motivation, several studies have yielded positive results (e.g., Chen, 2018; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Hayashi, 1999; Liao & Wang, 2020; Park, 2020; Schmitt & Al-Hamoud, 2009; Zhou & Day, 2021). Since ER encourages learners to choose a variety of interesting and meaningful materials at an appropriate level, they can become motivated to read extensively and get used to reading, leading to an even greater increase in reading motivation and interest. Ro (2013) explored an adult L2 reader's motivational transformation during an ER study over eight weeks. A decrease in L2 reading anxiety, a positive change in attitudes towards reading, and a greater motivation in L2 reading were found after the treatment. The main factors influencing the changes involved reading easy and interesting materials, reading for pleasure, and constant exposure to the language.

Contrary to its substantial contribution to learners' language development in many aspects of learning, ER has its limitations, and many scholars have questioned its effectiveness and limitations. As for the impediments to ER practice, time restrictions in and out of the class represent one of the significant challenges, such as learners'

reluctance to allocate time to read outside the class and the demands of the exam-oriented syllabi (Arai, 2019; Chen, 2018; Milliner, 2017; O’Sullivan, 2012). ER is often not treated as an essential feature in the L2 curriculum (Renandya et al., 2018) as fluency and implicit learning are generally ignored by learners and teachers who are accustomed to traditional learning (Grabe, 2009; Nation, 2009). Additionally, establishing a library with a variety of reading materials on a wide range of topics may not be an option for most L2 contexts because of its cost (Robb, 2018). The limitation of insufficient reading materials pointed out in the literature due to many low-resourced educational contexts may be overcome by purchasing a digital library, like XReading (<https://xreading.com/>), or preparing a list of websites providing open access to reading materials, such as Storyveaver (<https://storyweaver.org.in/>) and Nation’s graded reader website (<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation#free-graded-readers>). Besides, teachers can start establishing a library with a few reading materials appealing to the general interest of the learners. Another often expressed concern is the delayed impact of ER and the desire to see immediate results (Renandya et al., 2021) in contrast to the slow and gradual development of language acquisition/learning without instant permanent results (Ellis, 2002). It has been suggested that inadequate understanding and inexperience in ER can cause disappointment when the immediate effect of ER fails to meet the expectations of teachers and learners. Therefore, the delayed impact of ER should be considered while implementing ER.

Another of the distinctive concerns related to ER is sustained motivation. Only some learners are able to stay motivated during the ER process if they enjoy reading less (Stoller, 2015). Teachers can help learners strengthen their understanding of reading’s role as an effective way of learning by motivating learners to read extensively and demonstrating how to read extensively (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). Therefore, teachers should not only encourage learners to read extensively by providing a number of interesting materials but also be role models and show their learners how enjoyable and beneficial learning can be as readers in and out of the classroom.

In a Turkish EFL context with 25 university students from the English Language Teaching department, Can and Baştürk (2016) carried out an ER study to examine the participants’ motivation and willingness to read extensively and the positive and negative factors they encountered throughout the program. The ER program was added to a reading

course content. However, the learners' grades were not affected due to their participation. For this reason, the number of participants dropped to 10 gradually. The participants were offered a list of classic English literature books as reading materials. The findings indicated that the participants did not enjoy reading extensively because they found reading a tedious and challenging activity and were demotivated to read classic literature books. They also believed that they did not need ER to be successful in their university life. These results showed that the participants had insufficient motivation to start reading extensively and establishing reading habits.

One way to keep learners engaged and motivated in ER is revealed to be the integration of follow-up activities into ER implementations (Chen et al., 2013). These activities are also significant in encouraging learners to read extensively and in helping them get accustomed to ER since they give a sense of purpose and responsibility and increase learners' reading motivation (Day & Bamford, 2004). Yılmaz et al. (2020) conducted an ER study involving in-class writing activities in a Turkish EFL university context. In this experimental study, the participants were B1 level prep-school students, and the experimental and control groups involved 22 participants each. The ER program of this study relied on Day and Bamford's principles (2002) and provided learners with a collection of self-selected graded readers and teacher guidance and feedback. The activities were well-designed and related to their weekly reading experiences. Throughout the six-week-long study, the experimental group read extensively outside the class and did writing activities about what they read in class. In contrast, the control group followed the regular program of the reading/writing course. The quantitative data were collected from reading and writing tests and the foreign language self-concept (FLSC) scale before and after the treatment, and the qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with ten randomly chosen experimental group students after the treatment. The results were quite positive in terms of learners' reading and writing performance, FLSC, and views of the ER program. The qualitative data revealed that the ER program enhanced the participants' reading attitudes, motivation, and self-confidence in their language learning process. They also observed improvement in their L2 reading and writing skills, along with the other aspects of the language, such as vocabulary knowledge, comprehension and use of complex grammar, and speaking skills. As stated in the literature (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Lee & Hsu, 2009; Park, 2016), incorporating writing

activities with ER helped enhance ER's benefits. This approach likely led to improvements in both the cognitive domains, such as linguistic skills, and affective domains, like motivation, since connecting reading and writing gave them a sense of responsibility and a space to share their reading experiences.

Considering the difficulties and concerns mentioned previously, to implement an effective ER program, devoting time, providing resources of reading materials within learners' linguistic level, and supporting learners to read for pleasure outside the classroom are essential (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). In addition, ER is not considered a one-size-fits-all approach, and the top ten principles may be too demanding for some educational contexts, as Day (2015) and Green (2005) suggested. Thus, teachers and researchers should consider their learners' characteristics and needs, restrictions, and facilities in their educational settings while developing an ER program.

2.3. Reading Attitudes and Extensive Reading

As a complex affective factor in language learning, reading attitude is defined by various researchers. Smith (1990) defined reading attitude as "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that make reading more or less probable." Krashen (1994) emphasized reading attitude as a crucial component in learners' readiness for reading. Various factors are involved in a language learner's attitudes towards reading. Day and Bamford (1998) outlined four main factors constructing L2 reading attitudes: reading attitudes towards a first language, past experiences in reading in L2, general attitudes towards L2 and its culture, and features of a language classroom environment (Zhou & Day, 2021). Furthermore, they identified the factors affecting reading motivation: reading materials, reading skills in L2, L2 reading attitudes, and sociocultural environment (Yamashita, 2013). Of the four factors, reading materials and reading attitudes are underscored as primarily crucial in L2 reading motivation.

Considering these factors and the primary aim of ER to foster learners' enjoyable reading experiences with interesting materials within their comfort zone, the ER approach may positively impact learners' L2 reading attitudes. Since L2 reading attitude is a significant factor in determining the motivation to read, the great likelihood of ER fostering reading attitudes may positively influence learners' decision to read regularly. Unlike the intensive reading approach, which involves reading a pre-determined material thoroughly under the control of a teacher and reading comprehension assessment, the ER

approach provides a more learner-centered environment with its features promoting positive attitudes, such as not involving fear of evaluation, mechanical comprehension assessment, and uninteresting materials (Stoller, 2015). To reinforce the possible positive impact of ER on L2 reading attitudes, a plethora of ER studies have been conducted (e.g., Al-Hamoud & Schmitt, 2009; Chen et al., 2013; Liao & Wang, 2020; Ng et al., 2019; Ro, 2013; Yamashita, 2013).

Park (2020) alleged in his study that several ER studies included unreliable factors to measure the change in learners' reading attitudes as most studies administered the data instruments after the treatment (e.g., Takase, 2009) and/or learners' perspectives on the ER programs rather than their reading attitudes were prioritized (e.g., Lee et al., 2015). In his quasi-experimental study comparing the impact of the extensive and intensive reading approaches on the reading attitudes of 73 high school learners in Korea, Park (2020) implemented ER and intensive reading classes once a week for two hours over a period of 12 weeks. The ER treatment group was provided with a comprehensive collection of graded readers, and the participants were asked to keep a reading log to monitor their reading progress. As for the intensive reading group, the learners read four reading materials above their linguistic skills and answered their comprehension questions in each class. Having administered a reading attitude questionnaire, the results exhibited a significantly greater enhancement in the ER group's L2 reading attitudes. The cognitive aspect (personal perspective) showed a higher increase in the ER group than in the intensive reading group. Thus, this study concluded that the ER approach is a key factor in facilitating EFL learners' L2 reading attitudes and enhancing their reading experiences. Furthermore, it was suggested that EFL teachers need to diagnose their learners' needs, interests, and levels and provide reading materials for self-selection before implementing an ER program.

Al-Hamoud and Schmitt (2009) also conducted a quasi-experimental ER study comparing ER and intensive reading classes with EFL learners. The results showed the effectiveness of each reading approach in reading comprehension, speed, and vocabulary knowledge. However, the ER approach was much more effective in promoting positive reading attitudes. Thus, the findings indicated that the participants in the ER class got more benefits than the ones in the intensive reading class. Supporting Park's findings and suggestions (2020), this study underscored the role of positive L2 reading attitudes in

learners' decision to read extensively, which paves the way for their language development.

With a different approach to ER due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Puripunyanich (2021) developed an online ER program as a part of an English course by using a virtual library, XReading. The study aimed to explore Thai university learners' attitudes towards extensive reading online (ERO). The learners were required to read a specified number of words on XReading. As a responsibility, they were asked to take the quizzes of the books they finished on XReading and get a %60 accurate result. Quantitative data were collected from 356 learners from various departments through a questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale about reading attitudes. The results showed the participants' positive reading attitudes towards ERO. The three items in the questionnaire with the highest means were about the delightful experience of reading graded readers, getting motivated from reading more straightforward texts and being able to read shorter texts. Qualitative data were obtained from 13 participants through semi-structured focus group interviews. The interviews revealed deeper insights into the quantitative results. The participants expressed that they developed positive reading attitudes due to freedom of choice on the texts, a wide range of reading materials, reading for pleasure, and the digital platform's features. Nonetheless, they noted two main challenges in the online ER program: getting digital eyestrain and getting confused about choosing a book among numerous books. Other difficulties were technical problems and inadequate types of text. In this study, freedom of choice was underlined as a crucial component facilitating motivation to read. Preparing a list of various reading materials with different genres, topics, and difficulty levels was suggested for ER programs with students inexperienced in ER. Furthermore, the role of orientation in overcoming learners' confusion was stressed for the recently established ER programs to inform learners of what reading extensively is and to introduce the platform(s) used in the program.

Along the same lines, Nhung (2022) carried out an ERO study lasting 12 weeks with 87 Vietnamese EFL learners to examine their views of ERO during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study used a website called Extensive Reading Central, <https://www.er-central.com/>, since it had many graded readers and was free to use for everyone and user-friendly. The participants were introduced to the ER program and reminded to choose any text they wanted and enjoy reading outside the classroom without the fear of testing. As the website allowed the teacher to create a class and learners to record their reading times,

the participants' engagement in reading was monitored easily. After the treatment, all the participants were invited to semi-structured interviews, and the analysis yielded positive results in learners' attitudes towards ERO and the ER program. The most uttered reasons for the study's positive outcomes were the variety of topics and genres, the program's positive impact on their language skills, and the convenience of the website and digital reading. The participants also stated the opposing sides of the program, such as the unattractive interface of the website, the need for more varieties of reading texts, technical issues, and digital eyestrain in line with most ERO studies (e.g., Bui & Macalister, 2021; Cote & Milliner, 2015; Ng et al., 2019; Puripunyanich, 2021). Despite the beneficial impact of the online ER program on the participants, the researcher emphasized the need for a study using more than one data instrument and not relying solely on learners' perspectives.

Considering the vital role of collaboration and meaningful follow-up activities in promoting positive reading attitudes and reading motivation and diminishing reading anxiety (Dickinson, 2017; Huang, 2015; Liao & Wang, 2020; Takase, 2007), Chen (2018) incorporated a task-based approach into ER to give learners a purpose and keep them active in the ER program. This qualitative study investigated the participants' views of the task-based ER program's influence on their language skills and reading habits. The participants were 28 EFL university students taking a B1 level reading course in Taiwan and had no extensive experience in ER. They were required to attend the class two hours a week, read in and out of class, and participate in follow-up activities. 20% of their final grade was attributed to their engagement in this ER program. Given Day and Bamford's principles in designing this ER program, the researcher asked students to prepare the task of the week (e.g., creating a different ending and giving advice to one character) before coming to the class and to share the task with their pair or groups. The results demonstrated that captivating reading materials and meaningful tasks enhanced the participants' reading experiences and developed a sense of accomplishment, which encouraged the participants to read more and establish reading habits.

In a similar vein, Liao and Wang (2020) integrated collaborative activities in an ER program as a part of an English course conducted with 130 EFL freshman students at a Taiwanese university. The participants selected graded readers from the library, created book posters and presentations as a group outside the class, and then presented their posters and got feedback from the others. Also, the instructor provided feedback on

language use. Having obtained the data from a post-questionnaire, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews to explore the participants' views of the program and activities, the results indicated that the ER program integrated with collaborative follow-up activities favorably impacted the participants' motivation to read and L2 reading attitudes. In addition, most participants noted that their reading anxiety was reduced throughout the program, which was supported by Yamashita (2013) since a positive learning atmosphere contributes to reading motivation. Furthermore, they enjoyed sharing what they read and brainstorming ideas with the others. The biggest challenges pinpointed during the interviews were preparing posters and presentations outside the class and insufficient guidance in finding engaging and appropriate-level books. Hence, the importance of including suitable texts, guidance, and well-designed activities in enhancing learners' reading experiences was highlighted, as Harmer (2001) did. For future research, it was emphasized that including only graded materials may not be enough to activate learners' interest and motivation to read more. To develop positive reading attitudes, incorporating numerous types of materials (e.g., news, blogs, magazines, and game and movie reviews, etc.) was recommended, along with implementing collaborative activities, such as literature circles, writing activities, and info-gap activities. In this respect, Ramonda (2020) highlighted that follow-up ER activities should not be generic questions (e.g., 'What is your book about?', 'Who are the characters?'); instead, they should be meaningful and intriguing (e.g., 'Who is the worst character in the story, why?', 'How might the characters look like in real life?')

Bakla (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study by integrating Web 2.00 tools in an ER program lasting for an academic term in a Turkish EFL context. He investigated how and to what extent post-activities through the Web 2.00 tools affected learners' reading behaviors and views of the ER program. 27 EFL learners participated in this study and were requested to use several Web 2.00 tools to prepare follow-up activities for the graded readers they read and share them on a blog for which they were trained before the program. The blog statistics were used to understand their engagement levels, while the focus group interviews were held to gain a more comprehensive view of the program's effects. However, the study did not yield the expected results since the engagement of the participants in the program was rather low. The interview results unveiled that the participants were inexperienced in using Web 2.00 tools and felt demotivated to create follow-up activities. Thus, providing learners with different genres might be potent to

foster motivation to read and creativity in follow-up activities. Similar to the challenges revealed in Liao and Wang's study (2020), this study pinpointed some obstacles. It was underscored that learners' negative attitudes towards ER might change with an ER program lasting longer. It was also highlighted that time commitment, a variety of resources, and a great deal of initiative in encouraging learners to read extensively are crucial to have an effective ER program, as echoed by Grabe and Stoller (2011).

Briefly, most ER studies have revealed a positive influence on learners' attitudes towards reading in L2 due to the nature of the ER approach, which promotes reading for pleasure with a choice to choose any material relevant to their interests and linguistic skills. Although there are multifarious ways to implement an ER program, involving interactive and captivating follow-up activities is claimed to foster their reading attitudes even more. Nation (2007) stated that these activities might motivate learners to read and comprehend more and develop reading habits since they give learners a genuine purpose. In order to help them start establishing a reading habit and not to cause any apprehension, ER studies conducted with inexperienced learners can be diligently designed by introducing ER and the program to learners, providing guidance, and offering a wide range of genres and topics to read.

2.4. Online L2 Extensive Reading

Within the scope of ER research, the use of technology has been of great importance recently due to its benefits. The benefits and recent technological developments have reshaped ER boundaries with the opportunities to make ER more effective and accessible in different contexts. Extensive reading online (ERO) programs with a virtual library have become prominent in recent studies since L2 readers can find a wide selection of materials for diverse reasons through the use of technology and the Internet (Arnold, 2009). Digital resources not only provide a variety of texts but also allow teachers to maximize ER benefits (Bui & Macalister, 2021). It is also important to note that establishing a virtual library can eliminate one of the challenges of ER, which is the cost of setting up a traditional library.

Most learners may need to learn how to navigate websites and digital platforms for learning purposes. Hence, careful guidance of teachers in ERO programs is of utmost importance, particularly for language learners with lower-level L2 proficiency. Robb (2018) underscored the inclusion of digital texts based on many aspects, such as text

levels and interests. He also suggested many digital resources, such as <https://www.ero-central.com/>, <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/>, <http://www.manythings.org/k/reading.html>, <https://simple.wikipedia.org/> (see Robb, 2018 for more). Accordingly, implementing ERO with the teacher's guidance is crucial until learners become autonomous in digital L2 reading. After learning how to use digital resources efficiently in ERO programs, learners may have a chance to expand their digital literacy in L2.

Jeon and Day (2016) found in their aforementioned meta-analysis that digital materials had a greater effect size ($d = .89$) than printed ones ($d = .47$). They underscored the effectiveness of digital resources in comparison to paper-based resources and suggested incorporating virtual libraries since not many schools are able to set up a library with a comprehensive collection of reading materials. In contrast to the effective results of ERO studies, only ten studies out of 49 used digital resources in their meta-analysis, which signified the gap in ER research.

Ramonda (2020) carried out an ER study with 137 undergraduate EFL learners in a lower-intermediate reading course, requiring them to read six preselected class readers in the first half of the term and six self-selected graded readers from the library during the rest of the term. He discovered that some participants struggled to find the pre-selected and assigned books since there were not enough copies for everyone in the library, and they needed to buy the assigned books. He suggested using virtual libraries, like XReading, since any book in these libraries can be displayed by everyone in a class and integrated into ER programs based on the needs of learners, such as their proficiency level.

Most ERO studies used subscription-based LMSs, like XReading and/or Moodle Reader (M-Reader). XReading is a virtual library including various graded readers, and M-Reader is a platform involving only post-reading quizzes of graded readers. Robb and Kano (2013) involved M-Reader in their large-scale experimental 15-week-long study with Japanese university students to move ER beyond the classroom by reading outside the class and taking online quizzes. Pre-and post-test results showed significant positive outcomes on reading scores of 2,783 participants who read extensively outside the class and took online quizzes compared to the ones who did not. Using quizzes was recommended since they held the participants responsible for their reading. The

researchers also suggested that teachers may save time in classes and reduce their workload by using this platform to assess learners' reading proficiency.

Adopting another LMS, XReading, Zhou and Day (2021) investigated the effect of the online ER program on the attitudes towards L2 reading of 57 Japanese university students in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. The online ER program was embedded into the EAP courses. The participants were requested to get %60 accurate results on the quizzes of the self-selected graded readers they read. After 12 weeks of implementation, the quantitative results of the study illustrated a significant positive impact on participants' reading attitudes. The qualitative findings revealed that the participants observed improvement in their reading proficiency, vocabulary, grammar, and writing and speaking skills alongside their attitudes towards reading. Moreover, the efficient features of the virtual library, such as accessibility and flexibility, and the importance of the quizzes on XReading were underscored based on the study's findings.

Milliner's quantitative study (2017) involved 19 university students and required them to read self-selected books on their smartphones for an academic year with the aim of exploring the impact of the XReading implementation on participants' reading engagement and their overall language proficiency and reading section scores on TOEIC. It was found that each participant read 39 graded readers on average throughout the academic year. The pre- and post-test results revealed a significant increase in TOEIC scores after the implementation. Similar to Zhou and Day (2021), he also pointed out the effectiveness of post-reading quizzes in monitoring learners' reading engagement.

Another study used XReading as a virtual library, Cote and Milliner's online ER study (2015) investigating ER's impact on 95 Japanese university students' reading attitudes yielded positive outcomes. After a 15-week-long treatment, the participants' former negative reading attitudes demonstrated a positive change. The majority of the participants indicated their preference for digital graded readers since they could easily access the digital library via their smartphones, which signifies the convenient features of digital resources in ER, as echoed in Zhou and Day's study (2021).

Instead of M-Reader or XReading which require funding for a subscription, Bui and Macalister (2021) used an open-access website for reading materials, <https://exreading.wordpress.com/>, as Nhung (2022) did. Taking Day and Bamford's principles into account, a digital library was designed, and free-graded readers and simplified texts were retrieved from various websites and categorized into groups based

on difficulty level. To provide real-life-like L2 reading opportunities, educational aspects, such as quizzes in XReading, were not embedded into the platform. Yet, to help them monitor their reading process, a stopwatch and a progress tracker were added to the platform. Instead of comprehension questions, meaningful reading tasks were included in each reading material. Since strict curriculum and time constraints inhibit implementing ER activities in language classrooms, Bui and Macalister (2021) implemented a 10-week-long online ER program with 17 university students in an EFL Vietnamese context. The study explored the difference in learners' reading fluency and reading motivation. The participants were asked to read at least 2,000 words a week and record the number of words and reading time online. After the due date for completing follow-up reading tasks, they were contacted to verify whether they had completed tasks. The results of the study uncovered a %23 average increase in each participant's reading speed, and most learners highlighted ERO's positive effect on their reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, most participants expressed the program's positive impact on their reading motivation due to several aspects, such as digital materials categorized into difficulty levels, their self-perceived progress, a sense of accomplishment after finishing a text, interesting reading materials, and an easily accessible digital library. However, the participants stated demotivating issues related to the digital platform and digital reading: technical issues, eyestrain, inadequate variety in genres, and unappealing interface of the platform. Also, the obstacles of digital ER programs stated by the participants showed similarities to some ERO studies (e.g., Cote & Milliner, 2015; Nhung, 2022; Puripunyanich, 2021).

Using open-access materials, a similar positive impact of ERO was illustrated in Pongsatornpiat's ERO study (2022). In pursuit of revealing 27 third-year university EFL learners' gains in reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and perceptions of reading digital weekly articles extensively, she established an ERO program for eight weeks. The participants were required to read at least one article weekly from a list of articles from reliable digital resources. To evaluate their comprehension and views of ERO, the participants were asked to keep a weekly online journal by summarizing each article weekly, keeping track of their reading experiences, and noting new vocabulary items. Based on the learners' identification of the main ideas in their summaries and new vocabulary lists, the analysis of online journals demonstrated their sufficient reading comprehension of the texts they read. Similar to some findings of Bui and Macalister's

study (2021), the participants' reflections on their reading experiences were mainly about their progress in reading, new vocabulary knowledge, and reading interesting topics. The interviews conducted after the treatment with 15 volunteer participants also supported the findings of the journals in favor of the positive effects of the ERO program.

Conducting an ERO study with eight advanced learners of German as a foreign language, Arnold (2009) left what they would read entirely to the participants without pre-selecting appropriate texts. He implemented an online extensive reading program in an advanced-level German course in a tertiary context to foster learners' reading motivation, confidence in L2 reading, and reading skills and help them establish reading habits outside of class. Seven ERO sessions were conducted in the computer lab during regular class hours in this course. Throughout the sessions, the participants read any interesting materials in German for 75 minutes without a limitation of length or type of text. At the end of each session, they filled out a reading report including the time they spent searching for a text, reading time, summary, and enjoyment and difficulty level of what they read. The qualitative data gathered from the reflections and a questionnaire revealed a number of benefits of the program in line with the study's aims. Discussing the results of his study, Arnold (2009) highlighted the omission of preselected reading materials by teachers. He proclaimed that leaving text preference to learners facilitated their autonomy, motivation, and self-efficacy. Thus, he suggested examining the effect of learner selection on learners' reading experiences in future research.

With the exception of graded readers on digital platforms and articles from online news websites, there is no study, except for the studies of Arnold (2009) and Fatimah et al. (2020), that provides real-world experiences by allowing learners to read any type of digital text they want, such as news, blogs, movie/book reviews, social media posts, recipes, etc. In addition, the current ERO studies not only confined alternatives to reading materials but also excluded opportunities to practice reading digitally to enhance learners' digital literacy in L2 by including different reading resources pertinent to their interests within their linguistic skills. Although Arnold's study (2009) left the text preference to the participants, they were advanced German as a foreign language learner. In other words, it was easy for the participants to find different types of texts and navigate the digital platforms in German. Thus, there is still a need for ER research to include a variety of text types to provide lower-level learners with enhanced reading experiences.

In a nutshell, with its recent developments and great role in learning and teaching, technology has affected the features of ER, and ER research has started to implement online ER programs on digital platforms oriented with digital reading materials. Although there is an insufficient number of ERO studies (Zhou & Day, 2021), in light of the findings, learners benefit from virtual libraries' easy access to a wide range of reading materials and improve their reading skills. Although digital reading caused some problems, such as eyestrain, some studies' findings yielded positive outcomes regarding online ER programs' effect on learners' reading attitudes and motivation. Apart from the studies of Arnold (2009) and Fatimah et al. (2020), no study has taken advantage of the vastness of digital resources and included a variety of digital reading modalities. What is more, the participants of the current ERO studies have been restricted to reading only one type of reading material, such as reading only graded readers, as in the studies employed XReading and M-Reader or informative articles.

2.5. Blended Learning and Extensive Reading

In most EFL classrooms, learners feel uneasy about reading for pleasure on their own since they are accustomed to traditional approaches, such as the intensive reading approach in which teachers are relied on and seen as an authority to transfer knowledge. As mentioned in the previous chapter, integrating technology into ER is promising since digital sources are abundant, easily accessible, almost costless, and enjoyable. However, learners who need more experience in navigating the L2 digital sources often need help finding an interesting text and enjoy digital reading since the Internet is like a deep ocean with unlimited authentic texts about a myriad of topics. Although online ER programs enable learners to read at their own pace based on their own preferences, low learner autonomy may lead to frustration, a feeling of isolation, and unsustainable reading habits. A feeling of isolation does not help much in increasing learner autonomy because social interactions with peers and teachers are needed (Little, 2007). Therefore, teachers and researchers implementing ER programs should bear learners' characteristics in mind and find ways to enhance their autonomy as digital literates in L2 by optimizing ER effects on learners' language development and guiding them to use the Internet wisely. One noteworthy solution to this issue is the integration of blended learning modality into ER to balance online and traditional delivery of learning.

Blended learning involves online and traditional modalities of learning and is defined variously under several terms, such as ‘blended’, ‘mixed’, and ‘hybrid’ (Tang, 2013). Blended learning presents a combination of the efficient opportunities of traditional classroom settings and technologically enhanced online environments in and out of the classroom with increased learner engagement and autonomy (Dziuban et al., 2004). In other words, it is a blend of positive features of face-to-face learning, such as real interaction between teacher-student and student-student, and favorable sides of online learning, such as flexibility and unlimited resources for learning. Blended learning strives to enhance learning and learner autonomy. It provides a mixture of learning approaches and modalities by compiling the benefits of online and face-to-face learning. In addition, monitoring learners, helping them whenever they need, and encouraging them to self-reflection with various practices are valuable features of blended learning since most learners are not aware of their own role in their language learning process (Chanthap & Wasanasomsithi, 2019; Klink, 2006; Murphy, 2005). Thus, incorporating blended learning into ER might be a promising way to combine the advantages of traditional ER and ERO and compensate for the limitations of each version, as few studies did (e.g., Al Roomy & Althewini, 2019; Chanthap & Wasanasomsithi, 2019; Fatimah, 2020; Jeon et al., 2017; Xiong, 2022). To illustrate, teachers can monitor learners in a face-to-face classroom setting, and learners can share a face-to-face environment with other learners. At the same time, digital materials can be used to develop learners’ digital literacy skills in L2, which is essential in the 21st century. Nonetheless, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, very few studies both employ the benefits of blended learning modality and ER and conduct a well-developed blended ER program.

Fatimah et al. (2020) involved a blog as a Web 2.00 tool in their ER study integrated with blended learning. The participants used a blog in the class to report and share what they read extensively outside the class, and numerous digital materials involving a wide range of topics, such as comics, movie reviews, biographies, journals, etc., were shared. Six university students in Indonesia were required to read more than a text in a day and report their acts of reading weekly on their blog. The reports of the reading materials were not like usual reports requiring a summary of a text to evaluate their comprehension; instead, the reports involved interesting tasks, such as writing a letter to one of the characters, writing a diary of one of the characters, changing the end of the story, and so on. Also, the teacher guided learners on how to use the blog and write

reports, monitored their reading processes, and encouraged them to read more throughout the one-term-long program. The study revealed that using blogs during class hours and reading for pleasure outside the class enhanced the participants' reading motivation and interest since creating posts on a blog was simple and motivated them to read more. Due to the accessibility to the rich diversity of digital reading materials, the participants had opportunities to read many interesting texts within their comfort zones. Blogging activities helped the learners develop creativity and autonomy since they were in charge of their reading process. As a result, based on the participants' perception, the blended ER program improved their language skills, such as word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, and confidence in L2 reading.

Al Roomy and Althewini (2019) conducted a blended ER study to examine the impact of a blended ER program on learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and reading experiences. The experimental study involved 41 freshmen at a medical university in Saudi Arabia, and the data were obtained from pre-and post-test results and an open-ended questionnaire. While both groups attended a regular reading course and were distributed pre-and post-tests, the experimental group ($n = 21$) was also exposed to a compulsory online ER program for four months. Implementing the ER aspect of the program online, the participants were asked to read digital materials at appropriate difficulty levels via ReadTheory.org, a subscription-based LMS. However, the learners were not allowed to choose their own texts independently; they read at their own pace outside the class. Regarding the face-to-face aspect of blended learning, the teacher observed the learners' reading progress, offered help, and gave feedback. Learners also discussed their answers to the comprehension questions with other learners. The results exhibited a greater improvement in the learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, the participants pointed out its positive effect on their reading attitudes and experiences. They stated that ReadTheory.org supported their reading comprehension and allowed them to read at their own pace. Accordingly, the LMS as a virtual library fostered a positive learning environment, motivated them to read more, and established an L2 reading habit. The participants emphasized the virtual library's features as favorable, like in the aforementioned ERO studies in the previous section. The blended ER program with its virtual library enhanced the participants' reading skills, attitudes, motivation, and experiences. However, as an obstacle to the study, the participants faced technical problems with the digital platform. Consequently,

online ER programs in a blended learning modality are suggested to be implemented with meticulous care and concrete rationale.

In another study, Chanthap and Wasanasomsithi (2019) examined the impact of a 14-week-long blended ER program on the learner autonomy of 40 Thai EFL undergraduates with low intermediate proficiency levels. The implementation included reading strategy instruction, online reading activities, and ER activities in a class setting. The data were obtained through a pre-and post-learner autonomy questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with six participants. The questionnaire results showed that the participants' learner autonomy significantly increased after the blended ER treatment. Therefore, the results signified the benefits of online learning in promoting individual reading for pleasure and becoming independent readers. Qualitative data also supported the quantitative results as the participants pointed out improved reading skills, especially planning their reading materials, monitoring their reading process, and evaluating their reading comprehension and performance. Unlike Fatimah et al.'s study (2020), not enough attention was given to ER and the use of digital resources to facilitate reading experiences by providing a variety of genres and topics, although the study incorporated blended learning into ER and yielded positive results about learner autonomy. Therefore, it is suggested to integrate blended learning in ER attentively to make use of compelling aspects of both face-to-face and online learning.

In brief, the integration of blended learning and ER might be a promising ER approach since it not only allows learners and teachers flexibility and accessibility of digital resources and online learning but also provides an encouraging environment for learners to gain positive reading experiences with teacher guidance and face-to-face interactions. To have an effective blended ER program, teachers and researchers should also consider some factors, including teachers' role, learners' needs, introduction to online learning and digital platforms, and use of technology as a helpful tool to enhance face-to-face learning experiences (Al Roomy & Althewini, 2019; Sharma & Barrett, 2007). It is worth noting that there is a scarcity of research investigating its effects by employing several data instruments to increase reliability and providing a well-developed blended ER program by taking advantage of both blended learning and ER to have an effective implementation. Hence, there is a need for more ER studies integrating blended learning modality to elucidate the impact of the blended ER approach on language learners.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter aims to present the research design employed in the current study, the setting and participants involved in this study, the blended ER program and its details, the data collection instruments and tools used in the study, the data collection procedure followed throughout the study, and the data analysis process initiated to reveal the results of the study.

3.1. Research Design

The current study sought to reveal the blended ER program's impact on EFL learners' attitudes towards reading in English and explore their views of the blended ER program. This study employed a sequential explanatory design based on mixed-methods research, following quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis successively (Creswell et al., 2003). This research design integrates both kinds of data in a study to benefit from the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods and addresses issues related to *priority*, *implementation*, and *integration* of both methods (Ivankova et al., 2006). The design involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data and then qualitative data to elaborate on the outcome of the first data collection phase and merging quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions (Creswell et al., 2003). Accordingly, the current study included a sequence of research stages. In the first place, quantitative and qualitative data were collected, prioritizing the qualitative phase. Following the data collection, the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study were integrated attentively to explore the quantitative and qualitative findings profoundly. Figure 3.1. demonstrates the research design adopted in the current study.

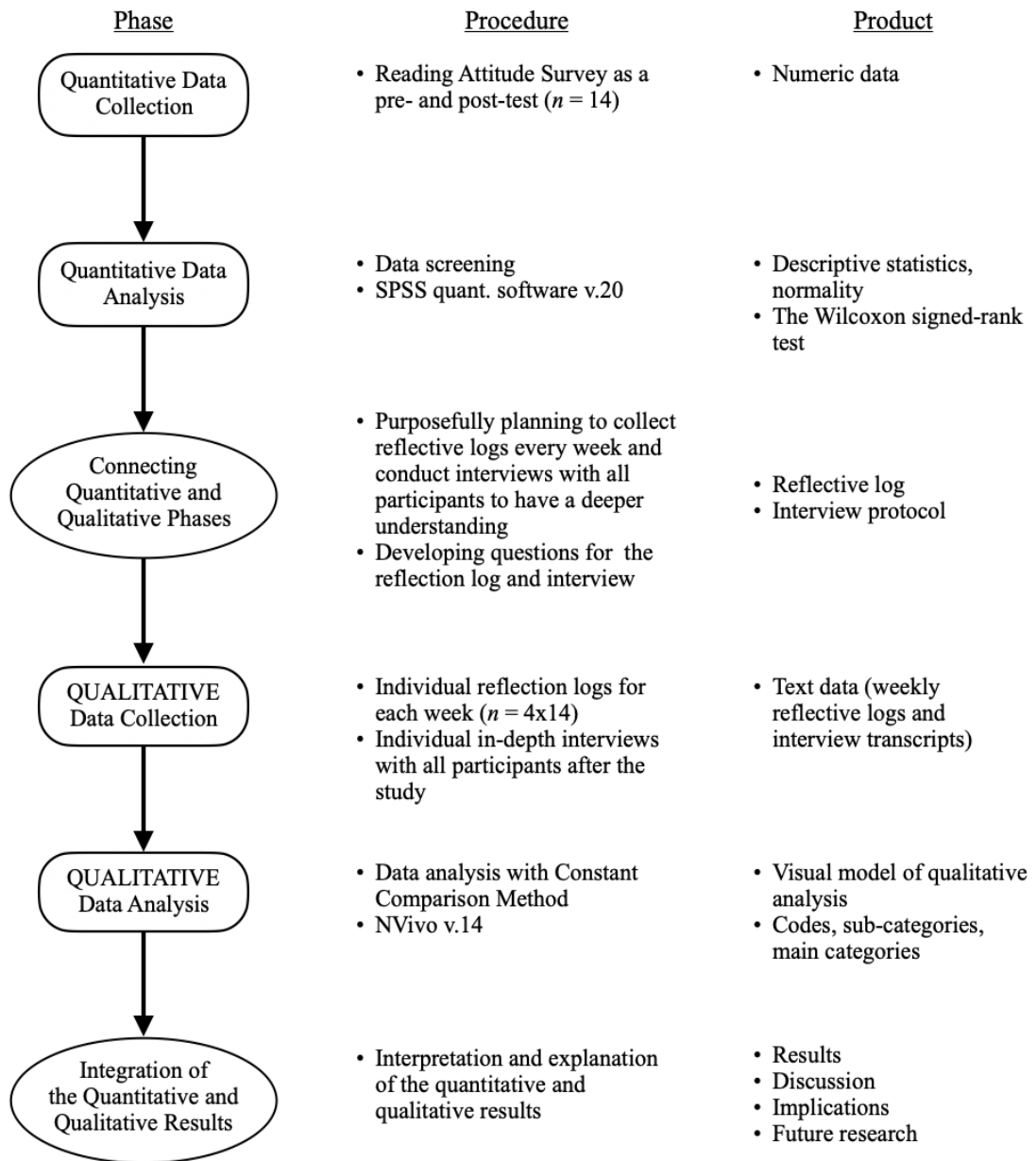


Figure 3.1. Visual model for the current study (adapted and revised from Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006)

3.2 Setting and Participants

3.2.1. Setting

The current study took place in an English preparatory program at a private university in Turkey. Before the start of the academic year in the university, students from various departments must take a proficiency exam prepared by the testing unit of the Foreign Languages Department to identify their proficiency level based on the Common

European Framework Reference (CEFR). After the exam, prepared by the testing unit, the TOEFL ITP examination is administered to identify whether the students who get 70 points or more from the proficiency exam are at B1 or B2 level or at a level where they can attend departmental courses. However, the students who need help getting at least 70 points are in the classrooms for A1-A2 proficiency levels. During the fall term, students' language skills, reading, listening, writing, and speaking, are evaluated through quizzes and midterm and final exams prepared by the testing unit. At the end of the term, if the students get a total grade above 80, they pass a higher-level class for the spring term. Subsequently, they must get 510 from the TOEFL ITP examination, administered after finishing an academic term. In that case, they graduate from the English preparatory program and start the next academic term in their departments.

This study was conducted in the spring term of the 2022-2023 academic year, and the participants were chosen from the B1 level classrooms for two main reasons. The participants were not selected from B2 level classrooms because of the washback effect, defined as the potential influence of testing on language teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Since the students must get a specific score from the TOEFL ITP examination to start at their departments, most B2 level students have concerns about the classes and the examination. The reason for not selecting the students in the A1-A2 level classes was the students' need to reach a linguistic threshold level of proficiency and become more proficient readers to read extensively (Carrell, 1988; Schaller, 1997).

Students in the B1 level classrooms are required to attend 25 hours of English classes every week. The classes are divided into three courses: 15 hours of the main course, five hours of an integrated TOEFL and writing course, and five hours of a listening and speaking course with different instructors. English language skills are taught in an integrative fashion, and a coursebook is followed for each kind of course. Regarding the reading-focused classes, a typical reading class starts with the lead-in stage to highlight the lesson's topic and continues with the pre-teaching vocabulary stage to prepare them for the text. Afterwards, students are required to read the text intensively and answer the comprehension questions. In the last stage of the class, they are encouraged to use the language in a post-activity related to the topic of the class. Reading skills are mainly improved within class hours except for assignments; however, there is no extramural reading activity given through extensive reading.

3.2.2. Participants

The convenience sampling method was employed to select participants as the participants were available, had time to join an ER program and were voluntary to participate (Creswell, 2012). At the beginning of the study, 17 B1 level EFL learners of an English preparatory program at a private university in Türkiye were enrolled in the study. Prior to the study, all participants signed the consent forms (see Appendix A) and were informed about the ER program, guaranteeing their voluntary participation. They were free to opt out of the study anytime upon their request. Throughout the study, three participants left the program of their free will without giving any reasons. Therefore, the data obtained from these three learners were discarded and not analyzed. As a result, a total of 14 participants took part in the study. In order to assure anonymity, pseudonyms are used instead of the participants' real names. Since the participation was voluntary, the researcher first introduced the program to her former students in B1 level classrooms. Afterwards, an orientation program was held by the researcher for the volunteers.

Before starting the blended ER program, a background survey was sent to the participants via Google Forms to identify the participants' demographic information, past reading experiences, and attitudes towards reading in both English and Turkish (see Appendix B). Of 14 participants who took part in the study, 11 of them were females, and three of them were males. Their ages ranged between 18 and 22. The participants had been learning English as their first foreign language for generally 6-11 years and graduated from different types of high schools such as Anatolian, science, and private high schools. Although they were in the preparatory program during the research, their majors were diverse, such as computer engineering, law, economics, architecture, psychology, and so on.

As for their past reading experiences and reading attitudes in Turkish and English, the participants generally enjoyed reading in Turkish and spent chiefly 4-6 hours a week reading in Turkish. Likewise, some participants ($n = 8$) favored reading in English, while others ($n=6$) did not enjoy reading in English due to comprehension problems, lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and boredom. Moreover, the challenges of reading in English were stated as insufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammar and difficulty with comprehension. All participants found reading in English beneficial as it helps language learners develop their proficiency and learn the target language's culture. On the other hand, most of the participants did not allocate time to reading in English for

pleasure according to their interest, while few of them generally spent two hours a week reading interesting materials in English, such as short stories, articles, blogs about games and technology, and posts and memes on social media. It was found that they read digitally in English for generally less than an hour a week. Some participants stated multiple challenges they encountered in digital reading, such as eye strain, less comprehension, inadequate knowledge of functional use of language in online environments, and difficulty with taking notes. See Figure 3.2. for the details related to the types of materials they read in English.

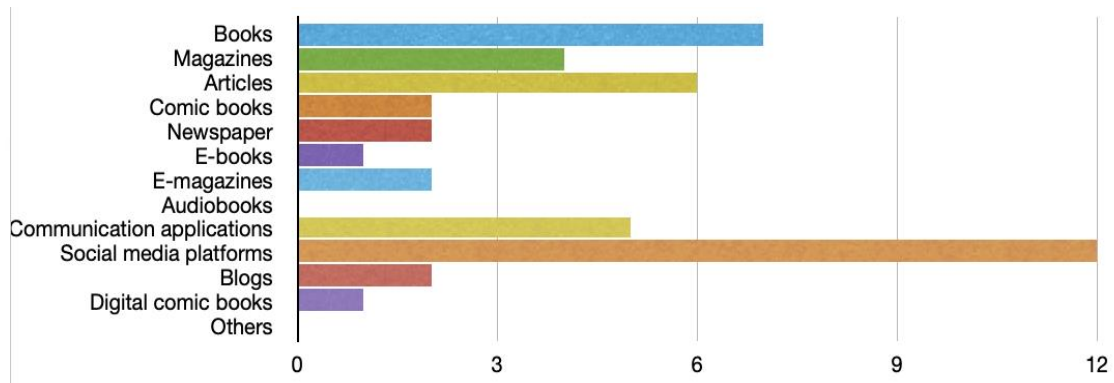


Figure 3.2. Background information about the genres participants read in English

Considering the participants' responses to the background survey, an ER program including LMSs, and digital reading was designed within the framework of blended learning to provide opportunities for reading for pleasure, improve their EFL reading skills in the digital world, and enhance their reading attitudes toward English.

3.3. Blended Extensive Reading Program

In light of Day and Bamford's principles (2002), current research in ER (e.g., Arnold, 2009; Chen, 2018; Renandya et al., 2021; Wang & Ho, 2019; Yamashita, 2013; Zhou & Day, 2021), and characteristics of blended learning in ER and the literature (e.g., Chantap & Wasanasomithi, 2019; Fatimah et al., 2020; Jeon, 2017; Xiong, 2022), a blended extensive reading program, which is a combination of online and face-to-face learning, was designed. The study was initially supposed to last 11 weeks, with eight weeks dedicated to the blended ER program. However, Türkiye was struck by severe earthquakes that affected the entire country and tertiary education settings. The higher education system switched from face-to-face to online learning since student dormitories were used for earthquake victims. Thus, it was not possible to go on the blended ER

program as it was planned. What is more, some participants could not be reached after the university education system's switch to an online/hybrid learning modality. The others did not want to continue the online version of this ER program based on volunteerism. For this reason, the study lasted seven weeks, with four weeks allocated for the program. Table 3.1. demonstrates the research plan of the study.

Table 3.1. *Research plan of the study*

Week	Data Collection Procedure
Week 1	• The blended ER program is introduced to the students.
Week 2	• An orientation session is held to detail the program and its tools. • After the orientation session, volunteer participation forms are distributed, and the background and Reading Attitude Survey are sent via Google Forms. • Introductory week starts to get participants used to the blended ER program and to cultivate reading habits and positive L2 reading attitudes.
Week 3	• The first week of the blended ER program starts. • The participants are required to keep reading logs on Padlet after each act of reading. • A face-to-face meeting is held, and the participants perform tasks to share their reading experiences. • After the meeting, the reflective logs of the first week are sent to the participants.
Week 4	• The second week of the blended ER program starts. • The same steps in the first week are followed.
Week 5	• The third week of the blended ER program starts. • The same steps in the first week are followed.
Week 6	• The fourth week of the blended ER program starts. • The same steps in the first week are followed.
Week 7	• The Reading Attitude Survey is sent to the participants after finishing the program. • The semi-structured interviews are held with each participant.

In the first week of the study, the blended ER program was introduced to the learners in B1 level classes, and the second week involved an orientation meeting to introduce the program and LMSs, Google Classroom and Padlet, in detail, administering the background survey and Reading Attitude Survey as a pre-test. As a trial of the blended ER program, the second week was the introductory week to ER. In the following four weeks, the blended ER program started. Throughout the blended ER program, the

participants were expected to follow the principles of ER by reading digital or printed materials within their interest and linguistic level in their free time and minimizing dictionary use to keep the flow of reading. They were required to keep reading logs about what they read in a day, participate in weekly meetings by performing follow-up tasks about what they read, and fill out weekly reflection forms about their reading experiences to collect data. In line with the tenth principle of ER (Day & Bamford, 2002), the researcher acted as a mentor and followed the program as a participant to be a model to the participants. In the last week of the study, the Reading Attitude Survey was sent to the participants as a post-test, and semi-structured interviews were held with each participant (n = 14).

3.3.1. Rationale of the Blended ER Program

To design the present study, a small-scale pilot study was implemented by the same researcher in the previous term. Based on the outcomes of the pilot study, the existing needs and characteristics of the Turkish EFL tertiary-level context were considered to plan and design the current blended ER program. It was concluded that an ER program integrated with blended learning would be suitable and effective for the study and its context rather than a fully online or traditional ER program.

One of the reasons for developing a blended ER program was the pilot study's findings in which a fully online ER program was conducted, and the participants' views were taken regarding the program's strengths and weaknesses. The pilot study took place in the same context with two participants for six weeks in the 2021-2022 academic year. In the first week of the program, there were six participants. However, four of them withdrew from the study based on voluntary participation. The findings related to the piloting suggested that conducting weekly meetings face-to-face instead of online would be more beneficial to increase students' motivation and keep them more engaged with the program. It was revealed that learners mostly preferred face-to-face environments since meeting in person promotes social skills, as Marriot, Marriot, and Selwyn (2004) suggested. On the other hand, the contribution of online learning delivery is undeniable due to its flexibility, accessibility, and wide range of resources. Most learners need guidance to make the most of the digital world due to the information pollution and vastness of the Internet. Thus, integrating a blended learning modality into ER might be

beneficial to guide and monitor learners to optimize their reading experiences (Xiong, 2022).

Unlike university-funded online ER studies (e.g., Cote & Milliner, 2015; Jeon, 2017; Puripunyavanich, 2021; Zhou & Day, 2021), the current study was not funded to establish a well-designed digital ER program. Instead, Google Classroom, a free LMS developed by Google for educational purposes, was employed to create an open-access virtual classroom where the program content, suggested reading materials and various follow-up tasks were posted. Using Google Classroom makes the blended ER program practical for any language classroom and accessible to every teacher worldwide.

Taking the characteristics of young adult learners into account, it is necessary to create an effective learning environment since they have expectations, past experiences, and divergent sociocultural contexts and belong to different generations, such as Y, Z, and Alpha (Luka, 2019; Pätzold, 2011; Rothwell, 2008; Williams, 2018). Therefore, blended learning functions as a bridge that combines online and face-to-face delivery of learning. For instance, under the influence of their past experiences, some readers may prefer paper-based reading materials. In contrast, others may favor reading digital materials for pleasure since they are digitally literate, and digital reading is convenient compared to paper-based reading.

Considering the nature of ER and the advantages of blended learning, the participants were allowed to read more than just digital materials or specific genres and materials in the blended ER program. Instead, they were given a space where alternatives were offered, such as various reading resources (magazines, graded readers, blogs, news, horoscope predictions, movie/book reviews, short stories, etc.), preference for reading printed or online, and multiple follow-up tasks. Likewise, the participants were not restricted to reading for a certain amount of time since reading extensively is an activity for pleasure. Consequently, based on the reasons above, instead of a fully online or traditional ER program, implementing an ER program in a blended learning setup appeared to be the most suitable approach in this study.

3.3.2 Features of the Blended Extensive Reading Program

Given the features of ER and blended learning, this study tried to adopt the essential features of ER and provide a well-designed blended learning modality described as a model involving the strengths and excluding the weaknesses of traditional and online

learning (Graham, 2013). Pertaining to the online delivery of learning aspect of the current study, this study employed LMSs, referring to a series of Internet applications employed to provide content to learners and to engage them with collaborative knowledge building and sharing. One of the LMSs used in the study was Google Classroom, a free website developed by Google for educational purposes as a virtual classroom. The other system was Padlet, a web-based platform allowing users to create an online bulletin board (Jong & Tan, 2021; Sangeetha, 2016), and it was used as a virtual reading log. Lastly, an instant chat application called WhatsApp was utilized to provide feedback as immediately as possible and strengthen the interaction between the learners and the instructor. These three tools were selected as they were user-friendly, free, open-access, and have archival and posting features.

The functionality of digital environments can affect learners' engagement in blended learning (Kintu et al., 2017; Pituch & Lee, 2006; Shrain, 2012). Thus, in the current study, a virtual library on Google Classroom and reading logs on Padlet were designed meticulously by the researcher. Three experts in the field were consulted on the appropriateness of these tools. In addition to utilizing learning management systems, the learners were encouraged to read online materials to be competent readers with flexible adaptability for effective and critical involvement in increasing numbers of new forms of media (Pardede, 2020).

In agreement with the ER principles (Day & Bamford, 2002), the Internet not only offers interesting and authentic materials but also gives them the freedom to read at their own pace on any material they want (Blin, 1999; Chantap & Wasanasomithi, 2019; Pinkman, 2005). However, the learners were not restricted to reading only online materials or for a specific duration to avoid generating negative feelings towards the blended ER program. Additionally, not giving a preference to learners is against the nature of ER and its principles (Day and Bamford, 2002). Following the principles proposed by Day and Bamford (2002) to promote the enjoyment of reading in L2, the current study postulated the principles as a guideline for ER and attempted to implement most of them. In other words, providing learners with various reading materials within their interest and linguistic level to read as much as possible and faster for general understanding, promoting independent reading as a rewarding and enjoyable activity without assessing the learners, and guiding learners and being a role model to them aspired this study.

With respect to the study’s traditional delivery of learning aspect, the participants were given a choice to ask for and read printed materials. Additionally, weekly face-to-face meetings allowed the participants to share their reading experiences by performing follow-up tasks. Another reason the weekly meetings were held in a physical environment was that greater learning experiences occur when teachers create a face-to-face setting since it reduces the psychological gap between the teachers and learners (Kelley & Gorham, 2009). It was suggested by Luka (2019) to place emphasis on “face-to-face class learning and group work,” although the proportion of face-to-face and online learning may differ in blended learning studies. Through a precise evaluation, it was concluded that face-to-face sessions help learners reduce isolation from other learners by enabling them to take part in a physical environment. Figure 3.3. summarizes the components of the blended ER program.

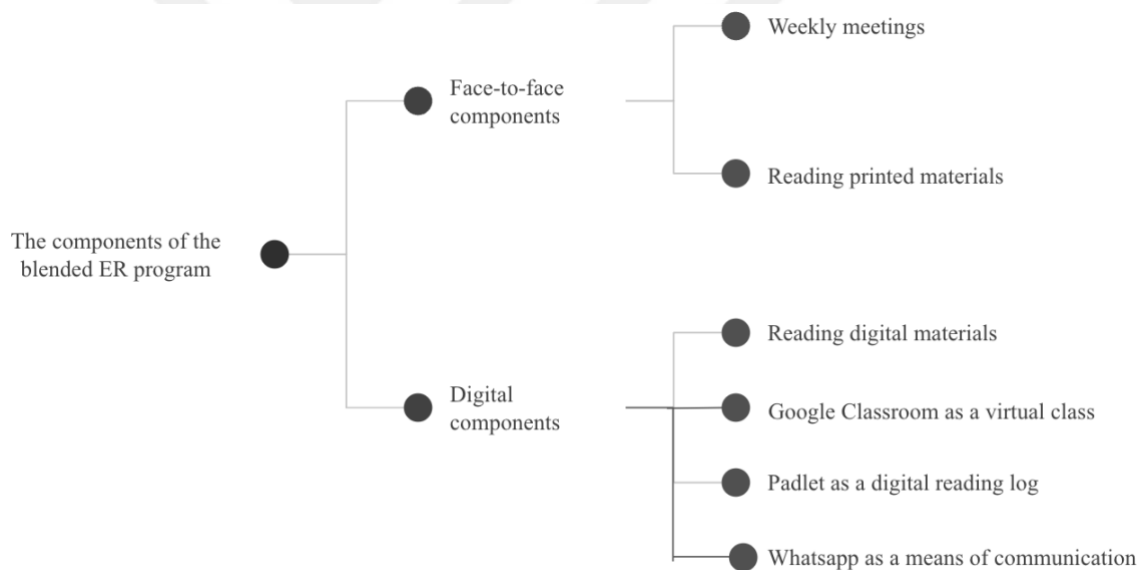


Figure 3.3. *The components of the blended ER program*

3.3.3 Tools Used in the Blended ER Program

With the primary intention of developing the digital aspect of the program as efficiently as possible, LMSs were incorporated into the program. Furthermore, to enable the traditional aspect of the blended learning setup, follow-up tasks were generated for the participants to choose one or more to share what they read during the weekly meetings. Thus, these tools are presented in this section as Google Classroom, Padlet, WhatsApp, and follow-up tasks and face-to-face weekly meetings. In the process of developing the digital platforms of the blended ER program, three experts in ELT and

two instructors who were teaching at B1 level classrooms during the study were consulted on the tools' relevance to the current study and digital platforms' interface and content.

3.3.3.1 Google Classroom

Google Classroom, a free LMS developed by Google for educational purposes, provides various opportunities to enhance student and teacher communication. It was employed to create a virtual classroom and library for the blended ER program in the study. Since the participants were inexperienced in reading for pleasure in English and digital reading, they needed guidance to read extensively. Therefore, they were offered a wide range of websites, including reading materials about various topics within their linguistic level under the 'Reading Materials' post as a library. the 'Reading Materials' post is demonstrated in Figure 3.4.



Suggested Reading Websites



Zeynep Yadigar Tosun • 29 Kas 2022 (Düzenlenme: 11:49)

★ *The reading websites are divided into 4 difficulty levels. In the first group (1), there are the simplest texts with everyday expressions and very basic phrases. In the second group (2), there are simple texts with everyday language and familiar structures and vocabulary. In the third group (3), there are various texts which are slightly more difficult and longer. In the last group (For all levels), you can find websites for all levels. You can choose whichever text you want according to your difficulty preference.* ★

⚠️ **READ:** Read quickly and Enjoyably with Adequate comprehension, so you Don't need a dictionary ⚠️

★ 1 (the simplest texts) ★

📖 Books / stories 📖:

- <https://learnenglish-new.com/category/english-short-stories-for-beginners/>
- <https://english-e-reader.net/level/starter>

📖 Articles on various topics 📖:

- <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading/a1-reading>
- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading/a2-reading>
- <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/reading-practice>
- <https://www.ngllife.com/content/reading-texts-word>

📖 News 📖:

- <https://www.newsinlevels.com/>
- <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/>

★ 2 (simple texts which are slightly below) ★

📖 Books / stories 📖:

- <https://learnenglish-new.com/category/stories-for-elementary/>
- <https://freegradedreaders.com/wordpress/a2/>
- <https://english-e-reader.net/level/elementary>
- <https://worldstories.org.uk/lang/english>
- <https://or4f.org/#ESLREAD> (short stories)

📖 Articles on various topics 📖:

- <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading/a2-reading>
- <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/graded-reading/a2-graded-reading>
- <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/reading-practice>
- <https://www.ngllife.com/content/reading-texts-word>

📖 News 📖:

- <https://www.newsinlevels.com/>
- <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/>

★ 3 (texts slightly above or at your level) ★

📖 Books / stories 📖:

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/features/drama/> (dramas)
- <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/lals/resources/paul-nations-resources/readers> (books)
- <http://www.manythings.org/voa/people/> (biographies)
- <http://www.manythings.org/voa/stories/> (stories)
- <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Short-Stories-With-a-Twist-Ending> (short stories with a twist ending)
- <https://learnenglish-new.com/category/pre-intermediate/> (books)
- <http://www.bibliomania.com/0/-/frameset.html> (fiction books, short stories, poetry, drama, interviews, articles)

📖 Articles on various topics 📖:

- <https://www.englishclub.com/reading/>
- <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/graded-reading/b1-graded-reading>
- <https://www.history.com/> (about world history)
- <https://www.worldhistory.org/> (about world history)
- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/business-english/business-magazine> (about business topics and issues)
- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/general-english/magazine-zone> (about global issues, special days and festivals)
- <https://www.ngllife.com/content/reading-texts-word>
- <http://www.manythings.org/voa/history/> (American history)
- <http://www.manythings.org/voa/health/> (about health)
- <http://www.manythings.org/voa/how/> ('How to do things?')
- <http://www.manythings.org/voa/space/> (about space exploration)
- <https://www.joe.co.uk/?ref=logo> (various topics)
- <https://www.archdaily.com/tag/architecture> (articles about architecture)

📰 News 📰:

- <https://www.newsinlevels.com/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/newsreview-2022>
- <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/>
- https://engoo.com/app/daily-news?max_level=5&min_level=5

🌟 4 (for all levels) 🌟

- Simple version of Wikipedia 🧐 => https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
- Quizzes for fun (like Onedio) 🧐 => <https://www.buzzfeed.com/quizzes>
- Recipes 🍳 => <https://tasty.co/> <https://www.learnenglish.de/recipespage.html>
- <https://www.mentalfloss.com/> => articles with various interesting topics

Figure 3.4. Screenshots of the post 'Suggested Reading Websites'

While preparing the virtual library, adding websites with various topics and genres within the participants' proficiency level was considered. In order to identify appropriate websites, the following inclusion criteria were used to select the websites:

- including open-access resources,
- not requiring a premium subscription for reading,
- editorially justifiable in terms of copyrights,
- appropriate for pedagogical purposes and developed by well-known publishers in the ELT field, such as National Geographic, British Council, BBC Learning English, etc.,
- comprising reading materials within the participants' linguistic level.

After identifying the websites, the links were grouped into four categories according to their difficulty levels: 1 = the simplest texts, 2 = simple texts slightly below their level, 3 = texts at their level or slightly above, 4 = for all levels cannot be grouped. The instructors teaching at B1 level classrooms discussed their relevance and appropriateness. The opinions of the experts in the ELT field on the issue were taken, and necessary changes were made accordingly. Furthermore, the participants were allowed to

choose reading materials apart from the list on Google Classroom since self-selected reading is one of the core features of ER.

In addition to the suggested reading materials, a guideline for reading extensively was prepared and shared on Google Classroom. Besides, any link the participants would need was posted in the virtual classroom. Thus, the researcher conducted the study in an organized way since Google Classroom allowed her to share everything related to the program as posts, and the posts in the virtual classroom were easily accessible to the participants. Another advantage is that Google Classroom is a free and open-access platform. That is, the creator of the virtual classroom can share the link with other teachers as viewers to benefit from the materials, activities, and content of a class. See Figure 3.5. for the overview of Google Classroom (see Appendix C for the interface and contents of the posts on Google Classroom).

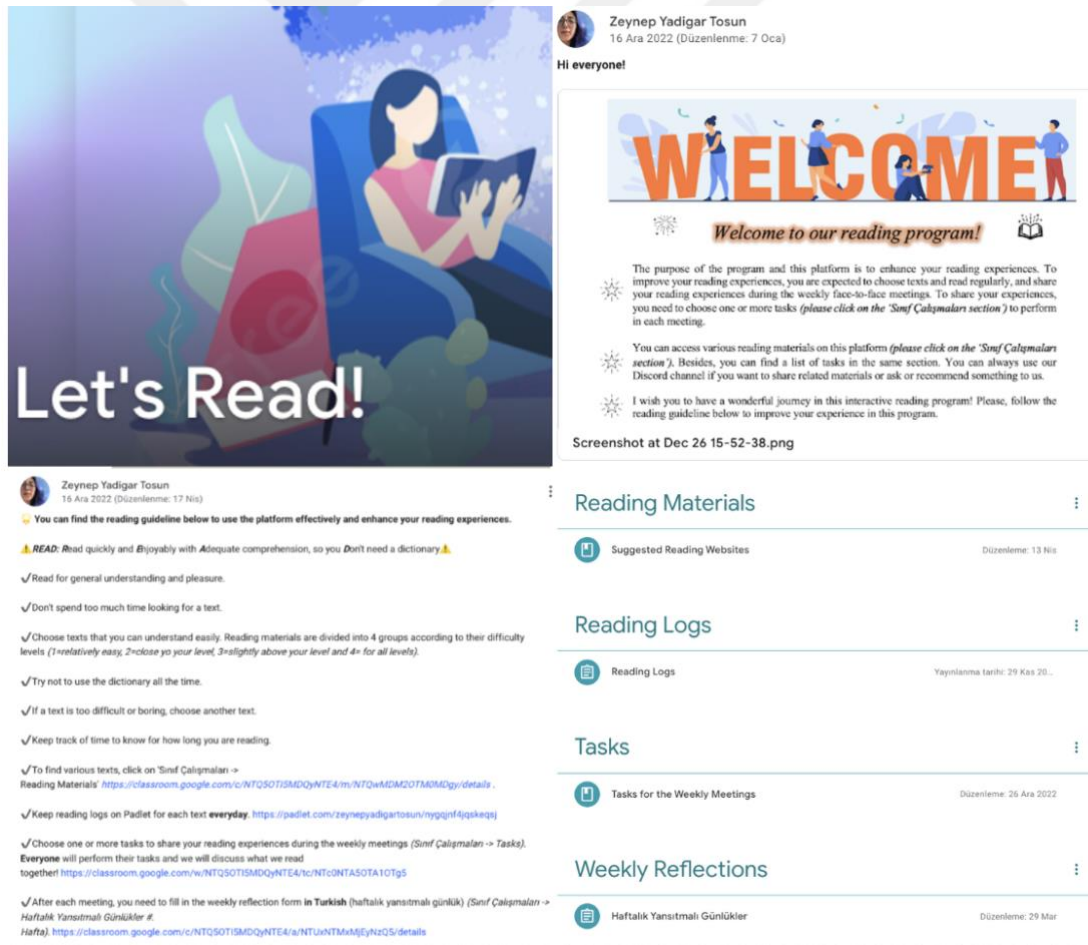


Figure 3.5. Overview of Google Classroom

3.3.3.2 Padlet

Another learning management system utilized in the study was Padlet, in which people organize and share their ideas or content with others on a bulletin-like board. Due to its accessibility and convenience, Padlet was used to monitor the participants' reading processes and help them keep track of their progress in reading. It is suggested that monitoring is necessary to carry out an effective ER program since it allows teachers to keep track of their students' reading progress, habits, and preferences (Bell, 1998; Chien & Yu, 2015). Additionally, the participants of the pilot study pointed out that keeping a reading log on Padlet motivated them to read more and helped them realize their progress in the time allocated to reading for pleasure. Hence, the participants were required to keep reading logs on Padlet about what they read in a day by recording the date, title, reading time, difficulty, and interest level. Date and reading time were required to track their reading engagement. Besides, they were asked to rate the interest and difficulty level of the texts they read to monitor. The purpose of sharing the title and/or link of their reading materials was to review what other learners read to get some idea about what to read next. In order to present a guideline, a post titled 'How to keep reading logs' was pinned on the page. Figure 3.6. illustrates the interface of Padlet.

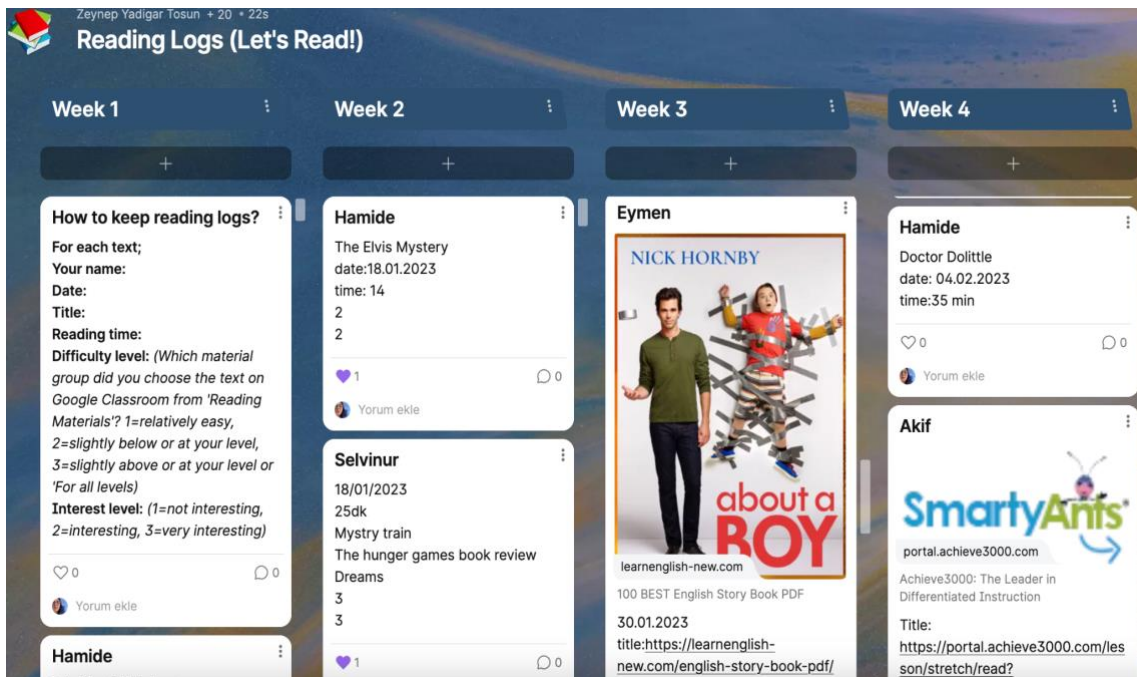


Figure 3.6. The interface of Padlet

3.3.3.3 WhatsApp

WhatsApp was selected as an instant chat application, and a class group was created with the participants. The participants had several options for effective interaction and communication, such as sending texts/audio recordings, media, and files to communicate with each other, and the instructor whenever needed. WhatsApp was selected to facilitate the participants' experiences in the blended ER program since it might reduce the feeling of being isolated from others and encourage learners to become more active during the study by enabling them to maintain communication. In addition, the researcher could help and guide the participants if needed.

3.3.3.4 Face-to-face Weekly Meetings and Follow-up Tasks

In the 21st century, active engagement in learning how to learn and collaborating to learn are crucial for learners. Once they are vigorously involved in their learning process, they may build individual learning aims and be aware of their learning progress (Chai et al., 2015; Garrison, 1992; Imamyartha et al., 2019). The traditional aspect of the delivery of learning is of great value in the blended ER program since the perceived quality of face-to-face sessions, where interactions among group members nurture positive attitudes toward learning, is one of the key factors determining student satisfaction in courses implementing blended learning (Shea et al., 2001; Smith & Kurthen, 2007; Trippe, 2001). Endris (2018) suggested that creating a space for reflection and discussion of critical reading-related topics is crucial since it provides opportunities to practice critical reading and scaffolding. Hence, to give participants a purpose and responsibility, weekly meetings during which the participants performed follow-up tasks were held face-to-face after school hours in the Foreign Languages Department of the university where the study took place.

The follow-up tasks were generated and shared on Google Classroom for the participants to select one or more tasks to perform during the weekly meetings. Such activities and tasks are regarded as highly beneficial because of their great impact on learners' reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills (Fatimah et al., 2020). In addition, follow-up activities promote both critical reading and higher-level thinking skills (Helgesen, 2008; Tomei et al., 2011). In line with the literature, the pilot study's findings revealed that the tasks and weekly meetings fostered the participants' attitudes toward reading in English. They enabled learners to share their reading experiences, motivated

them to read more, and enhanced their speaking skills. Correspondingly, the weekly meetings and follow-up tasks were integrated into the current study since the learners were given a space for reflection on what they read by requiring them to be prepared for the face-to-face meeting to perform tasks.

During the course of generating the tasks, designing intriguing tasks to empower learners to demonstrate their comprehension and encourage analysis and interpretation of a text was intended (Pardede, 2020). The tasks were given in a simple, short, and straightforward format, and links for examples were attached to some tasks to clarify the instructions for the participants. Moreover, Day and Bamford's fifth and sixth principles (2002) were taken into account, which are reading for pleasure and general comprehension and reading for its own reward. Therefore, the participants were not forced to choose only a specific task for a meeting and were not evaluated for their performance in the program. Twenty-three follow-up tasks in total were generated and posted on Google Classroom. Some examples of the tasks are creating an Instagram post about what they read, drawing a favorite or interesting part of a text, reporting what they learned in texts they read, and writing a tweet about their thoughts on what they read (see Appendix D for the list of the tasks).

Concerning the weekly meetings held face-to-face, before coming to the meetings, the participants were asked to choose one or more tasks related to what they read and be prepared to share them with others during the meetings. A circular seating arrangement was adopted during the meetings to optimize the interaction between the groups to the greatest extent possible. The meetings were held in English by starting the session with general questions about reading (e.g., What was your favorite time of day for reading this week?, Did you enjoy reading this week? and so on.) and proceeding with the chosen tasks (e.g., guessing the characters' zodiac signs, reporting the news they read like a TV reporter, and so on.) by the participants. The participants were constantly encouraged and scaffolded throughout the meetings to help them speak in English confidently.

3.3.4. Procedure of the Blended Extensive Reading Program

Over the course of the seven-week-long study, the blended ER program lasted for four weeks. At the outset of the study, students at the B1 level were informed of the blended ER program, and the students interested in participating in the program were told

to attend an orientation meeting next week. The face-to-face orientation session was held to introduce the program and show how to use the LMSs employed in the study. Likewise, the program's second week was treated as an introductory week since the participants were inexperienced in ER. Another reason for implementing the introductory week was that teacher guidance is emphasized in the literature since attending a program comprised of both blended learning and reading extensively requires autonomy in learning.

During the introductory week, to start cultivating reading habits and positive attitudes toward reading in English, the participants were encouraged to read interesting materials for pleasure within their comfort zone and keep reading logs on Padlet. Although the reading materials were shared online on Google Classroom, they were not restricted to reading only online materials, and the mode of reading was left to the participants' own decisions. Moreover, they were continuously motivated to read and reminded to stop reading a text that was too difficult or boring. However, they were not restricted to reading every day for a certain amount of time since forcing learners to read is against the nature of ER. Afterwards, a weekly meeting was held on the last day of the introductory week. To guide the participants to the first week of the blended ER program, the researcher asked them to share any reading experiences, concerns about reading extensively, questions about the program, and challenges they faced.

After the introductory week, the first week of the blended ER program started and followed the same steps as in the introductory week. Nevertheless, they were reminded to keep reading logs on Padlet and choose a task before coming to the meeting. After the first week's meeting, as one of the data resources, the first week's reflective log was sent via Google Forms to be filled out by the participants. The following weeks of the program lasted four weeks, followed by the identical process to the first week. Figure 3.7. demonstrates the weekly cycle of the blended ER program.

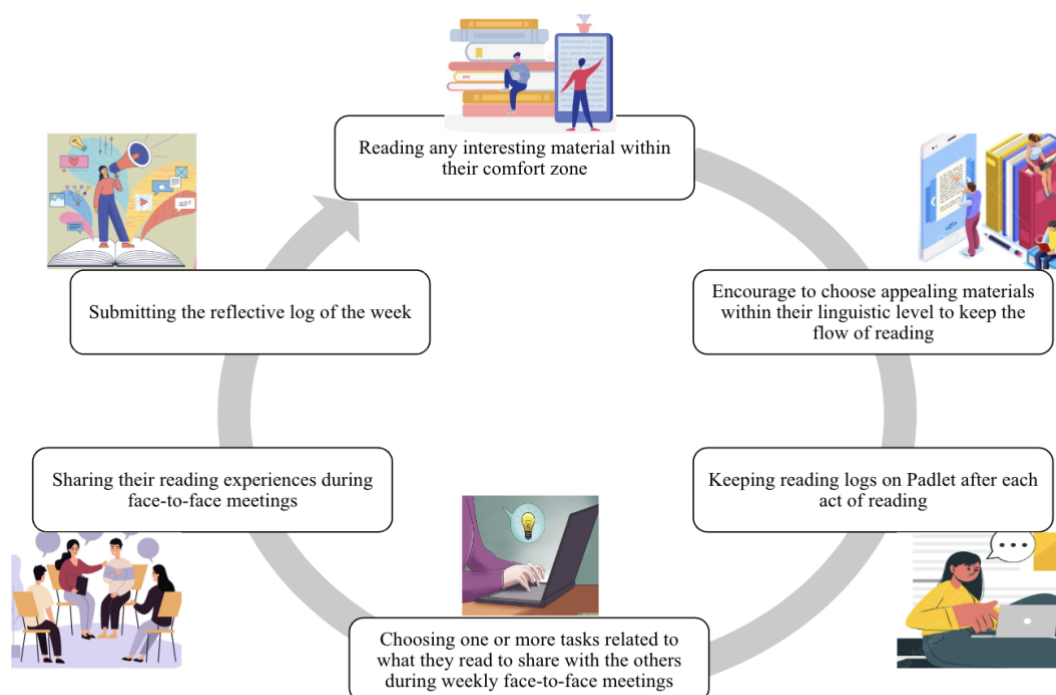


Figure 3.7. Weekly blended ER program cycle

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

The primary focus of the study was to investigate the program's effect on the participants' reading attitudes toward English in an English preparatory program at a private university in Türkiye and unveil their views of the blended ER program. Considering these purposes, quantitative data were gathered through the Reading Attitude Survey (Zhou & Day, 2021), and qualitative data were retrieved from reflective logs and semi-structured interviews. While designing the qualitative data collection instruments, five experts at Anadolu University, ELT Department, were consulted about the suitability and applicability of the instruments and were informed of the purpose of the study. Having considered their feedback, the required changes were made. Table 3.2. displays the research questions, data collection instruments, and data analysis tools.

Table 3.2. Research Questions and Data Collection & Analysis

Research Questions	Data Collection Instruments	Data Analysis
RQ1: Is there any effect of the blended ER program on the tertiary level EFL learners' L2 reading attitudes?	The Reading Attitude Survey (n=14)	SPSS Statistics V.20 • Descriptive statistics • The Wilcoxon signed-rank test

Table 3.2. (Continued) *Research Questions and Data Collection & Analysis*

Research Questions	Data Collection Instruments	Data Analysis
RQ2: What are the tertiary level EFL learners' views of the blended ER program?	Weekly reflective logs (n=14) Semi-structured interviews (n=14)	The Constant Comparison Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

3.4.1. The Reading Attitude Survey

Zhou and Day's Reading Attitude Survey was adopted as a pre-and post-test to unveil the impact of online ER on students' attitudes toward reading. This scale aimed to investigate the extent to which online ER affected the English reading attitudes of learners in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. The items questioned learners' attitudes towards reading in English, along with the statements about their confidence and enjoyment in L2 reading (see Appendix E). The responses to 15 items on a four-point Likert scale in the Reading Attitude Survey proved the reliability of the questionnaire with Cronbach's Alpha scores of .883 for the pre-and .857 for the post-test (Zhou & Day, 2021).

The researcher contacted Zhou and Day and got permission to use the Reading Attitude Survey in this study. To determine whether the blended ER program had an impact on the participants reading attitudes and to explore the effects of the program (if any), the Reading Attitude Survey developed by Zhou and Day (2021) was sent to the participants before and after the program via Google Forms. Due to the simply structured items in the questionnaire compared to the participants' proficiency level, it was not translated into the native language of the participants, Turkish. Yet, the participants were supported whenever they needed language assistance while filling in the Reading Attitude Survey.

3.4.2. Reflective Logs

In pursuit of having a deeper understanding of the participants' views of the blended ER program and its influence on the participants, four questions were generated to investigate the participants' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about their reading experiences (see Appendix F). Bearing the frame of the study in mind, the questions were mainly aimed at exploring the participants' attitudes toward reading and views of the program. The questions were formed in the participants' native language to avoid

misunderstandings and ensure they felt comfortable expressing their feelings, ideas, and views. The reflective logs were sent to the participants via Google Forms after each weekly meeting. In other words, each participant was required to fill out a reflective log to reflect on their week by considering their reading experiences.

3.4.3. Semi-structured Interviews

Since the study had been planned to last for 11 weeks by allocating eight weeks to the process of the blended ER program, as mentioned earlier, the data obtained from the reflective logs had been assumed to be more. However, the duration of the program was curtailed from eight weeks to four weeks because of severe earthquakes hitting Türkiye (see 3.3. Blended Extensive Program). As a result, the current study lasted for a total of seven weeks, allocating four weeks to the blended ER program. After completing the program, all participants were interviewed through semi-structured one-to-one interviews.

Conducting one-to-one interviews provides a deep understanding of qualitative data (Creswell, 2013). Accordingly, open-ended questions were generated, and five experts at Anadolu University were consulted to ensure the reliability of the questions. Afterwards, the questions were asked during the interviews to get answers to the research questions (see Appendix G for semi-structured interview questions). The questions aimed to explore the participants' views of the blended ER program and to detect any impact of the program on their reading experiences in English. The interviews were held in the participants' native language, Turkish, to avoid impediments enabling them to share their opinions, such as language limitations. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim to analyze the data.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure lasted seven weeks. Before the study's data collection process, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Committee of Anadolu University (see Appendix H). Having sent a research proposal to the Department of Foreign Languages of the private university where the study took place, the researcher received the necessary permission to conduct the study. The data collection procedure was initiated after the approvals for implementing the current study. The weekly data collection procedure is as follows:

- In the first week, the convenience sampling method was employed in this study, and the researcher explained the aims and program of the blended ER program to the EFL learners at the B1 level through a presentation. Afterwards, the learners interested in taking part in the study were invited to an orientation meeting that would be held the following week.
- The majority of the participants were inexperienced in ER and L2 digital reading. Thus, an orientation session was conducted. 17 students attended the orientation meeting about the program's aims, requirements, and tools. The consent forms were distributed to the participants after a detailed presentation regarding the blended ER program, the use of the LMSs, and a question-answer session. The background survey and the Reading Attitude Survey were sent to them via Google Forms. After the orientation session, the week was announced to be an introductory week to ER. The reason for conducting an introductory week was to get learners used to reading for pleasure and help them understand what ER is. No responsibilities were given to the participants, such as keeping reading logs or submitting the reflective log of the week. They were asked only to read extensively as much as possible.
- Throughout the implementation of the blended ER program lasting four weeks, weekly reflective logs were gathered via Google Forms after each meeting. In time, three learners left the study and the data gathered from them were discarded.
- Having finished the sixth week of the data collection process, the participants received the Reading Attitude Survey (Zhou & Day, 2021) at the end of the blended ER program to identify their reading attitudes in English after the treatment.
- Following the completion of the program, to elicit the views and reading experiences of all participants concerning the blended ER program, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant (n = 14). The one-to-one interviews were video-recorded and transcribed.

3.6. Data Analysis

The current study obtained data from multiple data collection instruments: the Reading Attitude Survey, weekly reflective logs, and semi-structured interviews. The findings gathered from several instruments might increase the reliability and consistency

of the study and allow comparisons within the data sources (Creswell, 2013). Quantitative data gathered from the Reading Attitude Survey before and after the program were used to find answers to the first research question regarding the effect of the blended ER program on the participants' English reading attitudes. First, descriptive statistics were employed to calculate the means and frequencies and assess the normality of the data. To computerize the quantitative data's means and frequencies and normal distribution, reverse scoring was used since items 7, 9, 12, 13, and 14 were reversely coded on the scale (Zhou & Day, 2021). The p-value of the normality test was more significant than 0.05, which showed that the data were normally distributed. Nonetheless, the opinion of an expert in ELT at Anadolu University was taken if the study's small sample size ($n = 14$) would violate the normality test. He recommended using a non-parametric test because of the high probability of violating the sample size. Hence, a non-parametric test called the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used instead of a paired samples t-test to identify the effects of the blended ER program on the reading attitudes of the participants. To analyze the quantitative data, the SPSS IBM software v.20 package program was employed.

The data collected through weekly reflective logs and semi-structured interviews were analyzed qualitatively using the Constant Comparison Method (CCM) for more in-depth information on the second research question. Employing the CCM enables researchers to distinguish codes and themes that are not initially apparent and to gain deeper insights into the views and ideas of participants (Nunan, 1992). Based on the ideals of grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the CCM is a cyclical process of analyzing qualitative data involving several steps to reveal relationships within the data: (1) initial coding, (2) refining and revising the codes occurred within the data, (3) combining similar codes to determine subcategories, and then (4) identifying main categories by constantly comparing the subcategories. Putting a step-by-step comparison at the center of the analysis allows researchers to do what is required to generate a theory inductively (Boeije, 2002). Accordingly, in the interviews and reflective logs, any sensible word or phrase involving ideas, views, feelings, and thoughts of the participants' views of the blended ER program and reading experiences in the program was referred to as a code. NVivo 14, a qualitative data analysis software, was employed to analyze the data. With respect to the principles of the CCM, the qualitative data were analyzed, and codes were identified. Having listed the codes, the ones that conveyed similar ideas were

constantly grouped by comparing and contrasting with one another. By repeatedly following this process, codes grouped together were used to reach sub-categories. Lastly, frequently compared sub-categories established the main categories (see Appendix I for the codebook of the qualitative analysis taken from NVivo 14).

In order to increase the reliability of the analysis, another rater who had prior experience with qualitative data analysis participated in the qualitative data analysis process of the current study. Given the enormous amount of data, the co-rater analyzed 10% of the whole data by analyzing %30 of the reflective logs, as O'Connor and Joffe (2020) stated as a typical and adequate portion for inter-rater reliability. Initially, %30 of the data from the reflective logs were coded by two raters independently. Then, the coded data were discussed to go through any disagreements and come to an agreement. The percentage agreement formula “number of agreements x 100 / number of agreements + number of disagreements” (Huberman & Miles, 2002) was employed to calculate the inter-rater reliability score. The inter-rater reliability of the coders was found to be .84, indicating a high reliability level.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Overview of the Study

The main aim of this study was to trace any change in their attitudes towards reading in English and to explore their views regarding the blended ER program by fostering the reading experiences of Turkish EFL learners at a tertiary level through a blended ER program. Aligned with this prospect, the research questions below were asked in this study:

RQ1: Is there any effect of the blended ER program on the tertiary level EFL learners' L2 reading attitudes?

RQ2: What are the tertiary level EFL learners' views of the blended ER program?

For the implications of these questions, the blended ER program was carried out with 14 B1-level EFL learners enrolled in an English preparatory program at a private Turkish university. Quantitative data were collected before and after the program through the Reading Attitude Survey developed by Zhou and Day (2021) to address the first research question. The change in their reading attitudes was analyzed with descriptive analysis with the mean scores and Wilcoxon signed-rank test to determine whether there was a significant difference between pre-and post-test results. To answer the second research question and to gain deeper insights into the participants' reading experiences, weekly reflective logs were requested from each participant, and semi-structured interviews held with each learner were analyzed qualitatively using the Constant Comparison Method. After seven weeks of data collection and analysis, the results in the following sections were reached and meticulously scrutinized in the following sections.

4.2. RQ1: Is there any effect of the blended ER program on the tertiary level EFL learners' L2 reading attitudes?

In order to investigate the participants' attitudes towards reading in English before and after the blended ER program, the Reading Attitude Survey (Zhou & Day, 2021) was administered as pre-and post-tests. The results of the quantitative analysis are demonstrated below.

Initially, descriptive analysis was performed to display whether there were any changes in the answers given to the questionnaire's items ranked on a four-point Likert scale before and after the blended ER program (see Table 4.1.). For descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviations for pre and post-test scores were analyzed. The scores given

to each statement (1 to 4) were tallied. The statements ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), and reverse scoring was used for statements 7, 9, 12,13, and 14. As suggested by Zhou and Day (2021), if they were not reversely coded, these statements would cause a lower mean score in the pre-and post-tests since the items question a negative aspect of the participants' attitudes towards reading in English. The results of the descriptive analysis are demonstrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. *Descriptive Statistics Related to the Pre- and Post-Reading Attitude Survey*

	Mean (Pre)	SD	Mean (Post)	SD	N
1. I have confidence in reading English books.	2,36	0,63	3,00	0,55	14
2. I find reading in English personally rewarding.	2,93	0,73	3,21	0,69	14
3. I find reading in English fun.	2,64	0,74	3,14	0,36	14
4. I find reading in English useful.	3,29	0,72	3,57	0,51	14
5. It is easy for me to read English.	2,21	0,89	2,64	0,63	14
6. I read English books, comics, newspaper, etc., outside of class.	2,21	0,80	3,00	0,78	14
7. When I read English, I need to look up many words in the dictionary.	1,93	0,91	2,43	0,93	14
8. When I read English, I am very interested in what I read.	2,64	1	3,29	0,61	14
9. I find reading English boring.	2,86	0,66	3,29	0,72	14
10. After reading English, I am very interested in what I read.	2,43	0,85	2,93	0,45	14
11. I would like to read more English.	3,14	0,77	3,29	0,46	14
12. I do not enjoy reading English.	3,00	0,55	3,43	0,64	14
13. I am a slow reader when I read in English.	1,93	0,73	2,36	0,63	14
14. When I read English, I don't understand very much.	2,29	0,82	2,93	0,82	14
15. I think reading books for pleasure in English is important.	3,71	0,61	3,86	0,36	14

As seen in Table 4.1., the mean scores of all statements in the questionnaire increased in the post-test. That is, there was a change in the participants' attitudes towards reading in English after the blended ER program. Among all the statements, statement 6 "I read English books, comics, newspaper, etc., outside of class." had the highest mean difference ($M_{pre} = 2.21$ $SD = 0,80$, $M_{post} = 3.00$ $SD = 0,78$). It suggested that the participants started building a reading habit by reading various genres extensively.

Following statement 6, statements 1 “I have confidence in reading English books.” (Mpre = 2.36 SD = 0,63, Mpost = 3.00 SD = 0,55) and 8 “When I read English, I am very interested in what I read.” (Mpre = 2.64 SD = 1, Mpost = 3.29 SD = 0,61) illustrated that the learners’ interest and confidence in L2 reading were enhanced throughout the program. Similarly, statement 14 “When I read English, I don’t understand very much.” had one of the highest differences between the pre-and post-mean scores (Mpre = 2.29 SD = 0,82, Mpost = 2.93 SD = 0,82).

On the other hand, statements 11, 15, 2, and 4 had a relatively lower difference between the pre- and post-mean scores. Among all the statements, statements 11 “I would like to read English more.” (Mpre= 3.14 SD = 0,77, Mpost = 3.29 SD = 0,46) and 15 “I think reading books for pleasure in English is important.” (Mpre = 3.71 SD = 0,61, Mpost = 3.86 SD = 0,36) had the lowest mean score differences. Statements 2 “I find reading in English personally rewarding.” (Mpre = 2.93 SD = 0,73, Mpost = 3.21 SD = 0,69) and 4 “I find reading in English useful.” (Mpre = 3.29 SD = 0,72, Mpost = 3.57 SD = 0,51) also revealed lower mean score differences compared to other statements. As displayed in statements 2, 4, 11, and 15, the participants' value of reading in English did not change much. In brief, the descriptive analysis presented a positive difference between pre- and post-test mean scores.

In order to reveal whether there was a statistically significant difference in the pre-and post-test results, further statistical analysis was performed. First, tests of normality analysis were computerized to find out whether the data showed a normal distribution and could be used for parametric statistical analysis. For this, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov values were analyzed as the study had a small sample size (n = 14). Table 4.2. shows the results regarding the tests of normality below.

Table 4.2. *Tests of Normality*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	p	Statistic	df	p
Pre-test	,128	14	,200*	,966	14	,825
Post-test	,162	14	,200*	,944	14	,474

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As seen in Table 4.2., the Kolmogorov-Smirnov value indicated a normal distribution of data ($p > .05$). However, based on the suggestion of an expert in the ELT field, a non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which is an alternative to a parametric paired samples t-test, was run because the small scale of the study ($n = 14$) could violate the results. To demonstrate the significance of the difference between pre- and post-tests within the same group, the results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test are given in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. *The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test*

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
PostTest - PreTest	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	0,00	0,00	-3,134	0,001
	Positive Ranks	13 ^b	7	91		
	Ties	1 ^c				
	Total	14				

*a. PostTest < PreTest

**b. PostTest > PreTest

***c. PostTest = PreTest

The result of the analysis demonstrated a statistically significant difference between pre-and post-test results ($Z = -3.134$, $p < .001$). This result suggested that the blended ER program had a significantly positive impact on the participants' attitudes towards reading in English. Therefore, the analysis demonstrated that the participants' attitudes towards reading in English changed significantly throughout the blended ER program.

The quantitative data analysis pictures an overall view of the blended ER program's influence on the participants' reading experiences by revealing a significant change in their reading attitudes before and after the blended ER program. Deeper insights into the participants' reading experiences, involving their attitudes towards L2 reading and views of the blended ER program, were provided through weekly reflective logs and semi-structured interviews in the next section.

4.3. RQ2: What are the tertiary level EFL learners' views of the blended ER program?

The second research question was addressed to investigate the participants' views of the blended ER program. After the introduction week, the learners practiced reading extensively for four weeks with the freedom of reading anytime and anywhere and at their own pace. To monitor their progress and engagement in ER, they were required to keep

a digital reading log on Padlet after each act of reading. In order to raise the interaction between the group, create a feeling of attachment, and provide a sense of responsibility and purpose, face-to-face meetings were held on the last day of each week, during which the learners shared their reading experiences through the tasks they had chosen. After each meeting, the participants were asked to fill out the reflective logs involving guidance questions to reflect on their reading experiences in the blended ER program. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant (n = 14) to gain a deeper understanding after the last week of the program. The qualitative data obtained from the reflective logs and semi-structured interviews were analyzed and coded using the Constant Comparison Method.

Based on the participants' answers to the reflective log's first question about what they read and their activities on Padlet, it was unveiled that they engaged in reading various types of texts/genres. In the program's first week, they read blogs, short stories, graded readers, articles, social media posts, and news. In the second and third weeks, it was observed that they tended to read short stories and books more. Similar to the program's first week, they read various types of texts in the last week. It can be concluded that the participants tried to read numerous types of texts in English as much as possible. On the other hand, unlike the first week, in which almost all participants actively engaged with ER, a decrease in their acts of reading was observed both on Padlet and the reflective logs in the following weeks. The qualitative data findings regarding the participants' experiences during the blended ER program are given in detail below.

The qualitative analysis uncovered a total of 957 codes regarding the participants' views of the blended ER program. These codes established two main categories, in particular, the *benefits and strengths of the blended ER program* (640 codes) and the *challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER Program* (317 codes). The main categories identified in the data were exhibited in Table 4.4., and their sub-categories are given in the following sections explaining each main category.

Table 4.4. *The main categories related to the participants' views on the blended ER program*

Main categories	N*
Benefits and Strengths of the Blended ER Program	640
Challenges and Weaknesses of the Blended ER Program	317
Total	957

N*: Number of codes

4.3.1. Benefits and Strengths of the Blended ER Program

The main category pertaining to the benefits and strengths of the blended ER program was constituted of 11 sub-categories, comprising 640 codes in total. The subcategories portrayed that the participants improved their language skills, increased motivation, developed reading attitudes, gained valuable reading experiences, and became autonomous in language learning throughout the blended ER program. The blended ER program also benefited the participants as it involved face-to-face meetings and tasks, a wide range of reading materials on a digital platform with different topics and difficulty levels, and many other opportunities to foster their reading experiences. These sub-categories are demonstrated in detail in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. *The sub-categories related to the benefits and strengths of the blended ER program*

Sub-categories	N*
Enhanced reading skills	120
Motivation for language learning through the blended ER program	103
Positive aspects and benefits of the meetings and tasks	96
Positive Views on the blended ER experiences	67
Reading interesting and appropriate-level materials	56
Favorable features of learning management systems	52
Advantages of digital reading	48
Positive change in attitudes towards reading	38
Opportunities provided in the blended ER program	36
Improved language skills	18
Sense of responsibility	6
Total	640

N*: Number of codes

As demonstrated in Table 4.5., the blended ER program had multifarious aspects from which the participants benefited. The most remarkable benefit of the program was the *enhanced reading skills* (120 codes), such as improved reading comprehension. As the participants got used to reading extensively, their difficulty with comprehension decreased. The participants also decreased dictionary use and developed reading strategies to understand the context of a text, such as guessing unknown words from the contexts. Since they used reading strategies and did not disturb the flow of reading with continuous dictionary use, they read for general understanding as if they read in their native language, Turkish. The quotes below illustrate the findings related to these findings:

"... Now, I can understand the main idea, even though there are some terms that I do not know." (P12 - The second week's reflective log)

"... Reading in English started to resemble reading Turkish..." (P3 - Interview)

Furthermore, the participants observed an increase in their reading time and engagement and managed to read longer texts for longer durations. The participants began reading for pleasure in L2 in their free time and established L2 reading habits. To set an example, some learners stated that they tried to include L2 reading in their daily lives when they found time, such as during a class break and on the way back home. The quotes in relation to these findings are shown below:

"I tried to read longer materials compared to the previous weeks, and I increased my reading time as much as possible." (P2 - The second week's reflective log)

"I had not read much in English before this program. I had been reading what was assigned in the coursebook... After starting this reading program, I started reading every day..." (P2 - Interview)

"Reading has become an activity that I do before I go to sleep." (P4 - The first week's reflective log)

As stated by P2, the blended ER program was beneficial in increasing learners' reading rates as it encouraged the participants to read extensively as much as possible. It resulted in reading longer materials and increased reading time. P2 further indicated during the interview that the blended ER program offered reading experiences outside the class with its flexibility and accessibility. That is, as P4 also mentioned, the program helped them establish an L2 reading habit by reading on a regular basis and increasing reading time.

It is worth noting that they noticed their progress in L2 reading and credited the blended ER program for their higher grades in reading. In other words, the participants became more accurate in answering reading questions at school. Therefore, the participants believed that they became more proficient in reading in English thanks to the blended ER program. The quotes below show the participants' expressions about their progress in L2 reading.

"In the past, when I read an article, I could understand its topic in general. However, when asked related questions, I had difficulty answering and making inferences. Now I can." (P11 - The third week's reflective log)

"I realized that I could understand the texts we read in class without difficulty, deduce the words from their meanings, and answer the questions correctly." (P3 - The fourth week's reflective log)

As shown by the statements in the quotes above, the blended ER program was beneficial for the participants as they noticed a positive change in their reading performance at school. As an effect of enhanced reading comprehension and developed reading strategies for unknown words, the blended ER program helped learners become more proficient in reading activities and reading tests.

In the second sub-category, *motivation for language learning through the ER program* (103 codes), the learners expressed that they felt more motivated to read and wanted to continue reading extensively even after the program ended. The participants were motivated because they built vocabulary knowledge and learned about new topics. The statement given below is an example of their motivation to learn and prosper through ER.

"I want to continue reading in English as if I read in Turkish, as I did during the program... because I want to learn new things and become more proficient in English."
(P7 - Interview)

As seen by the statement of P7, L2 reading was associated with L1 reading since L2 reading started to resemble L1 reading in the blended ER program. Since the participants read interesting materials for general understanding, L2 reading became a real-life-like activity rather than an in-class activity. As ER contributed to both their general knowledge and L2 proficiency, the participants were motivated to continue ER.

It is worth mentioning that this program helped them develop a sense of accomplishment, which motivated them to read even more. The participants were also encouraged when they realized their progress in L2 reading. They noted the impact of the sense of accomplishment they gained in the blended ER program on their motivation in the following excerpts:

"Although the book I read was easy (level 1), being able to read a book in English made me happy." (P13 - The second week's reflective log)

"Even though I used a dictionary for a few words, realizing that I can understand a text in English increases my motivation." (P12 - The fourth week's reflective log)

As reflected in these excerpts, the participants stressed their motivation to read extensively. The quotes from the reflections demonstrated that their motivation to read increased due to their sense of accomplishment and self-awareness regarding their progress in L2 reading. According to P13, reading a book in English was an accomplishment even though the book was easy. Likewise, P12 highlighted that comprehending a text in English was a source of motivation in L2 reading. Since they

observed their development in L2 reading throughout the blended ER program, their motivation to read increased. P11 also stated her positive feelings about L2 reading as she realized her progress in L2 reading comprehension. Moreover, she stressed her enjoyment of reading about interesting things, and her increased motivation to read different topics and genres. The P11's indications show that reading interesting materials was another reason for their increased motivation in the blended ER program. The excerpt about her reading motivation is given below:

"My motivation to read about different topics has increased. I enjoy reading interesting things. I am also happy that I can understand what I read better than before." (P11 - The fourth week's reflective log)

In addition to the effect of a sense of accomplishment and reading materials on the participants' motivation, encouraging them to read as much as possible without holding them responsible for any course grades or mandating a duration of reading time was another factor motivating them to read more regularly. One of the participants stated the following:

"...Since I try to read every day, I feel like I accomplish something... As reading every day is not mandatory in this program, I am motivated to read regularly without an obligation." (P14 - Interview)

As P14 indicated, he found inspiration in the ability to read whenever he pleased and made a concerted effort to read on a daily basis, forming a habit of L2 reading. That is, embracing the 'reading as much as possible' principle without holding the participants accountable for anything external was a motivating factor in the blended ER program.

Another sub-category was related to the *positive aspects and benefits of the meetings and tasks* (96 codes). Given ER as an individual activity outside the class and the participants' insufficient experience in ER, face-to-face meetings and tasks were one of the key components of the blended ER program. The participants found a purpose to read extensively through the meetings and tasks and stated their overall positive thoughts about them. They emphasized these meetings and tasks' role in motivating them to read attentively to share what they read during the meetings. The quotes below show the participants' views of the benefits of the meetings and tasks:

"... I started reading more attentively to share my reading experiences during the meetings." (P12 - Interview)

"Planning what to share and how to perform a task encouraged me to read more. I felt more responsible and tried to read carefully and comprehend more to perform a task during the meetings." (P10 - Interview)

"I think the meetings were useful... Participating in the meetings motivates me to read because everyone should talk about something they read every week, and we need to read something to talk about." (P9 - Interview)

As P12, P10, and P9 suggested, preparing tasks related to what they read was favorable as the tasks and meetings held them accountable for their reading to take an active role during the meetings. It can also be understood by the statements that the motivation to share their reading experiences through tasks with the other participants led them to read more and more carefully. That is, the meetings and tasks supported learners to read more to take part in the face-to-face meetings.

Furthermore, the participants highlighted that they were encouraged to read texts shared during the meetings. Besides, they regarded these face-to-face meetings as a recreational activity after school and a way to prevent feelings of isolation. Some participants also enjoyed sharing their reading experiences and were encouraged to read more after listening to the experiences of others. P13 and P14 stated their views as:

"During the meetings, interesting stories were shared. I was very impressed by two of the stories shared by the others, and then I read them. The stories were outstanding. One was about the Taj Mahal, and the other was about a woman who killed her mother. That's why the meetings were exciting and beneficial. Sharing what I read and hearing the experiences of the others encouraged me to read more." (P13 - Interview)

"As for the face-to-face meetings, I was initially nervous because there were people I did not know. Thus, I did not attend the first one. However, I had much fun joining the other meetings and am glad to be a part of this program." (P14 - Interview)

As seen from P13's statements, the participants helped each other to find interesting reading materials by sharing what they had read. She read two of the texts shared during a meeting with great enthusiasm. In addition, observing the other participants' reading engagement by listening to their reading experiences motivated them to read more. As indicated by P14, since the participants had an environment where they could communicate with others and feel a sense of attachment to a group, they were encouraged to follow the blended ER program. Thus, the face-to-face meetings and tasks raised the interaction between the participants and paved the way for enhanced reading experiences.

From another standpoint, the participants indicated that the meetings allowed them to practice L2 speaking and helped them feel less anxious while speaking. Since the participants prepared their tasks before the meeting, they planned how to share their reading experiences. Thus, the tasks acted as communication facilitators. The excerpts

below signify the benefits of the face-to-face meetings and tasks integrated into the blended ER program:

"...Speaking English is very difficult for me, and I feel anxious. However, the meetings helped me improve my speaking skills and reduce my speaking anxiety..." (P14 - Interview)

"Getting together and talking about what we read helped me a lot in terms of speaking... Going through what I would say in the meeting before coming to the meeting made it easier for me to express what to say while sharing my reading experiences. Besides, I did not get nervous while talking about what I read. Drawing something and bringing it with me was easier than telling the story directly." (P4 - Interview)

As understood from P14's excerpt, a decrease in their speaking anxiety was observed since they practiced speaking during the meetings. The tasks were helpful as the participants came to the meetings prepared to share their reading experiences through the tasks. Additionally, the interaction between the participants about what they read enhanced their speaking skills. In other words, the more they interacted, the more they practiced L2 speaking. Therefore, the meetings and tasks were beneficial for the speaking skills of EFL learners.

Another sub-category was *positive views on the blended ER experiences* (67). This subcategory was derived from the codes indicating the participants' enhanced ER experiences thanks to the blended ER program. Overall, all of the participants provided positive feedback while evaluating the program. Along with the overall positive view the participants held, the most recurring answer was the blended ER program's benefits. The participants generally put forth that the program was beneficial because it was well-developed and had practical features. In addition, they found the program effective and encouraging in L2 reading. Furthermore, the participants mostly underlined that this reading program was enjoyable and helped them build confidence in L2 reading. The following excerpts show how they perceived the blended ER program.

"It is not only practical and fun but also a resource for new information." (P1 - The first reflective log)

"In general, I think the program was something that a person who is eager to read can easily access and benefit from." (P8 - Interview)

"It was an excellent program. Also, it enhanced my confidence in reading." (P11 - Interview)

"It was effective because it encouraged us to read extensively." (P10 - Interview)

"It is beneficial for self-development in reading and language because reading is essential for language development..." (P3 - Interview)

Reading interesting and appropriate-level materials (56 codes) was another sub-category that echoes one of the key principles of ER and is a feature of this blended ER program. While designing the blended ER program, offering learners a wide range of reading texts with various topics was one of the aims. Therefore, a blended learning modality was involved in the program to benefit from the vast reading resources on the Internet. The blended learning aspect also allowed the researcher to guide the participants who had trouble reading digital texts. Consequently, all participants found reading interesting texts within their comfort zone favorable and encouraging. The participants had a chance to choose among various reading materials and favored this choice while reading in L2. They were given a variety of genres to choose from, including graded readers, magazines, biographies, recipes, news, etc. These genres covered a range of topics, such as the lives of celebrities, classic literature works, interesting facts, and more. The excerpts below show the importance of reading interesting and appropriate-level materials in ER.

“In the suggested reading materials list, there were stories that caught my attention. I even saved some of them to read later.” (P2 - The first week’s reflective log).

“My motivation to read different things has increased. I enjoy reading interesting texts.” (P11 - The fourth week’s reflective log)

“...I think the most impressive thing is that we choose reading texts within our own interests. For example, if you had chosen a book and we had had to read it, reading extensively would have been more challenging.” (P3 - Interview)

“...Choosing the texts, we wanted to read, and keeping the texts a little lower than our level helped reading not be so boring. It is better that reading materials are below our level in terms of sustainability in reading.” (P5 - Interview)

“Reading such intriguing texts motivated me to read in English more... I read blogs, articles, recipes, and movie reviews that gave information that I did not know...” (P1 - Interview)

The participants indicated their enthusiasm about reading and finding different texts suitable to their proficiency level and interests. As P5 noted, along with choosing their own texts, reading not above their proficiency level made reading extensively more sustainable compared to in-class reading. It can be seen in the excerpt taken from P1’s interview that she enjoyed reading intriguing texts from various digital sources, such as blogs, movie reviews, articles, and recipes. For this reason, offering a wide range of genres and topics within their linguistic level for learners to choose from is of utmost importance in fostering ER.

Another sub-category related to the benefits and strengths of the blended ER program was *favorable features of learning management systems* (52 codes). The participants stated their general positive thoughts about these digital platforms incorporated into the blended ER program. They also pointed out the advantages of using LMSs such as Google Classroom and Padlet and stressed their flexibility and accessibility. The following excerpts demonstrate how they felt about the integration of these platforms into the program:

"It was beneficial in terms of accessing everything with one click." (P5 - Interview)

"I think accessing anything I want by only clicking the link on Google Classroom and recording my progress on Padlet were great." (P1 - Interview)

"I think these are useful tools because we can access them instantly anytime we want... If we want to read something, we can instantly find it from the reading material list on Google Classroom... However, trying to find them in books takes time. You have shared many texts on Google Classroom, and I think we have enough text options to read in the list..." (P7 - Interview)

The participants' views of the LMSs in the program, namely Google Classroom and Padlet, were positive, as demonstrated in the excerpts above. In line with the aims of integrating Google Classroom and Padlet into the program, the participants found the LMSs advantageous since they easily accessed what they needed with great ease. As P7 indicated, in particular, Google Classroom was useful in terms of organization and finding reading materials without spending too much time searching.

Furthermore, the participants highlighted the usefulness and benefits of these LMSs, Google Classroom and Padlet. The program's various components were organized through Google Classroom. The components included a list of digital reading materials with links, a list of tasks for the face-to-face meetings, a link to Padlet, and general information about the program. The participants valued the design of Google Classroom in the blended ER program. In addition, Padlet was used to monitor learners' reading engagement and give them an opportunity to observe their own progress. The participants also favored the integration of Padlet into the blended ER program. The quotes below showed the participants' views of the usefulness of the LMSs used in the blended ER program:

"...They increased the accessibility quite a bit. Padlet was more practical for you to monitor our progress, and Google Classroom was more convenient for us to access the resources." (P8 - Interview)

“Being active on Padlet and going through who read how much and checking if anyone had read anything that caught my attention was useful.” (P4 - Interview)

“I was quite active on Padlet because I felt better when I recorded my reading activities on Padlet. I felt like I had achieved something at the end of the day. Besides, checking my progress was easier since we could see the previous weeks’ reading logs. Also, it was highly satisfying to see my daily reading activities. If Padlet were not included in this program, my views of the program would be negatively different.” (P14 - Interview)

The quotes illustrate that the participants managed to examine and find digital texts on the suggested reading materials list on Google Classroom and recorded their reading acts on Padlet. As stressed by P8, Google Classroom was a tool to access the links in an organized way. In line with P4’s statement, Padlet allowed them to check what others read in order to find more interesting materials. The participants found it encouraging to track their progress as L2 readers through their reading logs on Padlet. Seeing their own efforts to improve was motivating. As P14 indicated, the blended ER program without Padlet would be less beneficial since the learners would not have the chance to track their own progress, and the researcher would not be able to monitor the participants.

In line with the sub-categories *reading interesting and appropriate-level materials* (56 codes) and *favorable features of learning management systems* (52 codes), *the advantages of digital reading* (48 codes) followed these two previous sub-categories. Similar to the participants’ thoughts about reading intriguing materials, they expressed that digital reading materials were easy to access, and many materials were available for free, in contrast to printed materials. Thus, some of the participants declared their preference for digital reading. The following excerpts exemplify their views of digital reading.

“Finding many texts related to my major on the Internet was one of the positive reading experiences in this week” (P8 - The fourth reflective log)

“... I read topics related to fashion digitally because I cannot access the printed texts about fashion... Sometimes I search for recipes and horoscopes in English on the Internet. I also follow some accounts on Twitter for fun. I usually look at the things related to my hobbies because it's more gripping for me.” (P13 - Interview)

“I used to prefer reading printed materials to digital materials, but now it has changed because digital reading is more useful and practical. I started enjoying reading digital texts more than reading printed texts.” (P7 - Interview)

As seen in the excerpts above, digital reading was more accessible than paper-based reading to find abundant texts within the field of interest. In today’s world, due to

the prevalence of the Internet and the use of smartphones, accessing digital reading materials is more convenient and common than accessing printed reading materials. Therefore, accessibility was one of the factors why the participants favored digital reading. Some participants, like P7, used to prefer reading in print. However, they found reading on-screen more advantageous later in the blended ER program as they got used to digital reading and realized its benefits. As P13 stated, they managed to find texts based on their interests and read various types of texts, such as social media posts, recipes, and horoscopes, to engage in L2 reading. Learners could change what they found boring in a second with just a click.

In addition to the easy access to digital reading materials, flexibility was another significant feature for the participants since they could read digital texts anytime and anywhere via their digital devices. One of the participants' excerpts below demonstrates the advantage of flexibility.

"Since digital reading materials were easily accessible, it was better to have digital materials as we did in the program. During the break times at school, I read texts on websites, such as news. Generally, I could not find time for reading when I got home, but I was reading in my free time during the day." (P12 - Interview)

According to P12, digital reading allowed her to read whenever she was free since she easily accessed the Internet. Therefore, digital materials are of great importance regarding flexibility, too. P7 and P2 further pointed out that they also managed to find some solutions to some problems they encountered in digital reading. The quotes below indicate the problems and solutions:

"I have difficulty comprehending the articles about academic topics on-screen. That's why I started reading texts from daily life, such as recipes, blogs, and posts on Twitter and Instagram." (P7 - Interview)

"The ads on the websites sometimes made me annoyed while reading... However, downloading the PDF documents of the short stories solved this problem for me." (P2 - Interview)

As P7 indicated, reading longer texts digitally may be challenging for learners to keep their focus on digital texts. However, as P7 did, a possible answer to this kind of problem can be reading short texts until one becomes more experienced in reading longer digital texts. According to P2, another problem was related to the ads embedded into websites. In spite of its limitations for texts that do not have a PDF version, downloading the PDF of texts can be a solution for pop-ads. Considering the advantages of digital

reading, namely, a wide range of open-access materials, flexibility, and accessibility, the participants tried to overcome the problems they faced with digital reading.

Along with the quantitative data analysis results, a *positive change in attitudes towards reading* (38 codes) emerged as a sub-category based on the participants' views. The participants underscored the change in their reading attitudes in various aspects. They started enjoying reading in English and felt encouraged to read extensively, although they were bored before starting the blended ER program. The participants also became aware of the benefits of reading and overcame their bias against reading caused by their regular reading classes. The excerpts below are examples of the positive change in their reading attitudes:

"I was bored with reading before the program. This issue was about what I read because I had not considered reading novels or short stories in English. However, with your guidance and the program, I started to develop positive attitudes and thoughts about reading in English...." (P2 - Interview)

"I was bored while reading a text given by our teacher in the classroom. I wanted to finish reading the assigned texts as soon as possible. Thus, I was not reading all the paragraphs. But now that I'm constantly reading, I learned to endure and read a text completely without getting bored." (P13 - Interview)

"I used to skip even the English texts I saw on social media. However, when I encounter something in English, I read it without hesitation now. Thus, the program was also beneficial in this respect." (P1 - Interview)

As shown by the statements, the participants started regarding L2 reading as an engaging activity. As P2 and P13 pinpointed, the blended ER program helped EFL learners develop positive L2 reading attitudes by providing self-selected reading materials with various genres and topics. P13 also remarked that she managed to read longer texts without getting bored like before, as she got used to ER. Additionally, as P1 stressed, a change in the participants' approach to reading was noted. That is, after reading in English at their own pace, they did not experience the initial avoidance they had felt before. Therefore, the blended ER program was beneficial for learners to recognize L2 reading from a more positive perspective, which was supported by the significant findings of the quantitative data.

Another sub-category the qualitative data analysis uncovered was the *opportunities provided in the blended ER program* (36 codes). Most learners compared the blended ER program with their intensive reading classes concerning self-selected reading, different genres with diverse topics, and the teacher's role as a guide. Since they

were generally required to read a text above their linguistic level in detail and answer the comprehension questions under a teacher's control, the participants realized the differences between the ER and intensive reading approaches. The following excerpts show the participants' perception of the differences between the blended ER program and their reading classes:

"I think implementing this program as a course would make learners much more productive than our regular classes. During the classes, only the teacher is active, and the students do not want to engage in the activities because they are tedious. It (this program) would be much more beneficial due to the exposure to English. I believe that everyone can speak English if we are exposed to it. In terms of reading, for example, the reading texts in the coursebook are very boring, I wish we could choose a text freely. Therefore, I found the reading material list on Google Classroom beneficial..." (P11 - Interview)

"... I have difficulty in understanding and commenting on what we read in the class...It would be better to read the texts beforehand and then discuss them in class. Therefore, this program can be implemented in classes." (P9 - Interview)

"I am very happy to be a part of this program because there is no such program at school. We have reading homework, but I read quickly to answer the questions. Apart from that, I had not read for pleasure before this program. Since I chose the reading materials I am really curious about, I started to understand more. Also, I started to read more carefully to share during the meetings." (P12 - Interview)

Based on the views of the participants quoted above, the blended ER program had favorable features. It gave them more opportunities to enhance their reading experience than their regular reading course at school. As P11 and P9 underlined, integrating an ER program into the curriculum might foster learners' reading skills and attitudes, speaking skills, and autonomy, as the current study did. According to P12, since the participants chose intriguing texts, they tended to read without distraction and comprehend better. Moreover, the teacher's role as a guide was found beneficial for learners to become more autonomous in L2 digital reading. The excerpt below demonstrates the role of guidance in the blended ER program:

"I think your guidance (teacher's role as a guide) and a list of suggested reading materials were effective and plausible for the beginning... Since there are many things on the Internet, I would have had no idea where to start reading and which website is suitable for my proficiency level. Dividing the resources level by level was a pretty good idea as a guideline." (P7 - Interview)

As P7 mentioned, most learners who were inexperienced in digital reading would have suffered from the vastness of the Internet without the teacher's guidance or a list of suggested reading websites since they would have probably found authentic texts written for a general audience and highly above their proficiency level. Considering the participants' comparisons, the blended ER program was superior to regular reading classes at school.

In addition to *enhanced reading skills* (158 codes), *improved language skills* (18 codes) was another sub-category. Along with the blended ER program's positive effects on the participants' reading skills, the participants observed an improvement in their other language skills. Therefore, the improvement in their language skills other than reading skills was titled as another sub-category. The participants expressed that they were engaged in English and exposed to English more since they read different genres, noticed discourse differences in the texts, and interacted with the others during the meetings. As they were exposed to written input and tried to read as much as possible, their awareness of grammatical items was increased, and their sentence construction skills were improved.

"Reading social media posts allows me to learn patterns used in daily language." (P13 - The fourth reflective log)

"I avoided engaging with English. However, we are constantly exposed to English through the stories, books, and posts we read in the blended ER program...In addition, reading posts on social media teach us daily language expressions of people sharing the posts." (P7 - Interview)

"One can develop an awareness of grammatical items by reading." (P3 - Interviews)

As P13 and P7 indicated, reading real-life texts in social media posts was effective in learning daily language use. Although the participants practiced language skills at school, being exposed to authentic texts on the Internet through ER helped them gain awareness of the daily use of language.

Last of all, the participants indicated that the blended ER program awakened a *sense of responsibility* (6 codes) in them. Although this sub-category's codes were few in number, it manifests the program's influence on learner autonomy. Incorporating face-to-face meetings and digital reading logs held the learners accountable for their reading outside the classroom. Thus, the blended ER program helped them develop a sense of independence and responsibility in their L2 reading. During the interview, P14 stated the

program's effect on developing a sense of responsibility: "... As I felt responsible for the reading program, I actively read every day. This helped establish consistency in L2 reading. ”.

In summary, the participants' views of the ER program uncovered various benefits and favorable features of the program. Improving their reading skills increased their motivation to read in English and learn English. The benefits of meetings and tasks were the most recurring factors that made the blended ER program beneficial and well-designed. In addition, the participants mentioned positive views on the blended ER experiences. The participants put emphasis on the positive impact of self-selected interesting and appropriate-level materials, the favorable features of Google Classroom and Padlet, and the advantages of digital reading. After completing the blended ER program, the participants noticed a positive change in their attitudes towards reading in their L2. The quantitative analysis also confirmed this positive change. Additionally, they stated the opportunities provided in the blended ER program by pointing out differences between this program and their intensive reading classes at school. Alongside their reading skills, they improved in other language areas. Lastly, some participants highlighted that they gained a sense of responsibility to read independently through this program, which might show that they became aware of their autonomy in L2. Apart from numerous reported benefits and strengths of the blended ER program, the participants also expressed several challenges and weaknesses regarding this experience, which are presented in the next section.

4.3.2. Challenges and Weaknesses of the Blended ER Program

The second main category, derived from four sub-categories related to the participants' perceived challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program, comprised 317 codes. These sub-categories underlined the challenges the participants encountered during the blended ER program stemming from the *problems with reading materials* (92 codes), *issues arising from the design of the blended ER program* (80 codes), *language difficulties* (76 codes), and *factors hindering ER* (69 codes). The sub-categories of the second main category are portrayed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. The sub-categories related to the challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program

Sub-categories	N*
Problems with reading materials	92

Table 4.6. (Continued) *The sub-categories related to the challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program*

Sub-categories	N*
Issues arising from the design of the blended ER program	80
Language difficulties	76
Factors hindering ER	69
Total	317

N*: Number of codes

As reflected in Table 4.6., *the problems with reading materials* (92 codes) were one of the most notable challenges faced in the program and weakest features. As revealed in the first main category, reading self-selected interesting and appropriate level materials about various topics was one the greatest advantages of the blended ER program. However, some participants indicated some challenges with digital reading and a wide range of materials provided in a list of reading materials on Google Classroom. Regarding the digital texts on the list, some participants expressed confusion about which text to choose since there were many options.

“Choosing a website from the list on Google Classroom and digital reading was challenging for me.” (P6 - The fourth reflective log)

“Since there were too many options in the reading list, it took too much time to choose a text to read.” (P7 - Interview)

Even though the learners appreciated various reading materials presented on Google Classroom, some participants, like P6 and P7, found the long list of suggested reading materials complicated. As P7 stressed, a variety of text options may cause learners to get confused and have difficulty choosing a text, which may lead them to lose time. As for the challenges with digital reading, some of the most common issues included getting distracted by notifications on their devices, experiencing eyestrain, feeling exhausted from reading on-screen, struggling to take notes on unfamiliar words, and finding materials that align with their interests and proficiency level. The following excerpts exemplify these issues:

“Digital reading makes a lot of sense since there are so many options on the Internet. However, when a notification comes from my phone, I stop reading... That's why I immediately get bored and stop reading when I read on my phone.” (P13 - Interview)

“I could not find a book that directly suits my taste in reading and proficiency level on the internet. There were very few books in English that were suitable to my level.” (P4 - Interview)

"I have bad eyesight. Maybe that's why looking at the screen all the time was difficult for me... It's hard for me to read on screen." (P9 - Interview)

"It would be better if there were printed materials too. I really like touching a book and underlining some sentences or words. Also, seeing the worn-out pages encourages me to read more and makes me proud." (P6 - Interview)

As seen from P13's statements, one of the biggest challenges with digital reading was the constant distractions from notifications, which disrupted the reading experience. Since most participants used their smartphones to read extensively, some lost their attention to reading due to the notifications from other applications. Moreover, P4 noted that finding a specific genre or book within her linguistic skills was difficult on the Internet. Since some specific reading materials, such as a recently published book, cannot be found on the Internet, EFL learners might struggle with finding the exact L2 text they want digitally. P9 highlighted other challenges with digital reading: having eyestrain and being exhausted from reading onscreen. Because digital readers need to keep their focus onscreen until finishing reading a text, they probably experience eyestrain and exhaustion. As another problem about digital reading stated by P6, taking notes of unknown words was quicker and easier with paper-based materials than with digital materials. P6 also remarked that underlining words and the feeling of touching the pages of a book encouraged them to read. Thus, some readers may want the physical presence of a reading text to keep their focus on more.

P6 further indicated in the fourth reflective log, *"It was difficult for me to read on-screen. Therefore, I asked you for the printed version of the text I wanted to read."* Due to their challenges in digital reading, she highlighted her preference for reading in print. The excerpts taken from P6's reflective logs and interview illustrated her trouble with digital reading from the beginning to the end of the program. Having difficulties with digital reading from the first week to the last week might be a signal of a need to use printed reading materials. It can also be seen in the excerpts above that although some of the participants tried to keep reading digital texts, their preference for reading printed texts persisted with them. Given the problems with reading materials and the previously discussed advantages of digital reading, a few participants recommended that both digital and printed materials could be available to overcome these problems.

Another sub-category designated as one of the challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program was *issues arising from the design of the blended ER program* (80 codes). A few of the participants asserted that some features of the blended ER program

caused difficulties during the program. Having difficulty with the LMSs was one of the noteworthy challenges within the design of this program. In particular, some participants struggled to navigate these systems, Google Classroom and Padlet, and avoided using these learning management systems. To illustrate, some participants found keeping reading logs for each act of reading highly demanding. A few participants also were confused with the detailed posts and tabs.

"Since I read for pleasure in my free time, I do not usually keep track of time. Thus, I do not want to keep a reading log because I read in English in my free time." (P10 - Interview)

"I do not like constantly recording something while doing something for fun. It feels like I am under constant control, which I do not appreciate...What we read can be told directly in the meetings without keeping a record." (P5 - Interview).

"As there were many tabs and posts on the webpage and websites in the reading list, Google Classroom was a bit complicated for me." (P9 - Interview)

As P10 and P5 quoted above highlighted, keeping a reading log on Padlet for each reading was a burden since they wanted to be responsible for nothing but reading in their free time. Besides, some learners (e.g., P9, P10, P8, P3, P5, P12, P6) noted that they tried to read regularly, although they did not record what they read into Padlet. Similar to their confusion about choosing a digital text from the reading materials list highlighted in the previous sub-category, P9 also indicated her perplexity about the design of Google Classroom. Google Classroom might be too complicated for learners since there were a homepage including posts about how the program was planned and another tab consisting of the posts including the reading materials, tasks, link to Padlet, and weekly reflective logs.

In addition, some participants asserted problems related to the meetings and tasks. Choosing and producing a task was challenging for them due to problems with retention of what they read and a need for more interactive tasks. Although P8 had difficulty recalling what he read and a task he prepared during the meetings, he later added, *"If I had prepared the task immediately after I finished reading, sharing my reading experiences would have been easier."* Therefore, while introducing the program to learners, the importance of preparing tasks can be underlined to raise learners' awareness of the role of tasks. The quotes below represent the issues regarding preparing tasks for the meetings:

"After going through the task options, it is difficult for me to prepare it." (P7 - The first reflective log)

“Some tasks were about drawing or finding a song related to what we read, and so on. If all tasks had involved speaking more, I would have been encouraged more to speak.”
(P1 - Interview)

As indicated by P7, preparing a task before a meeting might negatively affect learners' reading experiences since they may not want to create something for what they read. However, this finding may be special to P7 because the other participants did not mention using tasks as a challenging aspect of the program. Indeed, most participants stated the beneficial aspect of tasks as helping them be prepared to share their reading experiences. As P1 recommended, adding more interactive tasks as options for learners would be more effective.

Some also stated that they could not find time for reading for pleasure after school because of tiredness and assignments. It was suggested that an ER activity integrated into the curriculum would be more effective for them. Lastly, a few participants emphasized the short period of time allocated to this program. As P4 stated below, the blended ER program should have lasted for a longer period for learners to notice its effects in the long term and for the study to be a more successful and effective one.

“... I can say that the program has improved my reading skills. However, it's a small positive effect because the program did not last very long.” (P4 - Interview)

Furthermore, some participants' views of the blended ER program revealed *language difficulties* (76 codes) as one of the causes of the setbacks experienced in reading. They were challenged generally because of insufficient vocabulary knowledge and high reliance on dictionaries. Challenges with comprehension, reading longer materials, and insufficient grammar knowledge reading followed them. The quotes below illustrate how language difficulties affected their reading experiences:

“I chose some texts above my level, and there were several words that I did not know. Looking up the dictionary for the words constantly made the topic difficult to understand.” (P3 - The second reflective log)

“I generally suffered from my poor vocabulary knowledge. There were many words I did not know. Also, the articles were too long. I do not think it is (reading long articles) appropriate for my level.” (P7 - The second reflective log)

“...Sometimes, I used the translation apps all the time...” (P9 - Interview)

As expressed by the participants, insufficient vocabulary knowledge was one of the demotivating factors in the blended ER program and affected their reading experiences negatively. However, as P3 mentioned, heavy reliance on dictionaries makes comprehension difficult. As seen in the same excerpt, choosing reading materials above

their proficiency level is likely to lead to this negative feeling caused by a lack of vocabulary knowledge. After noting her frequent dictionary use, P9 stated, *"I did not select my reading texts from the list on Google Classroom. This can be the reason why I always used translation apps..."* Thus, the participants who often suffered from this might have chosen difficult reading materials instead of materials within their comfort zone.

In the last sub-category, a few of the participants stated the *factors hindering ER* (69 codes). Time constraints were the most frequently encountered problem since the learners were too tired after school and had assignments to complete and midterms to study. In addition, the participants indicated that they were not motivated to start reading extensively in their free time. The excerpts below demonstrate the time constraints as one of the challenges in ER:

"Due to my responsibilities for English lessons at school, I could not spare much time to read extensively." (P2 - The first reflective log)

"I didn't have time to read this week, although I usually enjoy it. Reading doesn't cross my mind every day." (P4 - The second reflective log)

As can be understood in the quotes above, some participants struggled to find time to read outside the class. Therefore, the suggestion by some participants about involving ER in regular reading classes, mentioned in the second sub-category, might be helpful for learners to create a reading environment. Furthermore, P8 indicated in his third reflective log that being unable to find a place where he could read after school was another issue. The same suggestion by the participants can be useful for this issue as well.

Due to avoiding reading, some participants stayed inactive on Padlet and stressed their inactivity in their reflective logs. Some also noted a decline in their motivation in the last weeks of the program. However, they emphasized their desire to read more, which might have resulted from their enhanced L2 reading attitudes. The excerpts below show the participants' statements regarding these issues:

"Initially, I was highly motivated to participate in everything and improve myself. However, I eventually lost my motivation, and my engagement in reading decreased." (P7 - Interview)

"I could not show enough interest in reading this week. However, I feel that I have shown an improvement in reading in English. Thus, I want to read more." (P7 - The fourth reflective log)

"In fact, it (reading extensively) would be beneficial if I read regularly. However, because of my problems, I could not read regularly." (P9 - Interview)

The quotes above illustrate some of the learners' insufficient motivation in ER. As P7 stated during the interview, the intrinsic motivation in ER was not sustainable throughout the blended ER program. However, as P7 and P9 further stated, they acknowledged the importance of reading in language learning and were aware of the benefits of the blended ER program on their reading skills. In other words, the blended ER program was insufficient to provide sustainable intrinsic motivation. However, it helped some learners raise their awareness of the importance of L2 reading and the program's impact on their L2 reading skills.

As a result, these findings uncovered the challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program based on the participants' views. Most of these negative factors were related to reading materials, particularly digital reading and digital texts. In addition, challenges caused by the features of the blended program were prominent and expressed by some of the participants. To illustrate, keeping reading logs and choosing a text from the virtual library were challenging for some participants. Besides, language difficulties the learners had during the program were another resource of the challenges. As revealed in the last sub-category, factors hindering ER affected their reading experiences negatively. However, the blended ER program's challenges stated by some of the participants were mostly appreciated by the other participants. That is, the participants' views of the blended ER program, its features, and its procedure were mainly positive.

All in all, the findings demonstrated that the participants derived benefits from the blended ER program of this study in various ways. The number of codes merging the benefits and strengths of the blended ER program ($n = 640$) was more than the number of codes in the challenges and weaknesses of the program ($n = 317$). Considering the participants' views, their enhanced reading skills and increased motivation to improve their English proficiency were the most prominent gains of the program. Furthermore, the features and benefits of the meetings and tasks integrated into this program were highlighted since these provided learners with a sense of responsibility and attachment to a group. The participants were pleased with sharing their reading experiences and listening to the other participants' experiences. Similarly, their reading experiences were fostered through this ER program, and the participants appreciated reading interesting and appropriate-level materials. They stressed the advantages of digital reading mainly because of the wide range of easily accessible and intriguing texts in English. As the blended ER program provided many opportunities that their regular reading classes did

not, they cherished the opportunities they had throughout the program. In this regard, the program's positive aspects and benefits created such a positive change in their L2 reading attitudes that they overcame their bias against reading in English for pleasure and started enjoying reading in English and establishing a reading habit. Along with enhanced reading skills, the participants observed an improvement in other aspects of language, such as increased grammar and functional language use recognition and improved sentence construction skills by being exposed to English more and more. Lastly, they pinpointed the sense of responsibility in their L2 reading, which suggested they became more autonomous in L2 reading and L2 digital reading.

On the other hand, some of the participants stressed the challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program. Even though the benefits of reading intriguing materials within their comfort level and digital reading were prominent, the participants emphasized the issues with reading materials. These issues mostly stemmed from the challenges of digital reading and the advantages of printed reading. Likewise, a few of the participants stated some issues derived from the design of the blended ER program. In particular, they struggled with keeping reading logs on Padlet primarily because they wanted to avoid being responsible for recording what they read as fun, in contrast to the participants who claimed that Padlet helped them keep track of their reading progress. Another cause of the challenges and weaknesses of the program was the language difficulties. The most recurring reasons were insufficient vocabulary knowledge, which discouraged the learners to continue reading, and frequent use of dictionaries, which disturbed the flow of reading. As the last negative factor, the factors hindered ER experiences from reaching their potential and beyond. The following figure retrieved from NVivo 14 illustrates the comparison of two main categories and summarizes the qualitative findings of the study.

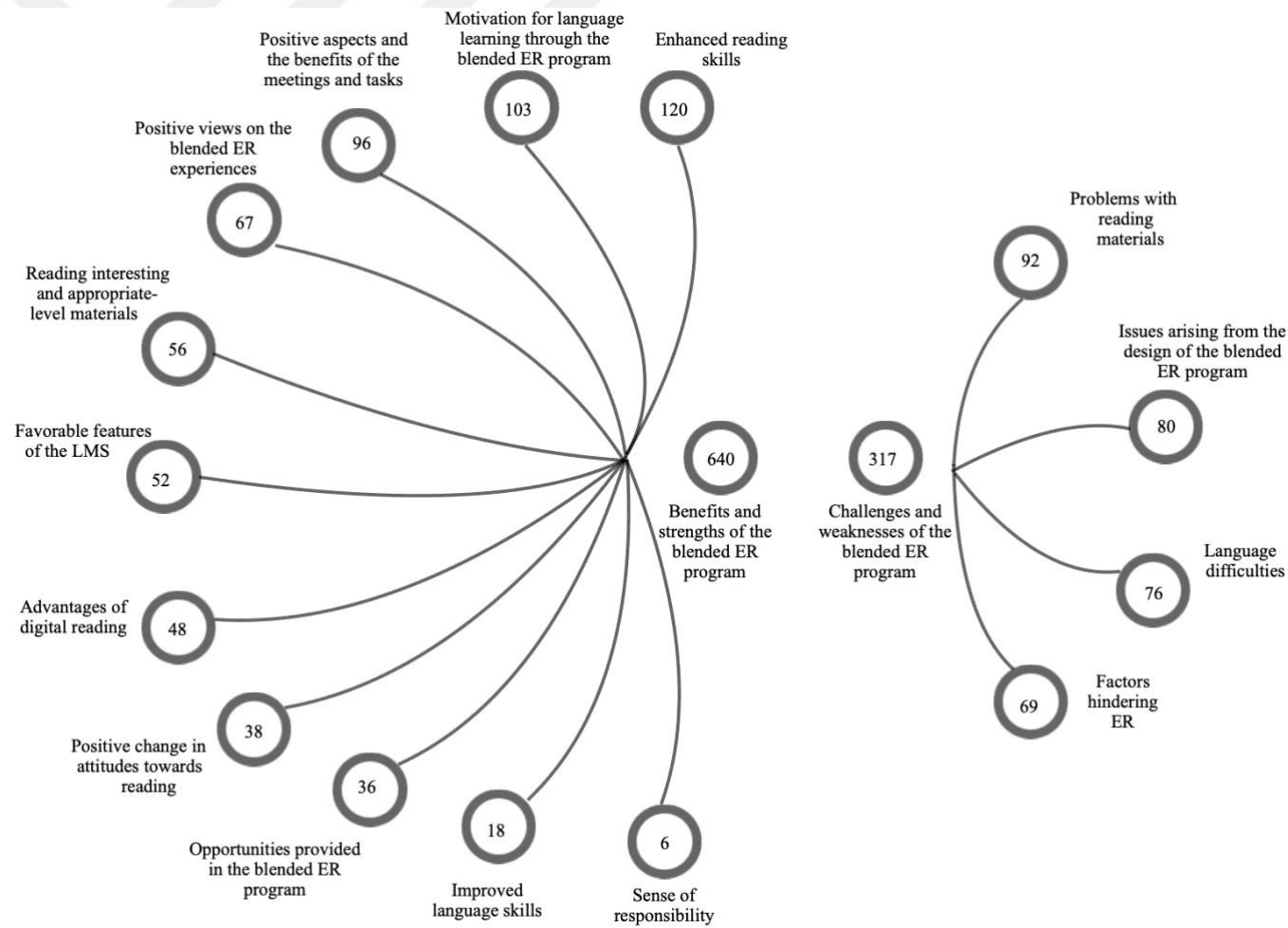


Figure 4.1. Summary of the qualitative findings of the study

5. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to reveal the change in learners' attitudes towards reading in English, if any, and unearth the participants' views of the blended ER program. In accordance with these aims, the first research question was addressed to investigate if there was any effect of the blended ER program on the tertiary level EFL learners' L2 reading attitudes, and the second research question was directed to uncover their views of the program. The findings of the research questions were discussed in relation to the existing body of research in this chapter, and a thorough discussion was carried out regarding the findings.

One of the purposes of the study was to reveal the changes in learners' L2 reading attitudes. The results of the pre-and post-tests administered in the study showed the blended ER program's positive influence on EFL learners' attitudes towards reading in English by unveiling a significant difference between their pre-and post-test results ($Z = -3.134, p < .001$). In other words, their L2 reading attitudes were fostered throughout the blended ER program. The qualitative findings of the current study supported the significant difference in the participants' L2 reading attitudes before and after the program. To exemplify, P9 indicated the change in her L2 reading attitudes with these statements *"I had bias towards reading in English at the beginning. Now, I try to read as much as possible...."* In addition, P11 stated her increased confidence as an L2 reader *"My confidence in L2 reading has increased since I started reading interesting materials, such as crime books."* That is, the participants' reading experiences were enhanced throughout the blended ER program, and their attitudes underwent a positive change.

Considering the significant differences between the pre- and post-test mean scores of the items in the questionnaire, it was found that the items about the importance and usefulness of reading in English (items 2, 4, 11, and 15) had less difference than the other items and had higher pre- and post-mean scores. The difference between these items' pre- and post-mean scores might indicate the learners' awareness of the importance of L2 reading and motivation to engage with L2 reading for pleasure. In other words, their motivation to participate in the blended ER program might have stemmed from their awareness of the importance and usefulness of L2 reading. However, the items regarding their confidence and enjoyment in L2 reading and their perception of themselves as L2 readers had distinguishable differences between pre- and post-mean scores. These results might signify that the blended ER program's various features and approach to reading

contributed to participants' perception of themselves as readers and their confidence and enjoyment in L2 reading. This new reading approach might have improved their reading experiences and positively changed their attitudes.

Since there is no study conducted in a Turkish EFL context with similar aims, this study's results provide significant insights into the impact of ER on the L2 reading attitudes of tertiary level EFL learners. The quantitative result of the current study was concurrent with the previous studies in different contexts, which revealed a positive change in L2 reading attitudes and pinpointed the role of ER in enhancing learners' reading attitudes (Al-Hamoud & Schmitt, 2009; Cote & Milliner, 2015; Park, 2020; Puripunyanich, 2021; Yamashita, 2013; Zhou & Day, 2021). Notwithstanding the ER studies' corresponding results, each ER study had a unique design and implementation. It might suggest the effectiveness of ER in fostering L2 reading attitudes even though there is no one-size-fits-all approach in ER (Day, 2015). As Green (2005) emphasized, implementing an ER program based on learners' needs and context opportunities is more effective than pertaining to the ER principles. Therefore, it may be beneficial to design and integrate ER programs by considering the facilities of teaching contexts and learners' needs, readiness, and attitudes. To set an example, considering the financial concerns, the current blended ER program provided various digital texts instead of a wide collection of printed texts. Additionally, since the participants were inexperienced in ER, weekly face-to-face meetings were held to give them an opportunity to share their reading experiences and create a motivating environment. Consequently, the participants enjoyed attending the meetings and were encouraged to read to share what they read through tasks.

Despite the uniqueness of each study regarding their ER programs, the common component of most studies is providing participants with a wide array of reading materials within their linguistic level (e.g., Chien & Yu, 2015; Endris, 2018; Wang & Ho, 2019; Pongsatornpipat, 2021). Day and Bamford (2002) suggested that a variety of self-selected reading materials in an ER program promotes its efficiency and success. Krashen's Compelling Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (2011) also suggests the significant role of highly interesting input in keeping the flow of reading and lowering the affective filter. As Pongsatornpipat (2021) discussed, reading materials were one of the factors fostering learners' L2 reading attitudes in this study. In the current study, P5 highlighted the relationship between reading attitudes and reading interesting and appropriate level materials: *"Reading interesting materials within our proficiency level was great for*

sustainability and attitudes in reading.”. As a result, learners benefited from various materials when they were presented within their current linguistic level; and thus, they might have developed more positive L2 reading attitudes.

One of ER's aims is to give learners opportunities to get used to reading in English. Thus, it might be essential to offer learners a variety of genres to give them a more authentic ER experience. Bakla (2020) pinpointed that using different genres and text modalities can help ER studies yield positive results in reading attitudes. The current study provided learners with a wide range of genres (magazines, short stories, news, social media posts, recipes, etc.) about various topics within the participants' proficiency level in an open-access list of reading materials on Google Classroom. Therefore, offering a variety of text types in the blended ER program might also have an effect on more positive attitudes towards reading in L2. The participants' views of reading a variety of texts from different resources advocated the impact of the blended ER program on the learners' attitudes toward reading in English. To illustrate, P4 remarked in her fourth reflective log: *'Reading up-to-date news in English was great. I felt a sense of accomplishment when I understood the news.'* Despite the possible influence of offering various genres to learners, only a few studies allowed learners to read genres other than graded readers (e.g., Arnold, 2009; Fatimah et al., 2020). Hence, ER studies should consider the influence of different text types while including reading materials in their implementations.

ER studies have used numerous resources and platforms to provide learners with reading materials and yielded positive results in their L2 reading attitudes. To give an example, Zhou and Day (2021), the developers of the questionnaire used in the current study, employed a subscription-based LMS, XReading, as a virtual library and found a significant difference between the pre-and post-test results of their online ER study. Zhou and Day (2021) suggested several possible benefits of XReading to the positive change in L2 reading attitudes, such as the variety of graded readers, quizzes of each graded reader and automatic recordings of students' reading activities. However, it was missed out that only a limited number of education contexts have access to XReading due to a subscription requirement. Considering the financial concerns, this study has gained importance since its virtual library was established on Google Classroom with open-access reading materials, and most learners in this study cherished the opportunity to access free reading materials provided in this blended ER program. Its low cost made the

virtual library, including a list of various genres on Google Classroom, worthwhile although it did not have the fixed features that XReading had, such as post-reading quizzes and a timer.

Adapting ER programs into learners' existing curriculum is generally embraced by ER studies (e.g., Fatimah, 2020; Jeon et al., 2017; Ramonda, 2020; Puripunyanich, 2021; Stoller, 2015). As an example, Park (2020) implemented a classroom-based ER program and unveiled fostered reading attitudes after the program. Nevertheless, as in the context of the current study, not all contexts are able to integrate ER into the curriculum due to some issues in teaching environments, such as administrative problems, learners' needs and responsibilities, and contextual and curricular restrictions. The present study's blended ER program was independent of the curriculum and did not give a certain grade or credits for a course. That is, the study was based on voluntary participation, and learners were responsible for their own L2 reading process. Similar to curriculum-integrated ER studies, this study fostered the learners' L2 reading attitudes. P14 noted that he enjoyed participating in the program since there were no mandated assignments or effects on their grades. Thus, ER programs, such as the one in this study, can also be used as a support and extracurricular activity to enhance learners' attitudes towards L2 reading, as Pongsatornpipatat (2021) did.

Even though revealing the participants' reading engagement was not one of the study's purposes, the frequency of their reading entries on Padlet and their responses to the first question in the weekly reading logs were noteworthy to discuss within the ER research. It was observed that most learners were active during the first week and tried reading diverse types of text, such as blogs, short stories, recipes, articles, social media posts, and news. Nevertheless, there was a decrease in their reading engagement primarily due to their school responsibilities, such as midterms and assignments. Although they wanted to read as much as possible and developed positive L2 reading attitudes, they sometimes could not find the motivation or time to begin reading, and their reading engagement did not show an increase in the following weeks of the program. To put it differently, the blended ER program successfully changed their L2 reading attitudes; however, it did not manage to keep their increased reading engagement. Therefore, the study might have been more effective if the blended ER program was regarded as an extramural activity integrated into learners' school agenda, as Renandya et al. (2021) emphasized. In other words, external motivation provided by the institution could have

helped learners increase their reading engagement when their intrinsic reading motivation started decreasing. Jeon and Day (2016) revealed in their meta-analysis, including 51 studies, that ER studies embedded into the curriculum had the highest effect size. Green (2005) stressed the misunderstanding about ER as a separate instruction from the curriculum and proposed ER as a part of the curriculum to benefit from its effects greatly. Even though the current study applied the sixth principle of "reading as its own reward" (Day & Bamford, 2002), it may be beneficial to modify it to "reading should be monitored and assessed" in order to motivate learners to engage in extensive reading until it becomes a habit (Ng et al., 2019). Therefore, curriculum designers and teachers can consider various potential benefits of integrating ER into the curriculum. Along with the integration of the blended ER program into the curriculum as an external motivation source, setting a goal for reading might be helpful to keep learners engaged in reading. Since 'reading as much as possible' might be too vague for learners to read extensively, recommending a certain duration or page number could be more effective in facilitating their ER experiences (Mikami, 2017). These suggestions might support learners when their intrinsic motivation is insufficient for ER.

Based on the qualitative data, another source of the participants' decreased reading engagement stemmed from time constraints and the negative washback effect caused by the strict curriculum. As the blended ER program was designed independently of the curriculum, some participants highlighted their struggles in following the blended ER program after school. This issue was mostly related to the time constraints hindering their ER experiences. The participants generally could not find time due to exhaustion after school and school responsibilities. They lacked the motivation to continue ER or were unable to be available for ER because of their midterm exams and multiple assignments. Some participants also indicated difficulty reading for pleasure and participating in the weekly meetings during the midterm weeks. Although they wanted to engage in reading extensively and attend the meetings, they stayed inactive in reading. When asked whether they want to continue ER after the blended ER program, P9 stated: *'If I fail the class, I will only focus on the exams.'* It can be concluded that learners in exam-oriented language classrooms might not perform their best in ER due to their concerns about exams. These issues might have stemmed from the interference of the negative washback effect of the exam-oriented curriculum with ER activities. The participants might have considered ER less significant than regular reading classes and

assignments in terms of preparing for the exams. Some researchers (Arai, 2023; He, 2014; Nishino, 2007; Robb, 2022) highlighted the influence of exam-oriented language classrooms on the success of ER treatments by discouraging learners from reading extensively. Therefore, curriculum designers can consider the positive effects of ER and the negative washback effect of exam-oriented language learning. Then, they may change some requirements and the design of the curriculum accordingly to increase learners' motivation and engagement in L2 reading.

Another reason for the decrease in the participants' reading engagement and insufficient intrinsic motivation might be the effect of some participants' reading habits in Turkish. During the interviews, some participants whose reading activity showed a decline emphasized their poor reading habits in Turkish and its possible effects on their engagement in L2 reading. In contrast, some participants who read more frequently than others noted their enjoyment of reading in Turkish and their efforts to read regularly. Yamashita (2004) investigated the relationship between L1 and L2 reading attitudes after an ER program and found a significant transfer of reading attitudes from L1 to L2. Takase (2007) unveiled in her study that intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes in L1 and L2 reading had a crucial influence on the volume of ER. However, in the current study, not all participants were influenced by their reading habits and attitudes in Turkish. To illustrate, P10 stated that her Turkish reading habits had had no contribution to the development of her English reading habits. Therefore, the role of L1 reading attitudes and habits in shaping L2 reading attitudes and habits is questionable in this study and needs further investigation.

An additional reason for the decrease in the amount of reading might be the process of getting used to ER. It was revealed that one of the codes related to the issues arising from the blended ER program's design was the length of the program for the participants. Some participants wanted the program to last longer to get used to ER and participate in weekly meetings more. Since the participants were inexperienced in ER, they may have needed a longer duration to get used to it. Nakanishi (2015) found in his meta-analysis study that the longer the period of an ER program, the more significant effect it has on learners. Renandya et al. (2021) emphasized the delayed impact of ER and the significance of sustained motivation to continue reading extensively after some time. Moreover, their reading time might have shown a decrease due to the curve of the participants' progress. Since second/foreign language learning is not a linear but a

dynamic and complex process, there may not be immediate but delayed development (Larsen Freeman, 2009). Hence, implementing the blended ER program in a longitudinal fashion would have been more efficient to see the participants' progress in ER. Nonetheless, the main reason for shortening the length of the blended ER program from eight weeks to four weeks was an exceptional circumstance. Türkiye was struck by severe earthquakes that had a devastating impact on the country, including the education system. Following the earthquakes, the university education system switched from face-to-face learning to online/hybrid learning to use dormitories as a place to live for the earthquake victims. As for the program's implementation, a break was given as everyone was affected mentally after the earthquake. Afterwards, the researcher tried to conduct the ER program fully online by omitting the program's face-to-face component, which was holding weekly meetings. However, the completely online version of this ER program was discontinued because of meager participation.

Given the results of the qualitative data, face-to-face weekly meetings and tasks were the most favored features of the design of the blended ER program. The primary reason for this could be the face-to-face meetings' feature to build social connections among learners and foster a sense of belonging. They enjoyed sharing their reading experiences and tried to read more to share with others. Thus, integrating an online ER program with a blended learning modality, including a face-to-face and an online learning component, can address the needs of learners since sharing and interacting with peers help them build new knowledge, improve their social skills, and increase their motivation in reading (Chen, 2018; Ellis, 2000). Vygotsky's sociocultural theories of learning suggest that learners can develop their potential through social interactions and collaboration (Huang, 2011). The learners participating in the pilot study conducted fully online also highlighted their need for face-to-face interaction to share their experiences. Since ER was an individual activity on its own, they needed physical attachment and interaction with others. The findings of Chen's study (2018), in which a task-based approach was incorporated into an ER program, suggested that sharing what learners read through tasks encouraged them to read more, fostered their motivation, and decreased reading anxiety. However, implementing a traditional ER program would not be wiser due to the advantages of online learning and changes in the 21st century. The increasing Internet use affects the text modality people read, and reading has been fused into continually updated digital settings (OECD ©, 2019). Thus, an online environment

includes digital literacy skills since information on digital devices also requires reading skills to navigate digital devices and access online resources (Oh et al., 2022; Turner & Hicks, 2015). Online learning provides learners with flexibility, accessibility, and chances to become more experienced and autonomous in L2 digital reading, whereas traditional learning gives a sense of belonging with valuable social interaction between their classmates and teachers (Banditvilai, 2016). Therefore, implementing a blended ER program might be the best option to benefit from both learning modalities' advantages.

Despite the decrease in their reading engagement after the program's first week caused mostly by external reasons, the qualitative data revealed the blended ER program's role in the participants' enhanced intrinsic motivation in L2 reading. The program's effect on motivation was regarded as worthwhile by the participants. In other words, throughout the program, participants expressed a strong desire to read more and reported an increase in motivation in their reading logs and interviews. Motivation is a significant affective factor in learners' success in language learning (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2013). Intrinsically motivated learners engage in enjoyable and interesting activities, while extrinsically motivated learners participate in activities that offer rewards. In accordance, ER research has suggested motivation's crucial effect on learners' ER experiences (e.g., Camiciottoli, 2001; Day & Bamford, 1998; Judge, 2011; Nishino, 2007; Mikami, 2017; Ro, 2013; Rob & Susser, 1989; Takese, 2007). Rather than grading learners based on their ER activities and setting a reading time goal, the principles of 'reading as its own reward' and 'reading as much as possible' encouraged some learners, such as P14 and P5, to read extensively and develop positive reading attitudes. Thus, the blended ER program effectively developed the participants' intrinsic motivation in L2 reading.

Al Roomy and Althewini (2019) revealed in their blended ER program that the participants recognized L2 reading as a lifelong activity instead of only an academic one, thanks to their blended ER program. In the current study, even though the participants in the study were not graded for their participation and reading engagement or given a certain amount of reading time to complete, they were motivated to continue ER after the program since they expanded their vocabulary knowledge, gained new information, and shared their reading experiences. Other factors affecting their motivation to continue ER were self-selected reading and their progress in reading. According to Leung (2002), reading materials significantly affect the participants' reading motivation. The more

learners feel a sense of achievement by reading interesting and appropriate-level materials, the more motivated they are to read. In Nguyen's online ER study with self-selected digital texts (2022), the learners stated that they enjoyed selecting reading materials from a range of topics, reading materials at an appropriate difficulty level, improving L2 language proficiency, and benefiting from the convenience of the online ER program. In contrast, Can and Baştürk (2016) allowed learners to read only classical works of English literature throughout an ER project as a part of a reading course at a university in Türkiye. They yielded negative results as the participants felt demotivated because of having difficulty reading classical English literature books. In addition, Can and Baştürk (2016) underscored that social media were a major source of distraction and impeded their ER experiences as most learners used digital devices to read novels. Considering learners' switch from print to digital reading in today's digital world and changing reading habits (Al-Seghayer, 2023), when learners are not restricted to one genre and are allowed to read even social media posts, ER might be less demotivating for learners.

The current study's participants also read posts from social media and online platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram posts, Reddit entries, recipes, and movie reviews. P8 highlighted that he often got distracted while trying to read a novel; instead, he tended to read articles within his interests, particularly technology and games, on the Internet. It is also worth noting that he started to turn on English subtitles in games and look for articles about technology in English during the blended ER program. Some other participants stated their efforts to read English texts they encountered on social media after starting the program although they had avoided reading them before.

Besides, using digital texts in the ER program helped learners easily access the materials on a wide range with almost no cost, read flexibly anytime and anywhere, and gain experience in L2 digital reading. These findings showed that including digital reading and not limiting learners to reading only one text type allowed learners to take advantage of any English texts they were confronted with. Since the suggested reading materials and everything related to the program were shared on Google Classroom, the participants accessed them easily. In addition, by tracking their own progress on Padlet, they were able to observe their progress and check what others read. Unlike the studies using XReading (e.g., Cote & Milliner, 2015; Milliner, 2017; Puripunyanich, 2021; Zhou & Day, 2021), an automatic tracker system was not included in any LMSs in the

current study. However, using Padlet was functional enough for them to track their own progress and for the researcher to monitor their progress.

Concurrent with the current study's favorable findings related to digital texts and LMSs, the findings of most ER studies using self-selected digital reading materials and LMSs were promising (e.g., Arnold, 2009; Bui & Macalister, 2021; Chen et al., 2013; Ngyun, 2022; Puripunyanich, 2021; Pongsatornpiat, 2021; Zhou & Day, 2021). For instance, Zhou and Day (2021) revealed improvement in learners' reading comprehension and motivation, along with other linguistic gains during the semi-structured interviews. It was concluded that reading large amounts of texts led them to observe gains in their motivation and language proficiency due to the valuable aspects of the online ER program, such as accessibility and flexibility. Cote and Miller (2015) stated that digital texts are a lower-cost alternative to printed texts. In another ERO study, Bui and Macalister (2021) found that reading digital materials for pleasure motivated learners to build a reading habit due to a sense of accomplishment after finishing a book, realization of their progress, easy accessibility to the virtual library, and availability of various digital books with a lower cost. In their blended ER study, Al Roomy and Althewini (2019) found out that the online aspect of the program, reading digital materials, supported learners in developing positive reading attitudes and reading comprehension and reading at their own pace. Similar to the recent research findings, the current study revealed the benefits of digital reading and LMSs (Google Classroom and Padlet) in terms of accessibility and flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and reading individually at one's own pace.

The participants also emphasized the blended ER program's effect on their L2 reading skills. Several studies suggested that exposure to ER can positively affect the development of L2 readers, particularly development in their reading proficiency (e.g., Al Roomy & Althewini, 2019; Bui & Macalister, 2021; Chen et al., 2013; Nakanishi, 2015; Norman, 2023; Pongsatornpiat, 2021; Yilmaz et al., 2020; Zhou & Day, 2021). Likewise, one of the most significant contributions of the current blended ER program was the improvement in the participants' reading skills in various ways. As they selected reading materials within their comfort zone, their heavy reliance on dictionaries decreased. The participants developed reading strategies for the unknown words and managed to reach a general comprehension by not disturbing the flow of reading. What is more, they noticed an improvement in their grades from reading tests and performance

in reading classes at school and attributed the reason they had the improvement in their grades and classes to this program. Since the learners realized their progress in reading comprehension with minimum dictionary use and developing their L2 reading habits, they tried to read as much as possible and started enjoying L2 reading. Accordingly, they seemed to break the vicious cycle of a weak reader (Nuttall, 2005) by becoming more fluent in reading and enjoying reading for pleasure with the help of the blended ER program. This result may stem from the space given as an opportunity to establish L2 reading habits at their own pace by reading anything, anywhere, and anytime.

There are some researchers highlighting the possible positive effects of reading materials in enhancing learners' reading skills. Meng (2009) stated that learners are most likely to engage in reading and become better L2 readers if they are responsible for selecting their own reading materials based on their interests and proficiency levels. Similarly, Endris (2018) asserted that the availability of a variety of reading materials is another aspect of ER's effect on learners' reading skills. In tandem with a virtual library created on Google Classroom, including a list of suggested reading materials, the participants of the current study were also allowed to read texts of their choice, not limited to those on the list. The participants found the variety, flexibility, and accessibility of the texts valuable. Therefore, interesting reading materials within the participants' linguistic level have an influence on the perceived development of their reading skills.

The blended ER program had additional factors maximizing the positive impact of reading materials, digital reading, and the LMSs on learners' reading skills, motivation, attitudes towards reading, and independence in L2 reading. These factors included tasks and weekly meetings conducted face-to-face. The design of the blended ER program involved follow-up tasks to create a positive environment by giving learners a purpose and opportunities to share their reading experiences with others during face-to-face weekly meetings. Among the blended ER program's features (e.g., digital reading, reading materials, the LMS, etc.), the participants appreciated face-to-face meetings and tasks. According to most participants, the face-to-face meetings and tasks were indispensable parts of the blended ER program. As Liao and Wang (2020) asserted, the follow-up activities of this program eased the learners' speaking anxiety, motivated them to read by giving them a purpose, and enhanced their reading comprehension. In agreement with the participants' views of the meetings and tasks, ER studies frequently encourage the integration of follow-up activities into ER programs to improve the impact

of ER. The reason for this is the follow-up activities' role in promoting learners' motivation and confidence in L2 reading, decreasing their anxiety in L2 reading and speaking, and giving them a sense of purpose and achievement (e.g., Chen, 2018; Liao & Wang, 2020; Pongsatornpiat, 2021; Takase, 2007). Without sufficient and effective follow-up procedures, learners' engagement with reading may be unsatisfactory even though ER provides favorable outcomes related to reading skills, increased motivation, and positive attitudes (Boakye, 2017). Pongsatornpiat (2021) also pinpointed the importance of interactive follow-up activities. She claimed that interactive group activities support learners to be more interested in reading and help them solve their L2 reading problems with their peers. Therefore, various tasks can be provided to give learners a sense of responsibility, raise interaction, and enhance their ER experiences, such as the ones in the current study (e.g., summarizing the text with basic illustrations, creating an Instagram post to promote the text, choosing a song representing the text, etc.) to monitor learners along with reading logs (Bamford & Day, 2004).

The face-to-face meetings and tasks were effective concerning the interaction between the participants and easy to manage due to the number of participants ($n = 14$). However, conducting meetings by leaving the task choice to learners and requesting them to perform their tasks individually could be challenging and ineffective with a larger group. In this case, learners can be grouped or paired and given the same tasks each week as in Chen's study (2018) to perform in groups. Alternatively, learners may read extensively during their free time, as in this blended ER program, and come to classes to share what they read. In this way, they can both practice reading and interact with the other learners.

To provide learners with a sense of responsibility and accomplishment, an alternative to interactive meetings as follow-up ER activities might be individual activities, such as quizzes and blogging. Most ERO studies employing XReading and/or M-Reader used quizzes provided by these subscription-required LMSs (e.g., Cote & Milliner, 2015; Robb & Kano, 2013; Puripunyanich, 2021; Tagane et al., 2018; Zhou & Day, 2021). Apart from ERO studies, Chantap and Wasanasomsithi's blended ER study (2019) used online quizzes to grade learners' reading activities and check their reading comprehension. These quizzes, unique to each graded reader, were favored by learners in these studies since learners could easily access and take the quizzes anytime and anywhere and check their comprehension of a graded reader they read. Fatimah et al.

(2020) used a blog as a follow-up activity to foster interaction and collaboration in another blended ER program. They revealed its usefulness in building learners' self-responsibility in L2 reading. Thus, individual activities can be employed to give learners a sense of responsibility and foster their reading experiences.

A further noteworthy aspect of the blended ER program facilitating learners' L2 reading was the unique opportunities provided in the program that were otherwise not available in their regular reading classes. According to most participants, the blended ER program was more enjoyable than their regular reading classes. The participants were able to choose their own reading materials as they did for L1 reading and were more motivated to read for the weekly meetings during which they shared their reading experiences. They did not get bored reading as they did in the intensive reading classes. The main reason for this comparison by the participants seems to be the evident differences between these two reading approaches (Arai, 2019). As it was highlighted by many researchers (e.g., Al-Hamoud & Schmitt, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Stoller, 2015), in contrast to ER, intensive reading classes may be challenging and apprehensive for learners because of assigned texts above their linguistic skills, mechanical comprehension questions, tight schedule, and teachers' role as a decision maker, which cause learners to be reluctant L2 readers. Another significant reason for the participants' tendency to compare these reading approaches can be related to their real-life-like L2 reading experiences in the blended ER program. Some participants expressed enjoyment in ER since some texts, such as social media posts, increased their awareness of functional language use. As Transfer Appropriate Processing (TAP) theory emphasizes, a piece of target information can be learned and retrieved successfully when a related context is given to learners to ease knowledge retention (Spada et al., 2014). Since the participants were exposed to English use in a context relevant to their lives, needs, and interests through ER and digital texts, recognizing and retrieving the functional language use might have been easier.

As for the researcher's observations of the participants during the blended ER program and their reading classes, while they ignored meaningful reading and comprehension activities during the classes, they focused on reading only for pleasure throughout the blended ER program. It was noticed that they were much more encouraged to read extensively and seemed to enjoy ER while sharing their experiences in the weekly meetings. The participants were also pleased with the selection of texts available to them,

which differed from what their reading course offered. They appreciated the teacher's role in guiding them to select a text within their linguistic level and interests rather than the teacher's role in determining a text above their linguistic level. Thus, the observations and favorable results exhibiting the effectiveness of the blended ER program can be another motivation for curriculum developers and teachers to involve ER in the curriculum and reading classes.

Apart from numerous reported benefits of the blended ER program, the participants' views revealed certain challenges and weaknesses of the program. The challenges and weaknesses stemmed from problems with reading materials, issues arising from the program's design, language difficulties, and personal factors interfering with their ER experiences. In order to implement a more successful and effective blended ER program, it is worth discussing these challenges and weaknesses pinpointed by the participants.

One of the features of this blended ER program is providing learners with a wide range of digital reading materials in various genres. Although the benefits and advantages of the reading materials and digital reading were prominent, there were some concerns about L2 digital reading, which might have caused some participants' problems and low engagement in digital reading during the rest of the program. Some participants mostly suffered from the distractions on their digital devices, eyestrain in digital reading, and unappealing reading materials, as most studies using digital reading materials revealed (e.g., Bui & Macalister, 2021; Chen, 2013; Cote & Milliner, 2015; Nhung, 2022; Ng et al., 2019; Puripunyavinich, 2021). Since there is a variety of information other than text on a website, such as hyperlinks and various text options, learners' divided attention can be an obstacle to digital reading (Lange, 2019; Al-Seghayer, 2023). Thus, on-screen reading can be challenging for learners when going through websites and reading texts, which can make on-screen reading mentally demanding. The participants generally used their smartphones to read extensively; thus, the notifications from other apps and pop-up ads on reading websites might have disturbed their reading flow. Some participants, P7 and P2, found solutions to the distractions in digital reading. Although not all materials have PDF versions, using PDF documents can block pop-up ads appearing on websites, as P2 did purposefully. However, most participants who were uncomfortable with digital reading could not develop useful digital reading strategies. If the blended ER program had lasted longer, they could have become more experienced with digital reading and

developed digital reading strategies over time. In addition, the participants could be supported by extrinsic motivation to encourage them to keep practicing digital reading in English and increase their reading time, as previously suggested. It is also underlined that EFL learners need to be trained to advance in digital reading and benefit from its multimodal aspects (Coiro, 2020). Thus, along with offering learners a longer duration in the ER program, learners can be trained to read digitally and apply digital reading strategies before starting a blended or online ER program.

Regarding distractions, such as pop-up ads of open-access websites, subscription-based virtual libraries (e.g., XReading and ReadTheory) become salient as a solution because learners could see only the text they read on the screen without any ads on subscription-based virtual libraries. However, considering the cost of the subscription, using open-access websites with ads may be more affordable in education contexts with no funds. Besides, appropriate-level materials on the Internet provide more variety of texts, ranging from stories to recipes, compared to subscription-based virtual libraries, including graded readers only. Although pop-up ads may disturb learners' reading, using open-access websites for various digital reading materials can still be an optimal option for language classrooms without funds. As highlighted by Robb (2018), many websites with free reading materials suitable to learners' level can be found on the Internet. Even though some obstacles to using free websites were stated in the current study, the results showed the benefits of using free digital resources.

A few of the participants indicated problems with choosing suitable and appealing reading materials on Google Classroom. In other words, they had difficulty choosing a text within their interests and linguistic skills among various digital resources grouped into four difficulty levels. P9 and P5 declared that they did not spend time revising the list of suggested reading materials. As P9 stated, they could have found interesting materials within their proficiency level if they had analyzed the list thoroughly. A distinctive point to consider related to this issue might be their confusion in choosing a text among a variety of options (Castek & Coiro, 2015), as appeared in the codes of this sub-category. Since the participants were given plenty of digital reading materials with links at once, they might feel overwhelmed to go through the list and choose one to read (Puripunyanich, 2021). More attention can be paid to teacher guidance to mitigate their struggle in choosing a text among various texts, as highlighted in Chantap and Wasanasomsithi's blended ER study (2019). Similarly, Chen (2018) proposed pre-

selected graded readers for the first weeks of the implementation since learners were inexperienced in ER. During the semi-structured interviews, some participants recommended reading pre-determined materials by the teacher. In this respect, learners can get used to ER and digital reading and find out which type of text they can read and want to read. A few reading texts appealing to general interest can be offered to learners, and then the number of text choices can be increased as they become more autonomous in ER and digital reading.

As one of the challenges, some participants struggled with language difficulties while reading for pleasure due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge and frequent dictionary use. This may have occurred due to some learners' own choices regarding challenging reading materials among various difficulty levels. The suggested reading materials on Google Classroom were grouped into four difficulty levels. The third and fourth groups involved texts equal to or slightly above their proficiency level, B1. Although providing various types of reading materials with different difficulty levels might help learners be aware of their language level and deficiencies in L2, providing only easy self-selected reading materials might be more effective until they get used to digital L2 reading and ER. Ramonda (2020) investigated whether learners preferred reading in-class books determined by the teacher or reading self-selected books on their own and found out that they preferred the former. One of the reasons for this preference was that most learners chose too challenging books when they read self-selected books for pleasure. This is why the learners appreciated the selection of books by their teachers. As Nation and Waring (2020) suggested, selecting reading materials for learners or providing a few self-selected reading materials might be more effective until they get used to digital L2 reading and ER.

It is also important to note that the participants' preference for reading printed materials was another reported problem by a few of them since the reading materials provided were digital materials. The participants had opportunities to practice L2 digital reading and improve their digital literacy skills throughout the blended ER program, which was crucial due to the prevalence of the Internet in sharing information and learning and the importance of digital skills in the 21st century (Engeness, 2021). Some participants held their reservations about digital L2 reading, while others got used to it. Thus, reading in the digital realm can be a personal choice since some learners might not get used to it. Given the importance of digital reading in the 21st century and the

participants' problems with digital reading, both digital and printed materials can be available in an ER program to overcome these problems and benefit from the advantages of digital reading. This issue might also be related to their L1 reading habits since most participants were not used to digital reading both in their L1 and L2, as revealed in the background survey. Some of the participants were also demotivated to read digital materials since they could not take notes of unknown words as they could with printed materials. To overcome this challenge, some helping tools with an extension to the browser may help them take notes and look up the dictionary (e.g., Google Keep and Tureng). Hence, further studies can consider adding extension applications to ER programs on digital platforms.

Another distinctive aspect was the issues arising from the design of the blended ER program. The LMSs, Google Classroom and Padlet, were among the noteworthy features of the program and were favored by most participants. Nevertheless, using these LMSs was overwhelming for some participants. This was mainly due to their unfamiliarity with the LMSs and keeping reading logs on Padlet. Keeping reading logs on Padlet was one of the most challenging aspects of the blended ER program. It was adopted to monitor learners and provide an opportunity to track their own and others' progress. The required information in the reading logs was kept at minimum, without asking for any detailed information about what they read (e.g., a summary) to prevent reading logs from being perceived as a burden by the learners. However, the participants found keeping reading logs in a digital environment highly demanding. Some participants did not record their acts of reading even though they read regularly. It can be concluded that keeping a record of a text one reads for pleasure can be perceived as a hindrance to ER for some learners. Therefore, reading logs can be optional for learners to monitor their own progress, and teachers can monitor learners' progress through their performance in meetings.

To put it in a nutshell, the primary purposes of the current study were to reveal the change in the participants' attitudes towards reading in English and to uncover their views of the blended ER program. In line with most ER studies, the study's findings presented the blended ER program's positive influence on the participants' L2 reading attitudes. As there is no study on a blended ER program in a Turkish EFL context, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study provided a deeper understanding of tertiary level Turkish EFL learners' attitudes towards reading in English extensively on digital

platforms with teacher guidance. The participants' views of the blended program have also presented valuable insights into the program's benefits and challenges. Even though there were limitations and challenges in the blended ER program, the participants mostly favored the blended ER program and had enhanced reading experiences. Considering the benefits and advantages of the blended ER program and its aspects to be developed, it is hoped that the findings of this study will guide researchers, curriculum designers, and teachers in implementing effective blended ER programs.



6. CONCLUSION

This chapter presents conclusions in relation to the findings of the study. Initially, the findings are presented briefly, along with a summary of the study. Afterwards, conclusions are provided, followed by the pedagogical implications. Ultimately, suggestions for further studies are given based on the findings.

6.1. Summary of the Findings

The current study intended to reveal the EFL learners' attitudes towards reading in English before and after the blended ER program and unearth their views of the program. This study lasted for a total of seven weeks, allocating four weeks to the blended ER program. 14 B1 level EFL learners in an English preparatory program at a private Turkish university participated in the study. In the first week of the study, an orientation meeting to introduce the blended ER program was held, and the participants filled in the Reading Attitude Survey (Zhou & Day, 2021) and background survey about their demographic information and reading habits in L1 and L2. The Reading Attitude Survey was used as the source of quantitative data, and the background survey was employed to get insights into learners' past reading experiences and their L2 reading preferences.

During the second week of the study, an introductory week to ER was held to prepare the participants for the blended ER program. In the introductory week, the participants were required to read extensively at their own pace. In the third week of the study, the blended ER program started. Throughout the program, the participants read various reading materials and genres within their proficiency level provided via Google Classroom platform in their free time. They were requested to keep reading logs on Padlet for each act of reading and submit weekly reflective logs regarding their ER experiences. Participants were given a task list on Google Classroom and were required to choose a task weekly based on their preference. On the last day of each week, the participants attended face-to-face meetings and shared their reading experiences through the tasks they chose in the task list. The researcher/teacher guided the participants anytime they needed and followed their progress throughout the program. After the program, in the seventh week of the study, the participants received the Reading Attitude Survey (Zhou & Day, 2021) again to reveal the difference in their reading attitudes, if any. Besides, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to uncover their views of the blended ER program and gain deeper insights into their reading experiences.

The quantitative data obtained from pre- and post-questionnaire were analyzed through descriptive analysis and a non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test, and the qualitative data gathered from the weekly reflective logs and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using the Constant Comparison Method. The quantitative analysis revealed that the L2 reading attitudes of the participants underwent a significant positive change during the blended ER program. The qualitative analysis reinforced the positive outcomes of the quantitative data. In particular, their confidence and enjoyment in L2 reading and perception of themselves as L2 readers were enhanced throughout the program. The qualitative findings uncovered the participants' views of the ER program, which were mostly positive (n = 640 codes), along with certain challenges (n = 317 codes). They expressed the positive impact of the blended ER program's features on their reading experiences. That is, the participants' reading skills and motivation were fostered the most during the program. Their reading experiences were enhanced, and they developed reading strategies (e.g., guessing unknown words' meanings from the context), increased their reading time, and reported getting better grades in their exams at school. Besides, they were motivated to read more and continue reading extensively after the blended ER program due to its effects on building new vocabulary and general knowledge, perceived improvement in their language proficiency, and a sense of accomplishment.

The participants also highlighted the crucial role of face-to-face meetings and tasks in developing positive views of the blended ER program and fostering their reading experiences. Since they interacted and exchanged opinions about reading materials with the other learners and shared their reading experiences, they regarded the meetings and tasks as indispensable aspects of the blended ER program. Besides, the participants stated overall positive views of the blended ER program, acknowledging the blended ER program as a well-designed and beneficial reading program. They appreciated the opportunity to read self-selected and interesting materials within their comfort zone and favored digital reading due to its advantages, such as accessibility and flexibility. The participants also valued the use of the LMSs (Google Classroom and Padlet) in this study since they could easily access the virtual library on Google Classroom and monitor their own and the other learners' progress on Padlet.

Considering the different features of the blended ER program from their intensive reading classes at school, some participants compared these two reading approaches.

Since they were restricted to reading pre-determined texts above their linguistic level and requested to answer comprehension questions in intensive reading classes, they embraced the opportunities given in the blended ER program, such as reading any text anytime and anywhere. As a support to the quantitative findings, all participants emphasized the change in their attitudes towards reading in English, such as overcoming their L2 reading bias, feeling confident as an L2 reader, and enjoying L2 reading. In addition, some participants realized the improvement in other language aspects than reading skills. To set an example, they stated that their awareness and use of functional use of language increased. Some participants also experienced enhanced autonomy in L2 reading and digital reading.

Apart from its positive effects, the participants underlined the challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program (n = 317 codes). The foremost mentioned challenges were related to the reading materials. Even though reading materials and digital reading were valued, some participants struggled mainly with their difficulties in digital reading, such as distractions in their digital devices (such as smartphones and tablets), eyestrain, and preference for printed texts. Similarly, they were also challenged by the LMSs (Google Classroom and Padlet). Specifically, keeping reading logs on Padlet was perceived as demanding for an L2 reading experience done for enjoyment. To keep their ER experiences as real-life-like as possible, some participants suggested limiting the use of Padlet as a reading log. As for the reading tasks, some participants recommended adding more interactive tasks to the list, such as group debates. Besides, some stressed their need for a longer period to get used to the blended ER program. Another challenging point for the learners was the language difficulties they experienced during their acts of reading. To illustrate, insufficient vocabulary knowledge led some participants to the disturbance of the flow of reading and difficulty with comprehension. Thus, some had difficulty keeping their intrinsic motivation increased. Lastly, factors hindering ER, such as time constraints and a decline in motivation, kept the participants away from reaching their potential and beyond in ER. To exemplify, due to time limitations stemming from their school responsibilities and exams, they sometimes could not manage to find time or enough motivation to engage with ER. All in all, this study put forward that along with the numerous benefits of a blended ER program, learners need time, support, and more experience in ER; and further opportunities are required to help learners have more enriched L2 reading experiences.

6.2. Conclusion

Considering the overall findings, it can be concluded that the blended ER program enhanced the participants' attitudes towards reading in English, and they held mostly positive views of the program. Even though the blended ER program was independent of the curriculum and lasted for four weeks, the participants had a positive change in their reading attitudes. It can be highlighted that both quantitative and qualitative findings concurred well with the previous literature on ER's positive influence on L2 reading attitudes (e.g., Bui & Macalister, 2021; Park, 2020; Yamashita, 2013; Zhou & Day, 2021). While there are a few ER studies conducted in Turkish settings, there is no study, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, investigating the change in learners' reading attitudes throughout a blended ER program and integrating blended learning into ER. The blended ER program in this study involved digital reading materials and LMSs (Google Classroom and Padlet), and weekly face-to-face meetings and tasks to benefit from both online and face-to-face delivery of learning and to promote positive reading attitudes and experiences. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing ER research with its context and design.

As the qualitative findings put forward, the participants' views of the blended ER program were favorable despite some of their concerns about the program. In line with most ER studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2013; Endris, 2018; Jeon & Day, 2016; Suk, 2017) the participants stated improvement in their reading skills. Since the blended ER program provided various reading materials within their proficiency level, the participants started to enjoy L2 reading and managed to break the cycle of a weak reader (Nuttall, 2005). In accordance, they mentioned increased motivation throughout the blended ER program due to independent reading, improved language proficiency, and the program's features. The ample opportunities provided in the blended ER program, such as various reading resources and the LMSs, enhanced the learners' reading experiences. Of the blended ER program's features, the participants favored face-to-face meetings and tasks the most. As supported by many researchers (e.g., Day & Bamford, 2004; Liao & Wang, 2020; Pongsatornpiat, 2021; Ramonda, 2020; Shen, 2008), interacting and exchanging opinions about what they read with the other learners through the tasks fostered the participants' ER experiences. Additionally, they gave the participants a sense of responsibility in their L2 reading since they needed to engage in reading to be active during the meetings. Hence, it can be inferred that face-to-face meetings and tasks were

indispensable aspects of the blended ER program and they serve as a guide in learners' L2 reading experiences outside the classroom.

Considering the participants' positive views of the blended ER program in terms of its design and usefulness, face-to-face meetings and tasks were not the only aspects valued by the participants. Digital reading materials with various genres and topics provided on Google Classroom and accessibility and flexibility of digital reading were other merits of the blended ER program. That is, most participants gained experience in digital L2 reading, found abundant texts, and appreciated the accessibility and flexibility of digital reading. Since they were inexperienced in L2 digital reading, their favorable views of digital reading after the blended ER program bear importance to the study. The accessibility and practicality of the LMSs used in this study (Google Classroom and Padlet) were other strands stressed by the participants in the blended ER program. To illustrate, the participants found a variety of texts easily on Google Classroom and monitored their and other participants' progress on Padlet. Such positive outcomes are highly valuable as the digital reading materials and LMSs employed in this study were open-access materials and platforms. Therefore, it can be implied that this study bears importance since the reading materials and LMSs provided in this study can be affordable for most learning contexts worldwide. Taking the features and opportunities of the blended ER program into account, the participants mentioned insufficient reading opportunities in their regular reading classes in contrast to the blended ER program, as Arai (2019) suggested. To set an example, reading materials, exposure to English with different discourses, teachers' roles, face-to-face meetings, and self-responsibility in L2 reading were uttered as the dissimilarities between the blended ER program and their intensive reading course. It can be concluded from the participants' comparison that this study was effective in helping learners realize how enjoyable and beneficial L2 reading and digital L2 reading can be outside the classroom context.

Despite the potential benefits and effectiveness of the blended ER program inferred from the participants' views, there were some shortcomings of the blended ER program. Having examined the participants' reading logs on Padlet and reflective logs, it was found their reading engagement showed a decrease throughout the blended ER program even though they kept reading various genres. Although they expressed their increased intrinsic motivation and enhanced reading attitudes, they were precluded from reading extensively mainly by time constraints and tiredness, stemming mainly from

school responsibilities and exams. Therefore, it is suggested that a blended ER program can be integrated into the curriculum to provide learners with external motivation and alleviate the effects of time constraints on learners. Despite their appreciation of the benefits of digital reading resources and digital reading, one of the concerns of some participants was related to the digital reading materials and digital reading experiences. Similar to other studies adopting digital reading (e.g., Bui & Macalister, 2021; Chen, 2013; Cote & Milliner, 2015; Nhung, 2022; Ng et al., 2019; Puripunyavinich, 2021), it was revealed that the participants struggled with digital reading mostly due to online distractions, eyestrain, and exhaustion. A few participants also stated their preference for printed materials primarily because they were inexperienced in both L1 and L2 digital reading and struggled to take notes of unknown words in the digital realm. Thus, it is suggested that learners can be given more training opportunities in digital L2 reading and the importance of digital reading can be emphasized and explained to learners during a blended ER program.

Another problem with the reading materials in the study was the participants' unfamiliarity with selecting reading materials suitable to their interests and current proficiency level on the Google Classroom platform. A few participants reported selecting difficult reading materials without going through the comprehensive list on Google Classroom. Although the blended ER program, with its student-centered approach, promoted learners' autonomy in selecting their own texts and increased their awareness of their linguistic capability with different levels of texts, some participants were not able to select appropriate texts within their linguistic ability. Thus, a blended ER program with L2 readers inexperienced in ER and digital reading may need to prioritize creating awareness of selecting appropriate materials tailored to learners' own needs. There were some concerns about the LMSs used in the program (Google Classroom and Padlet) and their requirements. Some participants found keeping a reading log for their digital L2 reading experiences demanding. Although the items in the reading log did not ask for details or a summary, some still felt discouraged from keeping a reading log. Considering the ones who benefitted from keeping records of their reading process, reading logs on Padlet can be non-compulsory and optional for learners. A few participants also mentioned difficulty in choosing a task for a text they read and stated a need for more interactive tasks, such as group discussions and debates. Thus, it can be suggested that implementing more interactive tasks and discussions in face-to-face

meetings with groups and peers may help learners become more familiar with each other and increase interaction among learners.

To conclude, the blended ER program offered multifarious opportunities to the participants to help them enrich their L2 reading experiences and become better L2 readers. Given the findings in general, the current study implies that implementing a blended ER program can foster learners' reading attitudes and experiences. This study suggests that blended ER programs can contribute to fostering L2 reading in several ways and promote more enhanced L2 reading experiences by taking the challenges into account as well. Several implications are drawn from the study that can guide language practitioners, instructors, and educators given in the following section.

6.3. Implications

In light of the aforementioned findings of the study, this study may provide deeper insights into ER research. The quantitative and qualitative data collected from EFL learners in a Turkish tertiary context shed light on the beneficial and challenging aspects of the blended ER program. Thus, some pedagogical implications are proposed based on the findings of the study.

The current study was independent of the curriculum and did not hold learners responsible for any grades. In other words, the blended ER program was not connected with the participants' reading course, and the participants were not offered any reinforcement in their grades. It was found that the participants did not show an increase in their engagement with ER, mainly due to the time constraints stemming from the assignments and exams at school. Nevertheless, the participants could have shown increased reading engagement and sustainability in ER if the blended ER program had been integrated into the curriculum. That is, the blended ER program as a course or a part of a course may motivate learners externally. Although there are some concerns about grading learners' ER activities due to ER's 'reading as its own reward' nature, inexperienced learners can be motivated externally with initial incentives to learners, such as additional grades (Bakla, 2020; Charumanee, 2014). Furthermore, it was revealed that the negative washback effect during the blended ER program influenced some participants. Hence, it can be suggested that curriculum designers can elaborate on the effects of ER and their own curriculum. Then, they can adjust their curriculum to foster learners' reading experiences and their perception of themselves as L2 readers. One

possible integration of a blended ER program into a reading course can be assigning learners to read for pleasure outside the class and performing follow-up activities in groups in the class. However, teachers' role as a role model of a reader should be reminded since they can show their learners that they can enjoy L2 reading and read in L2 as if they read in L1. Thus, one implication of the study is integrating a blended ER program based on a learning context's needs into the curriculum with teachers' meticulous guidance to enhance language learners' reading experiences and provide them with a source of external motivation.

Another implication of the study is related to increasing teachers' awareness of ER and LMSs, as teacher's guidance throughout ER experience is necessary for the program's success. In this respect, teachers need to provide support and motivation without excessive intervention by using various tasks and offering group discussion meetings. For the success of any ER program integrated into L2 contexts, teachers need to be aware of the ER benefits and technologies that can be integrated into ER in order to implement an effective blended ER program. For instance, Wang and Ho (2019) found that one of the effects of learners' enhanced L2 reading attitudes was the teacher's knowledge and awareness of the ER and ER implementation techniques. The more knowledgeable and experienced a teacher is, the more effectively he or she guides his/her students (Macalister, 2008). However, most teachers do not have previous experience with ER and may have biases about the immutability of learners' L2 reading attitudes (Renandya et al., 2021). Therefore, workshops and seminars can be organized to develop teachers' professional knowledge and awareness regarding the promising benefits of ER and the use of LMSs and digital texts for enhanced ER implementations. Through in-service teacher training, teachers can cascade knowledge with other colleagues, share their ER implementation experiences, and guide other teachers to find open-access reading materials on the Internet. Not only in the in-service period but also in the pre-service L2 teacher education contexts, ideas, best practices, features of ER, and its implementation can be integrated into the teacher education curriculum. In this way, pre-service teachers can have an idea about how to integrate ER into L2 teaching before they embark on their professional lives.

Based on the qualitative findings, the incorporation of face-to-face meetings and follow-up tasks was welcomed by the participants. They enjoyed sharing what they read and were motivated to read more to be active during the meetings. In addition, to avoid

the feeling of isolation in ER and give learners a sense of purpose and responsibility, follow-up activities can be rewarding. Therefore, ER programs can consider creating an environment for learners where they can share their reading experiences and exchange opinions about reading texts. Choosing and performing follow-up tasks can be difficult to manage with larger groups of learners. Thus, teachers who implement ER into their contexts can adopt grouping strategies to help learners share their experiences through tasks and manage larger classes effectively.

The curricula of preparatory programs of universities in Türkiye mostly adopt the intensive reading approach in reading classes, leaving little room for extramural reading activities as a part of their programs. Since learners mostly read a pre-determined text and answer comprehension questions, they may feel overwhelmed during intensive reading (Stoller, 2015). In ER, learners are given choices rather than assigned texts, and when teachers act as a guide, learners can be encouraged to read independently for pleasure. Therefore, ER can be considered a prominent approach in changing most L2 readers' ideas and attitudes about L2 reading from L2 reading as a frustrating activity to L2 reading as a pleasurable and individual activity.

ER provides learners with a great deal of language input and opportunities for L2 learning beyond the borders of the classrooms. However, most teaching contexts are deprived of a wide collection of reading materials or are not funded to establish a library or to subscribe to a virtual library. Therefore, implementing a blended ER program with a list of open-access websites and publishing all relevant materials on an LMS (e.g., Google Classroom) can be a solution for all L2 learning contexts. LMSs, such as Google Classroom and Padlet, can help teachers be more organized and monitor learners' engagement outside the class. Besides, teachers can find numerous types of text, such as news, movie reviews, and blogs, on various topics on the Internet to increase their interest in reading and support learners' L2 digital literacy through digital reading.

For effective implementation of ER programs, appropriate training on how to read digital texts for pleasure in L2 and to use LMSs can be provided to learners before implementing a blended ER program. In this way, learners may feel more comfortable with digital reading and not struggle with choosing a digital text among a variety of options. Introduction to ER can last longer, which may help teachers and learners make a smooth transition to the blended ER program that requires studying independently.

To put it briefly, it is believed that this study contributes to the current ER research, particularly in the EFL tertiary context. In light of the study's findings, the implications were suggested to lead to improvement in ER and L2 reading instruction. The summary of the implications is demonstrated in Figure 6.1.

Implications	
Teachers 	• Guiding learners without excessive teacher intervention • Being a role model of an L2 reader for learners • Monitoring learners' ER activities and giving feedback effectively • Creating a positive environment for learners through face-to-face meetings and follow-up tasks • Providing learners with a variety of genres on various topics through open-access digital resources • Using LMSs to enhance learners' reading experiences • Training learners on how to read digital texts for pleasure • Implementing introductory weeks to introduce ER and digital reading to learners • Acknowledging ER is a different approach than intensive reading
Curriculum Designers 	• Integrating a blended ER program into the curriculum • Designing training programs to enhance learners' ER and digital reading experiences
In-service/Pre-service Teacher Training 	• Organizing workshops and seminars to increase awareness of teachers in ER and blended learning • Guiding teachers in implementing an ER program, utilizing LMSs, and finding open-access and reliable digital texts for learners • Integrating ER, blended learning, and the use of LMSs into the pre-service teacher education curriculum

Figure 6.1. *The summary of implications*

6.4. Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of the present study provide significant insights into the effects of an ER program integrated with blended learning on 14 EFL university learners' L2 reading attitudes and their views of the blended ER program. The findings of the study also bring light to several suggestions for further research. It can be indicated that there is a need for similar ER studies adopting blended learning in various contexts with larger sample sizes and longer duration to demonstrate and generalize the effects of a blended ER program on learners' L2 reading attitudes and reading experiences. Through a longer implementation of the blended ER program, learners can become more experienced in ER and digital reading and build an L2 reading habit. Implementing a delayed post-test can also portray a detailed picture of the change in learners' L2 reading attitudes in the long term. Besides, different research instruments, such as the field notes taken by the teacher during face-to-face meetings, can be used as data sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the blended ER program.

Conducting a blended ER program in different contexts than tertiary level contexts, such as primary education contexts, is suggested for further research. The studies conducted in various contexts and levels can give fruitful results on a blended ER program's impact on different age groups. Investigating the relationship between L1 and L2 reading attitudes might also provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of a blended ER program. Further studies may examine the effect of other affective factors than attitudes, such as motivation, anxiety, and autonomy. Along with the affective factors, the relationship between cognitive factors regarding L2 reading (e.g., reading skills, reading comprehension, and language proficiency) and ER can be investigated. Moreover, the views of teachers on ER and blended learning might be explored to provide deeper insights into the effective implementation of blended ER programs in L2 contexts.

Finally, to enhance the blended ER program used in the current study, future studies can also consider the challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program based on the participants' views. In particular, keeping reading logs on Padlet can be replaced with another effective tool for monitoring to foster learners' ER activities. Besides, the blended ER program's integration into the curriculum and training learners before the program (e.g., digital L2 reading training) can be addressed to increase the possibility of learners' sustainable engagement with ER.

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Appendix-A. The Sample of Consent Form

Çalışma için Gönüllü Katılım Formu

Bu çalışma, ‘Sınıf Dışı Okuma Programına Harmanlanmış Öğrenmenin Dahil Edilmesi Üzerine Bir Çalışma: İngilizce Öğrenenlerin Okuma Deneyimleri Üzerindeki Etkisi’ başlıklı bir araştırma çalışması olup harmanlanmış öğrenme programı içerisinde oluşturulan sınıf dışı okuma etkinliklerini İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin okuma deneyimleri ve İngilizce okumaya karşı olan tutumlarına etkisini görme amacını taşımaktadır. Çalışma, Zeynep Yadigar Tosun tarafından yürütülmekte ve sonuçları ile sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma araştırma alanının gelişimine ışık tutulacaktır.

- Bu çalışmaya katılımınız gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır.
- Çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda, bir anket yapılarak sizden veriler toplanacaktır.
- Araştırmada katılımcıların isimleri gizli tutulacaktır.
- Araştırma kapsamında toplanan veriler, sadece bilimsel amaçlar doğrultusunda kullanılacak, araştırmanın amacı dışında ya da bir başka araştırmada kullanılmayacak ve gerekmesi halinde, sizin (yazılı) izniniz olmadan başkalarıyla paylaşılmayacaktır.
- İstemeniz halinde sizden toplanan verileri inceleme hakkınız bulunmaktadır.
- Sizden toplanan veriler araştırma sonuna kadar korunacak ve araştırma bitiminde arşivlenecek veya imha edilecektir.
- Veri toplama sürecinde/süreçlerinde size rahatsızlık verebilecek herhangi bir soru/talep olmayacaktır. Yine de katılımınız sırasında herhangi bir sebepten rahatsızlık hissederseniz çalışmadan istediğiniz zamanda ayrılabilirsiniz. Çalışmadan ayrılmanız durumunda sizden toplanan veriler çalışmadan çıkarılacak ve imha edilecektir.

Gönüllü katılım formunu okumak ve değerlendirmek üzere ayırdığınız zaman için teşekkür ederim. Çalışma hakkındaki sorularınızı Anadolu Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Eğitimi bölümünden Zeynep Yadigar Tosun’a yöneltebilirsiniz.

Araştırmacı Adı : Zeynep Yadigar TOSUN
Adres

Cep Tel
E-posta adresi

Bu çalışmaya tamamen kendi rızamla, istediğim takdirde çalışmadan ayrılabileceğimi bilerek verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlarla kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

(Lütfen bu formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra veri toplayan kişiye veriniz.)

Katılımcı Ad ve Soyadı:

İmza:

Tarih:

Appendix-B. Background Survey

İngilizce Okuma Hakkında Bilgi Formu

Değerli öğrenciler,

Aşağıdaki sorular,

TOBB Ekonomi ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi İngilizce Hazırlık Programında yürütülmekte olan bir yüksek lisans tez çalışması kapsamında hazırlanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı harmanlanmış öğrenme programı içerisinde oluşturulan sınıf dışı okuma etkinliklerinin İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin okuma deneyimlerine ve İngilizce okumaya karşı olan tutumlarına etkisini görmektir. Bu bilgi formu ise sizlerin sınıf dışı İngilizce okumaya karşı olan tutumlarınızı öğrenmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Sorular iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölüm sizinle ilgili bilgi edinmek için sorulmuş sorulardan, ikinci bölüm ise İngilizce okuma deneyimlerinizi ve İngilizce okumaya karşı olan yaklaşımlarınızı öğrenmek için hazırlanmış sorulardan oluşmaktadır. Vereceğiniz yanıtların içtenliği, doğruluğu ve samimiyeti çalışma için oldukça önemlidir. Gönüllü katılımın esas olduğu bu çalışmadan elde edilecek bilgiler sadece bilimsel amaçlar için kullanılacak ve gizli tutulacaktır. Ayrıca isimleriniz çalışmada anonim olarak kullanılacaktır. Çalışmadan istediğiniz zaman ayrılabilmeniz mümkündür.

Çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız için aşağıdaki iletişim adresini kullanabilirsiniz. Katılımınız ve değerli katkılarınız için teşekkürler.

Zeynep Yadigar Tosun

Danışman: Doç. Dr. S. İpek Kuru Gönen

Anadolu Üniversitesi

Anadolu Üniversitesi

Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü

Eğitim Fakültesi

Yabancı Diller Eğitimi

Yabancı Diller Eğitimi

İngiliz Dili ve Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans Programı,

İngilizce Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı

* Gerekli

1. Lütfen isminizi yazınız. *

2. Yaşınız: *

3. Cinsiyetiniz: *

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

☐ Erkek

☐ Kadın

4. Bölümünüz: *

5. Kaç yıldır İngilizce öğreniyorsunuz? * *Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.*

- ☐ 1-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 15+

6. Hangi tür liseden mezunsunuz?

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ☐ Anadolu lisesi
☐ Meslek lisesi
☐ Özel lise
☐ Askeri lise
☐ Sosyal bilimler lisesi
☐ Güzel sanatlar lisesi
☐ Diğer: _____

Aşağıdaki ilk iki soruyu Türkçe okuma deneyimleriniz geri kalanları ise İngilizce okuma deneyimlerinizi düşünerek cevaplayınız

1. Genel olarak Türkçe okuma yapmaktan hoşlanırsınız mı?

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ☐ Evet
☐ Hayır

2. Ne sıklıkla Türkçe okumalar yaparsınız?

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ☐ Hiçbir zaman
☐ Haftada 1 saatten az
☐ Haftada 1-3 saat arası
☐ Haftada 4-6 saat arası
☐ Haftada 6-8 saat arası
☐ Haftada 8 saatten fazla

3. Genel olarak İngilizce okuma yapmaktan hoşlanırsınız mı? *

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ☐ Evet
☐ Hayır

4. Üçüncü soruya verdiğiniz cevabı nedenleriyle açıklayınız. *

5. İngilizce okuma yaparken yaşadığınız zorluk(lar) var mıdır? *

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ☐ Evet
☐ Hayır

6. Beşinci soruya cevabınız evet ise yaşadığınız zorlukları kısaca açıklayınız. *

7. İngilizce okuma yapmayı yararlı buluyor musunuz? *

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ☐ Evet
☐ Hayır

8. Yedinci soruya cevabınız evet ise neden yararlı bulduğunuzu açıklayınız.

9. Keyif almak için İngilizce okumaya (kendi ilginiz doğrultusunda okuduğunuz internet siteleri, kitap, dergi, makale, blog, vs.) zaman ayırır mısınız? *

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ☐ Evet
☐ Hayır

10. Dokuzuncu soruya cevabınız evet ise keyif almak için İngilizce okumaya ne kadar zaman ayırırsınız? *

11. Dokuzuncu soruya cevabınız evet ise hangi tür İngilizce materyaller okursunuz? *

12. İngilizce okuma yaparken hangi kaynak(ları) kullanırsınız? (Birden fazla

işaretleyebilirsiniz.) *

Uygun olanların tümünü işaretleyin.

- ☐ Kitap
- ☐ Dergi
- ☐ Makale
- ☐ Çizgi roman
- ☐ Gazete
- ☐ E-kitap
- ☐ E-dergi
- ☐ Sesli kitap
- ☐ Dijital haberleşme uygulamaları
- ☐ Sosyal internet siteleri/uygulamaları
- ☐ Bloglar
- ☐ Dijital çizgi roman
- ☐ Dijital tartışma platformları
- ☐ Diğer:

13. Dijital ya da çevrimiçi İngilizce okuma kaynaklarını (e-kitap, bloglar, * tartışma platformları, vb.) ne sıklıkla okursunuz?

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ☐ Hiçbir zaman
- ☐ Haftada 1 saatten az
- ☐ Haftada 1-3 saat arası
- ☐ Haftada 4-6 saat arası
- ☐ Haftada 6-8 saat arası
- ☐ Haftada 8 saatten fazla

14. Basılı olmayan dijital ya da çevrimiçi İngilizce okuma kaynaklarını okurken * herhangi bir zorluk yaşar mısınız?

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ☐ Evet
- ☐ Hayır

15. On dördüncü soruya cevabınız evet ise neden(ler)ini açıklayınız. *

Appendix-C. The Interface of Google Classroom

Let's Read!

AkışSınıf çalışmalarıKişilerNotlar

Let's Read!

Özelleştir



Zeynep Yadigar Tosun
16 Ara 2022 (Düzenlenme: 7 Oca)

Hi everyone!



Welcome to our reading program!

The purpose of the program and this platform is to enhance your reading experiences. To improve your reading experiences, you are expected to choose texts and read regularly, and share your reading experiences during the weekly face-to-face meetings. To share your experiences, you need to choose one or more tasks (please click on the 'Sınıf Çalışmaları section') to perform in each meeting.

You can access various reading materials on this platform (please click on the 'Sınıf Çalışmaları section'). Besides, you can find a list of tasks in the same section. You can always use our Discord channel if you want to share related materials or ask or recommend something to us.

I wish you to have a wonderful journey in this interactive reading program! Please, follow the reading guideline below to improve your experience in this program.

Screenshot at Dec 26 15-52-38.png



Zeynep Yadigar Tosun
7 Oca

You can find the orientation slide here.



orientation.pptx
PowerPoint



Sınıf yorumu ekle...



Zeynep Yadigar Tosun
16 Ara 2022 (Düzenlenme: 2 Oca)

You can find the reading guideline below to use the platform effectively and enhance your reading experiences.

🔔 **READ:** Read quickly and Enjoyably with Adequate comprehension, so you Don't need a dictionary 🔔

✓ Read for general understanding and pleasure.

✓ Don't spend too much time looking for a text.

✓ Choose texts that you can understand easily. Reading materials are divided into 4 groups according to their difficulty levels (1=relatively easy, 2=close to your level, 3=slightly above your level and 4= for all levels).

✓Try not to use the dictionary all the time.

✓If a text is too difficult or boring, choose another text.

✓Keep track of time to know for how long you are reading.

✓To find various texts, click on 'Sınıf Çalışmaları ->

Reading Materials' <https://classroom.google.com/c/NTQ5OTI5MDQyNTE4/m/NTQwMDM2OTM0MDgy/details>.

✓Keep reading logs on Padlet for each text **everyday**. <https://padlet.com/zeynepdigartosun/nygqjnf4jqskeqsj>

✓Choose one or more tasks to share your reading experiences during the weekly meetings (*Sınıf Çalışmaları -> Tasks*).

Everyone will perform their tasks and we will discuss what we read

together! <https://classroom.google.com/w/NTQ5OTI5MDQyNTE4/tc/NTc0NTA5OTA1OTg5>

Reading Materials



Suggested Reading Websites

Düzenleme: 13 Nis

Reading Logs



Reading Logs

Yayınlanma tarihi: 29 Kas 20...

Tasks



Tasks for the Weekly Meetings

Düzenleme: 26 Ara 2022

Weekly Reflections



Haftalık Yansıtıcı Günlükler

Düzenleme: 29 Mar

Appendix-D. List of Tasks on Google Classroom

Tasks for the Weekly Meetings

Task 1

Create a mind map about a text you read this week ([click here to see an example](#)) ([another example](#)).

Task 2

Create a different ending to a text you read this week.

Task 3

You are the main character of the story. How would you feel at the end of the story? What would you do differently?

Task 4

Draw the main idea of the text and/or your favorite scene in the text(s) you read this week ([click here to see an example](#)).

Task 5

Choose one or more songs that represent the text(s) you read this week.

Task 6

What are the most striking things for you in the text(s) you read?

Task 7

What do you think will happen in the text(s) you read during the next five years?

Task 8

What did you learn from the text(s) you read this week? Make a list.

Task 9

Share your favorite passage or line that is particularly insightful, surprising, interesting, and/or informative from the text(s) you read.

Task 10

Imagine you are a TV reporter. How would you report the story you read and/or things you learned this week?

Task 11

How would you rate the text(s) you read this week on a scale of 1 to 10? Why?

Task 12

Create a timeline (chronologically) of the text you read this week by highlighting important events. [*\(click here to see an example\).*](#)

Task 13

Guess the characters' zodiac signs.

Task 14

Write a tweet about what you think about what you read.

Task 15

Choose a part of the story that interests you the most. Why did you choose this part?

Task 16

What would you change in the story if you were the author of the story?

Task 17

Imagine you are an influencer on Instagram. Create an Instagram post for what you read this week in order to advertise the book/story [*\(click here to see an example\).*](#)

Task 18

Create a book cover for the text/story you read this week *(you can use this website <https://www.canva.com/create/book-covers/>).*

Task 19

Based on your imagination, draw portraits of the characters in the text you read this week.

Task 20

Write a letter to the main character in order to warn him/her about the future.

Task 21

If the story/news took place in a different country/city, would the plot change? How?

Task 22

Introduce all the characters in the text you read [*\(click here to see an example\).*](#)

Task 23

Summarize what you read simply on one page with basic illustrations [*\(click here to see an example\).*](#)

Appendix-E. The Reading Attitude Survey

11/13/22, 9:08 AM

İngilizce Okumaya Karşı Tutum Ölçeği

İngilizce Okumaya Karşı Tutum Ölçeği

Değerli öğrenciler,

Aşağıdaki anket, TOBB Ekonomi ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi İngilizce Hazırlık Programında yürütülmekte olan bir yüksek lisans tez çalışması kapsamında uygulanacaktır. Bu çalışmanın amacı harmanlanmış öğrenme programı içerisinde oluşturulan sınıf dışı okuma etkinliklerinin İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin okuma deneyimlerine ve İngilizce okumaya karşı olan tutumlarına etkisini görmektir. Aşağıdaki anket ise sizlerin İngilizce okumaya karşı olan tutumlarınızı ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anketteki sorular İngilizce olarak sorulmuş olup sorular sizin seviyenize uygun olduğu için Türkçeye çevrilmemiştir. Ek olarak anketi cevaplarken anlamadığınız sorularda dil desteği sağlanacaktır. Bu soruları cevaplarken İngilizce okumaya karşı olan yaklaşımlarınız, duygu ve düşüncelerinizi göz önünde bulundurunuz.

Vereceğiniz yanıtların içtenliği, doğruluğu ve samimiyeti çalışma için oldukça önemlidir. Gönüllü katılımın esas olduğu bu çalışmadan elde edilecek bilgiler sadece bilimsel amaçlar için kullanılacak ve gizli tutulacaktır. Ayrıca isimleriniz çalışmada anonim olarak kullanılacaktır. Çalışmadan istediğiniz zaman ayrılabilmeniz mümkündür.

Çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız için aşağıdaki iletişim adresini kullanabilirsiniz. Katılımınız ve değerli katkılarınız için teşekkürler.

Zeynep Yadigar Tosun
Anadolu Üniversitesi
Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü
Yabancı Diller Eğitimi
İngiliz Dili ve Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans Programı,

Danışman: Doç. Dr. S. İpek Kuru Gönen
Anadolu Üniversitesi
Eğitim Fakültesi
Yabancı Diller Eğitimi
İngilizce Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı

* Gerekli

1. Lütfen isminizi yazınız. *

2. Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları İngilizce okumaya karşı olan yaklaşımınızı göz önünde * bulundurarak yanıtlayınız. Her bir cümle hakkındaki düşüncenizi belirtmek için kesinlikle katılıyorum, katılıyorum, katılmıyorum veya kesinlikle katılmıyorum seçeneklerinden birini seçiniz.

Her satırda yalnızca bir şıkki işaretleyin.

	Strongly agree (Kesinlikle Katılıyorum)	Agree (Katılıyorum)	Disagree (Katılmıyorum)	Strongly disagree (Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum)
1. I have confidence in reading English books.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I find reading in English personally rewarding.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I find reading in English fun.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I find reading in English useful.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. It is easy for me to read English.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I read English books, comics, newspapers, etc., outside of class.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. When I read English, I need to look up many	☐	☐	☐	☐

words in the
dictionary.

8. When I
read
English, I am
very
interested in
what I read.

☐☐☐☐

9. I find
reading
English
boring.

☐☐☐☐

10. After
reading
English, I am
very
interested in
what I read.

☐☐☐☐

11. I would
like to read
more
English.

☐☐☐☐

12. I do not
enjoy
reading
English.

☐☐☐☐

13. I am a
slow reader
when I read
English.

☐☐☐☐

14. When I
read
English, I
don't
understand
very much.

☐☐☐☐

15. I think
reading
books for
pleasure in
English is
important.

☐☐☐☐

Appendix-F. Weekly Reflective Log

9/21/23, 3:44 PM

Haftalık Yansıtıcı Günlükler (1. Hafta)

Haftalık Yansıtıcı Günlükler (1. Hafta)

Değerli öğrenciler,

Harmanlanmış sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma programındaki her hafta sonunda yazılması istenen bu günlüklerin amacı sizlerin o hafta içerisinde sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma hakkındaki duygu ve düşüncelerini, olumlu/olumsuz deneyimlerini (varsa) ortaya çıkarmaktır. Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları bu haftaki sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma programı kapsamında yaptığınız okumaları düşünerek cevaplayınız.

Vereceğiniz yanıtların içtenliği, doğruluğu ve samimiyeti çalışma için oldukça önemlidir. Gönüllü katılımın esas olduğu bu çalışmadan elde edilecek bilgiler sadece bilimsel amaçlar için kullanılacak ve gizli tutulacaktır. Çalışmadan istediğiniz zaman ayrılabilmeniz mümkündür.

Çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız için aşağıdaki iletişim adresini kullanabilirsiniz. Katılımınız ve değerli katkılarınız için teşekkürler.

Zeynep Yedigir Tosun

* Zorunlu soruyu belirtir

1. Bu hafta sınıf dışında İngilizce olarak ne(ler) okudunuz? Lütfen okuduğunuz tüm materyalleri yazınız.

2. Bu hafta sınıf dışı İngilizce okumaya karşı yaklaşımınız hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? Lütfen genel olarak sınıf dışı İngilizce okumaya karşı bu hafta içerisindeki tüm duygu ve düşüncelerinizi yazınız. *

3. Bu hafta sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma yaparken herhangi bir olumlu/hoşunuza giden deneyim yaşadınız mı? Evet ise açıklayınız. *

4. Bu hafta İngilizce okuma yaparken sizi zorlayan bir şeyle karşılaştınız mı? Evet ise açıklayınız. *

Bu içerik Google tarafından oluşturulmamış veya onaylanmamıştır.

Google Formlar

Appendix-G. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Harmanlanmış sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma programı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
2. Harmanlanmış sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma programının İngilizce okuma deneyimlerinize herhangi bir etkisi var mıdır? Varsa, açıklayınız.
3. Harmanlanmış sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma programının İngilizce okumaya karşı yaklaşımınız üzerinde herhangi bir etkisi var mıdır? Varsa, açıklayınız.
4. Dijital boyutta (çevrim içi/çevrim dışı materyaller, platformlar) İngilizce okuma hakkında genel olarak ne düşünüyorsunuz?
5. Harmanlanmış sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma programının dijital özellikleri (okuma günlükleri, sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma platformu, dijital okuma materyalleri, vb.) hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
6. Programın diğer özellikleri (haftalık buluşmalar, basılı okuma materyalleri, öğretmenin yönlendirmesi, vb.) hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
7. Programın sizi zorlayan ve değiştirilmesi/geliştirilmesi gerektiğini düşündüğünüz yanları var mıdır? Varsa açıklayınız.
8. Sekiz haftalık kapsamlı okuma programından sonra, İngilizce becerilerinizi geliştirmek için sınıf dışı İngilizce okuma yapmaya devam etmeyi düşünüyor musunuz? Lütfen nedenlerinizi açıklayınız.
9. Türkçede okuma alışkanlığınız hakkında neler söyleyebilirsiniz?
10. Türkçe olarak nasıl materyaller okursunuz ve okuduğunuz materyalleri ne sıklıkla okursunuz (dijital / basılı)?
11. Türkçe okuma alışkanlığınızın İngilizce okuma alışkanlığınıza herhangi bir etkisi var mı?

Appendix-H. Ethical Committee Approval

Evrak Kayıt Tarihi: 15.11.2022

Protokol No: 442550

Tarih: 22.11.2022



ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERÎ BİLİMLER BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİĞİ KURULU
KARAR BELGESİ

ÇALIŞMANIN TÜRÜ:	Yüksek Lisans Tez Çalışması
KONU:	Eğitim Bilimleri
BAŞLIK:	Sınıf Dışı Bir Okuma Programına Harmanlanmış Öğrenmenin Dahil Edilmesi Üzerine Bir Çalışma: İngilizce Öğrenen Öğrencilerin Okuma Deneyimleri Üzerindeki Etkisi
PROJE/TEZ YÜRÜTÜCÜSÜ:	Doç. Dr. S. İpek KURU GÖNEN
TEZ YAZARI:	Zeynep Yadigar TOSUN
ALT KOMİSYON GÖRÜŞÜ:	-
KARAR:	Olumlu
Prof. Dr. Saim ÖNCE (Başkan-İkt. ve İdari Bil. Fak.)	
Prof. Dr. M. Erkan ÜYÜMEZ (Başkan Yardımcısı -İkt. ve İdari Bil. Fak.)	Prof. Dr. Fatime GÜNEŞ (Edebiyat Fak.)
Prof. Dr. Yıldız ÖZÜNER (Eğitim Fak.)	Prof. Dr. İbrahim Cemil ULUKAN (Açıköğretim Fak.)
Prof. Dr. Hayran DEVECİ (Eğitim Fak.)	Prof. Dr. Erkan YUKSEL (İktisat Bil. Fak.)

Appendix I. The Codebook of the Qualitative Analysis Retrieved from NVivo 14

Name	References
<i>Benefits and strengths of the extensive reading program</i>	640
<i>Enhanced Reading Skills</i>	120
Positive impact on Turkish reading habits	2
Establishing a reading habit	16
Improved engagement in reading	21
Improved reading skills through the ER program	87
Getting used to ER	3
Impact on exams	3
Improved reading skills	8
Improved reading strategies	15
Improved translation ability	1
Improvement in comprehension	49
Inreased reading level	2
<i>Motivation for language learning through the ER program</i>	103
Gaining knowledge	9
Learning new vocabulary	14
Motivation to continue ER	18
Motivation to develop language proficiency	9
Motivation to engage in reading	18
Motivation to participate	9
Realization of progress	9
Self-discipline	7
Sense of accomplishment	10
<i>Positive views on the blended ER experiences</i>	67
Beneficial	16
Confidence building	1
Effective	5
Encouraging	5
Enjoyable	4
General positive feedback	34
Practical	2
<i>Reading interesting and appropriate-level materials</i>	56
Reading appropriate-level materials	9
Reading interesting materials	47
<i>Favorable features of LMSs</i>	52
Benefits of using Google Classroom	14
Easy access	9
Suggested reading materials list	5

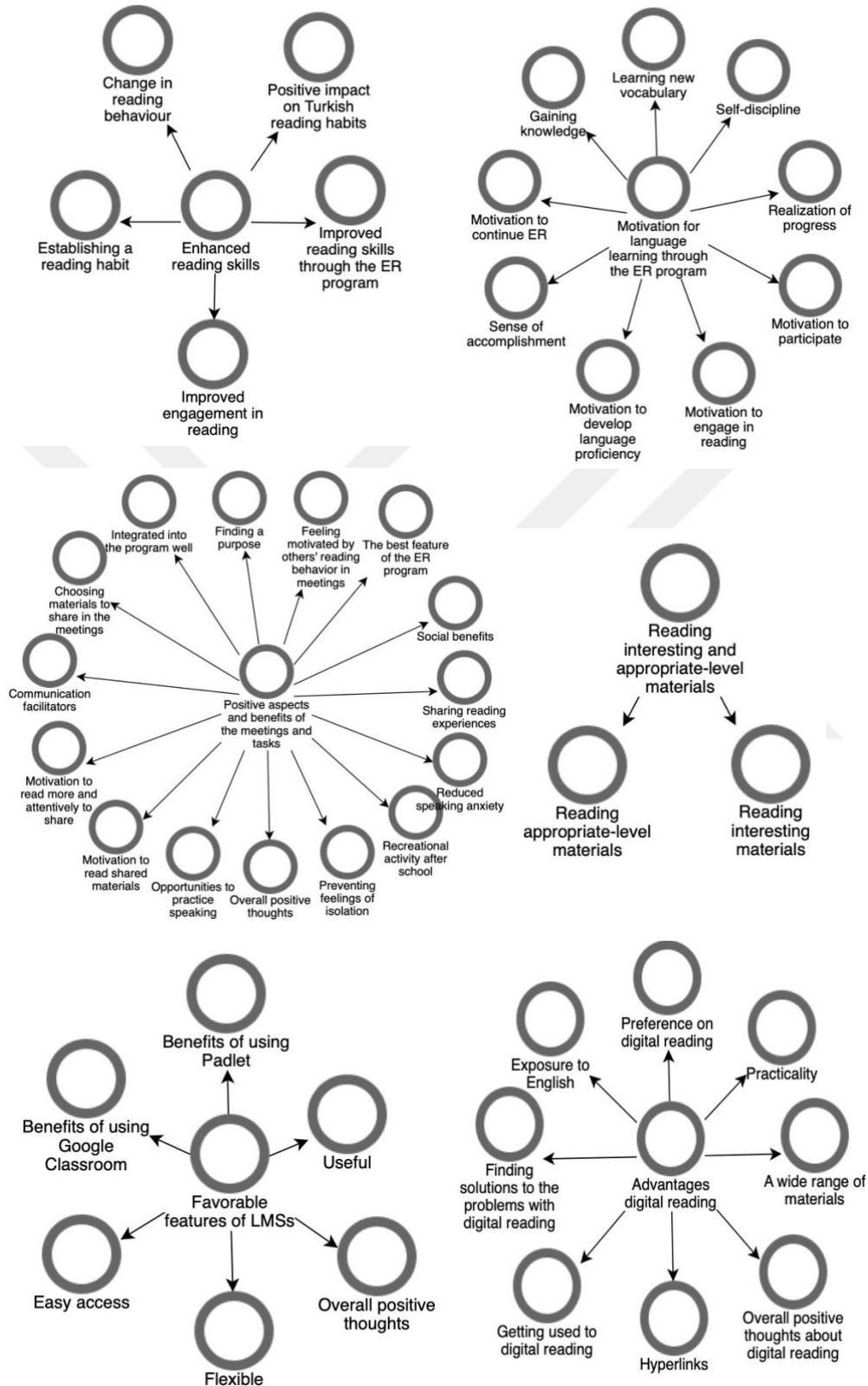
Benefits of using Padlet	15
Improved writing skills	1
Monitoring the process	11
Motivated by the others' reading logs	3
Easy access	11
Flexible	2
Overall positive thoughts	9
Useful	1
<i>Advantages of digital reading</i>	48
A wide range of materials	12
Finding solutions to the problems with digital reading	2
Getting used to digital reading	4
Hyperlinks	4
Overall positive thoughts about digital reading	2
Practicality (Easy access & Flexibility)	11
Preference for digital reading	13
<i>Positive change in attitudes toward reading</i>	38
Awareness of the benefits of reading	4
Self-discipline	1
Encouraged to read in English	2
Enjoyment	7
Initial boredom	2
Overall positive change	3
Overcoming reading anxiety	2
Reading as an engaging activity	4
Reading longer text without getting bored	1
Transition to enjoyment in reading	3
Change in reading behaviour	5
Initial avoidance of reading in English	5
<i>Opportunities provided in the ER program</i>	36
Comparison with intensive reading classes	12
Offering both digital and printed materials	1
Opportunities to read different genres	2
Teacher's role as a guide	20
<i>Improved of language skills</i>	18
Exposure to English	4
Improved engagement in English	9
Improved sentence construction skills	2
Improved writing skills	1

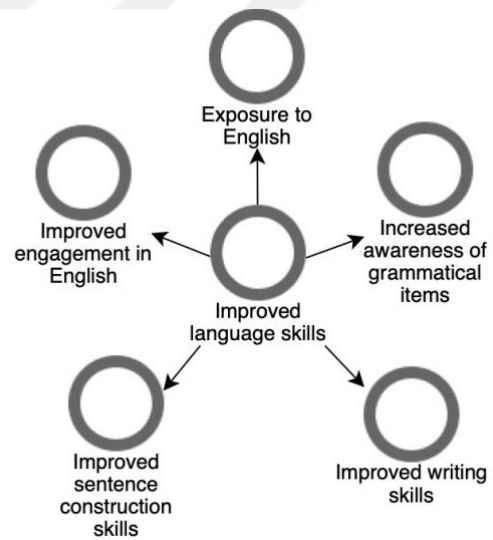
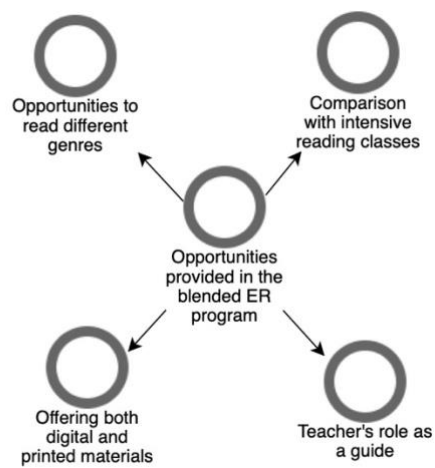
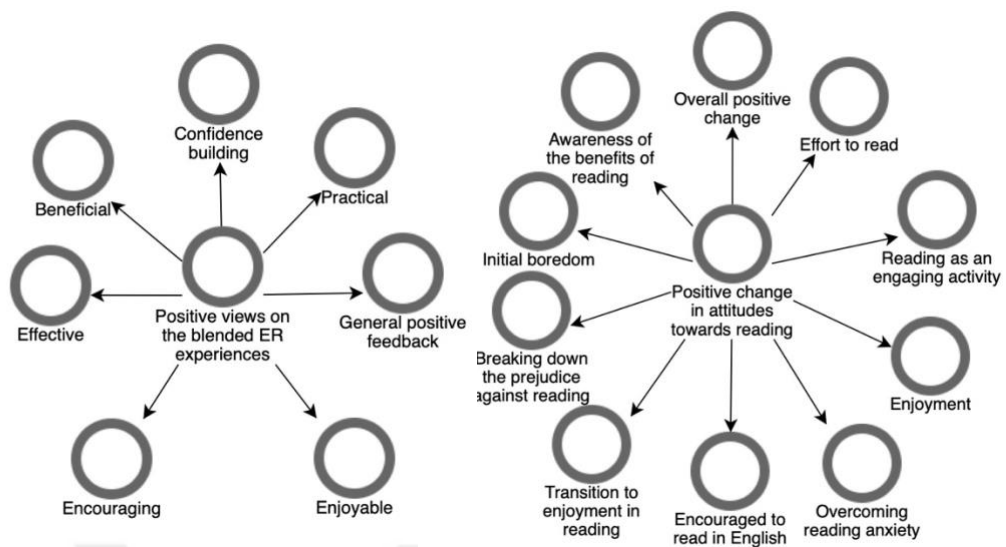
Increased awareness of grammatical items	2
<i>Sense of responsibility</i>	
<i>Challenges and weaknesses of the blended ER program</i>	317
<i>Problems with reading materials</i>	92
Difficulty in choosing a material	8
Difficulty with digital reading	54
Challenging and exhaustive	8
Difficulty in taking notes of the unknown words	5
Dislike about digital reading	3
Distractions in digital reading	15
Eyestrain	5
Inability to finish a material	1
Internet connection problems	1
Lack of interesting and appropriate-level materials	13
Less motivating than reading printed materials	1
Procedure of finding a reading material	2
Preference for printed materials	30
<i>Issues arising from the design of the blended ER program</i>	80
Difficulty with the learning management systems	51
Avoidance of digital platforms	6
Change in the digital implementation	1
Difficulty in navigating the digital tools	44
Difficulty in using Google Classroom	3
Difficulty in using Padlet	41

Keeping reading logs for each act of reading	4
Difficulty with ER after school	3
Need for more teacher guidance	1
Problems with meetings and tasks	18
Difficulty in choosing a task	1
Difficulty in producing a task	7
Difficulty with retention and recall	4
Low-level speaking skills hindering expression	1
Meetings during the exam week	1
Need for more interactive tasks	4
Short period of time	3
<i>Language Difficulties</i>	76
Difficulties experienced in reading	76
Difficulty in establishing a reading habit	4
Difficulty in reading longer materials	8
Boredom	2

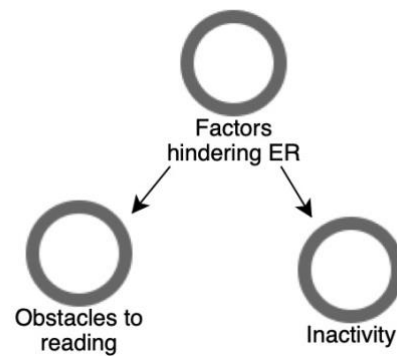
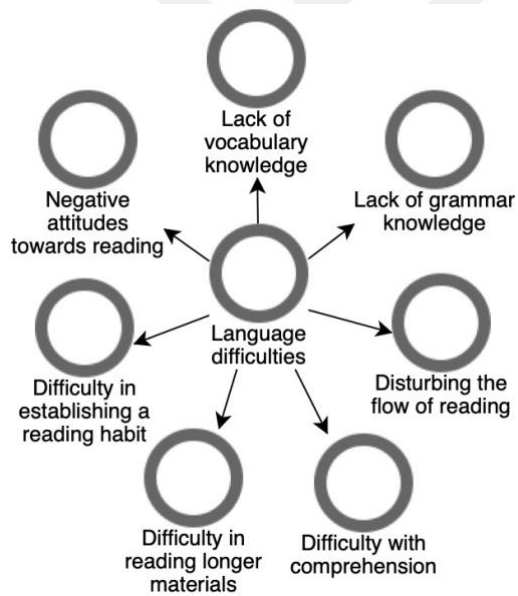
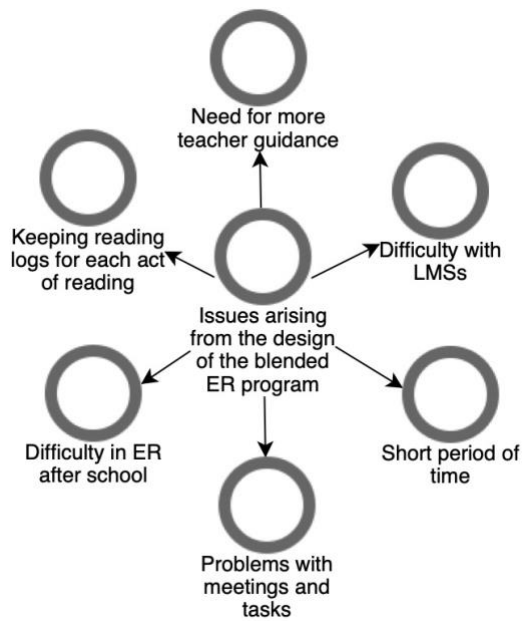
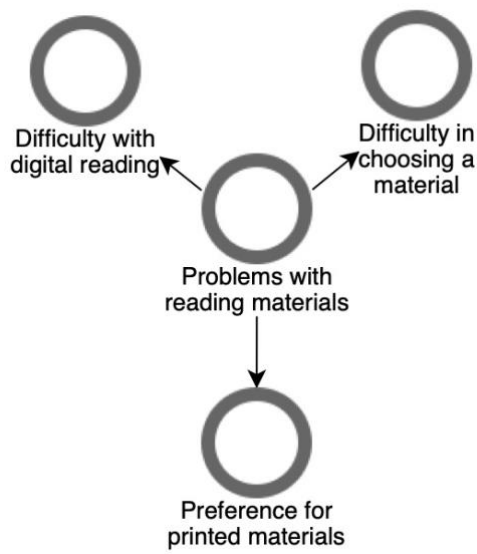
Difficulty in understanding longer materials	6
Difficulty with comprehension	16
Disturbing the flow of reading	21
Lack of grammar knowledge	2
Lack of vocabulary knowledge	21
Negative attitudes towards reading	4
Discouraged	1
Frustration in reading	1
Reading anxiety	2
<i>Factors hindering ER</i>	69
Obstacles to reading	68
Avoidance of reading	4
Refraining from reading	3
Reluctance in reading	
Boredom	4
Inactivity	2
Inefficiency	1
Lack of appropriate reading environment	2
Lack of motivation	17
Personal factors affecting reading	1
Time constraints	36
Inactivity	1

Appendix J. Concept Maps of the Sub-categories Retrieved from NVivo 14





Sense of responsibility



CURRICULUM VITAE

Name, Surname : Zeynep Yadigar TOSUN

Foreign Languages : English

Place and Year of Birth :

E-mail :

Educational Background:

- 2021, BA, Gazi University, Faculty of Education, English Language Teaching Department, Ankara.

Work Experience:

- 2021 - , English Language Instructor, TOBB ETU, Ankara