

# University Students' Expectations of their Lecturers' Support Regarding Extensive Reading – A Case Study of first-year English major students at a South African University



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## ABSTRACT

Despite the importance of extensive reading in higher education, limited research has explored university students' expectations of their lecturers' support in this area. This qualitative case study investigated the expectations of 65 first-year English Majors students at a South African university regarding their lecturers' support for extensive reading. The respondents were purposively selected and open-ended questionnaires were used to collect data, which was analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that students expected lecturers to provide guidance on digital reading, encourage reading groups, improve access to diverse reading materials, consider students' reading interests, expose them to newspapers and magazines, and promote the use of social networks for extensive reading. The study highlights the importance of considering students' perspectives in shaping reading instruction pedagogy and offers practical implications for lecturers to effectively support and facilitate extensive reading.

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## INTRODUCTION

Research conducted in South Africa indicates that the reading proficiency of students entering higher education is below the required level.<sup>1</sup> This reading challenge supports the argument for implementing extensive reading in South African higher education institutions. As such, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the advantages of extensive reading.<sup>2</sup> These studies reach a consensus that students appear to become better readers the more they read. Specifically, the studies agree that reading programs that involve a lot of reading help students become more fluent readers overall and increase their

<sup>1</sup> Sharita Bharuthram, "The Reading Habits and Practices of Undergraduate Students at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa: A Case Study," *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning* 12, no. 1 (2017): 50–62; Sharita Bharuthram, "Making a Case for the Teaching of Reading across the Curriculum in Higher Education," *South African Journal of Education* 32, no. 2 (2012): 205–14; M. Makgahlela and P. Molaudzi, "Academic Reading Challenges Faced by First-Year University Students in South Africa," *Reading & Writing* 11, no. 1 (2020): 1–8; M. Mojapelo, "Reading Comprehension Challenges of First-Year University Students: A Systematic Review," *Journal of Education Studies* 22, no. 1 (2023): 45–62..

<sup>2</sup> Maulidia Rachmawati Nur and Dinda Ananda, "Kegiatan Membaca Ekstensif Dan Penggunaan Sumber Daring Di Masa Pandemi," *DWIJA CENDEKIA: Jurnal Riset Pedagogik* 6, no. 3 (2022): 534–43; Abdurahman Ahmed Endris, "Effects of Extensive Reading on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Attitudes," *International Journal of Research in English Education* 3, no. 4 (2018): 1–11; S.R. Douglass, "Extensive Reading for Engaging Learners beyond the Textbook," *Teaching English with Oxford*, 2017, <https://teachingenglishwithoxford.oup.com/2017/07/18/extensive-reading-the-key-to-language-learning>.

reading rates and enhance their reading comprehension. It seems that the acquisition of new vocabulary may be responsible for some of this improvement. Douglass argues that by reading widely, students can pick up new vocabulary on the side and expand their existing vocabulary by seeing words they are familiar with used in a range of contexts.<sup>3</sup> According to Douglass, additional advantages include an improvement in students' writing and grammar abilities, their performance on standardized tests, their motivation, and their attitude toward reading.<sup>4</sup> Many authors agree that during the process of improving students' extensive reading at institutions of higher learning, lecturers have an important role to play as they can facilitate the extensive reading by engaging in a wide variety of activities to support and enrich the experience.<sup>5</sup> To this end, Douglass is of the view that lecturers might help students find appropriate books, check in on what they think about the readings, explore how they feel about the characters and keep track of what is read.<sup>6</sup>

The first-year experience of students at higher education institutions has been extensively covered in the literature, but the expectations of university students of their lecturers' support regarding extensive reading have received less attention.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the current study sheds light on South African university students' expectations of their lecturers' support regarding extensive reading while highlighting the students' reading choices regarding extensive reading. Having this information is likely to help lecturers make an informed decision if those expectations match up with standard university procedures. In addition, lecturers are likely to have a productive conversation and strive toward a more positive alignment between perceived expectations and student satisfaction with the experience by giving students the chance to express their expectations. In other words, promoting student voice in the classroom contributes to increased engagement, equity, and student success. While the student voice movement in education is growing, not all institutions of higher learning understand the benefits and how to make the most of it.<sup>8</sup> However, the students' insights and experiences can positively influence their reading interests and thereby improve their chances of academic success. To achieve this important goal, lecturers have a responsibility to make sure that students have access to the extensive reading of their choice and lecturers have a responsibility to manage and facilitate the extensive reading process so that it adds value to the university curriculum. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to determine postgraduate student expectations of their lecturers' support regarding extensive reading. To achieve this objective, the current study seeks to address the following research question:

- What are university students' expectations of their lecturers' support regarding extensive reading?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Students' Expectations

Student expectations are complex constructs that can influence adaptability, engagement, achievement, satisfaction, and retention. As a result, as was already mentioned above, several individual studies on students' expectations upon entering college have been published,<sup>9</sup> however, none that synthesise students' expectations of their lecturers' support regarding extensive reading. Rolfe believes that some

<sup>3</sup> Douglass, "Extensive Reading for Engaging Learners beyond the Textbook."

<sup>4</sup> Douglass, "Extensive Reading for Engaging Learners beyond the Textbook."

<sup>5</sup> L. Hasper, "The Role of the Lecturer in Enhancing Students' Extensive Reading Experiences," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics* 5, no. 1 (2020): 1–13; S. Sun, "Facilitating Extensive Reading through Multimodality: A Case Study in Thailand," *Journal of Asia TEFL* 17, no. 2 (2020): 747–62; V. Gopala, S. Pasupathi, and M. Hanumanthappa, "Improving Reading and Writing Skills for Engineering Students Using Extensive Reading Approach," *Proceedings of 2009 IEEE Students' Technology Symposium (TechSym)*. (Kharagpur: IEEE, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Douglass, "Extensive Reading for Engaging Learners beyond the Textbook."

<sup>7</sup> T. Moosa, "First Year Student Experience: A Critical Review of Literature," *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice* 18, no. 1 (2021): 1–18; C. Uleanya and Y. Rugbeer, "Undergraduate Students and Their Academic Experiences: What Matters," *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education* 12, no. 5 (2020): 987–1002; L L Lekena and A Bayaga, "Trend Analysis of First Year Student Experience in University," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 32, no. 2 (2018): 157–75.

<sup>8</sup> K. St. John and L. Briel, "Student Voice: A Growing Movement within Education That Benefits Students and Teachers," Center on Transition Innovations, 2017, <https://centerontransition.org/publications/download.cfm?id=61>; J. Gillet-Swan and A. Baroutsis, "Student Voice in Context: Understanding Educational Stakeholder Perspectives," *Journal of Education Policy*, 2023, 1–19; Jean Rudduck, "Student Voice, Student Engagement, and School Reform," in *International Handbook of Student Experience in Elementary and Secondary School* (Springer, 2007), 587–610.

<sup>9</sup> Moosa, "First Year Student Experience: A Critical Review of Literature"; Uleanya and Rugbeer, "Undergraduate Students and Their Academic Experiences: What Matters"; Lekena and Bayaga, "Trend Analysis of First Year Student Experience in University."

researchers have argued that student demands and expectations have been given little consideration.<sup>10</sup> Adding their voice, Pithers and Holland declare that it is imperative that student demands and expectations of lecturing staff have been given little consideration when planning, designing, and delivering courses.<sup>11</sup> This is a regrettable circumstance because the lecturers could be able to provide their students with access to a variety of reading materials if they were aware of how widely their students choose to read.

According to Tomlinson, Simpson, and Killingback, the complex constructs that make up student expectations can have an impact on retention, achievement, engagement, flexibility, and satisfaction.<sup>12</sup> Numerous studies on the expectations of students have been published; the findings indicate that students hold teaching staff to high standards, especially when it comes to resources and access, and they expect to complete additional coursework and take ownership of their education. Tomlinson, Sampson, and Killingback posit that having this knowledge is crucial for teaching staff to better support a positive university experience, increase satisfaction and retention, and better align preconceived notions of teaching and learning with reality.<sup>13</sup> Tomlinson, Sampson, and Killingback further declare that expectations have been found to be a significant factor influencing success and adaptability.<sup>14</sup> Higher education institutions must unquestionably comprehend what students expect from their instruction because this knowledge is crucial for guiding any necessary actions. To this end, Byrne et al.; Jones; and Lobo and Gurney conclude that fulfilling student expectations may seem crucial because research suggests that unmet expectations may negatively impact student engagement, success, satisfaction, and retention.<sup>15</sup>

Darlaston-Jones, et.al., declared that students are becoming more aware of their customer rights and the differences between the quality of services they receive and what they expect, because of the current environment in higher education that views students as the primary consumers.<sup>16</sup> It is crucial that instructors recognize this and find a method to meet the expectations of their students. Considering this, Pithers and Holland contend that lecturers should eschew traditional teaching strategies and provide their students with course materials in addition to routinely updating their knowledge and skills to sustain an effective teaching activity within the framework of professional development.<sup>17</sup> Similar studies that sought to explore undergraduate students' expectations of and preferences in teaching, learning and assessment have been conducted. For example, Sander, et.al., revealed that the students expected to be taught by formal and interactive lectures but preferred to be taught by interactive lectures and group-based activities.<sup>18</sup> Their least favoured learning methods were formal lectures, role-play, and student presentations.

Adding voice to the students' expectations of their lecturers regarding extensive reading, St. John and Briel argue that the process of listening to students and supporting their ideas is just one example of the larger concept of the student's voice.<sup>19</sup> St. John and Briel further revealed that instead of a top-down, teacher-directed approach to learning, students play an active and equal role in planning, learning, and leading their classroom instruction as well as contributing to the development of school practices and policies.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Heather Rolfe, "Students' Demands and Expectations in an Age of Reduced Financial Support: The Perspectives of Lecturers in Four English Universities," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 24, no. 2 (2002): 171–82.

<sup>11</sup> R T Pithers and Tony Holland, "Student Expectations and the Effect of Experience," *Australian Association for Research in Education*, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Amy Tomlinson, Andrew Simpson, and Clare Killingback, "Student Expectations of Teaching and Learning When Starting University: A Systematic Review," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 47, no. 8 (2023): 1054–73.

<sup>13</sup> Tomlinson, Simpson, and Killingback, "Student Expectations of Teaching and Learning When Starting University: A Systematic Review."

<sup>14</sup> Tomlinson, Simpson, and Killingback, "Student Expectations of Teaching and Learning When Starting University: A Systematic Review."

<sup>15</sup> M. Byrne et al., "Motivations, Expectations and Preparedness for Higher Education: A Study of Accounting Students in Ireland, the UK, Spain and Greece," *Accounting Forum* 36, no. 2 (2012): 134–44; F. Jones, *Tools for Teaching* (Los Angeles: University Printers, 2010); Ana Lobo and Laura Gurney, "What Did They Expect? Exploring a Link between Students' Expectations, Attendance and Attrition on English Language Enhancement Courses," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 38, no. 5 (2014): 730–54.

<sup>16</sup> Dawn Darlaston-Jones et al., "Are They Being Served? Student Expectations of Higher Education," 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Pithers and Holland, "Student Expectations and the Effect of Experience."

<sup>18</sup> Paul Sander et al., "University Students' Expectations of Teaching," *Studies in Higher Education* 25, no. 3 (2000): 309–23.

<sup>19</sup> St. John and Briel, "Student Voice: A Growing Movement within Education That Benefits Students and Teachers."

<sup>20</sup> St. John and Briel, "Student Voice: A Growing Movement within Education That Benefits Students and Teachers."

According to Pithers and Holland, in education, the concept of student voice is twofold. First, it refers to the expression of values, opinions, beliefs, and perspectives of individuals and groups of students in a school and second, to instructional approaches and techniques that are based on student choices, interests, passions, and ambitions.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, listening to and acting on student preferences, interests, and perspectives helps students feel invested in their own learning and can ignite passions that will increase their persistence.

### Extensive Reading

Extensive reading has been shown in previous studies to have several advantages for teaching and learning, particularly for students learning English as a second language. These advantages include vocabulary expansion, improved grammar comprehension, increased reading speed and fluency, enjoyment of reading, and confidence building.<sup>22</sup> Tien defines extensive reading as reading in relatively large number of texts compared with what is called intensive reading, which usually involves a slower reading of a small number of materials and often with translation exercises.<sup>23</sup>

According to Mohammed Salameh, the field of second-language reading pedagogy has been gradually endorsing and recognizing extensive reading as a viable instructional option.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, according to Grabe and Grabe and Stoller, extensive reading is a method of reading pedagogy that promotes students' extensive reading.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the authors warn that students' habits and attitudes toward English reading in general are indirectly influenced by insufficient training for extensive reading planning in the language. Furthermore, Shen concluded that even though the value and advantages of extensive reading are widely acknowledged, it is not included in English teaching curricula for many institutions of higher learning.<sup>26</sup>

Douglass makes the case for extensive reading, saying that it is preferable for students to read widely at reading levels that correspond to their comprehension levels rather than closely reading a difficult text in class.<sup>27</sup> This allows them to read for longer periods of time without the need for a dictionary or additional assistance. Douglass claims that most students read one or two books a week from a broad selection of fiction and non-fiction titles. Douglass goes on to say that the objective is for students to stop thinking of reading as a task and start reading these books for pleasure. They do this on their own, either in their free time or in class, usually at a pace that might be a little faster than usual for the classroom.<sup>28</sup>

Douglass made the claim that students become better readers the more they read, supporting the value of extensive reading. Students who participate in a program that involves a lot of reading tend to improve their reading comprehension as well as their reading rates and overall fluency.<sup>29</sup> Douglass lists several other advantages, such as an improvement in students' writing and grammar abilities, performance on standardized tests, motivation, and attitude toward reading. Douglass suggested that lecturers ask students to write three brief paragraphs for each book they read to encourage extensive reading in the classroom. The book's plot, for instance, is explained in paragraph one, and students' connections to the subject of the unit they are currently studying in textbooks are discussed in paragraph two. Douglass further suggested that educators support and enhance the extensive reading experience by participating in a wide range of activities. For instance, lecturers could assist students in locating suitable literature,

<sup>21</sup> Pithers and Holland, "Student Expectations and the Effect of Experience."

<sup>22</sup> Endris, "Effects of Extensive Reading on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Attitudes"; Douglass, "Extensive Reading for Engaging Learners beyond the Textbook"; L. A. Mohammed Salameh, "The Effectiveness of Extensive Reading on Enhancing Reading Comprehension and Reading Speed of EFL Learners," *International Journal of Language and Linguistics* 4, no. 3 (2017): 24–31.

<sup>23</sup> Ching-Yi Tien, "A Large-Scale Study on Extensive Reading Program for Non-English Majors: Factors and Attitudes," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 4, no. 4 (2015): 46–54.

<sup>24</sup> Mohammed Salameh, "The Effectiveness of Extensive Reading on Enhancing Reading Comprehension and Reading Speed of EFL Learners."

<sup>25</sup> W. Grabe, *Reading in a Second Language: Moving from Theory to Practice*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); W. Grabe and F.L. Stoller, *Teaching and Researching Reading*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, England: Pearson Education, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> M.Y. Shen, "Implementing an Extensive Reading Program to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension," *Journal of Language and Learning* 2, no. 2 (2004): 284–99.

<sup>27</sup> Douglass, "Extensive Reading for Engaging Learners beyond the Textbook."

<sup>28</sup> Douglass, "Extensive Reading for Engaging Learners beyond the Textbook."

<sup>29</sup> Douglass, "Extensive Reading for Engaging Learners beyond the Textbook."

inquire about their thoughts on the readings, investigate their feelings toward the characters, and maintain a record of the books that are being read.<sup>30</sup>

According to Tien, extensive reading will first be suggested and then established to better develop students' habits towards reading extensively.<sup>31</sup> This will steer students away from reading just for test purposes. Furthermore, reading a lot will improve reading habits, vocabulary and structure knowledge, students' motivation to learn a foreign language, and reading speed, according to Richard and Schmidt.<sup>32</sup>

Suryani maintains that extensive reading practice is a type of reading that incorporates a range of resources outside of the prescribed curriculum. The authors assert that the importance of institutions of higher learning roles in providing sufficient resources for extensive reading practice cannot be overstated.<sup>33</sup> This includes a library that is well-stocked and a wide range of reading materials to complement various reading exercises. Suryani argues that in this scenario, lecturers must adapt their pedagogy to help students get past the intricate challenges they encounter while learning to read.<sup>34</sup> Students who read extensively are free to select the genre and reading level of material they want to read.<sup>35</sup>

The benefits of teaching extensive reading were the primary focus of a study conducted by Fitria on the subject of both EFL and non-EFL students. The study's findings demonstrated the many advantages of extensive reading for teaching and learning, particularly for those learning English as a second language.<sup>36</sup> These advantages included expanding vocabulary, assisting with grammar comprehension, enhancing reading speed and fluency, reading for enjoyment, boosting self-esteem and motivation, and enhancing the desire to read more English.

Fitria went on to demonstrate that a comprehensive reading program at a university can help students become more passionate about reading in English.<sup>37</sup> Day and Bamford state that either way extensive reading is incorporated into a second language curriculum either as a stand-alone course or as a component of an already-existing reading course the goal of using it to ignite students' passion for reading in English can be accomplished.<sup>38</sup>

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Krashen's Comprehensible Input

According to this theory, people learn language and become literate when they comprehend messages, or when they comprehend what they read and hear.<sup>39</sup> Krashen, Lee, and Lao have indicated that humans pick up language skills like grammar and vocabulary when they are exposed to intelligible input.<sup>40</sup> The comprehensible hypothesis posits that input needs to be at least engaging for language learners to pay attention to it to facilitate language acquisition.

Krashen et al., further add that input ought to be so captivating that readers become completely engrossed in the work.<sup>41</sup> The benefits of the hypothesis include the multiple instances of unexpected language development brought about by a strong interest in reading rather than by deliberate effort. Consistent with Krashen's comprehensible input is Ellis's implicit learning theory. Ellis defines implicit learning as the process of acquiring knowledge without conscious awareness.<sup>42</sup> It is crucial for the growth of the reading process since it promotes automatic lexical and syntactic processing as well as reading

<sup>30</sup> Douglass, "Extensive Reading for Engaging Learners beyond the Textbook."

<sup>31</sup> Tien, "A Large-Scale Study on Extensive Reading Program for Non-English Majors: Factors and Attitudes."

<sup>32</sup> Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt, *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (London: Pearson Education, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Yeni Suryani, "Student And Teacher Perceptions Of Extensive Reading Practice," *Gudang Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu* 1, no.2(2023):9–15.

<sup>34</sup> Suryani, "Student And Teacher Perceptions Of Extensive Reading Practice."

<sup>35</sup> Nur and Ananda, "Kegiatan Membaca Ekstensif Dan Penggunaan Sumber Daring Di Masa Pandemi."

<sup>36</sup> Tira Nur Fitria, "Teaching Teaching Extensive Reading to EFL and Non-EFL Students: Benefits and Problems: Keywords: Extensive Reading, Reading, Reading English, Teaching Reading," *ENJEL: English Journal of Education and Literature* 2, no. 01 (2023): 76–85.

<sup>37</sup> Fitria, "Teaching Teaching Extensive Reading to EFL and Non-EFL Students: Benefits and Problems: Keywords: Extensive Reading, Reading, Reading English, Teaching Reading."

<sup>38</sup> R.R. Day and J. Bamford, *Extensive Reading in the Second Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> S.D. Krashen, *Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> S.D. Krashen, S.Y. Lee, and C. Lao, *Comprehensible and Compelling: The Causes and Effects of Free Voluntary Reading* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> Krashen, Lee, and Lao, *Comprehensible and Compelling: The Causes and Effects of Free Voluntary Reading*.

<sup>42</sup> R. Ellis, *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

fluency.<sup>43</sup> Students must read widely and extensively for implicit learning to have an impact on their reading development. This requires long-term, high volumes of input. Since that is one of the goals of intensive reading, this theory and Krashen's Comprehensible input are pertinent to the current investigation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Approach and Design**

The research methodology used in this article was qualitative. According to Bhandari, qualitative research entails gathering and examining non-numerical data (such as text, audio, or video) to comprehend ideas, viewpoints, or experiences.<sup>44</sup> It can be applied to produce fresh research ideas or to obtain a deeper understanding of an issue. The fact that data for this study came from students' opinions regarding the support associated with extensive reading they expect from their English lecturers. A case study design was adopted in keeping with the qualitative research methodology. A case study, according to Huby, Avery, and Sheikh, is a type of research design that is intended to produce a comprehensive, multifaceted understanding of a complex issue within its actual setting.<sup>45</sup> A case study research design enables a researcher to scrutinize the data in detail within a particular setting. Because it enabled the researchers to better understand the students' expectations of their English lecturers, the case study design was judged appropriate for the current investigation.

### **Data Collection Method**

Data was gathered using an open questionnaire with open-ended questions. According to Dossetto, open-ended questions necessitate respondents to provide more detail on their answers rather than providing a simple yes or no response. Dossetto claims that because open-ended questions provide feedback in the respondent's own words rather than predetermined responses, they enable the researchers to view the subject's point of view.<sup>46</sup> Since the open-ended questions allowed respondents to elaborate on specifics, give longer answers, express their ideas, and share their opinions on the expectations of their lecturers' support regarding extensive reading, it was decided that the questions were appropriate for the current study. Between February and May of 2024, the researchers created open-ended questions that matched the research questions and distributed them to the respondents.

### **Research Participants**

Sixty-five (65) respondents were specifically chosen for this study based on whether they were first-year English majors at the chosen university. A group of students enrolled in the module "Introduction to the Study of Language and Literature" was specifically chosen with the purpose of including the respondents. This module's goal was to familiarize students with the fundamental terms used in both language and literature studies as well as their definitions. The students were in the age range of 19 to 34 years, with 24 males and 41 females in the sample.

### **Data Analysis**

To familiarize themselves with the data, the researchers read through it multiple times. From the data, a few broad categories were developed to group all the responses into code responses. Each of the individual answers was coded with a numerical code. Each code denoted a segment or bucket of related responses.

### **Ethical Clearance**

The University of Fort Hare provided ethical approval to conduct the study under permit number REC-270710-028-RA Level 01. The students were given an explanation of the study's purpose and made aware of their right to withdraw from it at any moment. A consent form that guaranteed respondents' anonymity

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<sup>43</sup> Grabe, *Reading in a Second Language: Moving from Theory to Practice*.

<sup>44</sup> P. Bhandari, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 2020.

<sup>45</sup> Sarah Crowe et al., "The Case Study Approach," *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 11, no. 1 (December 27, 2011): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-11-100>.

<sup>46</sup> E. Dossetto, *How to Create a Survey With Open-Ended Questions* (Hotjar, 2023).

and confidentiality was given to students to fill out. Students were instructed to maintain their anonymity while disclosing their age and gender.

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

The findings are shown in this section based on the themes that surfaced from the students' responses to the open-ended questions. The author's narratives are supported by the verbatim quotes from the respondents. Nevertheless, not every response is presented verbatim in this paper; only those that proved insightful and illustrated how important students thought about their expectations regarding their lecturers' support concerning extensive reading. The responders' identities were concealed by using the code "S." 'S' stands for student in this context. Codes such as S1, S2, S3, and so forth were thus employed.

### **Theme 1: Reading online/digital reading**

Reading that occurs in an online environment while the reader is connected to the internet is referred to as online or digital reading. Numerous students disclosed that the experience of reading on the internet differs significantly from that of reading print material. They provided evidence in favour of this theory by pointing out that reading online will probably compensate for understocked university libraries. As a result, they anticipated that their instructors would help or give them online reading tips.

According to the respondents, reading from online sources could expose them to a variety of literature and enhance their vocabulary and comprehension of English. Additionally, respondents said that reading online frees them from the traditional practice of reading aloud in a prescribed order. When reading online, they tended to read less linearly and more selectively, navigating, and scanning for keywords. The respondents mentioned that reading more material is piqued by this method of selective reading. Responding to the question, S64 indicated:

*“Lecturers should guide us on how to use audiobooks. These are digital audio books which are digital versions of books on CD or books on tape. As you are probably aware, there are some students who really enjoy being read to. Some even prefer it. While lecturers always want to encourage independence among students, audiobooks are a good assistive technology for extensive reading. We can download them to a PC and we can use them on a computer or transfer them to our MP3 players, iPod, or any other portable digital device for listening.”*

Responding to the same question, S18 said:

*“Since many of us have smartphones, laptops, and tablets with an internet connection, it can be easy for us to listen to audiobooks. These books are available free from some internet platforms.”*

S20 provided another version of digital material when she said:

*“Lecturers should encourage us to use eBooks. These are textbooks you read on a screen. In other words, they are books in electronic form that can be read on a computer or handheld device rather than in print. Lecturers should assist us in identifying competing companies like Google Books. These should be tailored to the needs of various students. Our lecturers should also advise on how we can give feedback or provide evidence that we have made use of eBooks like sharing what we read in the classroom.”*

### **Theme 2: Encouraging reading groups**

Reading groups help students learn social and emotional skills because they let them share knowledge with one another. According to the respondents, lecturers ought to divide their students into reading-interest-based groups. The suggestion put forth by the respondents stemmed from their belief that they ought to have the liberty to select books based on their personal reading preferences. Students will be able to read for enjoyment and improve as readers as a result. As a result, the lecturer should make every effort to make reading enjoyable for the students. Emphasizing the issue of reading groups, S33 indicated:

*“For me, organizing a time whereby students would gather around and read out loud in a group would be great. I personally enjoy reading in class with other students and engaging in a conversation after reading about what we have read. All of that opens your mind and allows you*

*to be in the moment rather than sitting alone at home reading and getting bored. This could be done with a variety of material that is not necessarily prescribed.”*

On the same question, S10 said:

*“Having students read in groups can develop critical thinking and literacy skills as it helps us build the foundational skills we need for reading. It also helps build speaking and listening skills. Maybe our lecturers can ask us to share as groups what we have read. This has the potential to increase our reading comprehension as well as presentation skills.”*

### **Theme 3: Access to Reading Materials**

For students to engage in extensive reading, there must be a wide range of books available at their reading level. Students anticipated that their lecturers would suggest books that are specially tailored to their needs as EFL/ESL students. Students also anticipated that their lecturers would communicate with the university library to provide a variety of reading materials. In the event that a diverse range of reading materials is made available, students anticipated that their instructors would make reference to them in order to subtly compel them to read a broad range of content. Responding to the question, S7 indicated:

*“Our lecturers should provide us with a lot of materials and find a way to assess our understanding of those materials. I believe that exposure to a lot of reading material can force us to read beyond prescribed material.”*

Responding to the same question, S3 said:

*“The library should be well equipped in order to serve the purpose of extensive reading and our lecturers should work in collaboration with the library staff to order relevant material. This should be a variety of reading sources since students have different reading interests.”*

### **Theme 4: Reading Interest**

This theme was prevalent even though it was somewhat related to other themes. According to respondents, the texts that are made available should ideally reflect the diversity of the students who read them and their reading goals to foster a desire to read. Students anticipated that their instructors would assign readings that were both engaging and entertaining to read, as well as easy enough for them to finish quickly. Pupils anticipated learning content that would not require them to look up words in dictionaries.

According to the respondents, to engage in extensive reading, one does not necessarily need to read texts in which every word must be understood; instead, one should be able to comprehend the main ideas or follow a story using words they are familiar with and those they can infer from context. According to the respondents, students would learn more and be more motivated to read if their lecturers could introduce them to text material that interests and engages them.

Responding to the question, S41 said:

*“Lecturers are supposed to introduce us to reading materials that are not academic but will help us develop our vocabulary. I would like to suggest that our lecturers should expose us more to the South African literature. It would open our eyes to our rich history and pique our interest as we can learn about the history and transformation of South African literature. It is enjoyable and eye-opening.”*

Responding to the same question, S 51 said:

*“I think our lecturers could prescribe reading books written during our generation. I mean something we can relate to, something that can interest us because we would have a say in a way in what is written. This is due to the fact that we were present when the events in the text took place.”*

### **Theme 5: Exposure to Newspapers and Magazines**

Respondents anticipated being exposed to newspapers and magazines by their lecturers. They held the opinion that newspapers offered information, general knowledge, and global news. A few participants

mentioned that perusing newspapers is a beneficial routine that is already ingrained in contemporary society. The respondents went on to say that magazines are a great way to promote reading because they help readers improve vocabulary and comprehension skills. The students claim that magazines also have the advantage of being easier to read or more enticing. In light of the students' interests and pastimes, they, therefore, expected their lecturers to introduce them to newspapers and magazines. Supporting the use of newspapers and magazines to develop extensive reading, S1 said:

*“Magazines can reach a wide range of wealthy and diverse readers, uphold credibility, and provide in-depth analysis. Students can get together and share information about the magazine of their choice and interest since it is always geared toward a specific audience. This could help the students become more adept at compiling and presenting information.”*

Responding to the same question, S34 mentioned:

*“I believe that students who read magazines are more likely to be curious and to draw connections they might not have thought of. Reading magazines can help you get a better vocabulary and increase your ability to comprehend what you read. They offer news and current affairs, particularly if one consistently obtains the magazines that are currently in circulation.”*

Responding on how newspapers can be used to enhance extensive reading, S44 said:

*“Newspapers offer up-to-date information. By introducing new vocabulary to students in context, they have the potential to enhance their reading comprehension and skills. They can also pique readers' interests by talking about topics that are relevant to our everyday lives and current events.”*

Responding to the same question, S1 said:

*“Depending on the kind, some newspapers focus on regional issues while others cover global ones. Students can read various newspapers and communicate with one another through social media or in person. Newspapers can encourage a culture of extensive reading in this way.”*

### **Theme 6: Using Social Networks For Extensive Reading**

Social media platforms, according to respondents, are interesting places for readers to interact. As a result, they anticipated that their instructors would counsel and inspire them to use Goodreads, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to exchange book recommendations, have book discussions, and discover what to read next. Students occasionally find it difficult to get together for their traditional book clubs, so social media has become a way to keep them going. This is why it was suggested that students use social networks for extensive reading. Social media, according to the respondents, can influence reading habits by giving users a platform for expression and connection as well as by making reading materials easily accessible. Responding to the question, S19 said:

*“English lecturers should be creative by involving social networks in the classroom. Students should be encouraged to write about what they read on social media.”*

S 26 expressed a similar sentiment when she mentioned that:

*“Social media use can facilitate easy communication between us. In actuality, it's a simple method of sharing ideas and information without having to meet in person. Since we don't have the money to travel to campus every day, it becomes convenient. The plan might succeed if the university can provide us with a steady stream of data.”*

Responding to the same question, S14 indicated:

*“We can easily ask our lecturers for help if we need it or if we have questions about the process of extensive reading. As a result, our lecturers ought to provide guidance on how to use Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp so that we can read a lot. We must learn how to use these devices to read a lot because we typically use them for general communication.”*

## DISCUSSION

As stated in the introduction, the current study highlights the reading choices made by students in relation to extensive reading while illuminating their expectations regarding the support they receive from their lecturers in this regard. The study's findings show that students had a wide range of expectations for the support their lecturers should provide to allow them to engage in extensive reading. This was done in light of the advantages that extensive reading provides for raising students' reading competency. Specifically, the students indicated that they expected their lecturers to expose them to online or digital reading. The students emphasized that reading on digital devices would likely make up for university libraries that are not well-stocked. The students justified their expectations by claiming that reading from online sources could increase their vocabulary and English comprehension while exposing them to a range of literary works.

This result is consistent with a study carried out in Indonesia by Janah, Retnaningdyah, and Mustofa.<sup>47</sup> Their study offered a critical perspective on Indonesian students' use of digital platforms for extensive reading.

The results of the study showed that the implementation of extensive reading programs in Indonesia has shifted to digital extensive reading where both EFL students and lecturers use digital materials through various applications or online platforms. This change in approach is a result of the advancement of technology that has entered language classrooms. The results further revealed that digital extensive reading in Indonesia was implemented through several digital platforms such as Let's Read! Application, Blogging, Mobile-Assisted Xreading, WhatsApp, Zoom and Google Classroom. The adoption of digital or online platforms has been shown to be helpful in promoting the success of EFL students' extensive digital reading, according to the authors' conclusion. This finding has implications for lecturers' preparation of extensive reading so that they could take the needs of the students into consideration, as students in the current study mentioned digital reading as a support that lecturers should provide.

The results also demonstrate that students expected their lecturers to set up reading groups since these groups allow students to share knowledge and develop social and emotional competencies. The respondents felt that lecturers should group students based on their interests in reading. This finding supports the findings of a study conducted by Pongsatornpipat which focused on the use of interactive groups to enhance the reading ability of Thai undergraduate students.<sup>48</sup> The study's findings show that when students are in groups, they have the opportunity to engage with their peers in a variety of ways because the activities foster a supportive environment where students can share ideas and experiences and learn from one another.

The findings further reveal that students expected their lecturers to make the reading material available. The students went on to say that in order to encourage a love of reading, the assigned reading should ideally represent the diversity of the students who use it as well as their individual reading objectives. Access to reading material has been mentioned in the previous studies. Such studies have revealed that lack of access to appropriate reading resources in terms of language and genre can affect students' reading culture negatively.<sup>49</sup> The finding on access to the reading material also supports the findings of a study conducted by Al-Baihaqi.<sup>50</sup> The study focused on developing graded reading materials to enhance extensive reading. The study's findings demonstrated that in order for students to read as fluently as possible, they must receive a significant quantity of exposure to language outside of the classroom. This finding lends credence to Krashen's comprehensible input theory, which serves as the study's theoretical framework. According to Krashen, Lee, and Lao, when people are exposed to comprehensible input, their language skills, such as grammar and vocabulary develop.<sup>51</sup> The

<sup>47</sup> Karunia Eka Nafilatul Janah, Pratiwi Retnaningdyah, and Ali Mustofa, "Digital Extensive Reading in Indonesia: A Critical Review," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics* 7, no. 3 (2022): 513–28.

<sup>48</sup> Warangkana Pongsatornpipat, "Interactive Group in Extensive Reading to Enhance Reading Ability of Thai Undergraduate Students.," *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network* 14, no. 2 (2021): 342–71.

<sup>49</sup> Sibhekinkosi A Nkomo, "The Benefits of an Extensive Reading Programme Implemented in Two Foundation Phase Classrooms in the Eastern Cape, South Africa," *Reading & Writing* 12, no. 1 (2021): 1–10.

<sup>50</sup> Muhammad Fauzi Al-Baihaqi, "Developing Graded Reading Materials To Enhance Extensive Reading for Students of Senior High School," *Lingua Pedagogia* 2, no. 1 (2020): 47–60.

<sup>51</sup> Krashen, Lee, and Lao, *Comprehensible and Compelling: The Causes and Effects of Free Voluntary Reading*.

comprehensible hypothesis states that in order to promote language acquisition, input must be at least interesting enough to draw the attention of language learners.

The results of the study also reveal that students expected their lecturers to expose them to reading material that appealed to their interests. Jones and Brown declared that interest is the acceptance of a relationship between oneself and the reading content.<sup>52</sup> The authors argued that the greater or closer the relationship, the greater the attraction. Yulmiati, Zaim, and Atmazaki further add that, it is critical to understand students' reading interests in order to expose them to extensive reading materials that are similar to their preferred reading choices and reading environments.<sup>53</sup>

The results of the study further revealed that students expected their lecturers to expose them to newspapers and magazines in order to enhance their extensive reading. The students thought newspapers provided global news, general knowledge, and information. The students also mentioned that magazines, which have the added benefit of being easier to read or more alluring, are a great way to encourage readers to increase their vocabulary and comprehension skills. This finding concurs with the findings of a study conducted by Lancouchova on using magazines and newspapers in ELT with interpersonal and intrapersonal types of students. The results of the study showed that integrating newspapers and magazines into classroom curricula seemed to be very useful for students and it extended their language knowledge and skills.<sup>54</sup> Subsequently, Awuttey recommended that lecturers should sensitize students on the importance of newspapers and magazines in education and the need to develop good newspaper and magazine reading habits as well as overall reading.<sup>55</sup>

The results of the current study show that students expected their lecturers to support their extensive reading by exposing them to social media platforms. Specifically, the results showed that students expected their lecturers to expose them to social media platforms like Goodreads, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. This finding is in line with the findings of a study conducted by Moyo and Abdullah. The focus of the study was on enhancing and enriching students' reading experience by using social media technologies. The results of the study showed that the learning experience can be greatly enhanced and enriched by using social media or Web 2.0 technologies. The authors claim that social learning principles, which promote active learning through students interacting with educational materials and software over social networks, could help accomplish this goal.<sup>56</sup>

### **Implications for lecturers' support for extensive reading**

It was mentioned in the literature review that Day and Bamford argue that the purpose of using extensive reading to ignite students' passion for reading in English can be achieved in both ways: as a stand-alone course or as a component of an already-existing reading course.<sup>57</sup> Day and Bamford's suggestion is pertinent to the current study because the findings are likely to help lecturers develop the skills, they need to encourage extended reading in the classroom.

The study's findings have demonstrated that students had a special interest in reading online. Lecturers should prepare or workshop their students to read online in order to meet this expectation, since reading online may require much more self-control than reading a physical book. The usage of new technologies online implies the need for additional skills in order to use them all efficiently. As a result, training is crucial for both lecturers and students. Lecturers should warn students that anything can be published by anyone. Because of this, critical thinking abilities like analysing sources critically and appreciating authors' points of view are especially crucial when it comes to online learning. Possessing

<sup>52</sup> Troy Jones and Carol Brown, "Reading Engagement: A Comparison between e-Books and Traditional Print Books in an Elementary Classroom," *International Journal of Instruction* 4, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>53</sup> M.J. Yulmiati, M. Zaim, and R. Atmazaki, "Investigating Students' Reading Interest in English Electronic Books for Extensive Reading," *Journal of Physics: Conference Series IOP Publishing* 1779, no. 1 (2021): 012025.

<sup>54</sup> Barbora Lancouchová, "Using Magazines and Newspapers in ELT with Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Types of Students," *Published Bachelor Work. Czech Republic: Undergraduate Study of Brno*, 2006.

<sup>55</sup> Wisdom Mawuli Awuttey, "A Study of Newspaper Reading Habits Among Members of the Debaters' Club of Okuapemman School, Akropong-Akuapem," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 1, no. 2 (June 9, 2020): 58–67, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2020062>.

<sup>56</sup> Moses Moyo and Hanifa Abdullah, "Enhancing and Enriching Students' Reading Experience by Using Social Media Technologies," *Mousaion* 31, no. 2 (2013): 135–53.

<sup>57</sup> Day and Bamford, *Extensive Reading in the Second Language*.

this ability will probably provide students with the foundational knowledge needed for academic writing, as increased reading comprehension opens doors for students to enhance their writing abilities.

The results have also showed that reading groups were supported by the respondents. Lecturers should push students to take the initiative in sharing their online knowledge and tactics to live up to this expectation. The results also showed that when reading is associated with assignments for class, students frequently put it off. To get around this problem, lecturers should encourage students to make sporadic, mini-presentations of the books they are reading and ask them questions about what they have read informally. However, the students should not feel obligated to do this. There are situations when lecturers can be of great assistance to students who want to read widely outside of the classroom. A well-stocked library and consistent encouragement of students to check out books to bring home are two tactics that will probably aid in promoting extensive reading. The classroom approach and practice should not conflict with extensive reading because this could reduce the enjoyment that comes with extensive reading.

Lecturers should never forget that the goal of an extensive reading program is to promote reading fluency. As such, students should not be pausing frequently to reread passages they do not understand, and they should not read difficult material. Students may be encouraged just by having lecturers who are interested in what they are reading and who keep track of it.

Lecturers ought to be exemplary role models. Students will be encouraged to read, for instance, if they perceive the lecturer to be a reader as well. The lecturer can discuss books they have been reading in class, and if they have read the library's selection of books, they are qualified to offer students honest reading recommendations. Lecturers ought to consider that motivation is a crucial element in the accomplishment of a comprehensive reading program. It is important to pique students' interest because when you give them engaging content, they might want to read more books. The books that students read should be at a level that corresponds to their reading proficiency so that they can learn that they can read in English. Their motivation, enjoyment, and desire to read should all increase because of this fulfilling experience.

## CONCLUSION

The current study has clarified what expectations South African university students had of the assistance of their lecturers with respect to extended reading. The study's findings have demonstrated that students had differing expectations about the ways in which their lecturers could help them with extended reading. For example, students expected their lecturers to expose them to digital or online reading, encourage reading groups, improve access to reading materials, consider students' reading interests while choosing reading material, be exposed to newspapers and magazines and use social networks for extensive reading. Reading instruction pedagogy may be affected by students' perceptions of the support that lecturers should offer in relation to extensive reading. Therefore, lecturers ought to be able to deduce their students' extensive reading interests and choices based on the insights they have shared. Thus, it is the duty of lecturers to oversee and support the extensive reading process in order to enhance both the reading habits and reading comprehension of their students.

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