

Flow Experience in Extensive Reading: Indonesian EFL Students' Perceptions and Enabling Conditions

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Abstract

Flow experience (FE) refers to an optimal psychological state characterized by deep involvement, enjoyment, and a sense of control during an activity. Although extensive reading (ER) is widely recognized for supporting language development, less is known about the psychological conditions that sustain learners' engagement in ER, particularly in Indonesian EFL contexts. This study investigated Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of FE during a two-semester ER program and examined the internal and external conditions that enabled or hindered flow. Thirty-six undergraduate English Literature students at a private university in West Java participated in the study while completing ER using the XReading platform across two consecutive semesters. A mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected at the end of each semester using a 36-item Flow State Scale covering nine dimensions of flow. Qualitative data were then gathered through semi-structured interviews with six purposively selected students representing diverse ER achievement patterns, complemented by document analysis of XReading logs and ER-related written tasks. Results indicated that students generally experienced high levels of flow in both semesters, with higher overall flow reported in the second semester. The largest increase was observed in skill–challenge balance, suggesting that sustained ER participation strengthened learners' ability to select texts that matched their developing proficiency. Across both semesters, book content emerged as the most influential external condition, while mood and concentration were the most salient internal conditions. Interview findings further highlighted learner autonomy in selecting texts and managing reading routines as central to students' sense of control and immersion, although competing academic and personal demands could disrupt flow. The findings suggest that two-semester ER programs can foster sustained flow when learners have access to engaging, level-appropriate texts and meaningful autonomy, supported by teacher guidance to help students regulate attention and affect.

Keywords: Flow experience; EFL students; extensive reading; reading enjoyment.

INTRODUCTION

Extensive reading, which emphasizes reading large quantities of enjoyable and accessible materials, has long been recognized in English language teaching for fostering

reading fluency, vocabulary development, and overall language proficiency. Its emphasis on reading for pleasure rather than detailed comprehension or linguistic analysis has also been regarded as an approach for cultivating a sustained interest in reading. A substantial body of research has documented the positive contributions of extensive reading to foreign language learning, including gains in reading fluency and comprehension as well as improvements in vocabulary, grammar, and broader language competence (Nation & Waring, 2020; Robb, 2022; Robb & Ewert, 2024; Jeon & Day, 2016; McLean & Rouault, 2017; Suk, 2017). In addition to linguistic outcomes, extensive reading has been associated with enhanced motivation and learner autonomy, with evidence of its effectiveness across diverse linguistic and cultural settings (Genlott & Grönlund, 2013; Khonamri & Farzanegan, 2016). Further research suggests that extensive reading may support higher-order learning outcomes, such as critical thinking and cultural awareness, and may contribute to improved academic writing through increased lexical diversity, stronger argumentative coherence, and greater metacognitive awareness (Khonamri & Farzanegan, 2016; Taye & Teshome, 2025). However, despite these established benefits, the psychological states that underpin successful and sustained engagement in extensive reading remain underexplored, particularly in Indonesian EFL contexts.

To deepen understanding of learners' engagement during extensive reading (ER), the present study adopts flow theory as an interpretive lens, conceptualizing engagement as an optimal experiential state that emerges when learners are fully absorbed in meaningful activity (Abuhamdeh, 2020; Liu et al., 2022; Sangers et al., 2025). Flow is defined as a psychological state characterized by intense concentration, enjoyment, and intrinsically motivated involvement, in which learners' attention is directed primarily toward the activity itself rather than toward external evaluation or performance concerns (Arai, 2022; Karimi et al., 2024). In educational contexts, flow has been consistently associated with sustained engagement and positive affect and is often accompanied by reduced anxiety and deeper cognitive-affective involvement in learning tasks, conditions that are conducive to durable language development (Liu et al., 2022; Sangers et al., 2025). Conceptually, ER aligns closely with the core conditions that facilitate flow, as it emphasizes extended, meaning-focused reading of accessible texts and promotes learner autonomy. Such autonomy enables learners to select materials that match their interests and proficiency levels, thereby supporting an appropriate balance between challenge and skill (Jeon & Day, 2015; Jeon & Day, 2016; Jacobs & Renandya, 2015; Yamashita, 2015). Moreover, ER is typically implemented within a comparatively low-stakes learning environment, where intensive testing and constant form-focused analysis are minimized, reducing evaluative pressure and increasing the likelihood of immersion and enjoyment during reading (Robb & Ewert, 2024; Yamashita, 2015; Arai, 2025).

Building on the conceptual alignment between extensive reading (ER) and flow theory, this study focuses on EFL learners' subjective flow experiences and the conditions that facilitate or constrain them, reflecting evidence that flow in language learning is context-sensitive and shaped by classroom, task, and interpersonal factors (Aubrey, 2017; Gong & Xu, 2024; Zou & Ren, 2024). Rather than treating ER primarily as a pathway to measurable proficiency gains, the study foregrounds learners' perceptions because engagement-oriented outcomes, such as sustained involvement and positive orientation to reading, are integral to how ER functions in practice and are increasingly emphasized in ER research

syntheses (Jeon & Day, 2016; Robb & Ewert, 2024; Zhou, 2024). This emphasis is warranted because flow is inherently experiential and dynamic, and thus is best examined through learners' reported experiences, including approaches designed to capture moment-to-moment states, rather than inferred solely from performance indicators (Aubrey, 2025; Zou & Ren, 2024). Moreover, flow is not assumed to arise automatically; it is enabled or inhibited by conditions such as autonomy-supportive instruction, a supportive classroom climate, teacher support, and motivational affordances embedded in the learning environment (Aladini et al., 2024; Gong & Xu, 2024; Aubrey, 2017). In ER contexts, these conditions are realized through opportunities for self-selected, accessible, and appealing reading alongside reduced evaluative pressure, while material fit and program design features can meaningfully shape learners' motivation and engagement trajectories (Arai, 2025; Yang et al., 2021; Zhou & Day, 2021). By examining both learners' perceived flow and the contextual conditions surrounding ER, this study aims to provide a nuanced account of when ER becomes an engaging practice for EFL learners and to inform more context-responsive ER design and implementation (Robb & Ewert, 2024).

Extensive reading (ER) has been widely conceptualized as a meaning-focused, learner-centered approach grounded in principles of autonomy, accessibility, and enjoyment, and research consistently demonstrates its broad benefits for EFL learners' reading fluency, vocabulary development, and overall language proficiency (Ivone & Renandya, 2019). Beyond linguistic outcomes, ER has been shown to foster positive learner perceptions and sustained engagement, particularly when implemented in low-pressure environments that allow learners to read extensively according to their interests and proficiency levels (Ateek, 2021). From a psychological perspective, flow theory offers a useful framework for understanding such engagement, as empirical evidence indicates that flow is closely associated with affective involvement in reading and can function as a predictor of reading comprehension through its interaction with emotional and motivational variables (Shahian et al., 2017). However, the extent to which flow emerges during ER is shaped by contextual and instructional conditions. In the Indonesian context, although teachers generally hold favorable attitudes toward ER, its classroom implementation remains constrained by limited institutional support and practical guidance, suggesting that learner engagement may be uneven across settings (Waring & Husna, 2019). Recent evidence further indicates that Indonesian EFL students are capable of experiencing high levels of flow during ER activities, particularly when enabling conditions such as meaningful feedback are present, even though the relationship between flow and reading quantity may be weak or indirect (Siregar & Henni, 2024).

Despite the growing body of research documenting the linguistic and motivational benefits of extensive reading, learners' experiential engagement during ER remains insufficiently explored. Existing studies have largely emphasized learning outcomes or general affective variables, offering limited insight into how learners experience enjoyment and flow while reading extensively, particularly in EFL contexts. In addition, although flow has been recognized as a relevant construct for understanding engagement, limited attention has been given to the specific conditions that learners perceive as enabling or constraining flow during ER activities. To address these issues, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) To what extent did the student participants experience reading enjoyment and flow? and (2) What conditions did student participants attribute to

enabling flow experience in extensive reading? This focus allows for a more contextually grounded understanding of engagement in extensive reading within the Indonesian EFL setting.

METHOD

This study adopted a sequential mixed methods design to develop a comprehensive account of students' flow experiences during extensive reading, integrating quantitative evidence on the extent of flow and reading enjoyment with qualitative insights into the conditions that enabled or constrained these experiences. The quantitative to qualitative sequence was selected to support explanation building, in which patterns identified through survey data informed the focus of subsequent interviews, and to strengthen interpretation through systematic integration of complementary data sources ([Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017](#); [Turner et al., 2015](#)). From a mixed methods perspective, the design emphasized the identification of overall patterns in the initial phase, followed by an interpretive phase that examined the reasons underlying those patterns, while maintaining analytic transparency in how the quantitative and qualitative strands were connected and integrated during interpretation ([McCrudden & McTigue, 2018](#)).

The participants were 36 Indonesian EFL students enrolled in an Extensive Reading course at a private university in West Java, Indonesia, all of whom used the XReading platform as part of the course requirements. Situated within a bounded instructional context represented by a single ER course cohort, the sample was appropriate for descriptive pattern mapping followed by explanatory interviewing within a sequential mixed methods framework. Data collection was conducted across two consecutive semesters to capture patterns of flow experience over an extended period of engagement, reflecting a longitudinal perspective on learner experience rather than a single time point ([Thomson & McLeod, 2015](#)). For the qualitative phase, six students were purposively selected based on their questionnaire profiles to represent variation in flow and engagement levels. This approach aligns with mixed methods sampling principles that emphasize drawing qualitative cases from quantitative results to enhance explanatory depth, with the selected interview sample size supporting focused, in-depth analysis of patterns identified in the survey data ([Suri, 2011](#)).

Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire administered at the end of each semester. The instrument consisted of a 36-item Flow State Scale adapted from [Fongpaiboon \(2017\)](#), operationalizing nine dimensions of flow, goal clarity, feedback, skill–challenge balance, concentration, sense of control, awareness, loss of self-consciousness, altered sense of time, and intrinsic experience, using a five-point Likert response format. The use of multi-item scales to measure latent and multidimensional experiential constructs, along with the reporting of scale-level summaries, is consistent with established measurement practices in the social sciences, particularly when complex psychological constructs cannot be adequately captured through single items ([Diamantopoulos et al., 2012](#); [Boone & Boone, 2012](#)). Although Likert-type responses are ordinal in nature, treating aggregated scale scores as approximately continuous is widely accepted under commonly met conditions, especially when multiple items contribute to each construct ([Rhemtulla et al., 2012](#)). In adapting an established instrument to a new context, attention was given to scale-adaptation procedures to preserve construct interpretability and measurement

quality, in line with methodological recommendations for cross-context instrument use (Pillet et al., 2023).

To complement the survey data, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted approximately two weeks after the administration of the second-semester questionnaire. Semi-structured interviewing allows for in-depth exploration and contextualization of participants' experiences while maintaining comparability across interviews, and it supports flexible follow-up questioning to clarify meanings and deepen responses (Qu & Dumay, 2011; Rowley, 2012). Probing techniques were used to encourage elaboration and reveal underlying reasoning, contributing to analytically rich qualitative accounts (Robinson, 2023). Ethical considerations were addressed through the use of pseudonyms and anonymization procedures, consistent with established guidance on confidentiality and ethical reporting in qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2015).

Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving iterative familiarization, coding, theme development, and refinement to identify recurring patterns in how students described flow and its enabling/limiting conditions in ER (Nowell et al., 2017). To strengthen analytic credibility, the coding and theme development followed published guidance on reflexive thematic analysis and on documenting a transparent, auditable analytic process (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017). Finally, integration was conducted by examining convergence and divergence across (a) questionnaire patterns, (b) interview themes, and (c) document/log indicators, producing an interpretive account of what levels of flow were reported and why those levels appeared under particular conditions. This step followed mixed-methods scholarship that treats integration as an explicit analytic activity (rather than parallel reporting) and emphasizes coherent meta-inferences supported through triangulation and deliberate linking across strands and data sources (Guetterman et al., 2021; Uprichard & Dawney, 2019).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings and discussion, organized into two subsections. Together, these subsections address how participants experience reading enjoyment and flow during extensive reading and identify the internal and external conditions that facilitate or constrain these experiences. The first subsection reports the questionnaire results on learners' flow experiences in extensive reading, with particular attention to flow dimensions and their associated variables. The second subsection presents and discusses interview findings that provide deeper insight into participants' personal experiences and the contextual conditions that enable flow during extensive reading activities.

Comparison of Flow Experiences in the First and Second Semesters

The first step in doing the study is to calculate the mean scores for the nine flow state conditions from the questionnaire to get a general idea of whether the participants experience FE or not during ER. The result is displayed in Table 1, showing the mean scores for the flow state scale during the 1st and 2nd semesters.

Table 1. The average flow state scale per group in January 2023 and June 2023

Flow state scale items	AVG Jan	SD Jan	ME	AVG Jun	SD Jun	ME
Goal	3.57	0.60	High	3.84	0.55	high
Feedback	3.57	0.53	High	3.93	0.55	high
Balance	3.37	0.35	Moderate	3.85	0.45	high
Concentration	3.53	0.37	High	3.92	0.45	high
Control	3.49	0.40	High	3.52	0.64	high
Awareness	3.65	0.42	High	3.77	0.56	high
Consciousness	3.88	0.47	High	3.67	0.43	high
Time	3.60	0.48	High	3.92	0.58	high
Experience	3.86	0.65	High	3.83	0.46	high
Total	3.61	0.82	High	3.81	0.80	high

Table 1 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and categorical interpretations of the nine flow-state dimensions measured during extensive reading in the first (January 2023) and second (June 2023) semesters. Overall, the results indicate that students experienced a high level of flow in both semesters, with a modest increase in the second semester. The total mean score rose from 3.61 (SD = 0.82) in January to 3.81 (SD = 0.80) in June, suggesting a strengthening of students' flow experiences over time. At the dimensional level, eight of the nine flow components were already classified as high in the first semester. The only exception was skill–challenge balance, which was rated as moderate (M = 3.37). By the second semester, all nine dimensions reached the high category, indicating a more consistent and uniformly positive flow experience across components. The largest increase was observed in the balance dimension, which rose to a mean of 3.85 (SD = 0.45), suggesting improved alignment between students' reading abilities and the difficulty of the materials. Other dimensions, including goal clarity, feedback, concentration, time transformation, and awareness, also showed noticeable increases in mean scores from the first to the second semester, reflecting greater immersion and engagement during extensive reading. Dimensions such as control, consciousness, and intrinsic experience remained high across both semesters, indicating stable perceptions of agency, absorption, and enjoyment.

Table 2. One-sample t-test and descriptive statistics of flow conditions in January and June 2023

	1 st semester, January 2023						2 nd semester, June 2023					
	AVG	SD	ME	T	P	Mean- ing	AVG	SD	ME	T	P	Mean- ing
Goal	3.57	0.60	high	4.151	.000	sig	3.84	0.55	high	3.689	.000	sig
Feedback	3.57	0.53	high	4.811	.000	sig	3.93	0.55	high	3.540	.000	sig
Balance	3.37	0.35	mod	3.808	.000	sig	3.85	0.45	high	4.387	.000	sig
Concentration	3.53	0.37	high	4.608	.000	sig	3.92	0.45	high	4.229	.000	sig
Control	3.49	0.40	high	3.838	.000	sig	3.52	0.64	high	4.081	.000	sig
Awareness	3.65	0.42	high	4.489	.000	sig	3.77	0.56	high	4.470	.000	sig
Consciousness	3.88	0.47	high	3.818	.000	sig	3.67	0.43	high	3.165	.002	sig
Time	3.60	0.48	high	4.664	.000	sig	3.92	0.58	high	4.587	.000	sig
Experience	3.86	0.65	high	3.519	.000	sig	3.83	0.46	high	3.863	.000	sig

Total	3.61	0.82	high	3.802	.001	sig	3.81	0.80	high	3.973	.000	sig
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Table 2 presents the results of the one-sample *t*-tests and descriptive statistics for the nine flow conditions measured during extensive reading in the first (January 2023) and second (June 2023) semesters. The one-sample *t*-tests were conducted to examine whether students' mean scores on each flow condition were significantly above the reference value, indicating the presence of flow-related experiences. Across both semesters, all nine flow dimensions yielded statistically significant results ($p < .05$), demonstrating that students consistently experienced the core components of flow during extensive reading activities. In the first semester, mean scores for most dimensions fell within the high category, with the exception of skill–challenge balance, which was classified as moderate ($M = 3.37$). Despite this, the balance dimension was still statistically significant ($t = 3.81, p < .001$), indicating that students experienced this component to a meaningful extent.

In the second semester, all flow dimensions reached the high category and remained statistically significant. The balance dimension showed a notable increase ($M = 3.85, t = 4.39, p < .001$), suggesting a stronger alignment between students' reading skills and the level of challenge posed by the materials. Other dimensions, such as goal clarity, feedback, concentration, time transformation, and intrinsic experience, also demonstrated consistently high mean scores and significant *t*-values across both semesters, indicating stable and robust flow experiences. At the aggregate level, the total flow score was statistically significant in both semesters, with mean scores of 3.61 ($t = 3.80, p = .001$) in January and 3.81 ($t = 3.97, p < .001$) in June. This confirms that students experienced an overall state of flow during extensive reading in both periods, with slightly stronger flow in the second semester.

Table 4. Internal and external variables that influence flow

Factors		Type	Jan 2023	June 2023
Internal	Mood		76.9 %	75.6%
	Concentration		74.4%	75.6%
	Health		25.6%	29.3%
External	The content of the book		79.5%	82.9%
	The reading place		41%	48.8%
	The language of the book		41%	51.2%
	Activities and other tasks from other classes		25.6%	31.7%

Table 4 presents the internal and external factors reported by students as influencing their flow experiences during extensive reading in January and June 2023. The percentages indicate the proportion of students who identified each factor as affecting their engagement and immersion while reading. Among the internal factors, mood and concentration were consistently reported as the most influential in both semesters. In January, mood (76.9%) and concentration (74.4%) were identified by a substantial majority of students, and these proportions remained similarly high in June (75.6% for both factors). This stability suggests that students' emotional state and ability to maintain focus played a central role in facilitating flow throughout the ER program. In contrast, health was reported by a smaller proportion of students, although its influence increased slightly from January (25.6%) to June (29.3%).

Regarding external factors, the content of the book emerged as the most influential variable in both semesters, with an increase from 79.5% in January to 82.9% in June. This finding indicates that the relevance, interest, and appeal of reading materials were critical in supporting students' flow experiences. Other external factors showed more moderate but notable increases over time. The influence of the reading place rose from 41.0% to 48.8%, and the language of the book increased from 41.0% to 51.2%, suggesting that environmental comfort and linguistic accessibility became more salient as students progressed through the ER program. Additionally, activities and tasks from other classes were reported more frequently in June (31.7%) than in January (25.6%), indicating that competing academic demands increasingly affected students' reading engagement.

Qualitative Insights from Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews with six students provided rich qualitative data that complemented the quantitative findings. All interviewed students reported positive initial reactions to gaining access to XReading, expressing enthusiasm about having a large digital library readily available. They appreciated the breadth of reading options and the ease of access, although two students (B and C) noted a continued preference for physical books. Despite this preference, all participants viewed XReading as beneficial for supporting extensive reading. Learner autonomy emerged as a central theme across all interviews. All six students emphasized the value of being able to choose what to read and determine how many words to read, noting that this freedom allowed them to select materials aligned with their personal interests and manage their reading time flexibly. Several students highlighted that autonomy increased their motivation and engagement. Students D, E, and F, in particular, stressed the importance of topic interest, explaining that engaging content led to deep immersion. As student D noted, *"When the story fits what I like, I want to finish it in one sitting, and I don't realize how much time has passed."* Similar experiences were shared by students E and F, who described losing track of time due to enjoyment and curiosity while reading.

Students A, B, and C, who described themselves as more passionate readers, also reported immersion when topics matched their interests. However, they indicated a greater tolerance for unfamiliar topics. Student A explained, *"Even if the topic is not something I usually like, I can still enjoy reading it if the story is interesting."* This finding aligns with Kirchhoff's (2013) observation that interest and curiosity play a crucial role in facilitating flow during extensive reading. Preferences regarding reading settings varied among participants. Students A and B reported that time and place were not major factors influencing their immersion. In contrast, student C emphasized the importance of a relaxed atmosphere, noting, *"I like reading when I'm relaxed, sometimes with snacks, it helps me focus."* Students D and E stated that a quiet environment was essential for concentration, while student F preferred soft background music and minimal disturbance, explaining, *"If there is noise or interruption, I can't really get into the reading."* Although the survey results suggested that time and place were less influential overall, all six students agreed that an environment with minimal disturbance supported concentration. They also indicated that relaxed periods, such as afternoons or weekdays, were more conducive to immersive reading.

When asked to compare their experiences across semesters, several students reported that they found it easier to meet their reading goals in the first semester. Students A and D explained that increased involvement in campus organizations during the second

semester reduced their available reading time. Student C shared a personal challenge, stating, *"I lost my father at the beginning of the second semester, and it really affected my mood and motivation to read."* Students B and E attributed decreased motivation to heavier academic workloads, while student F explained, *"I lost motivation because I struggled to follow my classes, not only reading but other subjects too."* These accounts highlight how external pressures and emotional factors can disrupt flow experiences, supporting [Mori's \(2015\)](#) argument that extrinsic support remains important in sustaining extensive reading engagement, particularly in tertiary contexts.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated EFL learners' flow experiences in extensive reading (ER) and the conditions that enabled or constrained those experiences over two semesters. By integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, the findings provide a nuanced account of both the extent to which learners experienced reading enjoyment and flow and the contextual and psychological conditions they associated with the emergence of flow during ER.

The first research question concerned the extent to which students experienced reading enjoyment and flow during extensive reading. The quantitative findings clearly indicate that learners experienced a generally high level of flow across both semesters. The overall mean scores for the flow state scale exceeded the threshold for the "high" category in both measurement points, and all nine dimensions of flow reached statistically significant levels. These results suggest that ER functioned not merely as a reading activity but as an engaging and immersive learning experience, consistent with conceptualizations of flow as an optimal state of deep involvement and intrinsic enjoyment ([Abuhamdeh, 2020](#); [Csikszentmihalyi, 1990](#)). Importantly, the data also reveal a developmental pattern in students' flow experiences. The higher overall flow score in the second semester, along with increased frequencies of students reporting that they "often" or "always" experienced flow, indicates that flow was not static but strengthened over time. This finding supports previous ER research showing that enjoyment and engagement tend to increase as learners become familiar with ER routines, expectations, and material selection processes ([Ateek, 2021](#); [Robb & Ewert, 2024](#); [Yamashita, 2015](#)). Sustained exposure to ER appears to support the gradual internalization of reading as a pleasurable and self-directed activity, increasing the likelihood that learners experience flow more consistently.

Among the nine flow dimensions, the most notable change occurred in skill–challenge balance, which improved from a moderate level in the first semester to a high level in the second. This pattern aligns closely with flow theory, which positions skill–challenge balance as a core prerequisite for flow ([Abuhamdeh, 2020](#); [Shahian et al., 2017](#)). In ER contexts, such a balance is strongly linked to learners' ability to select texts that are neither too easy nor too difficult ([Arai, 2022](#); [Nation & Waring, 2020](#)). The observed improvement suggests that learners became more proficient in judging text difficulty and matching materials to their reading abilities over time, a process that has been identified as central to sustained reading pleasure and engagement ([Arai, 2025](#); [Yang et al., 2021](#)). These findings provide strong evidence that the student participants experienced substantial reading enjoyment and flow during ER, with flow becoming more stable and frequent as the program progressed. This supports the view that ER can foster not only linguistic development but also positive

affective and experiential outcomes that encourage long-term reading engagement (Jeon & Day, 2015; Robb, 2022; Zhou, 2024).

The second research question focused on the conditions that students attributed to enabling flow during extensive reading. The findings indicate that flow emerged through an interaction of internal and external conditions rather than from a single factor. Among external conditions, the content of the reading materials was consistently identified as the most influential factor in both semesters. Quantitative results showed high and increasing endorsement of book content as a flow-enabling variable, and interview data richly elaborated this finding. When reading materials aligned with learners' interests, students reported deep immersion, loss of time awareness, and a strong desire to complete texts in one sitting, experiences that closely match defining characteristics of flow (Abuhamdeh, 2020; Arai, 2022). This reinforces extensive reading research emphasizing that interest and narrative appeal are central drivers of enjoyment and engagement, often outweighing considerations of difficulty alone (Yamashita, 2015; Yang et al., 2021).

Learner autonomy also emerged as a crucial enabling condition. The freedom to choose reading materials, determine reading quantity, and manage reading time contributed to learners' sense of control and intrinsic motivation, both of which are essential components of flow experiences (Abuhamdeh, 2020; Gong & Xu, 2024). This finding aligns closely with core ER principles that emphasize self-selection and reduced evaluative pressure as foundations for sustained engagement (Jeon & Day, 2015; Nation & Waring, 2020). The qualitative data further suggest that autonomy supported learners in integrating reading into their personal schedules and interests, thereby increasing the likelihood of entering a flow state. Moreover, internal conditions, particularly mood and concentration, were also consistently identified as influential. Students reported that positive emotional states and the ability to focus facilitated immersion, whereas emotional distress, fatigue, or academic overload disrupted engagement. This supports prior research highlighting the affective and attentional dimensions of flow and the sensitivity of flow experiences to learners' psychological readiness (Abuhamdeh, 2020; Shahian et al., 2017). The interview findings demonstrate how personal and academic pressures in the second semester could constrain flow for some learners, even within an otherwise supportive ER environment.

The role of reading environment (time and place) appeared more individualized. While survey data suggested a moderate overall influence, interview responses revealed that some students required quiet or comfortable settings to concentrate, whereas others were less affected by environmental factors. This variability aligns with research suggesting that contextual preferences for flow are highly individual and shaped by learners' habits, personalities, and daily routines (Aubrey, 2016; Zou & Ren, 2024). The findings suggest that flow in ER is enabled by a constellation of conditions: engaging content, learner autonomy, positive mood, sustained concentration, and supportive contextual arrangements. These conditions interact dynamically, with their influence varying across learners and over time. The results underscore that while ER provides a strong structural foundation for flow, the realization of flow depends on how well program design aligns with learners' psychological needs and life contexts (Robb & Ewert, 2024; Zhou, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated EFL learners' flow experiences in extensive reading (ER) and the conditions that enabled those experiences. The findings indicate that students experienced a consistently high level of reading enjoyment and flow across two semesters, with a modest increase in overall flow in the second semester. All core flow dimensions reached high and statistically significant levels, suggesting that ER facilitated deep concentration, intrinsic enjoyment, and sustained engagement. The improvement observed over time, particularly in skill–challenge balance, indicates that flow in ER develops progressively as learners become more experienced in selecting appropriate texts and regulating their reading practices. These results affirm that ER can function not only as a means of language development but also as an engaging and immersive reading experience that supports positive learner–text interaction.

With respect to enabling conditions, the study shows that flow in ER is shaped by an interaction of internal and external factors. Engaging book content and learner autonomy in choosing materials and managing reading time emerged as the most influential external conditions, while mood and concentration played a key internal role in facilitating immersion. Although the influence of reading environment and time varied across individuals, learners consistently emphasized the importance of reduced pressure and personal relevance in sustaining flow. At the same time, increased academic demands and personal challenges were found to disrupt flow, highlighting its context-sensitive nature. Taken together, these findings suggest that flow in extensive reading does not arise automatically but is enabled through interest-driven material selection, autonomy-supportive design, and sustained instructional support that responds to learners' changing conditions.

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