

REVIEW

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# Reading approaches practiced in EFL classrooms: a narrative review and research agenda

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## Abstract

Reading is an essential skill for students to perform effectively and successfully in any academic setting. This skill is vital for foreign language learners as it provides chances for students to be exposed to English in input-poor settings. English as a foreign language students' reading skills in diverse contexts remain substandard due to the lack of necessary input and efficient instructional methodologies. Thus, we review the literature on three common reading instructional approaches: the intensive reading (IR) approach, the extensive reading (ER) approach, and the blended IR and ER approach. This review summarizes the existing literature on IR, ER, and blended IR and ER and provides the critical appraisal of existing scholarly literature from several aspects, including reading approach, research design, research context, data analysis method, and the results of various studies of reading approaches. Finally, we present several future research directions in the field of reading research.

**Keywords:** Intensive reading, Extensive reading, EFL (English as a foreign language), Reading approaches

## Introduction

Reading plays a vital role in learning any language. Research has shown that students become proficient in every aspect of the English language with the help of reading (Babayan, 2019). Despite its significance, the reading ability of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners seemed unsatisfactory (Endris, 2018). Students do not have reading habits and reading proficiency as they only read for tests and exams (Rafiq et al., 2019). Moreover, research from various contexts has shown that students have poor reading habits and reading proficiency (Dar et al., 2019). For instance, Sajid and Kassim (2019) discovered that Pakistani tertiary level students have difficulty in all language skills, including reading skills. Even post-graduate level students face problems in reading. According to Meniado (2018), Saudi students have poor reading proficiency, and they lack essential reading habits. Similarly, Thai students also have poor reading proficiency and it affects their overall English language ability (Maipoka & Soontornwipast, 2021). In another study, Anandari and Iswandari (2019) stated that reading literacy is critical

for Indonesian students, but they do not possess effective reading abilities, which is a red alert for the whole nation. Gu and Lau (2021) found that Chinese students also face reading difficulties due to traditional teacher-centered reading instructions. In another study, Meniado (2021) found that Arabian Gulf learners have poor reading proficiency and reading habits due to lack of strong reading culture and inefficient reading instruction. It is very difficult for a person to be successful in the future without having effective reading skills and strategies (Grabe, 2009b).

It is widely accepted belief that reading helps in learning any foreign language. Nuttall (1996) claimed that the best way to learn a language is to live with the speakers of that language or to read that language extensively. EFL teachers often face challenges in developing the poor reading skills of students. Teachers should adopt practical teaching approaches to enhance reading skills and students' general language proficiency to address the challenges mentioned above. For instance, Haq et al. (2019) concluded that students lack independent reading skills because the grammar-translation method for the teaching of English is not producing competent language users. In another study, (Iqbal et al., 2015) revealed that teachers did not use reading aloud, IR, ER, and silent reading activities to improve the students' reading skills. Andrés (2020) found that teachers should shift their traditional methods to more analytical ways to foster classroom reading and make students autonomous and independent readers.

According to Bakla (2020), IR and ER are two primary components of reading instruction. These instructional approaches are widely used to develop the reading proficiency of students in different contexts. Both approaches have distinct features in theoretical perspectives and pedagogical applications. Hence, these approaches yield different impacts on students' reading and language development. Renandya (2016) found that both approaches are equally important for improving students' reading proficiency. However, second language teachers are more familiar with IR and always capitalize enough time on IR. Jeon and Day (2016) reported that IR is an effective approach for teaching reading, but ER is also indispensable due to its reported outcomes and evident benefits. Despite its reported benefits, ER is still a less travelled area due to particular challenges (Day et al., 1998). Brown (2009) identified some ER challenges, including the cost of books, lack of time, monitoring of students' reading, managing the library of books, guiding students to choose appropriate books, and getting students engaged in reading. The number of theoretical discussions and empirical research studies on ER have grown tremendously (Renandya & Hidayati, 2021). Although several studies found the effectiveness of IR and ER approaches individually. However, the blended IR and ER approach is still an under-researched area despite the fact that some studies found this approach very effective in the EFL classrooms.

Several primary studies are available in the academic databases on IR, ER, and blended IR and ER approaches. Moreover, there are many secondary studies on ER in the form of meta-analysis and review studies published to date. These available studies have presented the effectiveness of ER approaches in different settings (Jeon & Day, 2016; Nakanishi, 2015). These mentioned studies have concluded that the ER approach is very effective in improving the English language proficiency of EFL learners. However, to the best of our knowledge, no secondary study reviewed the IR, ER, and the blended IR and ER approaches in the same study. Hence, this study aims to present a comprehensive

review of IR, ER, and blended IR and ER approach practiced in EFL classrooms from four different aspects, including the objective of the study, the research design used in the study, data analysis method, and the results of the study. Further, the reviewed studies are critically appraised from the four aspects mentioned above. Finally, several future research directions are provided for new the researchers interested to further contribute to the reading research domain.

For this review paper, the primary studies were selected from well-known bibliometric databases including, Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. We employed a query containing the keywords related to IR and ER reading approaches. We selected those articles which were published between 2010 and 2020. We then removed the articles which were duplicate across the databases, and also we removed those articles which were not related to our review objectives. Finally, we also did not include those articles whose results were unclear.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: “Review on the intensive reading (IR) approach” section presents an overview and a critical appraisal of existing studies on the IR approach used in EFL classrooms. “[Review on the extensive reading \(ER\) approach](#)” section offers a critical appraisal of the existing studies on ER approach used in EFL classrooms. “Theoretical background of the blended IR and ER approaches” section critically appraises the review of existing studies on the blended IR and ER approach used in EFL classrooms. “[Discussion and future research directions](#)” section presents the discussion and future research directions in the reading research domain. Finally, this review paper is concluded in “[Conclusion](#)” section.

### **Review on the intensive reading (IR) approach**

This section summarizes and critically appraises the literature on the IR approach. Apart from that, it also discusses the various research designs used in IR studies across the globe. Further, it also provides the tools, data analysis methods, and results obtained in published literature. Moreover, it describes the benefits and weaknesses of the IR approach. Finally, it also provides the pros and cons of the IR approach and discusses the skills that can be enhanced using this approach.

#### **Theoretical background of the IR approach**

According to Mart (2015), the IR approach helps the reader perform a thorough analysis of grammar and vocabulary points of the text. Furthermore, Brown (2000) characterized this approach as a narrow reading because the reader performs a deep analysis of the texts to understand the meaning of a text. Teachers also participate in the reading process through reading aloud, questioning, and predictions activities. Harmer (2007) argued that reading material of IR is generally teacher-directed and it is mainly designed for developing specific receptive skills of the learners such as skimming, scanning, and reading for detailed information or reading for inference.

Scholars have defined this approach in different ways. For example, Macalister (2011) described IR as an approach to reading in which learners come across more complex texts and language. In this case, teachers help their students in understanding vocabulary, grammar and language concepts. The researcher elaborates that there are four main focuses of IR such as grammar, themes, topics, making inferences and text structures.

According to Long and Richards (1987), IR is an in-class teacher-centric approach involving short texts with grammar and vocabulary. The teacher decides on the text, and all students have to read that text. Learners apply top-down and bottom-up processes to perform better in reading comprehension. The reader deliberately focuses on language features as they are used in the context (Nation, 2014). Hence, this approach is beneficial and valuable for developing the learners' reading comprehension and other language skills. This approach not only helps in the development of grammar and vocabulary knowledge but it also enhances writing, listening and speaking abilities (Andrés, 2020).

### **Review of the IR approach in the light of existing literature**

In the last decade, very few researchers have conducted studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the IR approach. In those studies, researchers have investigated the impact of the IR approach on various language aspects such as reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and overall language proficiency, as shown in Table 1. The studies have been conducted using quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods approaches. Most of the authors have employed quantitative research designs, more specifically, the experimental research design (Chuenchaichon, 2011; Khazaal, 2019) and survey research designs (Ebrahim, 2018; Widyaasita et al., 2020), to measure the effectiveness of the IR approach on various language aspects.

This section briefly discusses some empirical studies measuring the effectiveness of the IR approach. For instance, Mahmoudian et al. (2011) examined the effect of the IR approach on the grammatical competence of junior high school students of Iran. The researcher used a quasi-experimental research design. The researcher employed the descriptive statistics method to measure the mean score of pre-and post-test of grammar. The results reported that students significantly improved grammatical competence, and they also held positive attitudes towards learning grammar through the IR approach. Chuenchaichon (2011) investigated the impact of IR tasks on improving paragraph writing skills of the undergraduate students of Thailand using an experimental research design. The researcher used pre and post-test of writing to examine the effect of IR approach. The researcher employed descriptive statistics to analyze the difference between pre and post-writing tests to measure the impact. The study reported significant improvement in the writing skills of the students through the IR approach. Similarly, Khazaal (2019) investigated the impact of the IR approach on developing the vocabulary of college students of Iraq using the experimental research design. To evaluate the effect of the IR approach, the authors used a pre-post test of English vocabulary. To measure the significance of pre-post test results, the researchers employed a Paired T-Test and found that the IR approach significantly impacted students' vocabulary knowledge.

Similarly, Widyaasita et al. (2020) explored students' perception of IR and how this approach improved the writing of college students of Indonesia using a survey research design. The researcher employed a questionnaire to explore the perceptions of students. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. The findings showed that 80 percent of students reported that they improved vocabulary knowledge through IR, and they enjoyed being taught through this approach. Andrés (2020) explored the effectiveness of IR and its effects on the reading comprehension of the University students of Colombia using a mixed methods action research design. To explore the effects, the authors

**Table 1** Review of IR approaches in EFL classrooms

| Study                     | Objective  | Research design   | Data analysis method                        | Results   |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Andrés, (2020)            | To explore the effectiveness of IR to enhance reading comprehension                                    | Design: mix methods action research<br>Tools: questionnaire, diagnostic test, Teachers journal, Reading test<br>Population and sample: 16 university students from Columbia | Statistical analysis<br>Thematic analysis   | IR strategies improved reading comprehension  |
| Widyaasita et al., (2020) | To determine student perception about teachers teaching through the IR approach                        | Design: quantitative study<br>Tools: survey questionnaire<br>Population and sample: 41 college students from Indonesia  | Descriptive statistics                      | Eighty per cent of students said IR could increase their vocabulary, and students were happy with the teachers' methodology of IR |
| Khazaal, (2019)           | To investigate the impact of the IR approach on developing vocabulary                                  | Design: experimental<br>Tools: vocabulary pre-post test and questionnaire<br>Population and sample: 40 College students from Iraq   | Paired sample T-Test                        | IR approach had positive effects on students' vocabulary. ( $p < 0.001$ )   |
| Nuraini et al., (2019)    | To improve the writing skills of learners through IR   | Design: Qualitative study<br>Tools: observation, interviews, writing tests<br>Population and sample: 36 school students from Indonesia                                      | Thematic analysis<br>Descriptive statistics | IR approach improved the descriptive writing skills of the students   |
| Rejeki and Kurnia, (2019) | To know students' perceptions about IR and how it affects their writing abilities                      | Design: Qualitative study<br>Tools: survey questionnaire<br>Population and sample: 8 university students  | Thematic analysis<br>descriptive statistics | Students showed positive feedback about IR activities and responded that IR had an impact on their writing abilities              |
| Ebrahim, (2018)           | To investigate reading problems and to explore the influence of IR activities on reading comprehension | Design: quantitative study<br>Tool: survey questionnaire<br>Population and sample: 30 school teachers from Sudan  | Descriptive statistics                      | Reading difficulties can be solved through IR, and students improved their reading comprehension                                  |
| Sevilla-Morales, (2017)   | To explore the connection between IR and students' performance in the reading exams                    | Design: explanatory sequential mixed methods<br>Tools: classroom field notes<br>Two reading tests<br>Artifacts<br>Population and sample: 12 school students from Costa Rica | Descriptive statistics                      | The study showed positive results on students' reading performance  |
| Chuenchaichon, (2011)     | To investigate the impact of IR on paragraph writing   | Design: experimental study<br>Tools: writing pre-post test<br>Population and sample: 54 Undergraduate students from Thailand  | Descriptive statistics                      | Results showed improvement in the writing skills of the students  |
| Mahmoudian et al., (2011) | To investigate the effects of IR on grammatical knowledge  | Design: quasi-experimental<br>Tools: grammar pre-post test<br>Population and sample: 60 junior high students from Iran  | Descriptive statistics                      | Students improved their grammar skills, and they had positive attitudes towards learning grammar through IR. ( $p < 0.05$ )       |

employed a questionnaire, tests, and research journals. To analyze the data, the authors used both descriptive statistics approaches and thematic analysis. The results revealed that the IR approach significantly enhanced reading comprehension of the students. In another study in Sudan, Ebrahim (2018) found that the reading difficulties of students can be solved through the IR teaching approach. In another study conducted in Indonesia, Rejeki and Kurnia (2019) found that the IR activities helped students in mastering their language skills, such as vocabulary, grammar, word order and writing abilities. Besides this, the IR approach influenced their motivation to read. The above studies suggest that the IR approach is useful and can benefit teachers in enhancing the English language proficiency of the students. This approach is an integral component of the language curriculum in the EFL classrooms.

In the studies mentioned above, researchers have conducted quantitative experimental studies where they used pre-post test tools to measure the effectiveness of students learning through the IR approach. It can be noticed from the studies mentioned above that the researchers have only used descriptive statistics to compare the results of pre-post tests. However, the simple means or standard deviation are not enough to measure the significance of the results. Thus, the researchers could use inferential statistical tests to measure the significance of the variables to understand the effectiveness of this reading approach in an appropriate way.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses of the IR approach**

Although the IR approach is considered traditional and teacher-focused, it has brought about significant changes in the learners' vocabulary and reading comprehension abilities. Teachers usually employ this approach as it helps to develop the learners' reading comprehension skills (Yang et al., 2012). Besides this, It also helps in learning vocabulary and the organizational pattern of the text (Waring, 1997). In a study, Stahl (2003) showed a close connection between IR and overall language competence. The researcher substantiated that there was a significant improvement in the students' writing abilities and vocabulary knowledge. This approach is beneficial for the teachers as they use a three-phase process of teaching reading like pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading activities (Paran, 2003). As discussed earlier, the IR approach emphasizes a detailed analysis of vocabulary and grammar, so this detailed analysis allows learners to master language effectively and adequately.

This approach has certain weaknesses along with its significant role in language development. Nation (2009) highlighted five major weaknesses of this approach. First, the reading material is mainly selected for understanding specific reading skills. Second, the focus always remains on form and comprehension. Third, short and difficult texts are selected. Fourth, students cannot read fluently as they have to focus on accurate comprehension. Finally, students are assessed as good or bad readers based on their reading performance.

Above all, students are unable to read at their level because all students read the same material. However, the text may or may not attract the reader because the teacher chooses it. The continued domination of the IR approach in most EFL classrooms remains a problem. This indicates that IR approach is by no means the perfect reading approach as it has certain shortcomings. For example, the IR approach has been

criticized for its focus remains only on linguistic features and word-for-word translation and not on fostering enjoyment for reading itself (Fang, 2022; Robb & Susser, 1989).

Furthermore, as this approach uses relatively short texts and gives the teacher control over learners' reading through explicit instruction, ultimately, it hinders learners from becoming fluent, independent and autonomous readers. The above mentioned comprehensive discussion has presented the theoretical orientation and empirical evidence about the effectiveness of the IR approach in various EFL contexts. The following section will elaborate on the review of the ER approach.

### **Review on the extensive reading (ER) approach**

In this section, we reviewed the literature on the ER approach. This section describes the ER approach and elaborates its benefits and drawbacks. Further, this section discusses state-of-the-art literature on the ER approach and the skills that can be enhanced using the ER approach.

#### **Theoretical background of the ER approach**

The ER approach has been defined in various ways in L2 pedagogy (Day et al., 1998); (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). ER is an instructional approach in which students read a lot for fun according to their level to get general information and overall meaning. The core purpose of this approach is to give more input-rich and enjoyable environments to improve the language proficiency and enthusiasm of the learners. According to Carrell and Carson (1997), readers read large quantities of material, focusing on meaning rather than language. Successful ER programs may promote positive L2 reading attitudes, helping unmotivated learners to continue reading (Day et al., 1998; Yamashita, 2013).

The literature on ER emphasizes that L2 learners learn to read better by reading more (Bamford & Day, 1998; Day et al., 1998; Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Grabe, 2009a; Krashen, 2011). Prentice (2012) stated that ER is real language in real use and demonstrates that books will always be the best and the most motivating teachers. As far as the definition of this approach is concerned, researchers are not unanimous on the exact definition of ER. However, all agree that the main feature of ER is to read a large amount of material, including novels, short stories, newspapers or magazine articles (Hedge, 2001). The other features of ER include reading regularly and consistently for pleasure, interest and curiosity. Waring (1997) mentioned that students read quickly and enjoyably for adequate comprehension without using a dictionary. Learners get numerous benefits through ER as it gives them chance to see language in its natural order beyond the textbooks. In addition to this, it builds their vocabulary as they come across thousands of words regularly, so it develops their reading speed and fluency. Interestingly, It also brings down their anxiety towards language learning and makes them more confident and motivated learners. ER approach provides learners a platform to read and listen to a lot of material to develop their reading habits. Moreover, it also develops the sense of grammatical patterns in context. The main work in the area of ER was started by the researchers (Bamford & Day, 1998). They gave ten principles of ER, which teachers and researchers are using as guiding principles for ER Approach. These principles are mentioned below (Fig. 1).

The principles above are considered fundamental principles of ER. The teachers are highly encouraged to use them. However, some ER scholars contend that the above mentioned principles are too idealistic and cannot be used in all contexts and settings (Macalister, 2015; Rob & McLean, 2015). The researchers further added that some kind of accountability is also essential to implement ER effectively. The researchers concluded that principle number six might be replaced with (reading will be monitored and assessed). Otherwise, students will not consider ER as a serious activity. Macalister (2015) believed that these ten principles are not binding but are guiding principles and may be changed according to different situations and contexts. The researcher removed principles number two, three and six and further added that reading should be a regular practice and it can be done either in the class or outside the class.

The above ER principles may be reduced by meeting the requirement of different settings and contexts. Reading can be done in and outside the classrooms. Anderson (2014) suggested that reading should be done in class and outside of class. The researcher also accentuated that curriculum designers must incorporate the ER component in it.

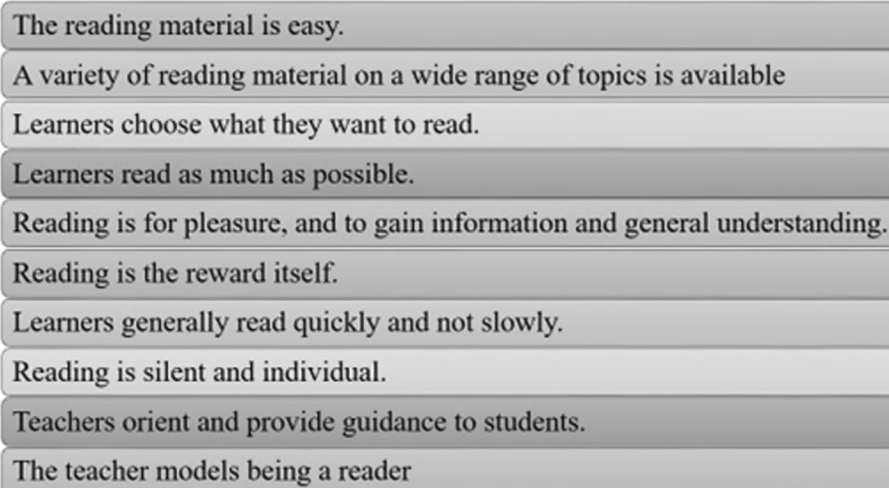
In this section, we will briefly discuss the theory underlying ER approach. The theory supporting ER is Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis. This theory posits that people acquire different aspects of language, including grammar, vocabulary and other skills, when they get comprehensible input in a relaxed, stress-free atmosphere. ER fulfills both these conditions as ER contains reading large amounts of easy materials with little or no follow-up work or testing. However, the input must be compelling and interesting that learners enter into the state of flow and become fully absorbed in the reading material for facilitating language acquisition. Input must be compelling for a more optimal acquisition (Krashen et al., 2017). The evidence supporting this hypothesis is innumerable cases of unexpected improvement in the language without conscious efforts.

### **Review of the ER approach in the light of literature**

In the last two decades, many researchers have conducted studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the ER approach. In those studies, researchers have investigated the impacts of the ER approach on various language aspects such as reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, grammar, reading attitudes, reading motivations and overall language proficiency, as shown in Table 2.

This section briefly synthesizes some empirical studies evaluating the effectiveness of the ER approach. For instance, Anindita (2020) conducted a qualitative study in Indonesia at the University level to explore students' perceptions about ER and its benefits. The researcher found that the ER approach contributed to students' knowledge and English skills, for example, writing, speaking, listening, reading, vocabulary, and grammar. In another qualitative study, Sun (2020) explored the perceptions of teachers and students about the benefits and implementation of the ER approach in the Chinese schools. The study revealed that teachers and students demonstrated positive attitudes towards ER and listed improvements in various aspects of their students' English skills, including reading, writing and vocabulary. In another quasi-experimental study, Mariano et al. (2020) determined the effects of ER on reading comprehension of primary students in the Philippines. The researchers used a





**Fig. 1** Top ten principles of ER approach (Adapted from Bamford & Day, 1998, p. 3)

pre- and post-reading comprehension test and a questionnaire. To measure the significance of pre and post results, the researcher employed the paired T-Test. After the intervention, significant changes were found among students in their reading comprehension and reading speed tests.

ER also impacts learners' writing ability, and studies have been conducted in various countries to evaluate the effects of ER on students' writing ability. Next, we give a brief review of the studies which have shown both positive and negative results from the ER interventions. For instance, Mermelstein (2015) conducted a one-year-long experimental study in Taiwan to improve the writing ability of University students through the ER approach. The researcher conducted a pre and post-test writing test and analyzed the significance through paired sample T-Test and found that the treatment group performed better than the control group in all sub-scales of writing. However, there was a small effect on the organization and content, a medium effect on vocabulary and language and a large effect on mechanics and fluency. Similarly, Park (2016) investigated the impact of ER on the writing skills of university students in Korea. The students were divided into experimental class and the traditional writing class. The researcher conducted a pre and post essay writing test of students and used an independent sample T-Test for analysis and found that both groups showed writing improvement. However, the ER group performed more significantly than the traditional group.

The above mentioned studies proved that ER brought changes in the writing proficiency of learners. However, research on this aspect is very scarce, and some studies also found inconsistent and negative findings. In a study, Tsang (1996) found that the treatment group did not outperform the comparison group in spelling, vocabulary, and organization. Hafiz and Tudor (1989) reported that the experimental group did not significantly outperform the control group in the vocabulary knowledge. Kirin (2010) investigated the impact of ER on writing on Hong Kong undergraduate students using the experimental study design. The researcher conducted pre and post-test of writing and found no improvement in learners writing ability. Thus,

the above studies justify the need for more research to explore the impacts of ER on writing in different classroom settings and contexts of the world.

Besides the effects of ER on different language skills, ER also impacts on students' grammatical knowledge. Lee et al. (2015) investigated the effects of two types of instructional approaches such as ER and the translation method on improving the understanding of general grammar and some specific grammatical points like articles and prepositions of South Korean adolescent learners. The researcher used an experimental study and conducted pre and post grammar and attitude questionnaires. To measure the significant difference between pre and post results, the researcher used an ANOVA test. The results showed that ER and the translation instruction methods had different effects on learner's grammar knowledge and attitudes depending on their proficiency level. However, both approaches had positive effects on grammar knowledge. However, low proficiency level learners had negative attitudes towards learning grammar through ER. The outcomes were more positive on high proficiency level learners from the grammar and attitude points of view. Likewise, Khansir and Dehghani (2015) investigated the impact of ER on the grammatical knowledge of school students in Iran using an experimental study design. Results of the post-test were analyzed using the Independent Sample T-Test. The experimental group performed more significantly than the control group in the grammar knowledge.

Thus, studies proved that the ER approach is more beneficial in learning grammar than the traditional translation method. However, it is not always easy to learn grammar rules accurately by reading extensively or incidentally. It always requires different approaches such as explicit explanation, output activity, and interactions to help learners understand the grammar (Aka, 2020). Despite that, the positive effects can be achieved through ER. Research on how ER impacts grammatical competence is still very scarce (Nakanishi, 2015).

The ER approach also affects the attitude and motivation of learners. The attitudinal effects of ER in EFL settings have also been studied in various contexts. Tien (2015) analyzed teachers' and students' perceptions about the effectiveness of an ER program. The study employed questionnaires and focus group interviews for obtaining the data. The data were analyzed using ANOVA and thematic analysis techniques. Results of the study showed that some students liked the ER approach while others disliked it. Teachers were also uncertain about the success of the program. The results further showed that students improved their linguistic competence and reading habits of English. Although there was resistance to the program initially, the perceptions of both teachers and students changed over one year. Porkaew and Fongpaiboon (2018) examined the effects of ER on the reading attitudes of learners through an experimental study research design. The authors evaluated the pre and post results using paired sample T-Test and found that students had a positive attitude towards ER. Their intellectual value increased through ER. However, they reported that no practical and cognitive value was increased through ER. Chien and Yu (2015) explored the effects of ER on students, attitudes toward reading in English. The study used a survey study research design using a questionnaire as a data collection tool. The study used descriptive statistics for data analysis and found that the ER approach improved the subjects, cognitive aspect of attitude; however, affective and behavioral aspects indicated negative results. Similarly, Utku and Koroğlu (2017)

**Table 2** Review of ER approach in EFL classrooms

| Study                     | Objective   | Research design   | Data analysis method                                     | Results   |
|---------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Shumaila and Khan, (2021) | To investigate the effect of ER on reading attitude                                 | Design: experimental study<br>Tool: pre and post attitude questionnaire<br>Population and sample: 110 school students from Pakistan   | Paired sample T-Test                                     | Students attitudes towards reading improved through ER  |
| Anindita, (2020)          | To explore students perception of ER and its benefits                               | Design: qualitative study<br>Tool: semi-structured interview<br>Population and sample: 10 university students from Indonesia  | Thematic analysis  | ER contributed to the language skills of the students   |
| Mariano et al., (2020)    | To determine the effects of ER on reading comprehension ability of primary students | Design: quasi-experimental<br>Tool: one group pre-post<br>Questionnaire and reading comprehension and speed test<br>Population and sample: 20 Philippine primary school students            | Frequency and percentage<br>Paired T-test                | Significant changes were found among students in reading comprehension and speed tests  |
| Sun, (2020)               | To explore the perception of teachers and students about the implementation of ER   | Design: qualitative study<br>Tool: semi-structured interview, Teaching material and reading journals<br>Population and sample: eight students and four secondary school teachers from China | Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis | Advanced and upper-intermediate learners had positive perceptions about the implementation of ER in China. Teachers' guidance and supervision are also required for the success of ER |
| Park, (2017)              | To compare the effects of IR and ER on the reading attitude                         | Design: Quasi-Experimental study<br>Tools: pre and post attitude questionnaire<br>Population and sample: 72 school students from South Korea  | ANCOVA   | ER approach fostered a more positive attitude than IR. However, participants' proficiency levels did not have a significant effect upon changes in their reading attitudes            |
| Meniado, (2018)           | To investigate the effectiveness of ER in a poor input environment                  | Design: survey study<br>Tools: questionnaire and unstructured interview<br>Population and sample: 365 college students and five teachers from Saudi Arabia                                  | Descriptive statistics<br>Thematic analysis              | Students and teachers had positive attitudes. However, there were many challenges faced by students in ER program   |

**Table 2** (continued)

| Study                           | Objective   | Research design  | Data analysis method                   | Results   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Park et al., (2018)             | To compare the effects of IR and ER on vocabulary knowledge                                       | Design: quasi-experimental<br>Tools pre and post vocabulary test<br>Population and sample: 72 school students from South Korea   | ANCOVA                                 | In the vocabulary test, the advanced and intermediate level learners benefited from ER, whereas the low level learners benefited from IR                          |
| Porkaew and Fongpaiboon, (2018) | To examine the effects of ER on reading attitudes of learners                                     | Design: experimental study<br>Tools: one group pre-post questionnaire and semi-structured interview<br>Population and sample: 68 Tertiary level students from Thailand | Paired sample T-Test                   | Students had a positive attitude towards ER<br>Their intellectual value increased through ER. However, they perceived no practical and cognitive value through ER |
| Park, (2017)                    | To compare the effects of IR and ER on reading comprehension and reading rate                     | Design: quasi-experimental<br>Tools pre and post reading comprehension and rate test<br>Population and sample: 72 school students from South Korea                     | ANCOVA                                 | In the reading comprehension, the advanced and intermediate level learners benefited from ER, whereas the low-level learners benefited from IR                    |
| Iqbal and Komal, (2017)         | To develop vocabulary knowledge through ER  | Design: mixed method approach<br>Tool: Pre and post<br>Population and sample: 100 students 20 teachers and four head teachers of elementary schools from Pakistan      | Descriptive and inferential statistics | Students improved vocabulary through ER. However, administration and teachers did not play their role for ER to be successful. They needed training in ER         |
| Park, (2016)                    | To explore the impact of ER on the writing of ESP students  | Design: experimental study<br>Tool: pre and post Essay writing test<br>Book recording form<br>Assignment log<br>Population and sample: 56 Korean university students   | Independent sample T-Test              | Both groups showed writing improvement, but the ER group performed more significantly than the traditional group  |
| Chien and Yu, (2015)            | To explore the effects of ER on students' attitudes toward reading in English                     | Design: survey study<br>Tool: post attitude questionnaire<br>Population and sample: 36 university students from Taiwan   | One sample statistics                  | ER improved the subjects, cognitive aspect of attitude; however, affective and behavioral aspects indicated negative results                                      |
| Lee et al., (2015)              | To investigate the effects of two instructional approaches on grammatical ability of the learners | Design: experimental study<br>Tool: pre and post attitude questionnaire and Grammar Test<br>Population and sample: 124 South Korean Adolescent learners                | ANOVA Test                             | Both methods had positive effects on grammar knowledge. However, low proficiency level learners had negative attitudes towards ER                                 |

**Table 2** (continued)

| Study                       | Objective  | Research design   | Data analysis method  | Results   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Khansir and Deghani, (2015) | To investigate the impact of ER on grammatical knowledge                               | Design: experimental study<br>Tool: post grammar mastery test<br>Population and sample: 40 school students from Iran  | Independent Sample T-Test   | The experimental group performed better than the control group  |
| Mermelstein, (2015)         | To improve writing ability through ER approach   | Design: experimental study<br>Tool: pre and post paragraph writing test<br>Classroom Observation<br>Population and sample: 211 Taiwanese University students                                  | Paired sample T-Test<br>Grading rubric for assessment                     | The study found a small effect on organization and content—a medium effect on vocabulary and language and a large effect on mechanics and fluency |
| Tien, (2015)                | To analyze the teachers and students perceptions about the effectiveness of ER program | Design: Survey Study<br>Tools: Questionnaire 4 focus Group interview<br>Population and sample: 1583 college students and 36 teachers from Taiwan  | Thematic analysis<br>independent-samples T-Test<br>One-way ANOVA analysis | Linguistic benefits were achieved through ER<br>Negative attitude of students and teachers changed to a positive attitude                         |
| Rahmany et al., (2013)      | To investigate the effects of ER on the speaking abilities of the students             | Design: experimental study<br>Tools: pre and post-Schmidt's Motivation Questionnaire and test battery<br>Population and sample: 60 school students from Iran                                  | ANOVA   | ER did not have a positive effect on the respondents' motivation for speaking   |
| Kirin, (2010)               | To investigate the impact of ER on writing ability                                     | Design: experimental study<br>Tool: pre and post-test of reading comprehension and essay writing<br>Semi-structured interview<br>Population and sample: 34 Hong Konger undergraduate students | Independent T-Test<br>Thematic analysis                                   | The study found no improvement in learners writing ability  |

conducted a case study to investigate the effects of ER on an adult's self-study of English over 20 weeks. The research revealed that ER had effects on the students' reading strategies, vocabulary, reading comprehension, reading speed, reading habits and reading motivation.

The reviewed studies reported that participants developed a positive attitude towards reading and considered ER as a helpful instructional approach in improving their English proficiency. However, some studies have presented negative attitudes toward ER from teachers' perspectives and from students' perspectives. Therefore, more studies are required to investigate if students would continue with ER even after the program comes to an end and if proficiency in English also affects their motivation to do ER. Although rich published research is available about the effectiveness of the ER approach on various language aspects, there is a need for more research to optimize ER instruction and practices. For example, the relationship between grammar and ER is almost unexplored (Nation & Waring, 2020). As the gains in writing through the ER approach provided some weak results from the experimental studies. Therefore, more research is required in different settings and contexts to investigate the impacts of ER on writing and grammar.

In the studies mentioned above, researchers have conducted studies using quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research designs. Most of the researchers have employed quantitative research designs, more specifically, the experimental research design and survey research designs to measure the effectiveness of the ER approach on various language aspects. However, very few mixed-methods research designs have been employed in the previous studies. The mixed-methods research approach involves mixing or characteristics of quantitative and qualitative research methods (Johnson and Christensen 2004). The rationales for combining two methods are to achieve a fuller understanding of a target phenomenon and to verify one set of findings against the other (Dörnyei 2007: 164). This combination of quantitative data and qualitative data provides a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data by itself (Creswell 2008).

### **Strengths and weaknesses of the ER approach**

This section briefly describes the strengths and weaknesses of the ER approach. Rao and Babu (2016) showed that ER could foster progress in reading development and vocabulary. ER can provide benefits in the form of comprehensible input, building confidence with extended texts, growth in learner's general language competence, increase in the learners' exposure to language, improvement in the writing, and motivation towards reading. ER can consolidate previously learned knowledge and develops prediction skills.

As discussed earlier, the ER approach is a long-run and time-consuming approach, so learners cannot expect immediate effects. ER has shown encouraging outcomes as it contributes to various language aspects (Bamford & Day, 2004; Bell, 2001). Nuttall (1996) iterated the role of ER in foreign language learning in a very compelling way. The best way to learn a foreign language is to read that language extensively. (Nation, 1997) also indicated that ER is attractive for three main reasons. First, reading is essentially an individual activity, and so the learners could learn at their level without being restricted to

the classroom setting. Second, learners can themselves select their reading material, and hence, it enhances their motivation for learning. Third, it offers an opportunity for learning to occur outside the classroom. According to Grabe (2009b), the significant benefits of ER are positive attitude and motivation towards reading, vocabulary growth, development of language and literacy skills, and increased conceptual-knowledge growth and reasoning. Meniado (2018) revealed that students had positive attitudes towards ER. The researcher further added that this approach was beneficial as it empowered students to become better readers and effective language learners.

Although most of the studies highlighted the positive effects of ER on the development of different language aspects, few studies have also found adverse effects of the ER approach. For example, Sun (2020) found that vocabulary was the most common problem concerning ER perceived by students and teachers. Shen (2008) concluded that the ER approach did not significantly change the learners' reading attitudes, reading habits, and language proficiency. Rahmany et al. (2013) revealed that ER did not positively affect the respondents' motivation for speaking as respondents did not develop their speaking ability. In another study, Kirin (2010) found that ER did not improve EFL students' writing ability despite additional reading involvement and activities. The above mentioned studies have proved that ER effects may vary according to different settings and contexts.

#### **Challenges in successful implementation of the ER programs**

Regardless of its role in language development, ER has not received the necessary support in language development programs (Milliner, 2017). ER is not popular in formal education settings because observable and attainable achievements are desired quickly (Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). A limited number of teachers implement ER in their language programs. Chang and Renandya (2017) found that only 13 per cent of teachers said ER was a component of their curriculum. In another study, Maley (2012) found that ER is rarely implemented for the following reasons. For example, insufficient time, costliness, unavailability of reading materials, improper integration in the curriculum and assessment, lack of understanding of the significance of ER is also a reason that it is not successfully implemented in various settings.

Furthermore, it is not easy to successfully implement ER at the University level due to time and curriculum limitations (Macalister, 2008). Teachers can not capitalize extra time on ER as the administration pressurize them to complete the syllabus and textbooks. Some researchers have highlighted certain disadvantages of ER. For example, Neumann (2009) pointed out some disadvantages of ER. First, learners feel that they do not learn the language as there is no explicit learning occurring in the classrooms. Second, the reading material is easy, so the learners think it is not challenging. Third, learners expect short term results such as reading skills that can be measured by their scores in the tests.

#### **Theoretical background of the blended IR and ER approaches**

As discussed above, IR and ER approaches have unique features. Second and foreign language teachers use these two approaches to develop linguistic competence and to give reading exposure to the EFL learners. Hence, both approaches have essential roles in

improving the language proficiency of the learners. Loucky (2005) maintained that these approaches are beneficial for enhancing the learners' receptive and productive communication skills. The language program should incorporate three main components: extensive reading activities, intensive reading activities, and vocabulary development activities. Scholars and researchers have also recommended this integration of IR and ER. i.e. (Anderson, 1999; Anderson & Nunan, 2008; Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Harmer, 2007; Hedge, 2001; Nation & Waring, 2020; Nuttall, 1996). Meniado (2018) suggested that blended IR and ER should be integrated into the curriculum. Paran (2003) also suggests that both IR and ER approaches complement each other and would be beneficial for getting the reading goals. Paran (2003) further argues that implicit and explicit learning occurs if both IR and ER approaches are combined. However, none of these approaches is alone sufficient for developing the students' reading skills. Teachers' explicit instruction and students free reading is also required for developing the reading abilities of the students.

#### **Review of the blended IR and ER approaches in the light of literature**

This paper also reviewed the studies on blended IR and ER approaches used in EFL classrooms. Table 3 shows the details of blended IR and ER studies.

This section briefly synthesizes some empirical studies evaluating the effectiveness of the blended IR and ER approach. For instance, Suteja (2019) explored the attitudes of 20 university students of Indonesia towards IR and ER approaches using a survey research design. The data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis techniques, the results showed that the students had positive attitudes toward IR and ER. However, ER was an additional component of IR practices. Erguvan (2016), in another qualitative survey study in Kuwait, found that college-level students did not enjoy IR when it was made compulsory for them. The student also had no interest in reading for pleasure. In more recent studies, Maipoka and Soon-tornwipast (2021) investigated the effects of IIER on primary students reading ability and explored their opinions about IIER in Thailand. The researcher used an embedded experimental mixed methods research design. The researcher employed a paired sample T-Test to measure the difference between the mean score of pre and post-test of reading and concluded that learners significantly developed their reading proficiency. They also held positive opinions about this integrated approach. Similarly, Alsheikh et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between IR and ER approaches and its impacts on the reading experience of graduate students in the United Arab Emirates using a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design. The researcher employed a paired sample T-Test and a thematic analysis technique to measure the results and found a reciprocal and intermingling relationship between IR and ER approaches. Participants also held positive attitudes towards both approaches. The above studies have justified the critical need for integrating both the instructional approaches in the curriculum of different contexts.

Furthermore, Ibrahim and Rawian (2018) investigated the impact of the IR-ER approach on the English language proficiency of fresh university students of Saudi Arabia using a mixed-methods study design. To find out the results, the researcher employed a one-way ANOVA test for reading comprehension and the content



analysis technique for structured interviews and found that the IR-ER approach is an effective method to increase English language proficiency of the students. Mart (2015) investigated how combined IR and ER help develop language proficiency of foundation-level university students from Iraq. The researcher conducted a reading test and used a pair paired sample T-Test for analyzing the data and concluded that learners' achievements increased with the combined IR and ER approach. Likewise, Rashidi and Piran (2011) investigated the effect of the ER and IR approach on vocabulary development of adult students of Iran employing an experimental research design. The researcher collected data through pre and post-reading comprehension tests and a semi-structured interview and used a paired sample T-Test and thematic analysis techniques for data analysis. The study revealed that both IR-ER could lead to the vocabulary development of the students.

Moreover, some empirical studies purely compared IR and ER approaches. (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Park, 2017, 2020; Park et al., 2018). These studies' results justified the need to incorporate both instructional approaches in the language classes as both approaches have equal significance and effects on learners' proficiency. Furthermore, when these approaches are compared, the researchers attempt to prove that one of these two approaches is essential and valuable. However, the research studies demonstrated that both approaches might not be taken in isolation as both have a crucial role in the learners' language development. Nation and Waring (2020) argued that when ER is compared with other approaches, the focus of those studies remains dichotomous, whereas both the approaches are equally important and beneficial.

Although, ELT scholars and researchers have recommended this Blended IR and ER approach. (Anderson, 1999; Anderson & Nunan, 2008; Anderson & Nunan, 2008; Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Harmer, 2007; Hedge, 2001; Nation & Waring, 2020; Nuttall, 1996). However, to the best of our knowledge, only very few scholarly studies are available in this area of inquiry. A few research studies on the effectiveness of integrated IR and ER approaches have been conducted in different contexts (Carrell & Carson, 1997; Erfanpour, 2013; Ibrahim & Rawian, 2018; Jafarpour, 2014; Mart, 2015; McConn, 2016; Miftah, 2013; Rashidi & Piran, 2011). These studies have focused mainly on reading comprehension and vocabulary. More studies are required to see how blended IR and ER approaches impact other language skills such as writing, grammar, and reading strategies. Studies should also be conducted to explore the attitude and perception of learners towards the use of blended IR and ER approach in different EFL classrooms.

Researchers have conducted studies using quantitative, qualitative, action research and mixed-methods research designs in the studies mentioned above. Most of the researchers have employed quantitative research designs, more specifically, the experimental research design and survey research designs, to measure the effectiveness of the blended IR-ER approach on the reading comprehension vocabulary and reading attitudes. The other variables of language have not been investigated by the researchers. The researchers used a very small sample size in some studies. The studies have been conducted in Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Thailand. More studies are required using a larger sample size and different research designs in other contexts to investigate other aspects of the language. Moreover, it is also

**Table 3** Review of blended ER and IR approaches in EFL classrooms

| Study                              | Objective   | Research design   | Data analysis method  | Results   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Maipoka and Soontornwipast, (2021) | To investigate the effects of IERI on primary students and to explore their opinions about IERI         | Design: embedded experimental mixed methods<br>Tools: one group pre and post reading ability test and semi-structured interview<br>Population and sample: 11 primary students from Thailand | Paired-sample T-Test<br>Thematic analysis                           | The student improved reading ability through the IERI approach and held positive attitudes towards it       |
| Alsheikh et al., (2020)            | Investigated the relationship between IR and ER approach and how it impacts on their reading experience | Design: explanatory sequential mixed methods<br>Tools: questionnaire and semi-structured interview<br>Population and sample: 50 Ph.D. and Masters students from UAE                         | Paired-sample T-Test<br>Thematic analysis suggested by Kvale (2007) | Students viewed the relationship between IR and ER and it had effects on their reading experiences          |
| Suteja, (2019)                     | To explore the attitude of students IR and ER   | Design: Mixed method<br>Tools: questionnaire; interviews and reading log<br>Population and sample: 20 university students from Indonesia  | Descriptive statistics<br>Thematic analysis                         | Students had positive attitudes towards IR and ER practices   |
| Ibrahim and Rawian, (2018)         | To investigate the impact of the ER-IR approach on English language proficiency of students             | Design: mixed method<br>Tools: pre and post reading comprehension test<br>And structured interview<br>Population and sample: 20 fresh university students from KSA                          | One-Way ANOVA and content analysis                                  | ER-IR approach is an effective method to increase English language proficiency of students ( $p < 0.05$ )   |
| Erguvan, (2016)                    | Analyze the students' attitudes towards ER and IR   | Design: qualitative research design<br>Tools: open-ended questionnaire semi-structured interview<br>Population and sample: 54 college students from Kuwait                                  | Thematic analysis   | Students do IR when it is compulsory but do not enjoy it. Students have no interest in reading for pleasure |
| Mart, (2015)                       | To investigate how IR and ER helps develop language proficiency   | Design: quantitative and qualitative<br>Tools: reading test<br>Population and sample: 60 foundation university students from Iraq   | Paired sample T-Test  | Achievements of learners increased with combined IR and ER approach   |

**Table 3** (continued)

| Study                     | Objective   | Research design  | Data analysis method  | Results   |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Erfanpour, (2013)         | To investigate the effect of IR and ER on reading comprehension | Design: qualitative and quantitative<br>Tools: two pre and post reading Comprehension tests and semi-structured interview<br>Population and sample: 60 school students from Iran               | Paired sample T-Test<br>Straus and Corbin's (1998) systematic approach for qualitative analysis | Both strategies had positive effects on learners. Reading comprehension ability |
| Miftah, (2013)            | To develop IERS to improve reading comprehension                | Design: collaborative classroom<br>Action research<br>Tools: classroom observation<br>Questionnaire<br>Reading comprehension test<br>Population and sample: 32 college students from Indonesia | Descriptive Statistics<br>Scoring Rubric for reading comprehension<br>Observation checklist     | IERS can improve students reading comprehension                                 |
| Rashidi and Piran, (2011) | To investigate the effect of ER and IR on vocabulary            | Design: empirical study design<br>Tools: pre and post-Oxford quick placement tests Schmitt vocabulary test<br>Population and sample: 120 adult students from Iran                              | Two-way ANOVA test  | Both IR-ER can lead to vocabulary development                                   |

highly required to see if the reading attitudes of the learners changes after being taught through blended IR and ER approach.

### **Strength and weaknesses of the blended IR and ER approach**

This section briefly describes the strengths and weaknesses of the blended IR and ER approaches. IR and ER could be integrated because learners will have chances to learn and acquire the target language knowledge, strategies and skills during IR instructions. Similarly, they will have plenty of opportunities to read extensively and apply and practice their newly developed language knowledge and skills while engaging themselves in ER. Following this principle, the learners' target language knowledge and skills, particularly reading skills, are likely to be developed and enhanced. Research scholars have strongly recommended integrating IR and ER approaches in language instructions as a practical pedagogical approach. This blending of IR and ER helps learners learn, obtain, and exercise their target language knowledge and skills inside and outside the classroom.

On the other hand, there are particular challenges for ER approach to be successfully integrated with the traditional IR approach. Such as the availability of resources, teachers' and students' attitudes and willingness, and economic background of school or college to afford the cost of ER related reading books and other reading material. The big barrier to blend IR and ER approaches is that ER activities are not performed successfully in the classrooms. Most of the class time is dedicated to IR instructional strategies as teachers remain busy completing their syllabus. Students also remain examination-oriented as their main purpose remains to pass their examinations. This unwillingness and lack of motivation from the teachers' and students' sides do not favour IR and ER approach integration. The blending of IR-ER can be successfully implemented if these issues are handled properly.

### **Discussion and future research directions**

It is evident from the literature that teachers often focus on the IR approach in the EFL classrooms. Additionally, IR has been proven the best approach in achieving the micro-level language skills, teachers should also focus on the ER approach and the IR approach to maximize the English language proficiency of the learners. Students will benefit from the addition of ER as a complement to the IR that is already taking place in most ESL or EFL programs (Elturki & Harmon, 2020). Teachers and program coordinators need to ensure that ER is included as a component of students' reading experience. ER can be part of any reading instruction to nurture language development. The research data has quantitatively and qualitatively proven that IR and ER approaches should be included in the curriculum to address the learners' reading issues. More importantly, different training and seminars can be conducted for the teachers to train them about the above reading approaches. A blended IR-ER approach may be designed that may be adopted as a teaching model in different contexts from primary level up to the University level. There is also a dire need of future research that combines both the IR-ER approaches in different contexts both quantitatively and qualitatively to prove how IR and ER complement each other and how it affects language learning and the reading attitude of learners.

Future studies should also be conducted using these two approaches in EFL classrooms to investigate its effects on EFL learners' various language aspects. Many research

scholars have emphasized using the blended approach, but there is still a dearth of studies exploring how this approach could be used in an EFL classroom (Anderson & Nunan, 2008; Harmer, 2007; Hedge, 2001; Nation & Waring, 2020). The reviewed literature found that the best teaching approach is to amalgamate ER and IR into the EFL contexts. This is because both the approaches have their pros and cons, and if they are used alone in EFL classroom settings, the desired reading outcomes may not be achieved. Hence, the integrated instructional approach may further prove beneficial for the students (Harmer, 2007). Anderson (1999) stated that a good reader develops effective reading strategies and then transfers them into the ER context. Brown (2007) asserted that ER components with the IR approach are highly demanded. Several recent studies reported the significance of the blended approach, and hence, language practitioners have started adopting it in EFL classrooms. Moreover, there are several researchers across the globe investigating the impact of blended IR and ER approach in different settings (Day, 2015).

As the scholarly literature supports more research in the blended IR and ER approaches to increase and encourage EFL learning, a model for integrating IR instructional approach with ER instructional approach should be developed (Melani & Syafitri, 2019). Falk (2019) stated that research into how IR and ER reading instruction support one another is still lacking in school settings. Hence, there is a dire need for more scholarly studies in EFL and ESL contexts where the English language is taught from primary to the University level. as the reading proficiency of learners remains very poor from primary to university level (Sajid & Kassim, 2019). Moreover, it is suggested for future work that the blended approach should be investigated thoroughly by using mixed methods approaches. For such methods, it is suggested that researchers should follow either a sequential explanatory research design, an exploratory sequential research design or an embedded research design depending on their contextual needs. Moreover, based on the review of literature, most of the existing studies have used smaller sample sizes, so future studies are suggested to use larger sample sizes to obtain more generic results. It was also found that the investigation of IR and ER approaches has been conducted chiefly in either school or college settings. Little work has been done in university settings. Future research is thus suggested to explore the effects of the blended approach in the the University contexts. This review found that limited parameters have been reviewed in the existing blended approach and other dimensions, including grammar, writing, reading strategies, reading attitude, and reading motivation, need further investigation. Furthermore, it has been found that the significance of the blended IR and ER approach is rarely investigated in South Asian contexts and it needs further research. It is believed that the observations mentioned above and future directions will further assist the ELT practitioners, researchers, and scholars to further contribute to the field of reading research.

## **Conclusion**

This study reviewed three primarily practiced reading approaches: intensive reading (IR), extensive reading (ER), and blended ER and IR approach in EFL classrooms. In addition, this study discussed various parameters of primary studies (including the research design, data collection tools, analysis methods) published in the domain of extensive and intensive reading. Furthermore, this study also discussed the merits and demerits of ER and IR approaches. Finally, this study also suggested the need for blending the IR and ER

approaches as an effective teaching model in EFL settings. It is believed that this comprehensive review will provide helpful information and practices to teachers, researchers and students with future directions in the practice of reading skills effectively in various settings and contexts. More importantly, this study will prove helpful for the researchers who intend to conduct their research studies/projects in the Integrated/blended IR and ER approach in different settings and contexts.

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#### Author contributions

Author ZA and STP pivoted study and wrote initial draft. Author MMA and PC made corrections. Author EN mentored and finalised the draft for submission. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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