

## **“WHAT WOULD STUDENTS READ ABOUT?”: INVOLVING L2 LEARNERS IN COMPILING A BUSINESS ENGLISH READING PORTFOLIO**

**Anca PECICAN<sup>1</sup>**

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### ***Abstract***

*This article presents and discusses a series of data on economics undergraduates' preferences for reading in English L2 within their subject field. The overall aim of the research was to outline a reader profile with a view to introducing an extensive reading programme for the forthcoming students. The research methodology made use of the university's Moodle platform where students had to post proposals of texts they considered enticing and give feedback to their peers' proposals. Both readers' freedom of choice as to the reading materials and the use of the follow-up interactive task provided valuable data outlining a specific reader profile. The collected data have revealed students' high interest in halfway specialized texts on up-to-date issues.*

**Keywords:** business English, extensive reading, reader profile, reading materials, interactive task

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### ***1. Introduction***

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During the last three decades, a wide variety of experimental studies proved the effectiveness of extensive reading (ER) as a complementary tool in second language teaching. Basically, ER means reading for pleasure or out of interest large amounts of understandable texts in the target language. As a learner-centred approach, it relies on the self-selection principle, which means that the student can freely choose the text he or she prefers within his or her suitable language level.

Numerous experimental studies carried out in widespread teaching contexts have provided significant proof that extensive reading benefits countless aspects of second language learning. Research highlighted the significant gains in vocabulary acquisition (Pereyra, 2015), reading fluency, grammar use as well as writing (Day, 2015: 15). The impact was such that ER programmes have been gradually implemented in learning institutions ranging from primary schools to universities (Robb & Kano, 2013; Chen, 2018) all over the world. Additionally, research on extensive reading has persevered in refining its scope. Valuable insights have been published in several research journals exclusively dedicated to second language

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<sup>1</sup> Anca Pecican, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, [anca.pecican@rei.ase.ro](mailto:anca.pecican@rei.ase.ro)

reading while publishing houses have been issuing numberless collections of graded readers. This is especially true in the case of widely spoken languages such as English, French, Spanish, Japanese, and Italian.

The present article reports on a pilot action research aimed at laying out the foundations for further introduction of an ER programme in the context of undergraduate students of Business English at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (BUES). The leading purpose of this initial step was to identify students' preferences regarding reading materials. Secondly, engaging students in compiling an interactive reading portfolio has been regarded as a reading motivation booster. This article presents learners' choices in terms of content and feedback to peers.

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## ***2. Review of literature***

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### ***2.1 Compelling input***

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The underlying theoretical basis of ER is Stephan Krashen's Comprehension Hypothesis according to which "we acquire language and develop literacy when we understand messages, that is, when we understand what we hear and what we read, when we receive 'comprehensible input'". (Krashen, 2003: 4) A further development of this approach to language acquisition was additionally characterizing the target language input as "compelling". Besides reading texts that can be easily understood, learners will also benefit greatly from such materials that move their focus from language to the message contained in the text: "Compelling input, input that is so interesting that the acquirer "forgets" what language he or she is reading or listening to, is an extremely important factor in language and literacy development: when input is "compelling", only the message exists". (Krashen, Lee, Lao, 2018: 1)

Day and Bamford (2002: 137-141) summarized the findings of their personal and other teachers' experience in practising ER throughout the years. They established ten basic principles "which could be regarded as the key ingredients of a successful ER program". (Ng, Renandya, Chong, 2019: 172)

An effective ER programme should make available a large variety of materials on a wide range of topics stirring learners' interest. Wide variety in terms of topic, text genre and source will generate and support learners' interest and motivation to keep reading. This flexible approach to reading also includes the readers' freedom to select the text they wish to read and to stop in case they lose interest. A particularly essential element in reaching positive outcomes with ER is the amount of time the learner spends on reading. According to the two researchers, learners should read as much as possible both in terms of time and content. Therefore, it is

crucial to keep them engaged in reading and provide the opportunity to make them read for enjoyment or out of personal interest. Involving students in selecting the texts has positive effects not only on motivation and attitude but also on students' taking responsibility for the learning process and developing autonomy.

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## 2.2 Reading materials

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There is general consensus among ER scholars and practitioners that the right texts will generate the positive experience the learner needs in order to keep reading. For Day (2015: 16), "materials are the heart and soul of an Extensive Reading Programme". This is especially valid when the reading takes place in out-of-class learning environments. Day & Robb (2015: 7) consider that "the biggest challenge to engaging in an extensive reading approach in out-of-class situations is finding the appropriate reading material" both with regard to language level and topic.

For this reason, worldwide publishing houses specialized in second language teaching and learning have undertaken the task of creating and publishing graded readers (GRs). The fundamental coordinates of GRs are the reader's interests or pleasure and the reader's language level. Thus, there are enormous collections dedicated to children, teenagers, young adults and adults varying in topic, structure and design. On the other hand, each of them ranges from beginner to advanced level in terms of vocabulary and syntax, text length, plot complexity, etc. In this way, controlled texts raise learners' confidence in their ability to understand the target language while helping them to expand L2 knowledge. In her research Claridge points out that editors mainly conceive of GRs as fiction writings (2012: 116), which reflects Hill's opinions that "only fiction provides the type of text that can develop learner's fluency" and good non-fiction readers are hard to produce (2008: 187). However, Day and Bamford (1998: 99 and Day, 2015: 16) also acknowledge the suitability of newspapers and magazines for an ER programme.

Perhaps the most striking disadvantage of GRs from the perspective of the teaching context that originated the present research is the fact that they contain mainly general language. A detailed search in publishing houses and book distributors' catalogues has revealed that only a small amount of GR on business topics can be purchased as compared to the lists of hundreds of general language titles. For instance, the Japanese Halico Publishing House has recently issued a 10-book series of business GRs (*The First Week on the Job; The Product Launch; 10 Ways to Manage Money; etc.*). Seed Learning also provides a GR series including certain economics titles (*Capitalism: Good or Evil?; The History of Transportation; Global Trade and Peace*). Additionally, *News in Levels* site contains adapted texts on a wide variety of topics including business. Nevertheless, in the light of Day and Bamford's principle regarding the variety of reading materials and topics that should be made available to learners, there is still room for improvement in the case of business-related texts.

The present study set out to extend and apply the findings and advancements of ER theory and practice to an L2 for specific purposes teaching/learning context. In this particular case, I started from the premise that an ER programme including business-related reading materials would successfully complement formal teaching and have positive outcomes on learners' specialized vocabulary development and reading fluency of field-specific texts. Yet, this approach could become problematic from the point of view of Day and Bamford's postulated variety in terms of text type and content (2002: 137). Specifically, asking students to read a massive amount of business texts only could result in loss of motivation especially since they already take part in various economics courses, according to the university's curriculum. Students also have to spend a lot of time studying and completing out-of-class assignments on economic issues. For this reason, this initial research aimed to identify students' reading preferences related to their subject field. The general premise is that allowing for the possibility to choose what to read (Day and Bamford, 1998: 8) would foster students' engagement in reading.

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### 2.3 Interactive tasks

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Successful implementation of ER programmes has also relied on follow-up interactive tasks which involve sharing personal experience as a result of reading. From this point of view, reading can act as both a passive contact with the language and a means for enhancing productive use of the second language. But what is more relevant for the purposes of this study is the potential of follow-up group activities to increase motivation in reading. Chen's research (2018: 413) points out that providing students with the opportunity to take part in interactive tasks develops their motivation and engages them in even more reading. Furthermore, the interactive task was also used as a source of additional information regarding learners' preferences of reading materials.

To summarize, the research described in this article aims to analyse the outcome of the inclusion of ER in a Business English course. The literature on ER highlights the positive effects of learners' freedom of choice regarding the readings as well as those of follow-up interactive tasks. Nevertheless, the constraint related to the field-specific content of the chosen texts, namely business, could hinder students' participation in the ER activity. Therefore, the questions that guided the present research were as follows:

- What would students prefer to read if they were to take part in a Business English ER programme? Which reading materials on the internet could become a *compelling input* for reading? What elements in terms of topic and content, genre, layout, and personal benefits could engage students in reading?
- How could variety in terms of reading materials be provided in a field-specific reading portfolio?

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### ***3. Research methodology***

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#### *3.1 Participants and procedure*

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The experimental research described hereby was conducted throughout the first semester of the 2019-2020 academic year to complement formal instruction. The participants were 37 second-year undergraduates studying English for Business Purposes at the BUES Faculty of International Business and Economics. They owned an upper-intermediate English level.

They were required to search the internet and select texts they considered interesting and worth reading. The main restriction was related to the field, namely students had to choose only texts related to business and personal development. There was no precise requirement as to the size of the text. Instead, the participants in the experiment were given three examples of worth-reading texts (see 3.3. a.-c.) which were meant to guide them in fulfilling the task properly. Students' choices were to be uploaded to the internal university's Moodle platform where access was granted only to them. Each student had to upload five text proposals and give feedback to ten of their peers' proposals on the same digital platform. The feedback task was formulated as follows: "Give feedback on whether you enjoyed reading the texts posted by your colleagues or not. Please, briefly support your opinion with one or two arguments".

Additionally, two imaginary examples of feedback reactions were given. Right from the beginning of the semester all students were informed about the procedure described above. They were allowed about twelve weeks to complete the whole task. Successful performance was assigned 20% of the final grade.

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#### *3.2 Teacher's role*

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Researchers and practitioners of out-of-class L2 learning and particularly ER make a strong case for the instructor's constant involvement. For instance, in Day and Bamford's view (2002: 139), the teacher is part of the reading community and takes an active role in promoting reading as well as in conducting reading-related tasks. In this particular case, besides explaining the overall aim of the activity and the benefits of ER, I uploaded a clear detailed account of the procedure on the mentioned digital platform. I also created a specific virtual forum section dedicated to the reading portfolio task only and I uploaded my own three proposals therein. These included a Romanian entrepreneur's biography as described on Wikipedia (a), a BBC feature article related to marketing strategies (b) and a blog post on career choices (c).

- a. *Anastasia Soare: The Eyebrow Queen*
- b. *The trick that makes you overspend*
- c. *How to Make a Career Choice When You Are Undecided: 8 Steps to Choosing a Career*

The task-specific digital area allowed for the students' interventions with no interference of other resources I posted for seminar or evaluation purposes.

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### *3.3 Instruments*

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Data collection relied heavily on students' posts. On the one hand, the readings proposed had to include besides the title and website link, a short description aiming at persuading the group members to read it. On the other hand, each piece of feedback was asked to contain an assessment on the extent to which the student became interested in reading it and supportive arguments. All participants in the task were encouraged to take a personal focus in selecting and describing their own proposals as well as in the feedback given to their peers.

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## *4. Findings and discussion*

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### *4.1 Overall quantitative data*

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Of the total number of 37 participants, 2 participated neither in the proposal stage nor in the feedback one. Of the remaining 35, 2 did not provide any feedback to their peers while other 2 participants wrote less than 10 feedback posts. This represents a complete participation in the task of 89.64%. By the end of the semester, which was the deadline for the task completion, a total of 186 reading recommendations had been posted on the digital platform by students. As regards the feedback posts, these reached a total number of 320 posts.

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### *4.2 Students' topic-related preferences*

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Collected data on students' proposals of high-interest business texts afford a ranking according to topic and content. Table 1 illustrates the classification as well as some of the titles and the percentage out of the total number of proposals. It is worth mentioning the fact that the building process of this ranking came across a major setback. Several of the listed titles can belong to multiple content categories. For example, the title *Investing Lessons of Warren Buffet* has been listed under the 'Famous entrepreneurs' category, while it can duly be included in the 'Finance and Investment' section as well. Yet, for the sake of the quantitative distribution accuracy, I chose to allocate the titles according to the topic I considered more attention-grabbing from young adults' perspective. Therefore, I am putting forward

this ranking as one possible methodological approach to the obtained data and perfectly acknowledge the existence of other potential ways of organizing the listed titles.

**Table 1. Students' proposals of worth-reading texts on the internet: Selected titles (October 2019 - January 2020)**

Rank	Topic	Titles proposed	% (number)
1	Well-known companies and brands	<i>The story of Apple; Where the money is really made at Amazon; 32 Female-Led Consumer Brands You Need To Know; Victoria's Secret Marketing Strategy; 25 of the best marketing campaigns; The numbers behind "The Fast and Furious"</i>	16.65% (31 proposals)
2	World economy	<i>World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019; Business culture in Germany; Japan's 'retro economy'; The effects of the opioid crisis in the USA in a series of breath-taking images and stories; Wealth in America: Inequality Persists in Household Wealth</i>	15.04% (28 proposals)
3	Career development & the workplace	<i>The Future of Work Could Be At Home; 7 Ground rules for dealing with interpersonal conflict at work; How to Choose the Right Career; Investing In Yourself—Hobbies That Can Help You Get Ahead; Unlimited vacation?!</i>	12.89% (24 proposals)
4	Entrepreneurship and business management	<i>Good news: You're your own boss. Bad news: You're your own boss; How to be a successful businesswoman; 10 Ways to Be a Better Manager</i>	10.74% (20 proposals)
3	Finance and Investment	<i>Beginner's guide to managing your money; 7 ways to protect your financial information from online scammers; Investing Lessons of Warren Buffet; 10 Ways to improve your financial literacy</i>	8.06% (15 proposals)
4	Well-known entrepreneurs	<i>Hard Drive: Bill Gates and the Making of the Microsoft Empire; Steve Jobs: The Exclusive Biography; The story of Huda Kattan, CEO of Huda Beauty; Investing Lessons of Warren Buffet; 20yo Romanian Among The Youngest Millionaires In Silicon Valley</i>	6.45% (12 proposals)
5	Personal development	<i>3 Reasons it's so hard to "Follow your passion"; 10 Ways to become a more confident person; How to brainstorm like a Googler</i>	5.91% (11 proposals)

Rank	Topic	Titles proposed	% (number)
6	Social issues	<i>Ghost work</i> (underpaid workers); <i>Defending the One Percent</i> (economic inequality); <i>The Impact of Increased Women's Economic Rights on Globalization</i>	5.91% (11 proposals)
7	Economic thinking	<i>Think like an Economist</i> ; <i>The invisible hand of Adam Smith</i> ; <i>Five Economic Concepts Consumers Need to Know</i>	4.30% (8 proposals)
	Other topics	<i>Robots are coming for your vote</i> ; <i>Bucharest-a crowded city</i>	13.97% (26 proposals)
TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPOSALS			100% (186 proposals)

Several topic-based blocks have been identified. News and information on famous companies and brands seem to be the subject arousing most students' interest (16.65%). This category includes references to widely popular companies operating in various economic sectors students already have certain background knowledge about. They are curious about their stories, failures and successes, business strategies or social commitment. The collected data seem to suggest that businesses and brands count more than the people behind them. The titles referring to famous entrepreneurs reached only 6.45%. In these particular two content categories, data also point out the recurrence of certain economic sectors such as technology and fashion followed by travelling and tourism; the beauty industry; shopping; entertainment (*The numbers behind “The Fast and Furious”*). The second category of worth-reading texts includes titles on world economy (15.04%), followed by articles related to career development and the workplace (12.89%). Learners' concern with their professional future is also revealed by the fourth category, namely 'Entrepreneurship and business management' (10.21%), which narrows down the professional focus to a certain extent. About 8% of the Business English students are interested in financial literacy, money and investment (8.06%), whereas economic social issues such as underpayment, inequality, social responsibility seem to count less (5.37%). On the other hand, economic phenomena and way of thinking (4.30%) also appear among students' interests, although perhaps not as much as expected from major Economics undergraduates. In addition, information on general personal development also arouses readers' interest (5.91%) while a significant percentage of proposals have no connection whatsoever with the economic field (13.97%). In the latter section, subjects such as artificial intelligence and ICT, politics, education, arts, history, healthcare and other social issues seem to draw students' attention more than economy.

The significant amount of high-interest texts not related to economy or business should also be taken into account from the point of view of the research purpose. It is possible that some students had not paid attention to the procedure or even ignored it. In any case, they focused more on personal interest than on the requirements. In addition, as previously mentioned, several proposals mix economy-related subjects with other topics referring to fashion, technology, and entertainment. These data point toward a potential risk of failure of an ER programme based exclusively on business texts. A possible solution could be the creation of texts on non-business topics treated from a business perspective. For example, a text on the economic implications of artificial intelligence can be included in an ER portfolio.

As previously mentioned, certain attention-grabbing topics escape the ranking in Table 1. For instance, interest in Romanian economy's place in the global economic context can be noticed in several titles included in different categories (*How Romania became a popular tech destination; Europe's eastern tigers roar ahead; 20yo Romanian among the Youngest Millionaires in Silicon Valley*). Reading about women's role in business and economy was also regarded as motivating (*How to be a successful businesswoman; 32 Female-Led Consumer Brands You Need To Know; The Impact of Increased Women's Economic Rights on Globalization*), while marketing aspects occasionally occurred underlying other recurrent topics (*Victoria's Secret Marketing Strategy; 25 of the best marketing campaigns*).

It is also worth highlighting students' high interest in up-to-date topics including world popular brands and companies, leading business figures, latest scientific advances, current economic phenomena (*How Climate Change Impacts the Economy*), and information technology. Feminism, social responsibility and national identity are also recurrent themes in present-day debates worldwide.

On the other hand, as regards "purely" economic topics, a preference for basic and fundamental concepts (*Think like an Economist; Beginner's guide to managing your money*) and common phenomena (*Why does a government borrow money?; 10 Ways to Be a Better Manager*) can be identified in many proposals. For instance, one student would like his colleagues to read about the history of money (*Do you know what's in your pocket? The story of money*), while another one was fascinated by Adam Smith's life and classical contributions to economics (*The invisible hand of Adam Smith*). Only one student posted a field-specific academic article (*The portfolio theory of inflation and policy (in)effectiveness*). Therefore, the requirement of the task for students to recommend texts they enjoyed or would enjoy reading resulted in an extremely low number of highly specialized texts. This finding could reflect on the one hand students' awareness of the limitations of their upper-intermediate language level. On the other hand, students' choices reveal pleasure and interest in accessible down-to-earth topics as well as subjects they

already own background knowledge about. However, given the low number of participants in the experiment, this choice pattern must be regarded as a trend and should be confirmed by other large scale research studies.

**Table 2: The titles that received the highest number of feedback posts**

Rank	Title	Number of positive feedback posts
1.	<i>The Future of Work Could Be At Home</i>	14
2.	<i>10 Ways to Be a Better Manager</i>	11
3.	<i>Unlimited vacation?!</i>	9
4.	<i>What is your opinion about charity?</i>	8
	<i>Victoria's Secret: A New &amp; Unique Marketing Strategy</i>	8
	<i>3 Reasons it's so hard to "Follow your passion"</i>	8
5.	<i>10 Ways to become a more confident person</i>	7
	<i>10 Ways to improve your financial literacy</i>	7
	<i>The trick that makes you overspend</i>	7

The topic distribution in the case of the feedback posts parallels to some extent the proposals' ranking. Surprisingly enough, only one title in the top five most interesting readings refers to a famous brand, whereas the most attractive titles tackle workplace-related issues, personal and professional development as well as gaining insight into social issues. Table 2 summarizes students' interest in their peers' proposals.

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#### *4.3 Text genres and layout*

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The collected data on students' reading preferences on the internet highlight a striking occurrence of informative texts. News reports, features, blog posts, and short monographs account for the majority of the readings put forward. On the one hand, it seems that students want to learn more about famous companies, brands, entrepreneurs or countries' economies they already have certain background knowledge about. This type of choices can also reveal a motivation originating in pleasure or curiosity. Young adults passionate about technology, fashion or cosmetics brands, for example, would be more prone to engage in reading about these topics rather than economic phenomena.

On the other hand, students want to know more about themselves and improve on both personal and professional levels. The instructive “how-to” texts also prevail among reading choices (*How to Run a Small Business; 7 Ground rules for dealing with interpersonal conflict at work; Beginner's guide to managing your money*). Expository texts generating insight into economic phenomena are also present but to a lesser extent (*Why does a government borrow money?; How Climate Change Impacts the Economy*). An underlying taste for narratives can also be identified in biographies (*The invisible hand of Adam Smith*) or companies' success stories (*A former diet cola addict built a \$100m firm*). Some students also manifested their interest in opinion articles (*I Was Once a Socialist. Then I Saw How It Worked*).

The collected data from students' posts point out a fairly reduced range of choices in terms of text genre. However vast it may seem, the internet provides a limited offer of reading materials that tend to repeat from a certain point onwards. For instance, fiction, a pillar of ER, is hardly available for free download and reading. This explains the lack of this text genre in students' proposals.

The data on students' proposals are also valuable from the point of view of the text layout. Regardless of the topic or genre, most texts display well-structured noticeable paragraphs accompanied by large self-explanatory pictures or cartoons; attractive headlines; headings, subheadings and captions; spaced lines. They all make reading a pleasant and easy-going activity. It should also be mentioned that a great part of the readings are short totalling an average between 300 and 700 words. However, interest in the topic can account for larger texts reaching almost 3,500 words (*What's your opinion about charity?*).

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#### 4.4 Sources

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Even though I consider that content and topic prevailed over source in choosing readings, information on accessed websites is also worth taking into account. Business news sites such as *bbc.com*, *ft.com*, *forbes.com*, *nyt.com*, *telegraph.com*, *bhr.com*, and many others are recurrent sources of the selected readings. In addition, economics blogs, career planning and personal development blogs also occurred frequently. The global encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* was another regular source for the reading proposals.

It is worth mentioning that texts written for instructive purposes, especially blog posts, use more plain language and can be more easily understood by upper-intermediate learners in their authentic form. However, it is questionable whether authentic newspaper features, for instance, can be suitable for pleasure reading in the case of upper-intermediate learners. Day and Bamford (1998: 101) consider that "quality newspapers are useful for advanced-level students". Yet, the debate on the effectiveness of authentic vs. simplified reading materials in L2 learning is not within the concerns of the present article.

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#### 4.5 Feedback to peers

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The feedback which students had to provide to their colleagues' posts was supposed to answer one main question: "Have you enjoyed reading this text? Why?". Most students provided positive feedback to several of their colleagues' proposals. Table 2 includes just the most popular titles among the readers. This I consider encouraging with a view to implementing an ER programme in the future. The feedback items contained reactions to the topic suggested as worth reading about. Students manifested both agreement and disagreement with the information presented in the text or with their peers' opinions. In certain cases there are comments about the way the topic is presented in the text (Ingrid T., Maria R., Andreea P.).

Re: *Think like an Economist*

Really good basics on the day-to-day economics! Very well structured with a lot of practical examples that make easier understanding the concepts. Good article! (Ingrid T.)

Re: *Bucharest, a crowded city*

If people won't (*sic!*) start to be willing to sacrifice some things in order to achieve more important ones, cities will continue to be overpopulated and crowded. Sacrificing shopping sprees and watching movies at home sounds ok to someone who is more focused on breathing cleaner air and avoiding infernal crowds. Good article, but I think it lacks statistics and interviews with the habitants. It could be longer and still be interesting. (Maria R.)

Among the reported benefits of reading the recommended texts are gaining insight into certain topics (Alexandra U.); acquiring new knowledge (Bogdan Ț., Alexandra P., Mălina R.) and personal improvement (Mălina R., Andreea P.); as well as the mere joy of discovering new information about known topics (Daina Ș.).

Re: *Why does a government borrow money?*

In this article I find it more interesting how the state has to repay the money, these differences from one day to 55 years. I find the article interesting. I will look into this topic. (Alexandra U.)

Re: *How Romania became a popular tech destination*

Wow, I didn't know about that. Nice article! (Bogdan Ț.)

Quite interesting! Maybe we should trust us more as a nation. (Alexandra P.)

Re: *10 Ways to Improve Your Financial Literacy*

I really needed your article, because I'm a terrible person at this chapter. For sure I will use some tips and I really hope that these will work for me. Thank you! (Mălina R.)

Re: *The story of Apple*

I think this text is worth reading. I particularly enjoyed reading about how Steve Jobs met Steve Wozniak. It was very interesting to find out why they chose this name (Apple). Great article! (Diana Ș.)

The texts on personal development received highly favourable feedback which turns this topic into a valuable element to take into account in the compilation of a high-interest reading materials library.

Re: *10 Ways to become a more confident person*

I love it. In the middle school, people were so bully and I was a little bit upset. But in time, I learn to be ok with myself. So, I like your article because I realised again how I am, in the real way. Also, I like that the informations (*sic!*) are about pictures. So, this makes of a real problem article a funny one. (Andreea P.)

Despite occasional language mistakes, the feedback data show that this type of task enabled students to practice thinking and writing about their own ideas concerning the text they had read. It is worth mentioning that not everybody knew each other, as they belonged to two separate groups. According to the registered posts, many of students reacted to their friends and groupmates' proposals. Yet, a significant part of them also reacted to their peers' from the other group whom they might not have known. Sharing ideas and reflections with other people and receiving response generates a community of thinking which can become stimulating and raise self-confidence. This can enhance motivation to read as other research studies have also pointed out. (Chen, 2018)

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## 5. Conclusions

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The present research is part of a larger action research project whose main aim is to enhance business vocabulary learning and reading fluency and comprehension through implementing an extensive reading programme. Using extensive reading with instructional purposes is challenging since students often lose motivation to keep reading large amounts of texts for long time spans. Consequently, the present research set out to outline a reader profile with a view to compiling a list of exciting reading materials. The university's internal digital platform proved highly beneficial during the process of data gathering. Students had to post on the platform a number of texts they considered worth reading and react to their colleagues' proposals. Both the proposals and the feedback posts allowed for the collection of a fairly notable quantity of data.

The collected data seem to suggest certain patterns in terms of reading choice in the case of 20-year-old university students. Accordingly, readers would be most interested to read about famous companies and brands they admire or come across in their everyday life; secondly, about developed or emerging countries' economies; and thirdly, career planning and the workplace environment also pique their interest. Entrepreneurship, finance and investment and well-known entrepreneurs come next. Business-related social issues and economic thinking are also regarded as worth reading about but to a lesser extent. A large part of the students are concerned about personal development and other topics not related to business. With regard to economic subjects, they usually prefer to read medium-specialized texts about basic concepts and phenomena. Up-to-date subjects and the

latest developments in business, technology or fashion also seem to stimulate reading.

One implication of this research is that providing students with the opportunity to choose their own reading materials and recommend them to their peers can lead to positive outcomes. Most students provided positive feedback on their colleagues' proposals highlighting the benefits of acquiring new knowledge, gaining new insight into existing concepts, personal improvement and enjoyment. This research has also led to the conclusion that building a community of readers who share their ideas about the texts they had read can also stimulate further reading and develop transferable skills such as critical thinking and autonomy.

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### *The author*

**Anca Pecican** is a lecturer at The Bucharest University of Economic Studies where she teaches Business English for Professional Communication. Her PhD research focused on the evaluative metaphors in the business press. She is currently carrying out action research in teaching language for specific purposes focusing on out-of-class learning and computer assisted second language teaching/learning.