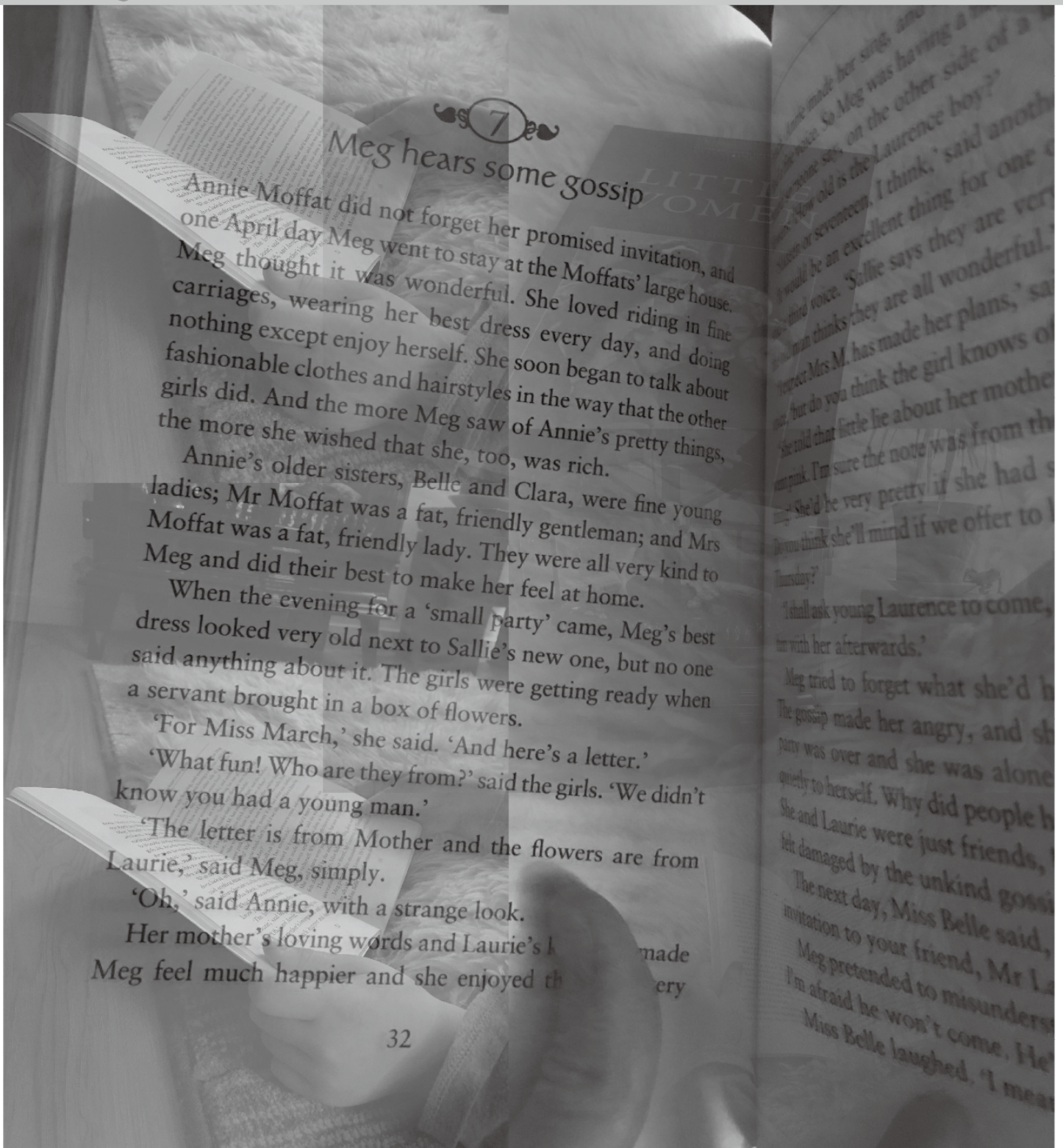




## EXTENSIVE READING IN JAPAN

ERJ



ERJ  
VOLUME 11 NO. 2

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# Facilitating, socializing, and acknowledging extensive reading

Melody Elliott and Catherine Cheetham  
Tokai University



The driving force and really the holy grail behind any extensive reading program is to get students to read more and become self-actuated autonomous learners by making extensive reading (ER) a habit. But how? For the most part, ER approaches rely on learners to be highly motivated (Kirchhoff, 2013). However, this is not always the case, so persuasive tactics are usually required (Stoller, 1994). For ER to be reasonably successful, instruction generally requires a significant effort to motivate students. Teachers can promote reader motivation by including opportunities for students to succeed on a consistent basis, through student autonomy and collaboration (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). To nurture extensive reading habits, it is essential to create and promote what Shibata (2016) terms a ‘learner community’. In this community, students can get support, share their experiences, and get information on ER. Teachers can foster this learner community by facilitating ER, encouraging students to socialize, and acknowledging student reading achievements.

## Background

At Tokai University’s Shonan Campus there are three sources of graded readers: the main library, the learning commons center (Global Agora), and the mobile library. Each term, teachers choose one or all of the three sources for their student’s ER needs. In addition, teachers are highly encouraged to register for MReader, a learning management system which tracks students extensive reading achievements. Since its implementation in the fall semester of 2015, MReader has been invaluable to the program with 8,479 registered users as of the fall semester of 2017. Each semester, the number of registered users continues to increase, and it has expanded to include other Tokai campuses located throughout Japan.

The mobile library is the foundation of Shonan Campus’ ER program and is used by the language center teachers to bring graded readers directly to the classroom. It is used on average each semester by 30 teachers in over 75 classes. The mobile library consists of approximately 1,800 different titles with over 17,000 graded readers which have been divided into 10 levels that encompass the headword count of various publishers. The mobile library utilizes a shopping cart system with two baskets that each hold approximately 180 books. The books are a selection from a variety of publishers including Oxford, Cambridge, Penguin, Scholastic, Cengage, and Compass which have been curated to match the language proficiency of students in the class. Typically, basic level books contain 75 to 300 headwords, while intermediate books contain on average 300 to 800 headwords. Advanced level books

have 700 to 2,200 headwords. Likewise, the more than 10,000 graded readers in the campus main library and the 880 books in the learning commons use the same color coding system. Students may check out up to five graded readers at one time from the main library.

## Facilitate

At the start of the term, it is important to give students direction by setting reading goals. These goals need to be attainable and reflect the learner’s language ability. It is also important to show and make students understand the overall benefits associated with ER. To do so, the graded reader committee produced two animated whiteboard videos: “Why Read?”, which highlights both the benefits of ER and the university’s program, and “MReader at Tokai University”, which instructs students on how to use MReader. The videos have helped create a more unified program and answered many student and teacher inquiries.

Regardless of the approach taken, teachers need to be consistent in their ER usage. A teacher needs to provide consistent feedback, as students need encouragement, reminders, and coaxing to read more (Stoller, 1994). By monitoring what students read either through MReader or in-class checks, students will be encouraged to read more. Previous research by the authors found that by bringing the books to class each week, mobile library users actually had a weekly reading consistency of 59%, which was significantly higher than main library users (Cheetham, Elliott, Harper & Ito, 2017). Consequently, teachers can improve the prospects of student ER by bringing the library to the students, so to speak, rather than relying



on students to access the library. Teachers provide students with valuable information on ER and are a resource when students have questions or need assistance in the selection of suitable readers (Shibata, 2016). Therefore, how a classroom teacher approaches ER can unquestionably have a profound influence on learner reading outcomes, as teacher-student interaction is crucial to support students on their ER journey.

## Socialize

For learners to achieve their reading outcomes, Shibata (2016) contends that there must be a supportive “learner community”. Students have an opportunity to motivate one another to read by discussing and recommending books and to socialize when books are brought to class (Davis, 1995). Classroom teachers are advised by the GR committee to allot 15 to 20 minutes (approximately one-fifth of a 100-minute class) to in-class reading and the selection of books one or two times weekly.

When teachers bring the mobile carts to class, students generally assist with procedures such as laying out the books on the desks, and organizing the book carts for returning and signing out books. Often while selecting new books, students can be heard recommending books to each other, much to the delight of the teacher. In addition, each book contains a simple rating sheet attached to the inside cover. Students can rate the graded reader out of 5 stars and leave a short comment about the book they read. This again helps students in selecting a book of interest.

To enhance the learning experience, many teachers often require students to give mini-book reviews in pairs or in small groups each week. In reporting to their classmates, they discuss what they liked or disliked about the book and give a brief synopsis. The mini-book review is especially useful for classes using the main library or learning commons, as it ensures that students not only bring and share the books that they are reading but also motivate their peers to read by example.

## Acknowledge

MReader as a learning management tool does a lot to acknowledge students reading achievements through its stamp collection, progress bar, and international leaderboard. In drawing attention to these features, it adds a degree of competition to the class which many

students respond to. However, it also gives the teacher the opportunity to not just single out the top reader, but also the most improved or consistent reader.

To support, encourage, and recognize students’ ER accomplishments, the graded reader committee established a reading contest (formerly known as the ‘Graded Reader Challenge’) known as the ‘MReader Challenge’. At the start of each semester, students are notified about the Challenge through campus advertisements and classroom announcements. It is open to all students who meet the contest requirements of reading a minimum of 150,000 words (or 40 books for basic level students) with MReader quizzes passed. To be clear, the MReader Challenge is not necessarily a competition between students but rather a personal challenge. Students who complete the Challenge requirements are rewarded with a certificate of achievement, an original collectable pin (which corresponds to the reading target they achieved), prizes and a celebratory lunch hosted by the International Education Center’s Director.

The old Graded Reader Challenge (2008 to 2014) was held each semester during the academic year. Successful completion of the contest involved a paper-based reading log of a minimum of 40 books. After a year-long trial period of MReader at the university in 2014, the contest was altered in 2015 to require a word count of 100,000 words based on MReader quizzes successfully passed to accommodate varying student abilities. For example, an advanced student reading over 1,000 headwords, would find it difficult to read 40 of such books in a semester, and a basic level student would find it equally difficult to read 100,000 words with MReader quizzes passed when reading books with less than 300 headwords.

However, two issues regarding the Challenge emerged with the popularity of MReader. The first issue was that the number of contest winners increased from 30 students on average per semester to over 100 students per semester in 2016. This left the committee pleasantly surprised, but in great need of additional funding to increase graded reader inventory and acknowledge student accomplishments. Clearly, the committee could not feasibly hope to maintain the contest along those levels of interest. The second issue was that many students would simply read the contest requirements of 100,000 words with MReader quizzes passed and stop reading. As

sustainable reading is a goal of any ER program and taking into account recent research on reading fluency and ER, the authors were convinced that students could read more.

To rectify these problems the committee introduced new criteria for the Challenge in 2017 with tiered award levels as in Table 1, and made the contest an annual event.

Table 1. MReader Challenge Tiered Award Levels with MReader Quizzes Passed

Number of Words Read with MReader Quizzes Passed	Award Level
40 books*	Bronze Bookworms*
150,000 words	Silver Bookworms
250,000 words	Gold Bookworms
350,000 words	Emerald Bookworms
450,000 words	Ruby Bookworms
600,000+ words	Diamond Bookworms

\*Only for students registered in basic level required classes.

The new criteria allow for more flexibility as basic level learners are still accommodated, all students are given adequate time to complete the requirements, and high achievers like a student who read over a million words in a year are also satisfied. As a result, more students are continuing to read beyond the minimum requirement of 150,000 words. In 2017, 15% of the winners read above the silver (bookworm) tier. The new criteria also give students a continuous challenge by motivating them to reach a new target each semester. Time will tell if more Challenge winners under the new tiered system will continue to read or attempt another level. Under the old Challenge (both the paper-based Challenge 2008 – 2014 and non-tiered MReader Challenge 2015 - 2016), a handful of students were able to meet the contest requirements numerous times as repeat winners.

Although the focus of this paper is on facilitating student ER achievements, it is worth noting that the Challenge does provide another form of reassurance and endorsement. Each year, the committee makes a point of inviting the Tokai University Newspaper to attend the ceremony. Over the years, the paper has done a series of articles about the program, the ceremony, and even featured articles on student winners. Not only have these articles duly recognized

the students' achievements but they have also put a spotlight on the program itself. As a result, the university has been more supportive of the ER program and the committee's aims.

## Conclusion

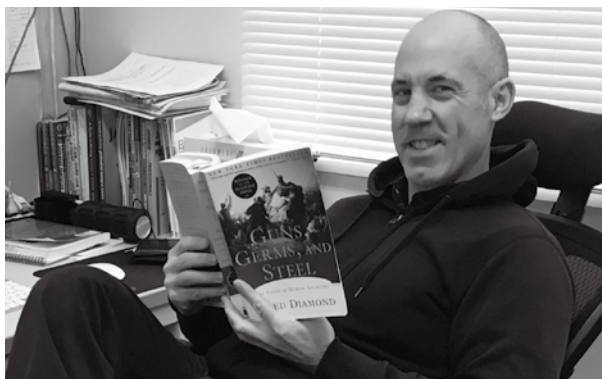
ER is an ideal way to develop autonomous learning and promote reading fluency, and a mobile library is a great initiator as it encourages students to read. However, simply providing access to graded readers does not necessarily result in higher reading outcomes. Instead, educators need to provide ample guidance and support for ER to ensure a successful reading experience. In classes that incorporate a 'learner community' approach, there is an opportunity for students to socialize and encourage one another to read. ER programs also need to provide the learner with validity, whether through systems such as MReader which provides users with reading goals and reassurance or through a reading contest such as the MReader Challenge which recognizes and encourages students and in turn, acknowledges and promotes the ER program as an integral part of the university's English language education.

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## New ER SIG officers

Here are some of the SIG's officers:



Matt Hauca teaches at Jin-ai University in the city of Echizen located in Fukui Prefecture. He became interested in ER as a way of engaging some of his less motivated students. He is happy to say all things ER are going well! He is currently reading *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* by Jared Diamond. A lengthy, but informative and fascinating read!



Chris Cooper teaches at Himeji Dokkyo University. He worked in public elementary schools in Japan for eight years, implementing an extensive reading program in his final placement before moving to the tertiary level, where he has been experimenting with extensive listening with self-selected YouTube watching. He was led into ER after falling for the work of Stephen Krashen during his MA. He is currently reading Julia Donaldson books to his young children on a daily basis.

Greg Rouault teaches at Tezukayama Gakuin University in Osaka. Greg first became interested in ER after researching student reading habits in both L1 and L2 and uncovering the benefits of level-appropriate graded readers for learner motivation and self-efficacy. The ER SIG has provided volunteer and professional development opportunities, academic contacts, publication outlets, and grant resources. Off the golf course and while on skiing or scuba diving holidays, Greg is currently reading behavioral economics like Thaler's *Nudge* and *Misbehaving*.



Chiyuki Yanase has been teaching both young learners and university students in Tokyo.

She has implemented an ER program within her story-based courses. Her ultimate goal is to develop her students' empathy and self-efficacy in language learning, as well as their love of reading. She is currently reading *The Routledge Handbook of Teaching English to Young Learners*.



Douglas Forster teaches at Japan Women's University. He believes that extensive reading is the best way to get Japanese students fully immersed in English, allowing them to experience and absorb vocabulary and grammar in a natural way that cannot be found in textbooks. He is passionate about classic rock, nature photography and cycling. He is currently reading *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a \* : A Counterintuitive Approach to Living the Good Life* by Mark Manson.



## "Dear Errie"

The ER SIG is proud to announce a special new advice column for members and non-members. Errie will do their best to provide answers on all topics related to extensive reading or listening, whether you are completely new to the idea of ER or an experienced practitioner with a long-established program. We hope to get questions with practical significance to many others in the ER community, but if you have something specific to your situation, feel free to ask.

**Send your Dear Errie inquiries by email to [erj@jalt.org](mailto:erj@jalt.org).**

## Your professional community needs you!

Help us to produce high-standard publications about extensive reading and listening.

Become a reviewer for the the Journal of Extensive Reading! Let us know which areas of ER you are interested in. And please register here: [jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer](http://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer).

Become a proofreader for all kinds of papers on extensive reading. Join the group here: [groups.google.com/d/forum/erproofers](https://groups.google.com/d/forum/erproofers).

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Published by the JALT ER SIG

[jalt.org/er](http://jalt.org/er)

ISSN 2187-0527

Printed on 100% recycled paper by [mojoprint.jp](http://mojoprint.jp)

Brought to you by [englishbooks.jp](http://englishbooks.jp)

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## Write for ERJ!

Send anything related to extensive reading or extensive listening, or of interest to members of the JALT ER SIG, to [erj@jalt.org](mailto:erj@jalt.org). Back issues can be seen at [jalt.org/er](http://jalt.org/er).

Use APA6 style, no footnotes, MSWord or text format. If you have any layout requests, send separately or consider the position of layout editor!

Maximum length: 4 sides of A4, around 2,500 words.

Photos, graphs and graphics should be separate, clearly named files.

Tables should be sent as data, not images.

Authors should prepare a photo, relatively close up, with high resolution, good contrast, and ideally reading something.

**You've read about extensive reading. You can also listen:**

[erpodcast.wordpress.com](http://erpodcast.wordpress.com)







## A brief history of extensive reading—Part 2

### The early development of extensive reading materials

Rob Waring

Notre Dame Seishin University, Okayama, Japan

This is the second in a series of articles looking at how ER became what it is we know today.

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In the first installment of this series we saw how the notion of reading for pleasure in one's first language only took hold in the 18th-19th centuries in Europe despite novels first appearing over 1000 years ago. Prior to this time, reading most often served a functional purpose involving memorizing passages, poems and so on, often for religious reasons. It was only in the last 200 years or so that the concept of the novel, or writing for a particular audience, children specifically, emerged. But how did we arrive at the modern concept of graded readers and extensive reading as we know it in foreign language teaching and learning? This second installment will focus on how the need to learn a foreign language developed and how we moved away from the primacy of using translation as a way to understand and learn a foreign language. It will also cover how the principles underlying two important learning and teaching methods informed the extensive reading and listening approach we see today.

Historically speaking, most people lived in rural communities and did not stray much beyond their villages. Very few needed to speak and listen to a foreign language and even fewer to read or write it, and when they did, it was often only for transactional purposes. Therefore, for hundreds of years, the main exposure to a foreign language for many people in Europe was the Latin services in church. The ordinary citizenry did not understand Latin because it was typically only used and studied by the clergy or scholars. Greek also had a revered status as the language of the great thinkers and prominent political and social ideas but its use was still restricted to a small elite group. Until the 18th or early 19th centuries in North America and in Europe, colleges had mostly been established to educate the clergy, with Latin and Greek the only foreign language components. The teaching method usually meant following the same methodologies used in first language reading—rote memorization of passages to be tested on; reading

aloud to learners and reading through translation.

The Industrial Age gave us mass transport systems, regular shipping routes and the railway. This brought more ordinary citizens into contact with people from other cultures and backgrounds, and thus a need to learn to speak and listen to foreign languages arose. In the 1870's Maximilian Berlitz and others developed the Direct Method, a variation of the Natural Method, as a reaction to the translation methods. It emphasized using only the target language, and focused on meaning and comprehension helping the learner to experience the foreign language naturally as one would one's first language. This focus on comprehending the foreign language naturally is one we see in modern extensive reading and listening. However, the method was predominantly oral, not individualized, and hard to implement in large classes. Moreover, the reading texts were mostly randomly selected and used to make language features salient, and to facilitate speaking and thus we might label this method more intensive than extensive.

After his move from the UK to Belgium in 1902, Harold Palmer developed the Oral Method, based on the Direct Method, in which he continued to emphasize speaking. Two of his papers (Palmer, 1921a; 1921b) laid the foundations for much of the extensive reading approach which was to come although he did not name it as such. Palmer's method differed from the Direct Method in that it stressed a receptive 'incubation' time whereby learners were presented with a 'shower' of 'comprehensible' teacher talk with no requirement for them to speak as the learners had to make out 'the general sense of what was said'. Here for the first time and pre-dating the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), we see the emergence of a fundamental principle of extensive reading—the focus on large amounts of comprehensible text, albeit orally.

Another important principle Palmer introduced



was that of ‘gradation’, which involved learners “passing from the known to the unknown in easy stages each of which serves as preparation for the next.” He went on to say, “in the ideally graded course, the learner is caused to assimilate perfectly a relatively small but exceedingly important vocabulary; when perfectly assimilated, this nucleus will develop and grow in the manner of a snowball” (1921b). Palmer was also instrumental in nurturing the ‘vocabulary control’ movement with the publication of the Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection (Faucett, et al., 1936) based on his work at the Tokyo Institute for Research in English Teaching. This culminated in his Thousand Word English reader series (Palmer & Hornby, 1937) and is a forerunner of the modern graded reader.

Palmer also recognized that the lexicon is made up of more than individual words and that fluency, and thus proficiency, is highly connected to exposure to ‘word-groups’ which we now call lexical chunks or meaning units, something few scholars mentioned until the boom in interest in the Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993) some 70 years later.

The significance of Palmer’s work cannot be underestimated because it values comprehensible input; the role of automaticity and implicit knowledge and learning; the need to associate meaning and form; it highlighted the role of formulaic language in

developing fluency as well as developing the notion of scaffolding language. All these principles are found in the way we construct graded readers and present them to our learners today. It is no wonder therefore, that we credit Harold Palmer as a founding father of modern ELT.

In the next installment of this series, we will focus on the work and influence of another giant in ELT—Michael West—who put many of Palmer’s ideas into practice in his reading materials.

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Read Marvel Readers and introduce the books in your own words!

Read one of the selected Marvel Readers and join the competition in either the writing or presentation category!

Learn English with these new and exciting super heroes!

\* The winner will be featured in next year's Pearson English Readers catalog!

### WRITING CATEGORY

Read one of the selected Marvel Readers, write an introduction in approximately 100 words (what you like about it and why you would recommend it) and post your introduction via the form.

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Read one of the selected Marvel Readers and, whilst showing the cover of the book to the camera, film a one-minute presentation about what you like about the book or why you recommend the book. Post your video using the form.

More details: <https://www.pearson.co.jp/en/marvel-campaign-take2.php>

\* When applying as an organization, your school will be entered into a draw to win a Pearson English Readers Library Set!

## 2018 LLL Award Winners

### Very young learners

#### Granny Fixit and the Viking Children



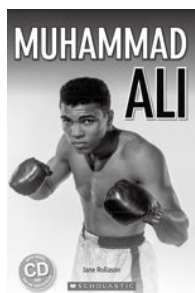
Author: Jane Cadwallader  
 Illustrator: Gustavo Mazali  
 Young ELI Readers  
 ISBN 978-88-536-2226-6

#### Finalists:

It's Hot  
 Oxford Read and Imagine  
 ISBN 978-0-19-470908-8  
 Little Red Riding Hood  
 Young ELI Readers  
 ISBN 9788853618948

### Adolescents and adults: Intermediate

(801-1500 headwords; CEFR B1)



**Muhammad Ali**  
 Author: Jane Rollason  
 Designer and Photo Archivist: Mo Choy and Amparo Escobedo

Secondary ELT Readers  
 Scholastic  
 ISBN 9781407169828

#### Finalists:

A Single Shot  
 Helbling Readers Fiction  
 ISBN 978-3-99045-511-1  
 Hope on Turtle Island  
 Oxford Read and Imagine  
 ISBN 9780194737333

### Young learners

(ages 6-11)

#### Mulan

Author: Rachel Bladon  
 Illustrator: Gen  
 Oxford Classic Tales  
 ISBN 9780194100069



#### Finalists:

Nyangoma's Story - A Child's Life in Uganda  
 Young ELI Readers  
 ISBN 9788853623041  
 The Snow Tigers  
 Oxford Read and Imagine  
 ISBN 9780194709330

### Adolescents and adults: Upper intermediate and advanced

(1501+ headwords; CEFR B2, C1, C2)

#### Emma

Author: Jane Austen  
 Adapted by Clare West  
 Illustrator: Gavin Reese  
 Oxford Bookworms Library  
 ISBN 978-0-19-402428-0



#### Finalists:

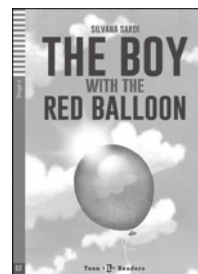
A Selection from Dubliners  
 Black Cat Reading & Training  
 ISBN 978-88-530-1634-8  
 The Mill on the Floss  
 Young Adult ELI Readers  
 ISBN 9788853623195

### Adolescents and adults: Elementary

(301-800 headwords; CEFR A1, A2 levels)

#### The Boy with the Red Balloon

Author: Silvana Sardi  
 Illustrator: María Girón



Teen ELI Readers  
 ISBN 9788853623065

#### Finalists:

Tales from Camelot  
 Green Apple Life Skills  
 ISBN 9788853016317  
 The Cave of the Jaguar  
 Hueber Lectüren  
 ISBN 9783190029976  
 Finalist Beginners:  
 Cinderella  
 Young ELI Readers  
 ISBN 9788853622976  
 The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse  
 Young ELI Readers  
 ISBN 9788853622921

## New graded readers releases

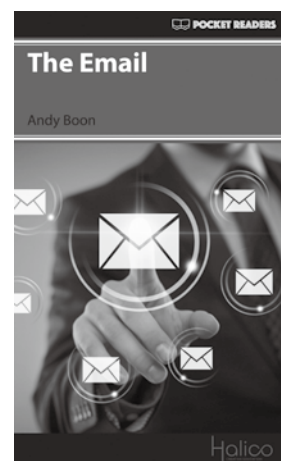
Bjorn Fuisting



And the variety keeps expanding! Last ERJ issue saw Seed Learning (the sponsor of this issue of the ERJ) bring out their Future Jobs series. In this issue Halico is launching a series dealing with current jobs. Pearson is also continuing broadening and expanding their offerings (and offering you a chance to win a full library set) with a new branch of Doctor Who readers in their Pearson English Readers as well as more Marvel books. There are also new titles in Oxford University Press' Dominoes, Classic Tales and Bookworms series, eleven new offerings of Eli Readers spread over Young Eli Readers, Teen Eli Readers and Young Adult Eli Readers, as well as two new titles in Scholastic's Popcorn Readers. Plenty of new reading to last you and your students through the dark months! The full list of new titles with levels, headwords and word counts can be found on the ER SIG website [jalt.org/er](http://jalt.org/er).

### Pocket Readers by Halico

Good news for teachers of business English classes who would like their students to read more. Halico, a newly started company in Japan, has brought out 10 titles dealing with various business topics centered around the marketing department of a fictitious convenience store chain. Headwords range from 500 to 725 and Mreader quizzes are coming soon.



Pearson English Readers

Robot of Sherwood

A story based on the original script by Mark Gatiss



Pearson English Readers

The Girl Who Died

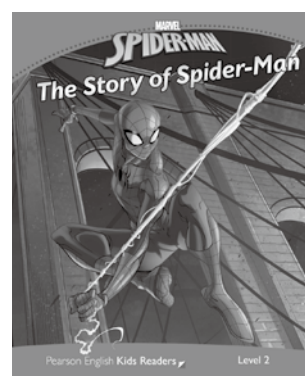
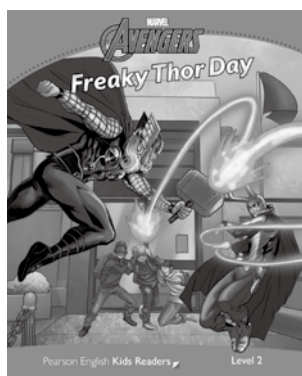
A story based on the original script by Jamie Mathieson

### Doctor Who by Pearson English Readers

Pearson (formerly selling graded readers under the Penguin brand) are continuing to diversify their offerings by bringing the much-loved Doctor Who out in graded reader format. Initially there are six titles, two titles in each of level 2, 3 and 4.

### Marvel Readers by Pearson English Kids Readers

Pearson are expanding the Marvel universe by bringing out four Marvel titles in their Pearson English Kids Readers. Now the little ones can read about the characters they love at a level they understand. In addition, Pearson is adding three more Marvel titles in their Pearson English Readers series. In conjunction with this launch, they are also offering you the chance to win a complete set of 263 graded readers in their Marvel Readers Contest Phase 2! The deadline is January 31st, 2019. See website for details: <https://www.pearson.co.jp/en/marvel-campaign-take2.php>







## The little things: Rethinking admin

Kevin Stein

Clark Memorial International High School

When the ER program at my high school started, I was almost exclusively focused on how students were engaging with texts during the act of reading. When I thought I noticed a student struggling, I would sit with them as they read through a page or two and we would keep track of how many unknown words they came across. When students' word per minute reading speeds dropped, I would talk with them about the book and try and find out the reasons for the decrease. If a student was staring out a window instead of looking at the page in front of them, I would ask them questions about the types of books they liked to read, the genres of TV shows they were interested in, and try and help point them to a text that might keep them a bit more engaged. A vast majority of my time was spent focused on the students and their reading. This might seem like what every teacher should be spending a vast majority of their time on, but I began to feel that I was also failing to dedicate enough energy to administrative issues, which, having been ignored, were growing progressively more serious. Yes, my students' reading speeds were increasing. Yes, they were reading more difficult texts. However, avoiding the administrative side of ER, making a more organized and transparent system for borrowing books, turning in reading journals, and ordering new texts for the school, ended up impeding my students' progress in ways both big and small. And, it was only after about two years and a number of fairly vivid incidents, that I began to pay much more attention to the nuts and bolts of what books were on the library shelf and how they got and stayed there.

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### The Case of the Missing Red Roses

One of my favorite questions to ask students, and to get them to ask each other, is "What was your favorite book this week?" Four years ago, one of my first-year students, a boy named Ko, said it was *Red Roses*, a beginning level graded reader. It's kind of a cheesy love story complete with missed connections, guitar playing, and of course bouquets of red roses. Ko and I had a fairly long chat about the book and after that I noticed him recommend the book to a number of other students. But about a year later, we were spending some class time recommending books to each other when I noticed that Ko, talking with a lower-level first-year student, suggested three books, none of which was *Red Roses*. When I asked him about it, he said it was because there hadn't been a copy of the story on the bookshelf for a few months. When I checked, I was surprised to find all three copies missing.

We have a sign-out-sheet for books which students borrow to read outside of class. I scanned the sheet, but according to the sign-out-sheets, all of the copies of *Red Roses* had been returned. That's when I realized that not keeping more careful track of where books were could have major repercussions on what kind of reading students were able to do as well as on how students developed their sense of belonging to a reading community. We changed our system and

started doing a book inventory every two months. Teachers worked in pairs and we made sure to try and track down all the books that should be in the library. We also started to take time at the end of each class to have students return their books to the shelf before the bell rang. And finally, we put some of our budget aside each year so that if a book disappeared, we could order another copy in time for the next semester.

No matter how careful the students and teachers are about making sure books always end up back on the shelves, a few still go missing each year. I realize that is just part of having an ER program. Making sure those disappearances do not disrupt how students talk about and enjoy sharing books is one of the ways that we help our students become enthusiastic readers.

### The Mystery of Too Many Mysteries

From the start of our ER program, we tried to encourage students to tell us what kind of books they wanted to read and if there were any particular texts they wanted us to order. A number of students consistently made suggestions for titles they wanted to read. Over the course of a few years, the number of mysteries grew to be a disproportionately large percentage of all intermediate books in the library. We had three or four copies of every graded-reader version of Sherlock Holmes for example. We also had

a large number of love stories and suspense titles. I had heard from a lot of other teachers interested in ER that students in their schools also seemed to be primarily interested stories from specific genres. At first, this made perfect sense to me. Stories that are part of a distinct genre follow certain rules and are, I thought, easier for the students to understand. My school continued to purchase books from specific genres. We probably would have continued to make genre heavy book orders if not for the fact that during one class, I noticed Yuna, a rather serious reader, re-reading O. Henry's short story collection *New Yorkers*. I mentioned to her that she must really like the book. She frowned and said, "Actually, I want to read something different. But there are not many books about normal people and daily life."

I realized that what she had said was absolutely true. I also began to think that perhaps the reason students ask for specific genres is simply that it is easy for them to make the request. If a student reads a good horror book, they can just say, "Please buy more horror books." On the other hand, if a student reads and enjoys a fairly nuanced story about characters realistically struggling through their days, it is much more difficult for a student to request that the teacher order more books in a similar vein.

That is why we set up time at the end of the semester for students to anonymously place books into a "Buy More of These Kinds of Books" box. This box is exactly what the name implies. Students grab the books they liked and which they would like to read more of and just drop them into the box. We go through the books in the box and try and spend a significant amount of our budget on books which are similar to the ones in the box. This has led to a much larger range of books ordered, including a good number of texts focussing on the rich lives of everyday people.

Don't miss "The Little Things" in the next *ERJ*.

Have you read anything good recently?  
Why not write a review for the *ERJ*?

## Confessions of a Big Picture Teacher

I am, for the most part, not a nuts-and-bolts type of teacher. I would rather help a student select a book than place a book order. I would rather talk with a student about a book after school than count the number of books on a shelf. This is perhaps why it took so long for me to realize that ordering and counting books are as much a part of a successful ER program as the individual interactions I have with my students. Cataloging, inventorying, and thoughtfully stocking the school library are not just necessary, they are the reasons why I can feel a jolt of excitement when I see a student eagerly walk up to the the ER bookshelves; because I know that there is an ever growing chance that students will find exactly the book that they are looking for. And that is, after all, how most good reading truly begins.

## Student Evaluations of Readers

The Extensive Reading Foundation has recently added links to three Excel spreadsheets that summarize data collected on MReader.org from the "post-quiz" questions that students respond to after taking a quiz on the book that they have just read. A total of more than 1,550,000 answers to "How did you like this book" form the basis of the data.

- 📖 Most popular graded readers
- 📖 Most popular non-graded "youth" readers
- 📖 Evaluations of all readers by series

You are welcome to use the data for guidance in selecting books for your own library, but to assure that the data is properly interpreted, please consult with the ERF before embarking on any publication that utilizes the data.

The data can be found here: <http://erfoundation.org/wordpress/graded-readers/>



## Exploration of the pedagogical value of "graded" in Graded Readers

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Considering the indispensable role of Graded Readers (GRs) in extensive reading (ER), this study explored the graded features of GRs by analyzing a GR corpus from a perspective of the usage-based model in cognitive linguistics. To illustrate this approach, a corpus of 60 books of Oxford Bookworm Library (OBW) from stages 1 to 6 was constructed and a pivot schema of "look + adjective" was analyzed as an example. It was found that as the level of the OBW goes up, the type frequency of the adjective is more varied. On the other hand, the token frequency of each adjective at one stage was low which indicates that the instantiations of "look + adjective" will not be effectively entrenched in memory as conventional linguistic units. The OBW data was also compared with a corpus of an ungraded reader in terms of "look + adjective". The results show that ER is effective for deeply understanding how partially known words are used in different contexts of stories rather than increasing vocabulary size.

Graded Readers (GRs), namely language learner literature, are written for foreign language learning, so learners can choose GR texts whose 98% are written in already partially known words (Hu & Nation, 2000) and experience the "virtuous circle of the good reader" (Nuttall, 1996, p.127): they can read faster, read more, understand better, and enjoy reading without a dictionary. GRs play a central role in Extensive Reading (ER). The major publishers, however, only provide information about headwords and grammatical items introduced at each level. They do not give us information about how words are used with difficulty from one level to the next level throughout the whole series. Few studies which utilized GR corpus have ever systematically revealed the "graded" features of English and facilitate incidental vocabulary learning in the virtuous circle of the good readers. In this study I analyzed a GR corpus of Oxford Bookworm (OBW) Library from the usage-based model in cognitive linguistics and explored qualitatively and quantitatively how the English of the OBW series was graded, compared with an ungraded reader and the pedagogical implications for teaching and learning vocabulary through ER.

### Reviews of English in GR

Honeyfield (1977) argued that the cohesion and coherence of GRs were distorted by the limitation of syntax and vocabulary. However, Claridge (2005) argued against Honeyfield's objection to GR, in terms of the texts of blandness and homogeneity. Comparing two original (ungraded) texts with graded versions of each, Claridge showed that the word

frequency distribution is varied in the same way for each respective reader. This argument is along the same line with Widdowson's idea of "authenticity" as follows:

Authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between the passage and the reader and it has to do with appropriate response. (Widdowson, 1978: 80)

Recognizing the authenticity of GRs from a learner's point of view, what incidental vocabulary learning can learners experience through ER? To answer this question, Wodinsky & Nation (1988) made a GR corpus of two books at level 4. They analyzed it and revealed that "Their mastery of the words at one level will allow them to cope with the texts and vocabulary at the next level" (p.160). This conclusion was also similar to Waring and Takaki's (2003) conclusion:

graded readers might be best used for recycling already known vocabulary than for introducing new words. This is because the results of this and other studies suggest that few new words seem to be learned from graded reading. (p.155)

Thus, it is deepening vocabulary learning rather than increasing vocabulary size that learners can take advantage of through incidental vocabulary learning in ER.

Furthermore, Nation and Wang (1999) constructed a GR corpus of seven books from stages 1 to 6 of the whole OBW series and analyzed it. As Claridge (2005) demonstrated the similarity in varying word frequency distribution between graded and ungraded



texts, their analysis also showed the similarity in the coverage of the General Service List (GSL, West, 1953) between graded and ungraded texts. That is, the GSL 2000 words cover 84.7% of the OBW corpus in the same way as about 80% of ungraded texts including fiction, newspapers, and academic texts (Nation, 2001). This means that "the graded readers provide a good way of meeting the high frequency words of English" (Nation & Wang, 1999, p. 369).

While those studies analyzed a GR corpus at word level, Allan (2009, 2016) did so at lexical chunk level. From a perspective of the process of language use and language learning, the unit of analysis should not be word level but lexical chunk level (Lewis, 1993). Allan (2009, 2016) constructed and analyzed a GR corpus of the Penguin Graded Readers (PGRs) of B1 and B2 levels in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) which does not include A1 and A2 levels for lower level students. Allan (2009, 2016) compared the PGR corpus respectively with British National Corpus (BNC) and a corpus of Original Fictional Works (FIC) in terms of density of lexical chunks. Both analyses show that lexical chunks largely occur with similar density in the PGR corpus, BNC, and FIC.

### Features of the OBW Corpus

When looking at the previous studies concerning GR corpus, it is important to note that they did not reveal how the words of GSL were recycled over and over again throughout the whole series with varying difficulty at each level. In order to explore this question, Mizuno (2017) constructed a GR corpus of 10 books from stage 1 to 6 of the OBW series. In order to analyze the OBW corpus, I developed a system which had a Key Words in Context (KWIC) feature and counted the frequency of occurrence of words based on the Word Family List (West, 1953).

The OBW corpus constructed by Mizuno (2017) featured the running words of 60 books from stages 1 to 6 (906,610 words). Based on the GSL Word Family list, it was found that the first 1000 words of GSL cover 78.2% on average at every stage of the OBW corpus. The data clearly showed that the first 1000 words are recycled over and over again through all stages which supports the studies cited earlier (i.e., Waring & Takaki, 2003; Wodinsky & Nation, 1988). Moreover, 84.2% of the OBW corpus was covered by the GSL 2000, which was very close to Nation and Wang's (1999)

result, 84.7% .

### Usage-Based Model for the study of GR corpus

The OBW corpus was then analyzed from a perspective of the usage-based model (UBM) in cognitive linguistics. In UBM, a language is described as a structured inventory of conventional linguistic units. That is to say:

They are 'units' in the sense of being entrenched cognitive routines, and 'conventional' by virtue of representing established linguistic practice in a certain speech community. (Langacker, 2008, p. 21)

This view of language indicates that we should explore what conventional linguistic units learners can meet and how many times they can meet them through ER, so pivot schemas with various levels of abstraction are constructed as mental lexicon (Tomasello, 2003).

To illustrate the relevance of UBM for the study of GR corpus, Mizuno (2017) took "look" as an example, which is one of the frequently used perception verbs in the OBW corpus, and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively "look + adjective" as a pivot schema and its instantiations as conventional linguistic units. Based on the data, this article will explore how learners can deepen their knowledge of "look + adjective" through reading the OBW series.

### Frequency of "look" in the OBW corpus

The frequency of "look" as a verb including "looked" and "looking" in the OBW corpus was 3,856. The count of the frequency of occurrence of the meaning "to have a particular appearance" was 733, and "to turn your eyes towards something, so that you can see it" was 3010. The ratio of the two basic meanings of "look" was about 1 to 4 which is about the same as the semantic frequency of "look" in the GSL.

Table 1 shows the top 10 adjectives which are most frequently used in the "look + adjective" as a pivot schema. The number of the token frequency of how many times the adjective is used at each stage clearly shows that learners can meet most of them far less than ten times even if they read ten books at one stage. On the other hand, it was found that as the stage goes up, the type of adjective (type frequency) gets more varied. Those 15 types of adjectives can be

Table 1. The top 10 adjectives most frequently used in the "look + adjective" and the token frequency at each stage in the OBW corpus

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Total
happy	6	7	4	2	6	3	28
surprised		3		4	5	16	28
worried	1	1	9	2	2	9	24
tired	3	2	1		9	5	20
serious			4	1	9	3	17
angry	6		2	1	3	2	14
beautiful	2				8	3	13
old				2	11		13
pale					4	9	13
puzzled			1		6	5	12
uncomfortable		2	2		4	4	12
sad			1		8	2	11
strange		5			3	3	11
different	2		2		3	2	9
nice	3	1			4	1	9

broadly divided into two types: One is an outward appearance (e.g., beautiful, different, nice, old, and strange). The other is an emotional expression (e.g., happy, worried, surprised, tired, serious, angry, pale, puzzled, uncomfortable, sad) which shows how characters feel. Thus, these adjectives in the "look + adjective" are worth being aware of as conventional linguistic units to deeply understand stories.

### Adjectives of "look + adjective" in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Since GRs are a bridge for reading ungraded readers, it is essential to explore the type and token frequency of adjective in the "look + adjective" in ungraded readers. To illustrate this, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1999) was analyzed. The type frequency of adjectives was 40. Except for "shocked" which was used three times, the token frequency of all the other adjectives was only once. Here is a list of the adjectives which were not used in the OBW corpus: awkward, big, burned, convinced, dangerous, dumbfounded, excited, furious, grim, miffed, ruffled, painful, solid, spectacular, tearful, terrified, and vicious most of which are above the B2 or outside the level of CEFR. This means that the adjectives in the ungraded reader are not pedagogically limited for ER. Furthermore, it was found that many adjectives in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* were used with adverbs, such

as: a bit, distinctly, extremely, more, quite, simply, so, strangely, too, and very from which we can abstract "look + adverb + adjective" as a pivot schema.

### Conclusion

As Widdowson (1990, p. 162) emphasized, "Pedagogy is bound to be a contrivance," GRs are pedagogically contrived to realize both language use and incidental language learning. This study explored both aspects from a perspective of type frequency and token frequency of the instantiations of the pivot schema of "look + adjective" in the OBW corpus. As Table 1 shows, the token frequency of each adjective was very low which indicates that the instantiations of "look + adjective" will not be effectively entrenched in memory as conventional linguistic units even if all 60 books from stages 1 to 6 are read extensively. Although this is a case study of reading only the OBW series, we may say that incidental vocabulary learning in ER should be expected to focus on deepening students understanding of a pivot schema and its instantiations in which partially known words are combined to form conventional linguistic units.

Furthermore, we should explore what other pivot schemas and their instantiations as conventional linguistic units can be abstracted from the English of the OBW corpus and visualize its graded features as a pedagogical contrivance. Based on empirical data, ER practitioners can explore what instantiations as

conventional linguistic units are worth intentionally learning, so learners can enjoy meeting them in specific contexts of stories and appreciate the stories more deeply.

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## Write this Column

Are you looking for an idea to write about? Do you want to find empirical evidence that ER works? Are you an aspiring young teacher-researcher with gaps on your CV? Are you a fading old university teacher trying not to perish under the pressure to publish?

Of course, you could start by looking through the recent research in the ERJ, and try to replicate a research project. But it would be great if someone put some suggestions in a column. As Paul Nation has said, there is over a hundred years of research on language teaching, and most of it is not very good.

Perhaps you can start writing this column and guide people towards excellent topics! Please contact the editor if you are interested!

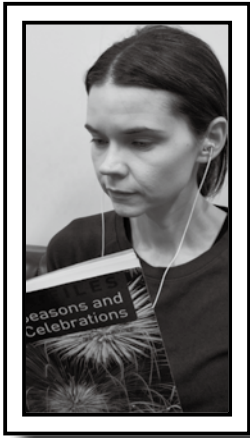
[erj@jalt.org](mailto:erj@jalt.org)

ME Learning is recruiting authors for a new graded readers series based on the lives of ordinary people. Authors will ideally have some publishing experience, be well-versed in levelled, graded and extensive reading, and have a proven ability in meeting deadlines, writing to briefs and taking editorial direction.

Please contact the series editor, Mark Brierley, at [mark2@shinshu-u.ac.jp](mailto:mark2@shinshu-u.ac.jp) with a resumé and a brief example piece on everyday life, of 300 to 500 words, mentioning the target level and headword count.







## Building a course around a nonfiction graded reader

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Graded readers are most typically used to support extensive reading in and out of the classroom. However, there are many ways that they can potentially be used. In this paper I will introduce the idea of creating a listening/pronunciation course based around a nonfiction graded reader. I will begin by explaining the rationale for using a nonfiction graded reader in this way. Next, in order to provide a basic overview of the design of the course, I will outline the activities that students engage in both in and out of class. Finally, I will explain what is involved in developing this kind of course, with particular reference to materials creation. I will conclude by discussing potential obstacles and possible applications to other teaching contexts.

### Rationale

The original idea for building a listening and pronunciation skills course based on a nonfiction graded reader came when I could not find an appropriate textbook for a course I was allocated to teach. The course in question is a first-year, low intermediate listening/pronunciation skills course taught in a language laboratory classroom. The students taking the course are non-English majors studying within an economics faculty. The two main aims of the course are to provide opportunities for students to learn about and practice key features of connected speech and to practice their receptive and productive pronunciation skills. While there are many coursebooks on the market filled with activities which specifically target these points, I felt that the textual content of the titles which I had reviewed were bland and decontextualized, and that this lack of content richness would limit the range of learning that would occur during the course.

Although the course was primarily targeting listening and pronunciation skills, I wanted to provide opportunities for students to engage with content relevant to either their area of studies (business, management and economics) or content that would help them in some way with their studies of English. I also wanted to incorporate chances for students to learn and revise grammar and vocabulary, and to make use of their language knowledge to explain in both written and oral form their understanding and ideas about the content learned in class. I felt that this would be difficult to achieve with a coursebook targeting only pronunciation and listening training.

This is where the idea came to base the course around a nonfiction graded reader. Nonfiction graded readers potentially provide interesting and relevant

content on a specific theme which is developed over the entire length of the book. This naturally leads to intensive use of related vocabulary items and natural opportunities to summarize and discuss the issues introduced in the book, which would help to realize the additional aims of the course. I decided to use summaries of the content from the selected graded reader as the basis for in-class activities which include listening, dictation, pronunciation, speaking, writing and grammar revision activities. In addition, students are required to use the graded reader out of class to conduct homework and other self-study activities.

For this course, *Seasons and Celebrations*, a level 2 book from the Oxford University Press Factfiles series, was chosen. Students are required to purchase the book and accompanying CD, and it is treated as the course textbook. I had originally wanted to use a graded reader covering a topic related to economics or business, but could not find an appropriate title. The content of *Seasons and Celebrations* is not overly challenging; however, it does provide useful knowledge for understanding some key themes behind important celebrations in English-speaking countries and important historical background knowledge that students may be surprisingly unaware of. In addition, it also provides entrance points to discuss topics such as religion, war, colonialism, commercialization and westernization, and opportunities to conduct comparisons. If the book were only to be read, level 2 might be too easy even for a pre-intermediate class; however, as the activities were primarily listening-based it was felt that this level would be appropriate. While there may be other factors which need to be considered, going down a level when the focus is on listening rather than reading seems to be a good approach to take.

## Key learning activities

### Out-of-class activities using the graded reader

Students have to complete a homework activity requiring use of the graded reader during most weeks of the 15-week-long semester. In the activity, students listen to and/or read a chapter of the reader and complete an online quiz on the content of the chapter due before the next class. Content from the chapter used in the homework activity is then used in the in-class activities, and in this way the homework is designed to naturally introduce key vocabulary and concepts to students in advance as a primer for the in-class activities.

The quizzes are created using Google Forms and are distributed to students via Google Classroom, a free learning management system which is also used to provide digital versions of class handouts, teacher-created audio files, and links to online resources. The quiz questions range from comprehension questions and questions about pronunciation and vocabulary to questions which ask students to identify and explain similar celebrations in Japan, share their impressions of the celebrations introduced, or evaluate their understanding of new concepts presented in the graded reader. Using Google Forms to create the quizzes allows the use of short-response questions which require students to physically type their responses. It also allows for the use of media such as pictures and videos which are useful to help students get a better understanding of new concepts and to introduce to them online resources that they can use to further investigate topics introduced in the reader.

In addition to completing the weekly quizzes, students also need to study for the vocabulary tests which are held three times during the semester. The vocabulary on these tests come only from the reader, and students are provided with bilingual vocabulary lists, recordings of all vocabulary, and links to online dictionaries which they can use to confirm the pronunciation of the vocabulary. The vocabulary lists were also uploaded to Quizlet (quizlet.com) with the aim to introduce to students a useful resource to support their learning both in this course and beyond. Quizlet is a mobile and web-based study application that offers paid subscriptions to users who want access to more features, but can also be used for free. Quizlet provides different means through which the user can study their target content, and its interactive

nature and ability to provide instant feedback make it a great resource. Two of the vocabulary tests are in dictation format, where students are required to write down the target English word as well as its meaning in Japanese, and one is an oral test where students must say the word in English after being presented it in Japanese.

### In-class activities

#### Stage one

The first part of the course focuses on introducing to students the concept of connected speech and specific examples of connected speech phenomena particularly important for developing listening skills. The main activities are listening and dictation activities, and the scripts used in these activities are summaries of content introduced in the graded reader. Summarized passages, rather than passages taken directly from the graded reader, are used to make activities more challenging and to allow for a more specific focus on target language and content teaching points that have been selected by the teacher. The scripts are then used to teach and practice examples of connected speech in context through a combination of noticing, read aloud, and shadowing activities.

#### Stage two

In the second part of the course, the focus shifts from looking specifically at connected speech to creating more natural chances to indirectly practice connected speech both productively and receptively using topics connected to the graded reader. Students engage in running dictation and dictogloss activities with the activities again being based on summaries and/or extensions of content from the graded reader. They then move on to practice making written and oral summaries of content introduced in the reader, which sometimes involves making comparisons with Japanese celebrations. The course culminates with students orally explaining a Japanese cultural celebration, which requires them to make use of language patterns they have been exposed to through the graded reader. The content focus of each activity is always connected to the previous week's homework to create natural chances for revising language and deepening students' understanding of the content area being covered.

### Steps to creating a course based on a nonfiction graded reader

Creating this kind of course does require a large investment of time, specifically regarding the creation

of the various supplementary resources needed to support the in- and out-of-class activities that learners engage in. Moreover, creating this kind of course requires the teacher to already have a firm understanding of the learning points that they wish to cover, enough knowledge of these points to be able to create materials to teach them, or at least access to appropriate resource books to facilitate this, and knowledge of appropriate activities through which to practice these learning points. However, if the teacher has this knowledge and has identified a content-rich and level-appropriate graded reader to use, then the process is slightly time consuming at first, but relatively straight forward. Here I will briefly outline the steps involved in creating this course, noting that the order of some of the steps could easily be changed.

1. Choose a nonfiction graded reader of the appropriate level and content.
2. Create additional resources to support out of class learning, specifically vocabulary lists (including recordings of these) and quiz questions for each chapter. The content of the quiz questions can of course be adjusted as necessary during the course of the semester. Useful online resources, especially YouTube videos, to be incorporated into quizzes should also be identified. As Quizlet provides automated pronunciations for each term on the vocabulary lists, it could potentially be used in lieu of teacher-made recordings.
3. Decide the learning points to be covered through the course and related resource books which can be referred to when creating materials. For this course which focused on connected speech, the *English Pronunciation in Use* series (Cambridge University Press) and *How to Teach Pronunciation* (Pearson) were useful for identifying potential learning points and the bilingual *Discovering English Sounds* (Cengage Learning) was extremely helpful for identifying appropriate Japanese terminology for explaining these learning points.
4. Create summaries of key content points from each chapter of the graded reader to be used in activities throughout the semester, but particularly for the listening and dictation activities conducted in the first part of the course. The summaries can include related information not specifically introduced in the graded reader if this is deemed to be beneficial.
5. Decide which connected speech phenomena

to concentrate on in each week of the course. Analyze the summaries for naturally occurring examples of these target learning points and edit the summaries as necessary. Recordings of the summaries will also need to be made.

6. Create supplementary materials to use during class such as worksheets for the dictation activities and written explanations of the learning points.
7. Create additional activities and worksheets for the productive skills practice in the second part of the course and think of alternative versions of these activities that can be used to adjust to the level and needs of the specific students taking the course.

This can all be done before the course starts, or week by week during the semester; although even in the case of the latter, it is a good idea to have finished steps one to four in advance. Once the general approach to the course has been set and the materials created, in future semesters the teacher can focus on improving materials and tweaking activities based on experience and new ideas and knowledge gained through professional development.

## Conclusion

I have been teaching this course now for several years, and still each year I revise materials and activities to further improve them. Although I have continued to use the same graded reader each semester, now that I have a solid framework for the course I can see how I would go about redesigning it based on a different reader.

Going back to my original rationale for using a graded reader for this course, recently I have been trying to get students to focus more on the different cultural and social issues touched upon in the reader, and I have found Google Forms and its ability to embed pictures and videos and incorporate short response questions extremely useful for this. Using the quizzes to get students thinking about these issues out of class first makes it much easier to then do further work in class as they have already had exposure to the topics I want them to think about.

The main obstacle to using nonfiction graded readers in this way is the problem of finding readers of the appropriate level and content. In contrast to the large number of fiction readers available, the number of nonfiction titles is limited (Hill, 2013). Moreover, it may not always be easy to find titles that match

learning aims or that are appropriate to use over an entire semester. I personally hope that the recent focus on content and language-integrated learning will encourage publishers to add more titles to their nonfiction reader series.

Another potential issue relates to the availability and quality of accompanying audio. In the case of the reader used in this course, the speed of the recordings was a little too slow, so much so that the speech was sometimes not connected in the way that it would be if said at a faster pace. While slower recordings can be useful for shadowing practice and for students who lack confidence in their listening skills, recordings made at a natural speed are necessary. In this course this problem was overcome by making my own recording of each chapter and offering this to students as an alternative to the accompanying CD. However, some audio players can play recordings at faster and slower speeds, and students can be directed to use these features to play the audio at a speed most appropriate for them.

Finally, while this particular course focuses on listening and pronunciation, a similar approach could easily be taken in courses with different aims. In the past I created a composition course focusing on paragraph writing which was based on a different nonfiction graded reader but otherwise involved the same procedure outlined in this paper. While the content of that reader turned out to be a little bland, the approach to the course itself seemed to work.

Hill (2001, 2008, 2013) has suggested that certain factors make nonfiction unsuitable for extensive reading, particularly when presented in an expository style. While I am unable to comment on this, I do believe there is a place for high quality nonfiction graded readers on topics of interest to the target audience, and that these can potentially be exploited by teachers in a variety of ways to enrich the teaching and learning experience.

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Send anything related to extensive reading or extensive listening, or of interest to members of the JALT ER SIG to [erj@jalt.org](mailto:erj@jalt.org).

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- ☐ Maximum length: 4 sides of A4, around 2,500 words.
- ☐ Headings and subheadings sentence-capitalised (only the first letter of the heading and the first letter of proper names capitalised—like this list!)
- ☐ Photos, graphs and graphics should be separate, clearly named files, with high resolution and good contrast.
- ☐ Tables should be sent as data, not images.
- ☐ Authors should prepare a photo, relatively close up with good contrast and ideally reading something.
- ☐ Add your academic affiliation if you would like that to appear in print.

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## Extensive reading strategies: Identifying comfort zones and venturing out of them

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One of the biggest challenges of Extensive Reading is making sure that students retain an enthusiasm for reading and constantly take in new and exciting material that will help their appreciation for reading grow. As time passes, students can become very much aware of their own tastes; what books they are drawn to, and which ones they want to avoid. This can be exciting at first, as they hone their love of a particular branch of literature. However, sticking to one type of text can lead to their reading habits stagnating. They may grow tired of familiar tropes, and this familiarity can become tedious. If this over-familiarity leads them to no longer enjoy what they perceive as their favourite corner of the library (be it a metaphorical library or not), they may lose enthusiasm for reading as whole.

To help keep interest levels high, variety is key, and students should be encouraged to tread through unfamiliar ground. Exploring new genres may make them feel uncomfortable or even lost at times, but there is a very real chance that they will discover a hidden treasure that may have sat unfound forever. This may well mean they will find a love and appreciation for a genre, author, time period or medium they would never have considered beforehand.

To help the students along this journey, I followed three easy steps:

1. Identify their likes and dislikes
2. Craft connections between their most hated and loved genres
3. Let the students explore these possible pathways

### Identifying their comfort zones

The first step was to look at which genres they most liked and disliked. For this I asked my Extensive Reading and Creative Writing classes to fill in a short questionnaire. I asked both classes, as reading is central to each course, and it gave me a larger pool of data to draw from. In total there were 42 participants,

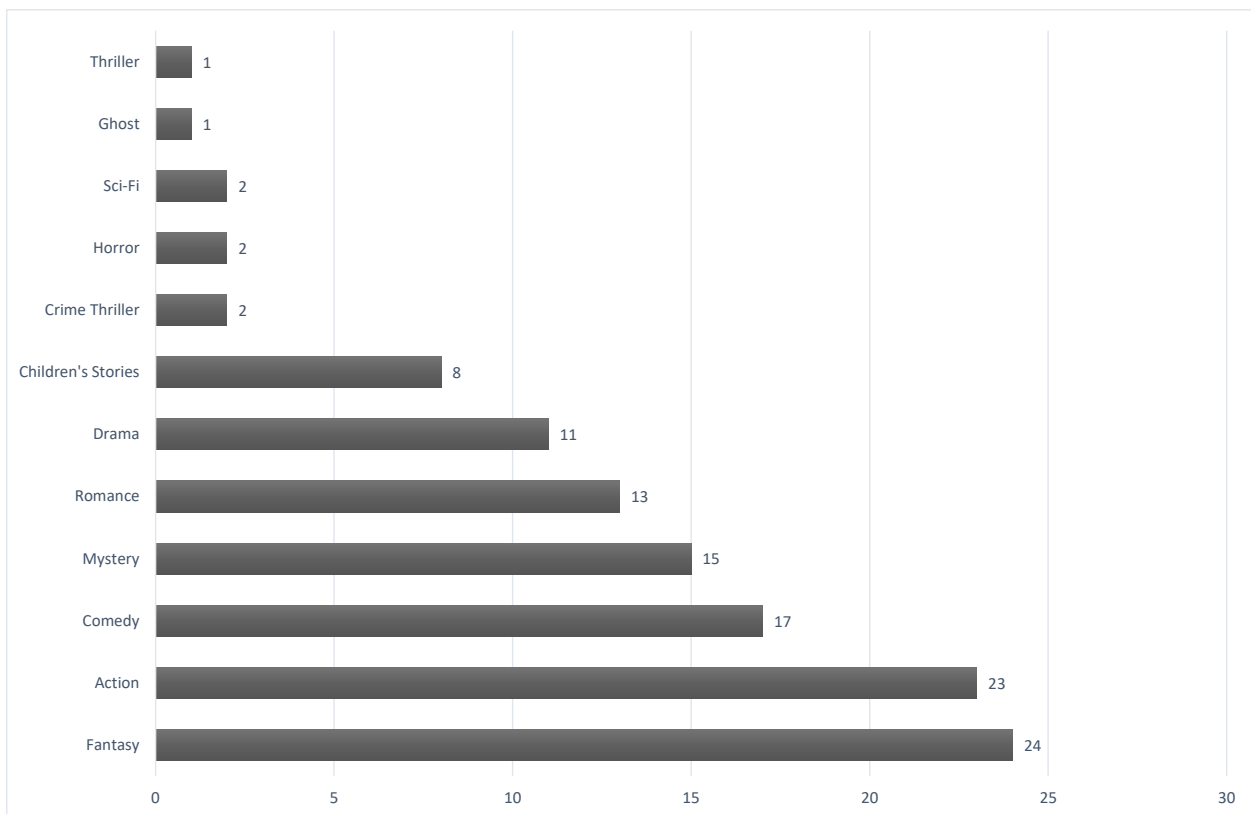


Figure 1. Most liked genres

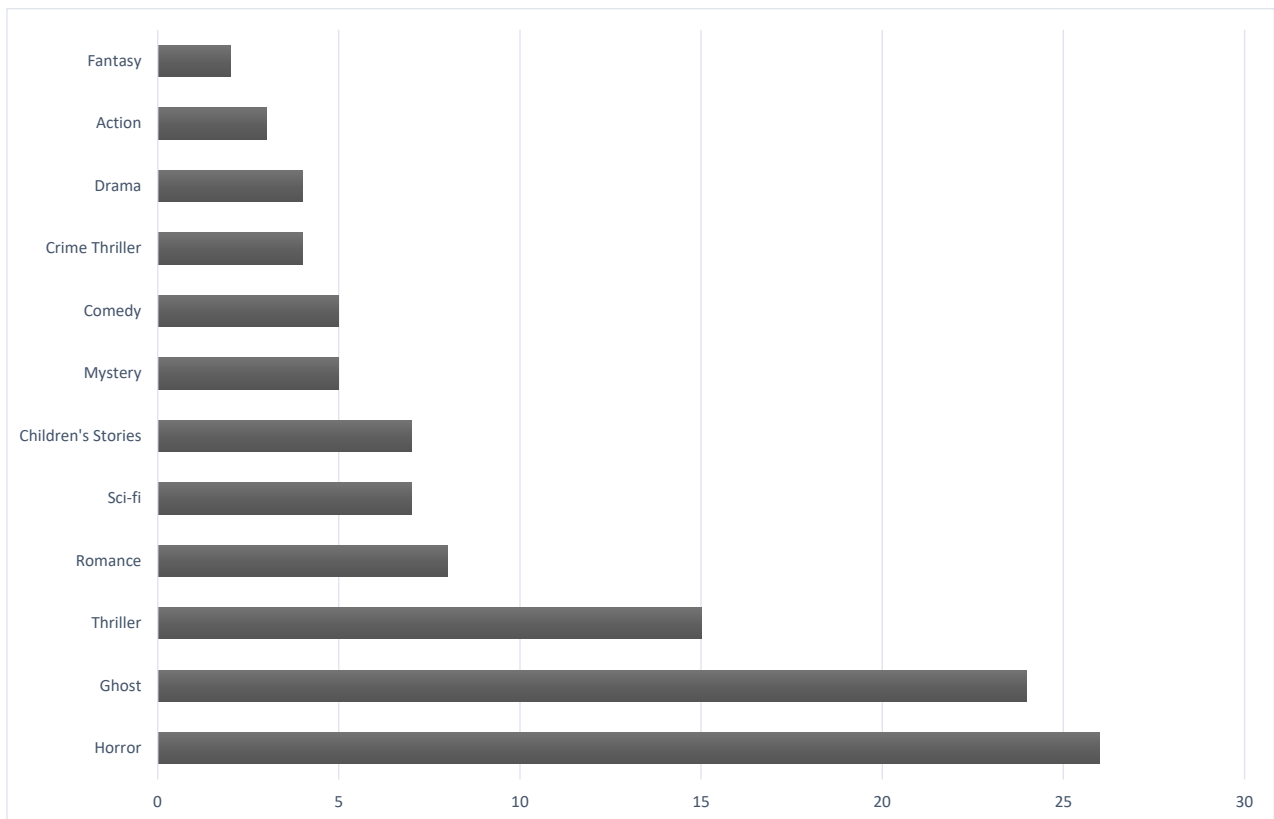


Figure 2. Least liked genres

and they could each choose three genres they liked the most, and the three genres they liked the least.

Figure 1 very clearly shows that students tend to favor Fantasy, Action and Comedy. Not only this, the “Least Like Genres” shown in Figure 2 show that these same genres rank very low on genres they would usually avoid. Conversely, the three most actively disliked genres listed in Figure 2 are Horror, Ghost and Thriller, which also garnered very few votes for the “most popular genre” seen in Figure 1.

As a whole, I felt like I had an idea of what the collective comfort zone for these classes might be. They enjoyed funny and exciting titles, but steered clear of anything that they deemed scary or supernatural. My next task was attempting to bridge the gap between these two opinions and (hopefully) introduce the students to some new material.

I chose to try and connect Horror and Comedy, as these were not only on opposite sides of the collected data, they have a strong emotional connection. In his book, *Laughing Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy*, William Paul explores the visceral similarities of laughing and screaming, two instinctive reactions we can have to genre films:

“This is a pleasure akin to what a child feels when a parent suddenly says ‘Boo!’ There is a jolt of surprise, followed by giddy laughter, and then a desire for the whole thing to happen all over again.” (1994, p. 66)

Here Paul is exploring the pleasure an audience can gain from being scared. This may appear like an oxymoron, as fear is not normally associated with pleasure, but Paul’s simple analogy shows how even as children, we have the ability to tie the experience of being scared with being entertained.

Having decided the two genres with opposing popularities, I looked at building a strong connection between the two. I decided to use Jordan Peele to bridge the gap. Jordan Peele is equally well-known for his work as a sketch comedian on the Comedy Central television series *Key and Peele*, as for directing his debut film, *Get Out* (2017), which was both a critical and commercial success.

I started by showing the students a short sketch from Comedy Central, which sees a young couple coming out of a nightclub. Who we assume to be the boyfriend is carrying the woman’s jacket. The woman storms away from the man, refusing to take her coat back and clearly annoyed about the man talking to

other women at the club. As the man gives up and turns to leave, the woman sends him an alluring look, which encourages him to continue his pursuit of returning her coat. The couple get further and further away from the club, through dark alleys and even on row boats. The sketch farcically continues until the two pass out in a desert, miles away from the original bustling city street where the sketch started. As the camera pans out, it shows the desert strewn with skeletons of men trying to give coats back to their disgruntled girlfriends.

In this sketch, Jordan Peele plays Meegan, the annoyed and alluring girlfriend. Whilst silly, the sketch does have a dark twist to it, with it ending in the characters' apparent death, and one could read in some social observation, as it shows genders being unable to communicate with one another. But for the darkness in the sketch and the layers of interpretation viewers may place upon it, the overall tone is very much comedic. I then showed the students the trailer for *Get Out*, which has the same dark humour and social commentary, but the starkness of the ending of the comedy sketch pales in comparison to the heavy sense of foreboding that the film trailer builds for *Get Out*.

The film trailer did pique the interest of the students, and with this enthusiasm we did a quick activity where groups would guess how the film ended. They could not however guess what connected these two short clips. When they were informed that the director of the horror film was actually the same person who played Meegan, half the class were surprised and the other half thought I was lying.

As a result, Jordan Peele acted as a bridge between a comedy sketch that could be readily understood regardless of the students' English ability, and a trailer for a horror film many of the students would have shown little interest in. The activity of guessing the ending was also "fun" and made the experience less scary, and whilst *Get Out* is (intended to be) a scary film, there is not an over-reliance on gore or blood and it is not exploitative or overtly sexual.

Although it would be inadvisable to show the entire film to students, who may find it overwhelming, the trailer alone sparked an interest in many students who before had stated they actively disliked horror. Whilst there was no data collected after this lesson, anecdotally, several students informed me that they had since seen the film, the majority saying they had enjoyed it, with one saying they only got halfway

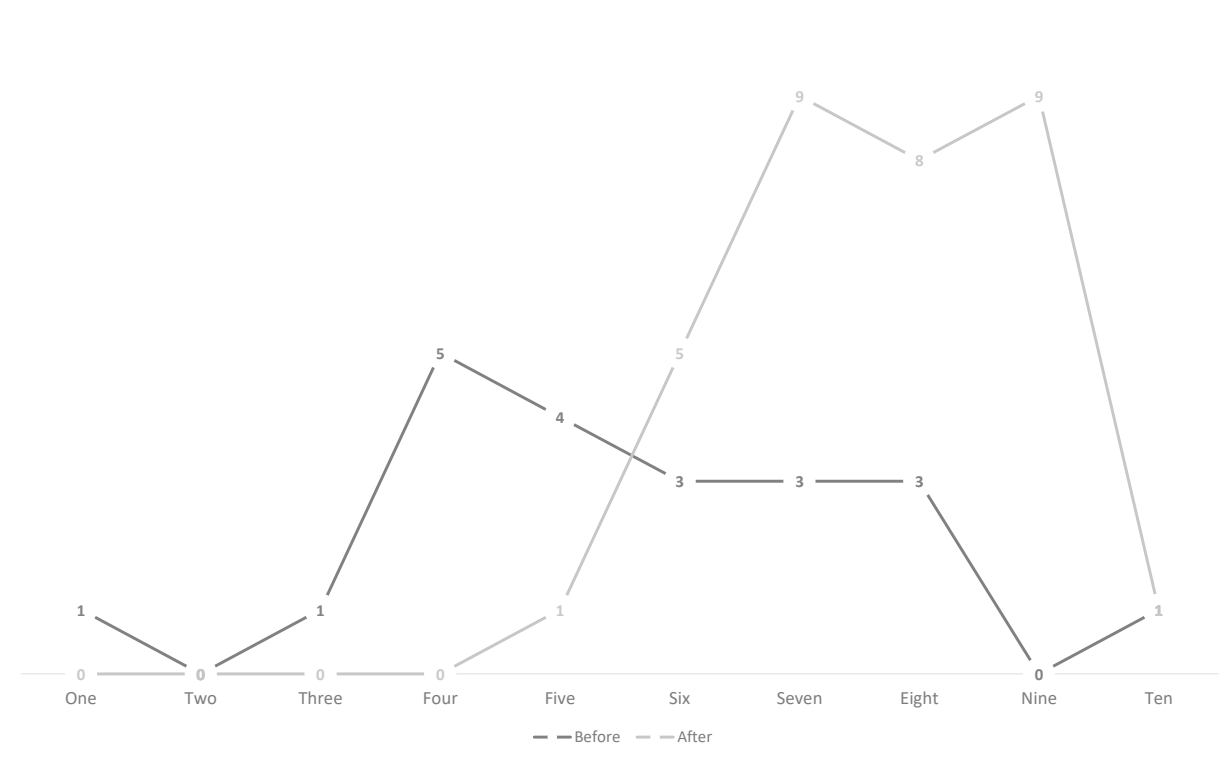


Figure 3. Popularity of reading before and after the course.

through before turning it off (although they were hoping to build up the courage to get back to it).

There is however a real danger that by dedicating class time to genres that students have clearly stated they do not like, they may feel uncomfortable or begin to lose enthusiasm towards the course. To track this, I asked my students how much they enjoyed reading as a hobby before and after the course, with “1” being “Hated/Hate Reading” and “10” being “Loved/Love Reading.” Thankfully, the students in my class seemed to benefit from this encouragement to explore new genres, as before the class the average score was 5.6 and afterwards 7.1, a notable increase.

It is difficult to say whether or not this increase was due alone to their varied intake, as I could not think of a way to isolate that one activity from an entire term, and the results may well be influenced by a number of factors. At the very least, the activity did not have a detrimental effect on their love of reading, and at the very best, it may lead to them exploring new and exciting titles they may have been left undiscovered.

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## Recent research in extensive reading and listening

Compiled by Imogen Custance  
& G. Clint Denison

Cooper, C. (2018). "Rakudoku": Fostering the beginnings of extensive reading (with 5th and 6th graders) in a public elementary school in Japan. *Journal of Extensive Reading*, 6, 23-29. <http://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/er/article/view/141/18>



A study was conducted in a Japanese public elementary school with 38 fifth- and sixth-grade learners, who took part in rakudoku (Yamanaka, 2009), reading graded readers from the Oxford Reading Tree (Oxford Owl, 2017) and Building Blocks Library (McDougall, 2010) series over a two month period during English lessons and in their free time. Many of the learners felt they could understand the books they read and found them interesting. To varying extents, all students enjoyed rakudoku and thought it was a useful part of their English education. It was concluded that this form of extensive reading could be considered for inclusion in the expanded English elementary school curriculum in Japan from 2020.



Elgort, I., Brysbaert, M., Stevens, M., & Van Assche, E. (2018). Contextual word learning during reading in a second language: An eye-movement study. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 40(2), 341-366. doi:10.1017/S0272263117000109

Reading affords opportunities for L2 vocabulary acquisition. Empirical research into the pace and trajectory of this acquisition has both theoretical and applied value. Charting the development of different aspects of word knowledge can verify and inform theoretical frameworks of word learning and reading comprehension. It can also inform practical decisions about using L2 readings in academic study. Monitoring readers' eye movements provides real-time data on word learning, under the conditions that closely approximate adult L2 vocabulary acquisition from reading. In this study, Dutch-speaking university students read an English expository text, while their eye movements were recorded. Of interest were patterns of change in the eye movements on the target low-frequency words that occurred multiple times



in the text, and whether differences in the processing of target and control (known) words decreased over time. Target word reading outside of the familiar text was examined in a posttest using semantically neutral sentences. The findings show that orthographic processing develops relatively quickly and reliably. However, online retrieval of meaning remains insufficient for fluent word-to-text integration even after multiple contextual encounters.

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Serrano, R. & Huang, H. (2018). Learning vocabulary through assisted repeated reading: How much time should there be between repetitions of the same text? *TESOL Quarterly*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.445>

Repeated reading, which involves the reading of short passages several times, has been demonstrated to be beneficial for second language fluency (Chang & Millett, 2013) and vocabulary acquisition (Liu & Todd, 2014). Despite the increasing interest in repeated reading, no study has addressed the effects of time distribution—how different encounters with the same text should be spaced for repeated reading to have the strongest impact on second language learning, specifically on vocabulary acquisition, the focus of the present study. This study includes two groups of 16-year-old learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Taiwan (N = 71). One group carried out assisted repeated reading (i.e., with audio support) once every day for 5 consecutive days (intensive distribution); the other read the same text once every week for 5 consecutive weeks (spaced distribution). The results revealed that intensive practice led to more immediate vocabulary gains but spaced practice led to greater long-term retention.

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Ro, E. (2018). Understanding reading motivation from EAP students' categorical work in a focus group. *TESOL Quarterly*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.426>

This article uses insights and methods from ethnomethodological conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization analysis (MCA) to explore reading motivation as a topic (Burch, 2016). With the results of CA and MCA of the participants' categorical work in their interactions in a focus group setting, this study outlines how enthusiastic readers talk about their experience with and opinions about extensive reading (ER) and how they use their talk for interactive purposes in the focus group. The author shows how participants developed different positioned cat-

egories of a particular kind of reader while displaying their own stances toward the ER experience and reading behaviors. The author also shows how they changed their stances toward voluntary reading and how they assigned different propositions to their experience with ER while accomplishing agreement on two points: that voluntary reading is enjoyable but subject to time constraints. This study portrays a complex picture of reading motivation as related to different kinds of identity work and the moral responsibilities associated with certain identities. Post-analytically, the author suggests pedagogical implications of what the participants' categories say about issues related to the ER teaching principles in an English for academic purposes context.

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Hsu, W. (2018). Voice of America news as voluminous reading material for mid-frequency vocabulary learning. *RELC*. Advance online publication. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0033688218764460>

Schmitt and Schmitt (2014) labeled the first 4,000 to 9,000 word families as mid-frequency vocabulary and highlighted its essential nature based on Nation's (2006) estimate that knowledge of the first 9,000 word families would provide 98% coverage of various texts. To attain this goal, this study first measured the vocabulary level of Voice of America (VOA) news for its potential as voluminous reading material for mid-frequency vocabulary learning. Then it investigated how much VOA news input is needed to encounter most of the first 9,000 word families enough times for learning to occur. To get differently sized corpora, every 500,000 words of VOA news were incrementally added to examine mid-frequency words. Results show that VOA news reached the sixth 1,000-word-family level at 98% text coverage. Corpus sizes of 0.5 to 6 million words provided an average of 12+ repetitions for most of the words from the fourth to ninth 1,000-word-family levels. The figures may serve as a reference for English extensive reading practitioners and learners who are concerned with mid-frequency vocabulary learning.

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Vaughn, S., Martinez, L. R., Williams, K. J., Miciak, J., Fall, A., & Roberts, G. (2018). Efficacy of a high school extensive reading intervention for English learners with reading difficulties. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. doi:10.1037/edu0000289

This study examined the effects of Reading Intervention for Adolescents, a two-year extensive reading intervention targeting current and former English learn-

ers identified as struggling readers based on their performance on the state accountability assessment. Students who enrolled at three participating urban high schools were randomly assigned to the Reading Intervention for Adolescents treatment condition ( $n = 175$ ) or a business-as-usual comparison condition. Students assigned to the treatment condition participated in the intervention for approximately 50 min daily for two school years in lieu of a school-provided elective course, which business-as-usual students took consistently with typical scheduling. Findings revealed significant effects for the treatment condition on sentence-level fluency and comprehension ( $g = 0.18$ ) and on a proximal measure of vocabulary learning ( $g = 0.41$ ), but not on standardized measures of word reading, vocabulary, or reading comprehension ( $g$  range:  $-0.09$  to  $0.06$ ). Post hoc moderation analyses investigated whether initial proficiency levels interacted with treatment effects. On sentence-level fluency and comprehension and on vocabulary learning, initial scores were significantly associated with treatment effects—however, in opposite directions. Students who scored low at baseline on sentence reading and comprehension scored relatively higher at posttest on that measure, whereas students who scored high at baseline on the proximal vocabulary measure scored relatively higher at posttest on that measure. The discussion focuses on the difficulty of remediating persistent reading difficulties in high school, particularly among English learners, who are often still in the process of acquiring academic proficiency in English.

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Tragant Mestres, E., Llanes Baró, À., & Pinyana Garriga, À. (2018). Linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes of a reading-while-listening program for young learners of English. *Reading and Writing*. doi: 10.1007/s11145-018-9886-x

Reading-while-listening may be especially well suited for young language learners because of the multimodality provided in many graded readers aimed at this age group (ie., the presence of oral and written text and illustrations). This study compares a group of students who were exposed to 18 sessions of reading-while-listening with a group exposed to the same number of sessions through reading-only, and a control group. Linguistic outcomes show that students in the two intervention groups obtained higher vocabulary gains than those in the control group but did not present superior scores in reading or listening comprehension or reading fluency. Non-linguistic

outcomes showed a clear preference on the part of the students for the reading-while-listening mode of input. The study concludes that the lack of differences in comprehension and fluency gains may be due to the fact that graded readers for children are too short; the input they offer is too limited to make a difference in areas other than attitudes and vocabulary learning.

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Warren, P., Boers, F., Grimshaw, G., & Siyanova-Chanturia, A. (2018). The effect of gloss type on learners' intake of new words during reading: Evidence from eye-tracking. *Studies in a Second Language*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1017/S0272263118000177

A reading experiment combining online and offline data evaluates the effect on second language learners' reading behaviors and lexical uptake of three gloss types designed to clarify word meaning. These are (a) textual definition, (b) textual definition accompanied by picture, and (c) picture only. We recorded eye movements while intermediate learners of English read a story presented on-screen and containing six glossed pseudowords repeated three times each. Cumulative fixation counts and time spent on the pseudowords predicted posttest performance for form recall and meaning recognition, confirming findings of previous eye-tracking studies of vocabulary acquisition from reading. However, the total visual attention given to pseudowords and glosses was smallest in the condition with picture-only glosses, and yet this condition promoted best retention of word meaning. This suggests that gloss types differentially influence learners' processing of novel words in ways that may elude the quantitative measures of attention captured by eye-tracking.

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