Extensive Reading in Japan

ERJ

In This Issue

Dear ERJ readers,

I hope everyone is bearing up well and staying healthy.

I am writing this as we continue to experience uncertain times. A delayed start of the academic year and the subsequent move to online classes have certainly made life challenging. In whatever format your classes may be offered in the fall semester, I hope you manage to find all the resources you need to continue with extensive reading in your classes.
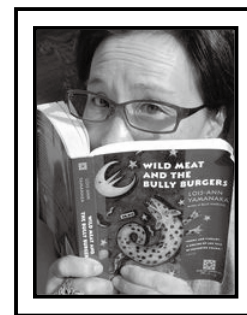
One of the key phrases of this year's JALT conference is 'communities of practice' and with this in mind, we are working on spreading ER interests widely and expanding collaboration with other groups that share common interests.

We have just concluded our first JERA/JALT ER SIG Joint Summer Seminar online. While it was unfortunate that we could not meet face to face, I think we managed to put together a successful seminar. We had 22 presentations with a 50-50 split in English and Japanese. They ranged from beginning ER to research-focused sessions with close to 200 attendees, so there was something for everyone. Hopefully we can continue with this successful collaboration with the Japan Extensive Reading Association into the future.

We are now looking forward to the ER SIG Forum at JALT 2020 scheduled for Sunday, November 22nd. The theme is 'Bridging the Gaps' with forum panelists discussing the connections between reading and writing, and in graded reader levels, content and learner accessibility.

We also hope to forge a stronger connection with the Japan Association for Self-Access Learning (JASAL), an active group focusing on self-access learning and issues in autonomy. This is a natural fit with ER pedagogy as we all tend to focus on keeping the learner at the center of the language learning process. And it helps that graded reader libraries are often housed in many self-access centers.

Planning meetings and events has been challenging but with the expanded use of online platforms we can still connect and keep our community strong.

There is much to look forward to but for now I am hunkering down and quietly reading a good book, waiting for the sweltering heat to subside. This storm will pass and there will be sunny days ahead.

Happy reading!

Ann Mayeda
ER SIG Coordinator

Your professional community needs you!

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

Become a reviewer for the Proceedings of the World Congress on Extensive Reading and the Journal of Extensive Reading! Drop a line to proceedings@erfoundation.org letting us know which areas of ER you are interested in, and please register here: 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

Also, the ERJ is always looking for your ideas, opinions and experiences. Details at jalt.org/er or write to erj@jalt.org

Extensive reading tactics: Introducing variety

ER course designers could also use non-traditional forms of classroom material, such as magazines, comic books, and graphic novels.

Adam L. Miller and Benjamin Filer

Aichi Shukutoku University; Nanzan University

Extensive reading has become an increasingly common feature of English language teaching in recent years. As a result, the use of graded readers as a tool to aid this style of teaching has become significantly more widespread. However, this trend may have led to a reliance on graded readers at the expense of considering alternative options. With that in mind, it is important to state that this paper is not proposing that graded readers need to be replaced in the classroom. What this study hoped to explore was if adding variety could help keep the interest and enthusiasm of the students, or if it would add an unnecessary level of frustration.

Seeking a variety of materials may traditionally include a range of genres within graded readers and/or short stories; Watkins (2018, p. 6) suggests that "ER course designers could also use non-traditional forms of classroom material, such as magazines, comic books, and graphic novels." Without wishing to disregard the importance of graded readers or short stories, this paper explores the boundaries of "non-traditional forms of classroom material," and what students most actively engage with. With that in mind, an extensive reading class of 17 students at a Japanese university were presented with a variety of alternative types of reading materials, and then asked in a short survey which texts they enjoyed the least/most. More details regarding the methodology of this study are given below.

The dangers of reading fatigue

The ultimate aim of this paper is to explore new types of texts that students may show an interest in, as students becoming bored with reading is potentially a very big problem with extensive reading. As Jacobs and Farrell (2012) highlight:

> "Finding attractive reading materials often constitutes the toughest challenge, as reluctant readers frequently read far below grade level. The problem frequently comes down to the Catch 22 that the books these students want to read [...] are at reluctant readers' frustration level, whereas materials at their independent reading level do not match their interests, often being seen as "babyish." (p. 69).

Finding the right balance between a text that both interests a student and is at a suitable level of difficulty can be extremely problematic, effectively narrowing the scope from which students can select texts. After exposing students to a range of texts, some traditional, some less so, there seemed to be a very clear divide between what the students found engaging and what did not hold their interest.

If educators allow students greater autonomy and "more freedom to choose reading materials that interest them" (Aebersold & Field, 1997, p. 43), there is a very real possibility that they will more actively engage in the course. This paper, therefore, argues that in introducing students to new and perhaps untraditional texts, there is an increased chance that students, no matter their previous opinions towards reading, will find the extensive reading course more engaging and rewarding.

It is true that graded readers are not simply limited to graded adaptations of classic novels, and in recent years there have been additions such as travel writing, film adaptations and biographies of historical figures. This variety of texts can go a long way in keeping students interested in the pursuit of reading, but they can still carry an air of academia; whereas the less traditional texts explored in this study have the potential to seem new, different and exciting.

Methodology

The data collected is from a single class of seventeen Japanese university students from years 1-4, their English ability ranging from pre-intermediate to intermediate. This may mean that the data is not definitive, but it does give an insight into what students in one class enjoyed reading.

The types of texts chosen for the questionnaire were graded readers, short stories, in-class reading

(which was Of Mice and Men), novels, travel writing, songs/lyrics, extracts from longer books, comics, film reviews, magazines, and websites. Topics such as travel writing and film reviews were based on lesson plans found on the British Council website (https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading/intermediate-b1/a-travel-guide), whilst the other topics were based around worksheets and activities specifically created for each particular class by the teacher. All topics besides "novels" had a single lesson dedicated to them, and due to time limitations, novels were only explored in the student's free time, so the data regarding that particular type of text may not be accurately reflective.

A simple questionnaire was presented to students on the last day of term, so this paper concedes that memories of more recent classes may have influenced the students' responses, but hopefully, the data collected is clear enough to show some trends or patterns among the class group.

At the end of the course, students were given 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire anonymously, and before doing so, the questionnaire was described to the entire class, to avoid any confusion or misunderstandings of the questions.

Research results

The questionnaire began with a list of different texts that had been explored in class, and students were asked to choose up to three styles they enjoyed most (see Figure 1).
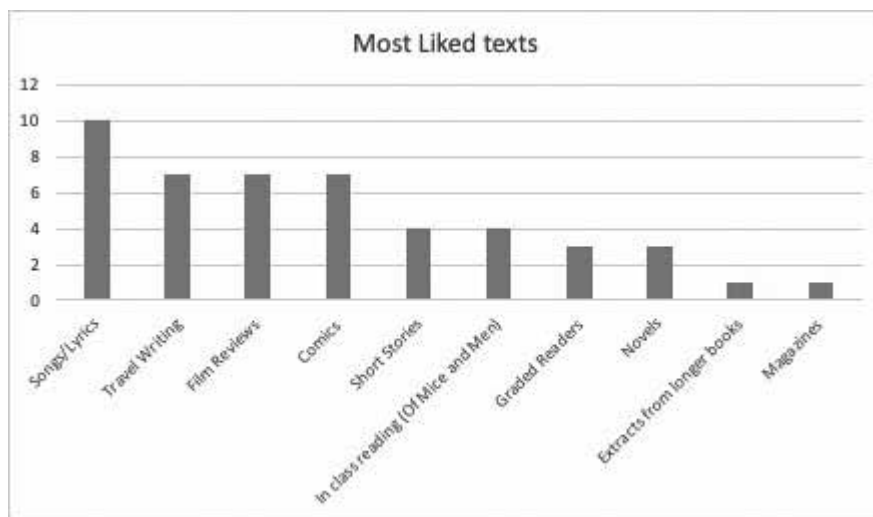

Figure1 What type of reading did students enjoy the most?

The three most popular types of text (i.e., Songs/Lyrics, film reviews and comics) were all text types that we feel are not often covered in ER collections, although it should be noted that some graded readers are now exploring the genres of comics and graphic novels. However, notably, magazines were also a new style of text introduced to the class, but they were amongst the least popular, so it is clear students did not choose the top four styles for novelty value alone.

To determine whether the texts that gained the least amount of votes indicated an active dislike or merely indifference, the students were shown the same list as before and asked to choose which three texts they enjoyed reading least.

Figure 2 shows that reading extracts from larger texts were not only the least popular but also the most actively disliked. In-class reading, websites and novels were the next least liked, with 5 votes each, again mirroring the apparent indifference to these styles of text in Figure 1. It is also important to note that whilst film reviews were shown to be popular in the first graph, they were also actively disliked by some students, which could show that even an approach that may appear popular in a class, may not be enjoyed by all students.
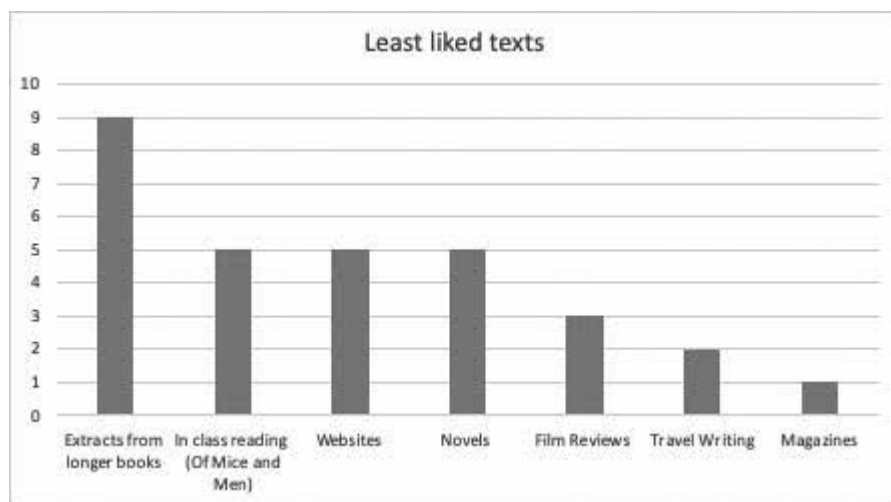
Songs/lyrics and comics were not disliked by any students,

Figure 2 What type of reading did students enjoy the least?

which when paired with their apparent popularity in the first graph, could show that they are universally preferable approaches to extensive reading. Graded readers and short stories did not receive any votes in the second question, whilst underperforming in the first; they appear to be neither popular or actively disliked. This may be an indication of student ambivalence towards them, perhaps seeing them as a staple of extensive reading that are inevitable more than enjoyable.

How much did students enjoy reading before and after the course:

There was a concern over the possibility of increased anxiety amongst the participants in terms of the variety of reading texts they were being introduced to. This concern arose from the idea that students may actually prefer a more consistent lesson environment and the security of familiarity that comes with graded readers. Considering extensive reading's "main value is to foster fluency – and, let us hope, pleasure in reading" (Greenwood, 1981, p. 107), we wanted to ensure this study did not impact upon that.

In order to track this potential decreasing interest in reading, the same questionnaire also asked the students how much they enjoyed reading before and after the course. Their answers were scaled from 1-10, with 1 representing an active disdain for reading, and 10 a love for reading. The results shown in Figure 3 are rather promising.

Figure 3 demonstrates that not only did fewer students dislike reading once the course was completed, but more students also seemed to actually enjoy it.

Unfortunately, there was also an increase in students who chose 6 on the scale of 1-10, indicating they have an indifference bordering on a fondness for reading, which is far from a ringing endorsement.

If we were to look at the average score from the collective answers from question 3 however, there is a marked improvement. Opinions on reading before the course averaged at 4.5 per student, whilst after the course, it was 7.1. It may be impossible to determine whether or not this increasingly favorable opinion towards reading was due to the range of texts we explored, or another unaccounted reason, such as students enjoying each other's company, the class or the teaching approach.

Discussion and implications

Perhaps the three most notable findings show that:

1. Novels and in-class reading (in this case, Of Mice and Men), were both unpopular and actively disliked.
2. Many of the less traditional styles of texts, such as film reviews, lyrics, and travel writing, were comparatively more popular with students.
3. Graded readers were neither popular nor disliked, indicating students were disinterested in them.

From these results, it could be extrapolated that changes could be made in an attempt to make extensive reading courses more enticing for a wider selection of students. Firstly, perhaps there should be less dependence on novels and in-class reading, or at least a new approach to make these styles more accessible to those who may not have an overt interest in them. Second, students seem to react positively to exploring new modes of
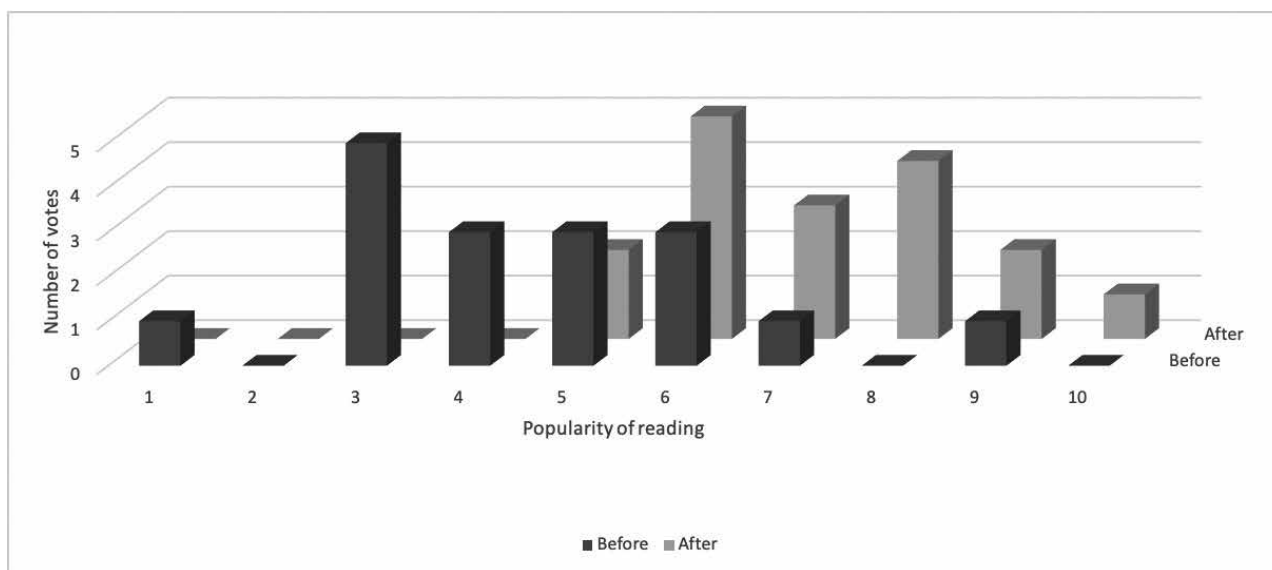

Figure 3 Students' preference for reading in English prior to and after the reading course

reading, and teachers ought to be prepared to introduce new styles of texts. Thirdly, the data seems to show that students are comfortable with graded readers being central to their extensive reading (or at the very least, resigned to this fact), and as these texts are specifically designed to target differing reading levels, they are an effective method of reading, that should help avoid students becoming frustrated.

If a balance could be struck between students having access to a variety of graded readers and exposure to an increasing number of less traditional texts, there is a very real chance that they could gain a very rounded and diverse learning experience.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, this study was taken from just one class of 17 students, and while it may make for an interesting case study, it is perhaps not advisable to base one's syllabus around these results, as different classes may respond differently, depending on age, English ability, personal tastes or interests, the teaching environment, or any other unforeseen variables.

One way in which a consensus could be formed would be if educators from different areas, or teaching different age ranges/English abilities, could introduce new styles of texts and ask students about what they liked or disliked. Teachers could also share their experiences, opinions or ideas, to see what other texts may be considered as suitable for extensive reading courses, and how classroom activities could be crafted around the texts to make them more engaging and interesting.

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Extensive Reading Foundation

Language Learner Literature Awards: 2020 Winners

The Extensive Reading Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit, educational association dedicated to the promotion of extensive reading to promote language learning. Each year we sponsor a contest where publishers are invited to submit their best books from the previous year. They are juried by a team of international judges – first language and non-native language readers. The finalists are selected in March. Until the end of July, they were listed on the association's website. Students and teachers were encouraged to make comments about the books. The judges then considered the on-line comments when making their final decisions. The following are the 2020 winners.

Category: Young Learners

(ages 6-11 / 2nd -6th Grade)

Title: *The Elves and the Shoemaker*

Author: Brothers Grimm

Retold by: Laura Cowan

Illustrator: Olga Demidova

Publisher: Usborne

📖 ISBN: 9781474947862
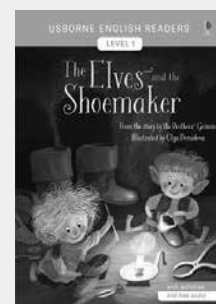
Reader's comment:

The illustrations are wonderful, reminding me of innocence, childhood and sweetness. A beautiful well-known fairytale, attractive to young readers. Beautiful and easy activities at the end of the book make the acquisition of new vocabulary fun!

Other finalists:

The Sick Dragon
Author: Herbert Puchta and Gavin Briggs
Illustrator: Andrea Alemano
Publisher: Helbling
📖 ISBN: 9783990458549

Visit Saint Petersburg with Me!
Author: Silvana Sardi
Illustrator: Arianna Operamolla
Publisher: ELi
📖 ISBN: 9788853626325
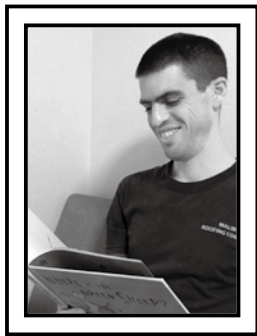
Extensive listening at Aichi Shukutoku University

Hywel Care

Aichi Shukutoku University

Aichi Shukutoku University`s Faculty of Global Communication (GLOCOM) began in the 2016 academic year. As the teacher of a Listening class for students in the First-year English Program (FEP), I implemented Extensive Listening (EL) in the Listening class beginning in the 2017 academic year. Although the Extensive Reading Special Interest Group`s mission is to promote the practice and research of Extensive Reading and Extensive Listening, to date no articles in ERJ have described examples of EL programs clearly in the manner many "How we do it at…" articles have done for ER. In this article, I describe the GLOCOM EL program and its development since 2017.

Why an EL program?

Extensive Reading (ER) was already used successfully with the reading class in the 2016 academic year, and research had shown students generally had a more positive attitude to reading in English after their experience of ER than before, including many of those who claimed that they disliked reading in high school (Care, DiCello, & Kobayashi, 2017). The textbook used in the Listening class had self-study units, eight of which were set as homework during the course (credit for which was part of the course assessment). Nonetheless, it appeared that even students who completed these units in full were not getting sufficient amounts of listening practice to prepare them for content classes (rather than language classes) in English after their first year. Although students were encouraged to practice English listening in addition to this, in a context in which many students do not spend the amount of time on structured homework that teachers would like, this was likely to be a low priority for many students. Time pressure from balancing academic work with a part-time job and/or a long commute to campus was a particular issue that impacted on the amount of English study outside of class for FEP students. Implementing EL, which is an outgrowth of ER (Brown, 2011), appeared to be a logical approach to addressing the issue of increasing students` time spent listening to English outside of class.

The setting

Aichi Shukutoku University is a private university in Nagoya with approximately 9,000 students studying in nine faculties located on two separate campuses. In April 2016, the first intake of freshmen students began studying in the GLOCOM faculty located on the campus in Hoshigaoka in Nagoya. One of the main aims of the faculty is for students to develop an advanced level of communication in English with classes conducted all in English. FEP is an important strand of this, comprising nine one-hour classes per week in the first year divided into strands of Academic Skills, Communication Skills and Language Skills each with three classes per week. Nearly all students come from within the Tokai region, and typically enter the FEP program with scores between 250 and 700 on the TOEIC. In FEP, students are streamed into four groups of roughly equal size (typically 15-18 students each) by TOEIC score. Typically all junior and high school education was experienced at Japanese schools. Some have experience of studying or living abroad, although rarely in excess of one month. Some also have experience of taking English lessons outside of their school.

The listening class within the FEP program

GLOCOM operates a quarter system, which means that there are three 60 minute classes a week for any given quarter's class. The Listening class takes place in the second quarter (Q2) of FEP. It is one of the Communication Skills classes and meets for 60 minutes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for a total of 23 one-hour classes spread over seven to eight weeks.

Listening class assessment

In 2016, the assessment criteria had been organized as follows:

- 10% Listening self-study
- 30% Mid-term test
- 60% Final test

The 10% self-study was based on completion of the eight textbook self-study tasks taken from Listen In Book 2 by Nunan and Adams (2009). For 2017, the self-study was increased to 12% to add an extra emphasis on the fact that "all English" in the GLOCOM

program included listening to English outside of class. The success of this based on the number of listening tasks that students did outside of class in 2017 when compared to 2016 led to a further increase of the self-study element to 20% for 2018 with each test reduced by 5% in its contribution to the overall grade.

Implementing EL in class

Reading on the topic and asking other teachers in other institutions about their implementation of EL gave a number of options for how to do this but a narrow listening scheme used by Mayora in a Colombian university was the basis for the program I decided to use (Mayora, 2017). Narrow listening is arguably a type of extensive listening in that it involves listening in large quantities but with the additional element of specialization as the listening is done with large amounts of material from within the same genre. In this case the genre was that of news reports. This had a number of advantages. In only a seven to eight week program, the degree of repetition of vocabulary items that is posited in the literature (see Nation, 2015 for example) seemed more likely when using a specific genre than allowing students too wide a choice of materials. It allowed me as the teacher to guide students to a selection of news websites with a primary audience of L1 English speakers and graded material, meaning the task of choosing from the vast range of English websites was more manageable, although students were not limited to the sites I suggested. The wide range of news topics gave students the agency that Day and Bamford argue for in ER in that students should choose their own materials. (Day & Bamford, 1998)

In the 2nd class of the scheduled 23, students were given an overview of the importance of doing self-study listening as well as the listening practice they would do in class. It was explained that part of homework in each class from lessons 2-22 would be completing at least one self-study listening task. Eight of these would be from the textbook's listening self-study units, each counted as one task, and the other 13 would be news reports that they could choose online. Achieving 21 tasks would gain 7.5 / 12 (a pass grade) and extra credit would be awarded for more. I took the decision not to stipulate a number of tasks for 12/12 so as not to put a ceiling on the students listening, but simply told students that they would be graded on a curve based on the final task totals at the end of the quarter. This was referred to as self-study listening

rather than EL, as the textbook activities from the previous year remained part of the mix of listening that students were required to complete for the 12% of their final scores.

The news report listening task itself required students to note on a worksheet the title and URL of the report they had watched or listened to, and to check the genre of news report from a selection (e.g., sports, world news, politics, entertainment). The following section asked them to communicate some information from the report. They were simply asked to take brief notes next to the following headings:

📖 What?

📖 Who?

📖 When?

📖 Where?

📖 Why?

If the report in question did not address one or more of these questions "N/A" was an acceptable response. They were then asked to write two or three other details that they heard in the report. It was emphasized that brief notes rather than full sentences were fine. The goal of this section was to focus students on meaning in the feedback they gave, and to require a minimum amount of writing to demonstrate that they had indeed listened to the report. These reports were not checked to confirm comprehension but simply a brief check to confirm that the report was indeed the one they claimed to have listened to. A final section asked students to rate the difficulty of the report, their own degree of comprehension, the number of times they needed to listen/watch to complete the task, and whether or not they would recommend the report to other students. A minimum audio/video length of 45 seconds was set for reports to be accepted.

To encourage students to listen to reports at an appropriate level for EL in these tasks, the number of tasks were counted with no extra credit for length or difficulty. Although students were free to choose difficult news stories, it was hoped setting up the credit in this way would encourage them to seek out reports that were more comprehensible, while retaining the principle of student choice from the ER literature.

How well did it work?

Measured against the maximum number of self-study listening tasks (eight) that students could complete when only using the text book in the previous year, it

was an unqualified success. Only one out of 74 students completed fewer than eight tasks in the first year that the EL component was introduced, though this was to be expected, given the requirement to complete a minimum of 21 tasks (13 news reports and 8 self-study units from the textbook). Measured against this requirement, participation in the self-study listening was still pleasing as 64 out of 74 students, a large majority, completed at least the minimum requirement. 12 students completed more than 40 tasks.

Although not required, the lack of extra credit for difficult tasks encouraged many students to use reports from websites specifically tailored to ESL/EFL language learners by the grading of language, options regarding the speed of delivery, or availability of transcripts to help students. Three of the five most popular websites were Breaking News English, VOA Learning English, and News in Levels. The other two were BBC News and miscellaneous news reports from YouTube. These were largely more 'authentic' news reports aimed at L1 speakers, although authenticity is a problematic concept in describing this kind of listening material. Overall, 1072 of the 1791 self-selected reports (59.85%) were aimed predominantly at learners of English. Fewer of these graded reports were rated very difficult to understand by students (7.92% vs. 14.97%). Nonetheless, both the overall percentage of reports that students would recommend to others and the distribution across the other levels of perceived difficulty (from `difficult to understand` to `very easy to understand`) were notably similar between these two types of report.

The easier, more comprehensible material that students were encouraged to use in the EL part of their listening self-study was observed to be the type of material that they more readily recommended to other students. Some examples include the following comparisons:

⌨ 52.15% recommendation rate of "very difficult to understand" reports compared to 91.06% recommendation rate for "quite easy to understand" or "very easy to understand" reports.

⌨ 35.61% recommendation where self-rated understanding was "poor" but 94.94% where it was "excellent" (each incremental point of greater understanding also saw an increase in this percentage).

⌨ 88.17% recommendation for material that students needed to watch once compared to 71.86% if students needed five or more viewings to complete the task. Again, each additional viewing between one and five or more saw a drop in the recommendation rate.

In light of the experience of this first introduction of EL, I have introduced changes in subsequent years – some results of these are reported below although comprehensive data is unavailable. Firstly, self-study has been increased to 20% of the final grade as previously mentioned. This has been divided into 15% for the EL activity using news reports and 5% for the textbook self-study tasks so that a missed required task from the textbook cannot easily be made-up with a cramming session of many extra news reports at the end of the course.

Other problems have been addressed regarding what is an appropriate English listening self-study task. For example, a news report about a forest fire in Portugal from BBC news with English subtitles but audio from interviews in Portuguese was submitted by multiple students in the first week of the course. Similarly, for reports with a transcript, many worksheets contained verbatim chunks from the report making it impossible to check whether students had listened or simply copied, and also contravening the purpose of EL, which is most definitely not the copying of exact words or phrases (Waring, 2011). In the first year, many of these problems had to be addressed through mid-course clarification of what would be accepted as a completed task, but in subsequent years examples of these problems were included in the orientation session for EL at the start of the course, with a checklist of common reasons for returning inappropriate worksheets.

Conclusion

The introduction of this narrow listening form of EL where students select news reports has greatly increased the number of listening activities that students complete for the listening class self-study. In addition to the textbook self-study tasks, they averaged 24.2 news reports per student across the seven weeks of the course in the first year. This has been lower in subsequent years, as first-year students in 2018 and 2019 averaged 18.89 and 20.87 news reports respectively. Whether this is a measure of less listening being done by these subsequent groups or greater awareness in teacher checking of inappropriately completed tasks from the beginning of the course is unclear. The checking of so many worksheets is time-consuming

and a factor to consider for any teachers planning on implementing this type of narrow listening activity. The development of checklists and a more targeted focus in checking worksheets for those students who had previously had problems completing the task correctly has helped reduce this over time. The payoff in increasing the amount of meaningful listening done outside the class since the first year of the department has made this seem worthwhile overall. Each year, 8-10 students out of the year group (ranging in size from 60-74) have not completed the minimum number of news report tasks, but a large majority have achieved at least the minimum requirements and made this EL program work. Although students have not been surveyed on their feelings about EL, students in 2017 said they would recommend close to 80% of the news reports to which they listened to other students, and in 2018 this was around 90%. I have also received comments from several New Student Seminar teachers that a number of freshmen students like listening to `real` news in English compared to textbook exercises where they have no choice regarding the material. While difficult to identify how widespread this is, it adds overall to a picture which suggests the implementation of EL has been a positive development for this Listening class.

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Category: Very Young Learners

(Up to age 5 / 1st grades)

Title: *Here Come the Unicorns*

Author: Adam Kardos

Illustrator: Omar Iván de Loera Chávez, (Andrea Montserrat Camacho Testas)

Publisher: AAS Press

📖 ISBN: 9784910155074

Reader's comment:

As me, this is a wonderful and magical book. Although I don't believe robots really have feelings, I remain appreciate the importance of environmental protection. Environmental problems are becoming more and more serious, it's everyone's duty to protect the environment and the animals. I love our planet; I think that the most effective way to protect environment is in harmony with nature. This book tells me why our planet is the best place to live. with the illustration, it's easy for me to read.

Other finalists:

The Golden Fish

Retold by Andy Prentice

Illustrator: Jesús López

Publisher: Usborne

📖 ISBN: 9781474964029

I Can't Sleep

Author: Herbert Puchta and Gavin Biggs

Illustrator: Francesca Assirelli

Publisher: Helbling

📖 ISBN: 9783990458464

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. Back issues can be seen at 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.

The practice and benefits of Mini-Bibliobattle

Kazuma Fujii

Nagaoka University of Technology

ER (extensive reading) has become popular in Japan over the past two decades. A big benefit of ER is to increase comprehensible input, which is usually insufficient in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environment. In second language acquisition research, the amount of exposure to language is reckoned as essential to language learning. ER is one of the few ways to ensure a large quantity of exposure in the EFL environment (Kadota, 2014). Theoretically and practically it seems natural that ER has been accepted by many teachers as a valid way to overcome the lack of input afflicting foreign language acquisition in Japan.

Further, an important factor in ER's spread is the significant role that Sakai (2002) played. He outlined *tadoku sangensoku*, or the three ER principles and they serve as a very influential guideline for Japanese learners and teachers of English. The three principles are: (1) Read what you can enjoy without a dictionary; (2) Skip unknown words; and, (3) Read books of interest. These learner-friendly guidelines succeeded in lowering the mental barrier for English and bringing many learners and teachers into this new way of reading for pleasure. Sakai also contributed to the adoption of ER by setting one million words as a goal of ER in terms of quantity. This clear terminus allowed learners to know how far they have come and motivated them to continue ER for a long time by accumulating words to their word count every time they finished a book.

Along with the spread of ER, its effectiveness has been established by a substantial number of studies. For instance, it has been suggested that ER has effectively improved reading rates, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and attitudes towards reading English. However, we must notice that there are two positions as to how much influence ER can bring about to these effects. One position regards ER as a "necessary and sufficient condition" and considers it can improve all (or at least almost all) aspects of English skills. One of the representative researchers in this position would be Krashen (2004), who posited: "Reading is the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, and adequate vocabulary, advanced grammatical competence, and the only way we become good spellers" (p. 34).

On the other hand, many researchers take a different position. Even though they acknowledge the effectiveness of ER, they view it as one of many "necessary conditions" required to improve English. They argue that ER alone is not enough to acquire every English skill, and some extra instruction would be necessary to strengthen the effects of ER. As an example of such extra instruction, the necessity of intentional vocabulary learning, explicit grammar instruction, or output practice have been suggested.

The author takes the latter position with regard to the effectiveness of ER and has proposed Mini-Bibliobattle as a good complementary activity that links ER to the improvement of output skills, taking advantage of the language skills enriched through ER (Fujii, 2017). The present paper briefly explains what Mini-Bibliobattle is, then reports on a classroom practice by the author, and argues the benefits of Mini-Bibliobattle.

Mini-Bibliobattle

Mini-Bibliobattle is a mini version of Bibliobattle, which is a book review contest based on the concept of "knowing people through books and knowing books through people" (Taniguchi, 2013, p. 258). It was started by Taniguchi (2013) with his peers in a laboratory when he was a graduate student at Kyoto University. The activity has since become a very popular practice adopted to various degrees throughout Japan.

The general procedure for Bibliobattle is as follows: (1) Each participant, called a *bibliobattler*, brings one favorite book; (2) Participants form groups of 4-6 members; (3) They decide the order of presentation by, for example, playing rock-paper-scissors, or drawing lots (there is no official rule as to how to decide the order); (4) Each participant gives a book-review presentation for 5 minutes; (5) The initial five-minute presentation is followed by a 2-3 minute-discussion, in which the other participants and audience may ask questions or give comments; (6) After all the presentations are completed, each participant votes for a book that he/she wants to read the most by a show of hands; and, (7) The book which gets the most votes is designated as the "Champion Book."

Mini-Bibliobattle is basically intended for young

participants with each presenter given three minutes to present their book-review, while all other procedures are the same. In choosing Bibliobattle or Mini-Biblibattle in an English class, teachers are supposed to select an appropriate format taking the students' proficiency level into consideration.

The practice of Mini-Bibliobattle

The author adopted Mini-Bibliobattle in his practice because the students' English proficiency was A1-B1 level of the CEFR based on their TOEIC test score. And, many of them had not had any experience of making a presentation in English.

In the present practice, 55 university juniors taking the author's English class in the fall semester in 2019 made up the sample. About 15 minutes was dedicated to in-class ER at the beginning of each class. In addition, students were assigned to read more than three books or more than 3,000 words outside of class every week. During the semester, an average of 71,108 words and 48.7 books were read per-student.

Mini-Bibliobattle was conducted in the last class of the semester. Before that, the author explained the general rules of Mini-Bibliobattle and the objective of doing this activity in the middle of the semester. At that time, the students were told that they need to choose one English book they felt was most interesting, and write a manuscript of about 300 words for a 3-minute book review presentation with a submission deadline of the 14th class (the second last class). For students who had difficulty in writing that amount of English on their own, the author uploaded some useful expressions for the Mini-Bibliobattle on a website and guided them for reference (Fujii, n.d.).

In the class of Mini-Bibliobattle, when the champion books were decided in all groups, the presenters of the "Champion Books" were asked to present once again, but this time, to the whole class. This was for sharing a good book in front of the entire class, and it was inspiring for the students to see some of their peers give a presentation confidently (Figure 1). Since the presentations are usually shared only in a group, this optional step brought yet another learning opportunity for the class.

Benefits of Mini-Bibliobattle

Based on this practice, the author would like to share four benefits of Mini-Bibliobattle. One is from the learners' point of view, and the remaining three are from the teacher.

Figure 1 Mini-Bibliobattle

High recognition as a meaningful activity

When Mini-Bibliobattle was finished, a questionnaire was conducted, in which the students were asked to answer four questions on a 5-point Likert scale. The four questions were:

1. Did you have fun doing Mini-Bibliobattle?
2. Did you get interested in a book introduced by other students?
3. Did you understand the presentations by other students?
4. Was Mini-Bibliobattle a meaningful activity of ER for you?

The results are shown in Figure 2, indicating that more than 90% of students found the Mini-Bibliobattle to be fun and meaningful activity and they became interested in other students' books. However, while 67% of the students answered they understood the other students' presentation, 28% answered they were not sure about comprehension and 5% responded they did not understand very much. This suggests there is some room for improvement, such asking students to write their manuscripts in easy English, speaking clearly and slowly while presenting, making eye contact with listeners, or showing pictures in the book during the presentation. However, overall, Mini-Bibliobattle was properly acknowledged as a meaningful output activity of ER as indicated by the survey responses.

Developing a better ER library

The second benefit is that conducting Mini-Bibliobattle can lead to the development of a suitable ER library for students. Teachers can grasp the students' preferences for series, genre, readability level, and length of a book from the list of their books for the battle.

Table 1 shows the series of ER books selected for presentation by a total of 55 students. Our university library has more than 3,000 books for ER, and they
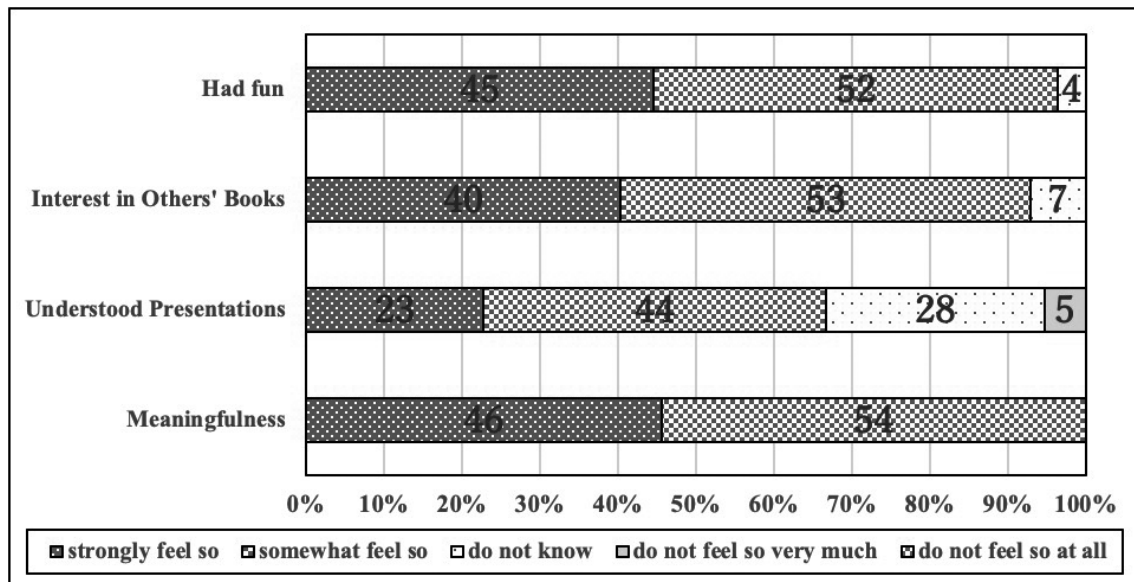
Figure 2 Results of a questionnaire survey

are divided into more than 50 series. However, among the 50 series, students selected only 17 series for their presentations, and among the 17 series, the top three series (i.e., FRL, OBW, and ORD) were selected by more than half of the students.

Further, teachers can learn about popular book's levels, and word counts which can inform purchasing decisions for the ER library. This will lead to an ER library better suited to student tastes and interests.

Table 1. Series of a book for Mini-Bibliobattle (*N*=55)

Series	No. of students
Foundations Reading Library (FRL)	14
Oxford Bookworms Library (OBW)	9
Oxford Read and Discover (ORD)	8
Oxford Dominoes (ODM)	4
Oxford Reading Tree (ORT)	3

Contribution to long-term ER

The third benefit is that students are expected to continue ER by encountering intriguing books in the Mini-Bibliobattle that they were unaware of. As in Figure 2, most students answered that they became more interested in books introduced by other students. The introduction to new books may stimulate students to expand the range of their reading.

To make the most of the opportunity of Mini-Bibliobattle, several ideas are worth considering towards a sustained, long-term ER initiative. One

idea is to put a sticker on the front cover of champion books so that the library users can readily know that these books were selected as a champion by their peers (Figure 3). Another idea is to make a poster of champion books and put it on the ER library or upload it on the institution's website.

It is claimed that the effect of ER will be much more significant if it is conducted continuously, over a long time (Nishizawa, Yoshioka, & Ichikawa, 2017). Since Mini-Bibliobattle is not the end goal of ER, it is a meaningful way to connect the reading experience to sustaining the ER effort over the long term.

Good chance for presentation practice and receiving feedback

The fourth benefit is that Mini-Bibliobattle can improve the students' presentation skills in English from three different learning occasions. The first occasion comes from their writing experience. They are expected to carefully consider the organization and paragraph structure so that their peers can understand the appeal of the book. Another one comes from their listening experience in Mini-Bibliobattle. Not only do they have a chance to listen to several types of English presentation in a group, but they learn about a good presentation, consciously or unconsciously, while thinking about the best book they want to read. The last occasion comes at the time of discussion and voting as feedback for their presentation. Mini-Bibliobattle as a learning opportunity to improve presentation skills can be

supported by one piece of evidence regarding the organization of the manuscripts.

All the 55 manuscripts submitted by the students were analyzed from the perspective of their organization. Based on the classification done by Akaike and Taniguchi (2014), each manuscript was classified into three categories, depending on its contents: (1) category of a book; (2) category of a presenter; and, (3) category of others. Specifically, the first category includes the description of the content, the organization, the author, the publisher, the series or the length of a book, etc. as indicated in the manuscript. The second category includes the description of the presenter's impression, his/her experience, or the reason why he/she chose the book for the battle and so on. The last category typically includes the student's other observations and description of social situations, common knowledge, questions to listeners and so on related to the book.

Table 2 shows the results of the ratio of description for each of the three categories between the presenters whose books were chosen as champion (n=9) and the rest of the presenters (n=46). Although the ratio between the two groups was not statistically different (χ=4.69, p=.096), the results demonstrate that while many presentations spent 75% on books, champion presentations spent relatively less time on books and instead more time on their personal feelings, experience or background information, occasionally asking questions. It can be inferred from this data that the latter presentations may have hooked listeners and enabled them to understand not only the outline of the book but also its appeal, based on the personal reading experience of the presenter. Thus, students can learn about a good presentation through writing, listening, and feedback experience.

Table 2. Ratio of the manuscript composition

	n	Book	Presenter	Others
Champion presenters	9	61.0%	20.4%	18.5%
Other presenters	46	74.5%	15.8%	9.7%

Summary

This paper briefly discusses the theoretical background of Mini-Bibliobattle as a good output activity of ER and shares its benefits based on classroom practice. It is hoped that this paper will help spread the practice of Mini-Bibliobattle and lead to interactions among students who enjoy ER.

Figure 3. Front cover of a champion book

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Extensive Reading – the contribution of Michael West

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When one thinks of the early founders of extensive reading, three names appear most often - A.S. Hornby, Harold Palmer and Michael West. In this article, we will look at West's life and work in relation to vocabulary learning and reading and especially his contribution to graded reading.

West built his early career in language teaching in Bengal (now a part of India and Bangladesh) from 1912 to 1936. His experience there revealed that the then-dominant approach to language learning, the Direct Method, as proposed by his colleague P. C. Wren was not suitable for Bengali children. Under the Direct Method, learners were given passages to take home and translate into Bengali and were sometimes given English synonyms. In class, a learner was selected by the teacher to read to the class and expected to translate the text word-for-word as needed. West criticized this method for its lack of input; the lack the development in the skill of translating from Bengali to English; the restriction of the learning mostly to writing, and the inability of the learners to develop any sense of fluency, either receptive or productive.

Due to the failure of the Direct Method in his setting, West developed an 'active research' approach to create various new experimental methods of language learning which he later reported in Bilingualism (West, 1926). Out of this investigatory approach, we first hear the term 'analysis of needs' (Howatt, 1984, p. 245; Tickoo, 1988) which guided his approach to the development of materials for language learners. West was also strongly influenced by the 'vocabulary control' movement of the 1920s as proposed by West himself, Palmer, Hornby and other linguists which stressed the systematic selection of the vocabulary and expressions in course materials to match the learners' needs.

It also emphasized the principles of gradation to systematically sequence material into levels, and presentation which promoted certain activities for language learning. However, West also did not trust the teachers to be able to conduct learner-centered classes and created learning materials for teachers to use, using his new method. His aim was to make materials that would bypass the teachers' own predisposition for lecturing, to help learners learn through interaction.

West is most well-known for his work on vocabulary lists, particularly the General Service List (West, 1953) which was not only ground-breaking at the time, but is still one of the best vocabulary lists available today, even if it is a bit outdated. He and his collaborators started work on the list in the 1930s and through several iterations released it in 1953. One of the main things this research revealed is that there are a small number of very useful words which all learners need to know. Even before the GSL was released, West and his colleagues used the principle of word frequency to write materials. These materials not only ensured the words the learners met were useful, but aided comprehension allowing learners to read fluently. Following the principle of gradation, only a few new words were added making the text just slightly above the learner's present level, a concept later termed i+1 by Krashen, (1982). The main reason underlying this was to ensure the words not only were repeated frequently to ensure they were embedded in memory, but to use them in slightly different ways each time to promote 'receptive generative use' to build up the learners' sense of how words and grammar fit together.

Some of West's most famous materials were based on the thoughts he espoused in his 'Reading Approach' and the 'New Method System.' The Reading Approach was first devised for English learners in India, and for French and German learners in the USA who had relatively little access (at the time) to controlled input. The aim was to provide reading materials that controlled the vocabulary, grammar and plot into levels for learners to progress through systematically. This led to the graded reader genre of reading materials that we see today.

West developed these readers over several years using his experimental 'action research' approach to the development of language learning materials. The original features of his New Method Readers (1926-27) were the presentation of new words in bold, the

systematic recycling of vocabulary, and the addition of supplementary readers. In addition, his books were longer than most readers of the time, some of them 8-10,000 words long. Following his understanding of the need to balance comprehensibility with the need to introduce new words, West added a new word once every six to seven sentences, giving an expected known-word coverage rate of 95% or more. At the higher levels, he introduced more words with a new word appearing in almost every sentence. His assumption behind the greater density of new words at higher levels was that as the core higher frequency words would have been mastered before the learners reached the higher levels. He wanted them to cope with more unknown words which he recognized were not being taught under the Direct Method. In this way, the modern graded reader was born.

Years later, this formula was copied by others, most notably in Faucett's Oxford English Course (1933-6), and from 1938, Palmer had adopted this approach in his New Method Grammar in Japan. Within a couple of decades, this approach to reading had spread to Sri Lanka, Palestine and all across Africa spawning new series of graded readers. Not only were his readers a commercial success, it laid the foundation for future series of graded readers published by Longman and Heinemann by other luminaries such as John Milne, whom we will learn about in the next article in this series.

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Category: Adolescents and Adults: Beginners

Title: *The Silver Statue*

Author: Paul Shipton

Illustrator: Berat Pekmezci

Publisher: Oxford University Press

📖 ISBN: 9780194634083

Reader's comment:

Nice, "fresh" teenage story with a clever twist in the plot. Easy to read and follow, it makes the readers want to read further so as to see what comes next!

Other finalist:

Skeleton Island
Author: Sue Murray
Illustrated by: Paul Fisher Johnson
Publisher: ILTS/Hueber Verlag
📖 ISBN Number: 9783190129713

Category: Adolescents and Adults: Elementary

(301-800 headwords; CEF A1 & A2 levels)

Title: *Ellis Island: Rosalia's Story*

Author: Janet Hardy-Gould

Illustrator: Thomas Girard

Publisher: Oxford University Press

📖 ISBN: 9780194634441

Reader's comment:

This is an excellent story about a journey of a mother with two children across the ocean. The language is quite easy to read and it is well-illustrated. It helps readers know more about life in the past.

Other finalists:

Naoko: My Japan
Author: Gabriele Rebagiati
Photographer: Tatsuya Hirata
Publisher: ELi
📖 ISBN: 9788853626424

Wonder
Author: R. J. Palacio
Retold by: Jane Cammack
Illustrator: Daniel Fabbri
Publisher: Black Cat (Cideb)
📖 ISBN: 9788853018359

The effect of extensive reading on students' ability to predict following text

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Fluent readers in any language do not focus on each word while reading because much of the text is predictable from the context and syntactic clues. Yet one reason that those who are learning to read a new language must read slowly is that they lack this ability to predict what is coming next. This project aims to demonstrate, through the "Scrolling Cloze" (SC) software developed by the lead author, that students, through their extensive reading, improve their ability to predict what will come next. The SC presented the students with text containing blanks that scrolled by quickly and then disappear from view. The students' task was to select the appropriate word for each blank from a panel of word buttons on their screen. Through a pre-test, post-test format, a cohort of English majors at a Japanese university attempted the Scrolling Cloze activity in April, at the beginning of their first year, and then a second time in December. The results indicate that the students' improvement in the number of correct answers correlated highly with the number of words read throughout the year, although not with any other measure such as improvement in their TOEFL scores, or other online practice activities.

There are now numerous studies that demonstrate that Extensive Reading is an effective approach, at least for some populations of learners. See Nation & Waring (2019, p. 101) for a listing of some of these studies.

The Extensive Reading Foundation's website lists these outcomes of ER, citing one or more studies for each claim:

1. ER increases reading skills, speed, and understanding.
2. ER builds vocabulary.
3. ER expands grammar knowledge.
4. ER develops listening and speaking ability.
5. ER correlates with improvement on tests like the TOEIC.
6. ER increases student enjoyment of reading.

One skill, however, is not mentioned, although it is related to those listed above: the ability to predict what is coming next in the text. Naturally, the more the reader can predict what is coming next, the less attention is required to those words. In fact, readers simply skip over the words that they have guessed from context, and this is one reason why good readers can read more quickly (Smith, 1975).

Let us look at a practical demonstration in the form of a common puzzle:

Read the following passage ONCE quickly from start to finish and count the number of f's that you find.

> Finished files are the result
> of years of scientific study
> combined with the experience
> of years . . .

The result is often that native speakers and those very proficient at English will see only three Fs, while slow readers will catch all of them, including those in the three occurrences of the word "of." This happens because the preposition is predictable from the preceding syntax.

Another argument is that native speakers, unless trained to proofread, very often skip over errors simply because they have already assumed what the words were. Thus, some recommended strategies for effective proofing include reading the text backwards, holding the paper upside down, or using a ruler–all of which force the proofreader to slow down and pay attention to words that otherwise might get skipped.

Research using eye-tracking

In eye-tracking research with native speakers, Barret Søgaard (2015, p.347), cited the work of Rayner and Duffy (1988) to conclude that "it is established and unchallenged that function words are fixated on about 35% of the time and content words are fixated on about 85% of the time."

Non-native speakers have difficulty recognizing idioms and therefore read them at a normal reading rate, whereas native speakers comprehend the phrase more quickly and move on with their reading. According to Siyanova-Chanturia, et al. (2011):

Contrary to native speaker results, non-native

findings suggest that L2 speakers process idioms at a similar speed to novel phrases. Further, figurative uses are processed more slowly than literal ones. Importantly, the recognition point analysis allows us to establish where non-natives slow down when processing the figurative meaning. (p. 251).

The research plan

The overall premise of this research was that the number of words read extensively would correlate with improvements in students' ability to guess what is coming next in a sentence.

Thus, our hypotheses were:

1. The SC activity can measure students' ability to guess "what is coming next" in a text.
2. There is a relationship between the amount of extensive reading and students' ability to guess "what is coming next?" in a flowing text.

While a standard cloze test can measure students' ability to guess, we were more interested in their ability to do this quickly and accurately as they are reading. A paper-based cloze would permit them to mull over each item and attempt to guess the word from the larger context, both before and after the blank line. Thus, we opted for a "scrolling cloze" (SC) test that would provide only a limited amount of time for them to respond. The number of correct items would then be correlated with the number of words read during the year.

The number of words read would be taken from their word count on MReader, a program previously developed by the lead author. MReader provides a randomized quiz of 10 questions from a larger question bank for each book that the students have read.

Design and development of the testing instrument

The basic idea was to have the students fill in blanks in passages that were available for only a limited amount of time. There were two basic options for achieving this: (1) to show a static passage on the screen with blanks for the students to fill in, but with a timer to place pressure on them to respond quickly; or (2) to have the text scroll past them on the screen with the blank appearing on the right side and slowing moving to the left and off-screen, somewhat like digital news scrolling at the bottom of a TV screen ("marquee function").

We opted for the marquee format since it allowed each word to be displayed for exactly the same length of time regardless of the length of the passage and the number of clozed items. Each word was visible for 12 seconds as it moved from right to left for a reading speed of approximately 40wpm. We decided to display a set of choices on the screen so that the subjects merely had to click on their answer choice.

Each brief passage contained multiple cloze items and the choices for all items were displayed like those in Figure 3. Five different colors were used for the word buttons so that the user could match each button set to a specific blank in the scrolling text.

Selecting the passages to use and the items to cloze within each passage

With permission from the publisher, Cengage, we selected passages from a number of their graded readers in the *Page Turners* series. We piloted seven texts and reduced the number to three that appeared to yield the best results, from *Soccer Crazy* (Level 1), *Kitchen Love* (Level 3) and *The Lift* (Level 3).

To determine the clozed words, we did not employ a strict policy on the word type or number of intermediate words. Instead, we hoped that through piloting we would be able to determine a set of words that correlated well with our initial information about the subjects' ability in English. We attempted to select words that we, as instructors, could assume that students would be able to guess, either from the context or due to a grammatical requirement, such as a specific preposition required by the preceding verb. We refined the item selection, removing words that were either too easy or too difficult to guess, or which had a low correlation with student ability, by selecting another nearby word as a replacement. More pilot trials might have resulted in a better selection of texts and item choices; however, due to time constraints, there was a limit to how many times we could ask students to pilot the passages.

Under the assumption that knowledge of collocations in English would be highly correlated with general language proficiency (Namvar, 2012) we also added two texts from 4-word NGRAM collocations culled from the Corpus of Contemporary American English, Brigham Young University. Two sets of 10 items were embedded in simple sentences from which one word was selected as the target.

The actual texts used are reproduced in Appendix A of Robb and Kamiya (2020). Figures 1 through 4 are

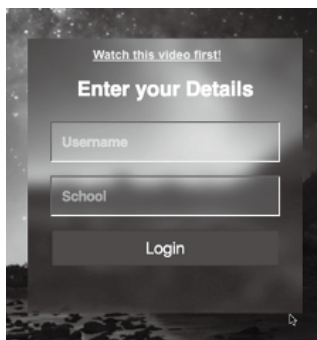screenshots of the SC application at various steps in actual usage.
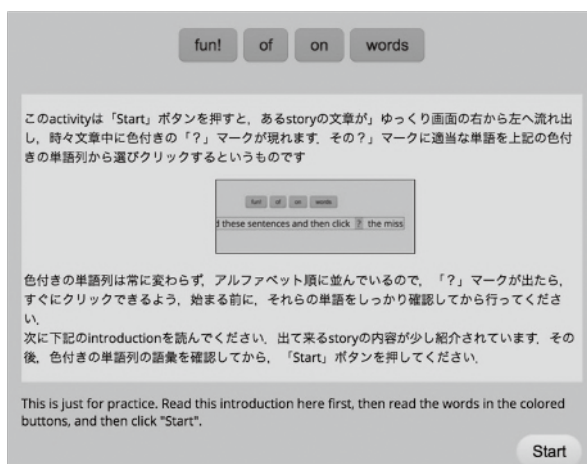

Figure 1. Login Screen

Figure 2. Instructions

Procedure

Once the testing instrument, the "Scrolling Cloze Test" (SCT), was developed, four classes of students of the English Department of Kyoto Sangyo University took the test twice, once in April and again in December, using exactly the same content. We assumed that a span of eight months was sufficient for the students to have forgotten the contents of the first administration. All students were required to read outside of class, with a minimum word target of 200,000 words during the year. The amount they read was one component of their grade for one of their required courses, but not the one used for the scrolling test assessment. For the data used in the study, the mean number of words read was 250,811 (SD= 94,830).

Using the SCT with the students

For each of the four "Joho" (Digitial literacy) classes, the lead researcher visited the class in the computer room just prior to the start of class. Their instructor introduced the researcher, after which we passed out an explanation on paper with an agreement for them to read and sign. After this, the SCT was demonstrated using the same "Have fun!" passage that the students would use for practice on their own computers. After the introduction to the full class, the students were requested to input their student number and the access code and then start with the "Have fun!" passage (https://www.langconcepts.com/sc5/mp4/HaveFun2.mp4) for practice. Following this, they continued to respond to the actual scrolling test items.

Results

The data for our investigation was based on the pre- and post-test measurements from the SC software, in comparison to their performance of the TOEFL test and the amount of extensive reading that they did during their first academic year.

Primary data

1. The number of correct responses to the April and December SC tests. There are "SC_Corr_Apr", "SC_Corr_Dec" as well "SC_Corr-Improv" which is the mathematical difference of the scores.
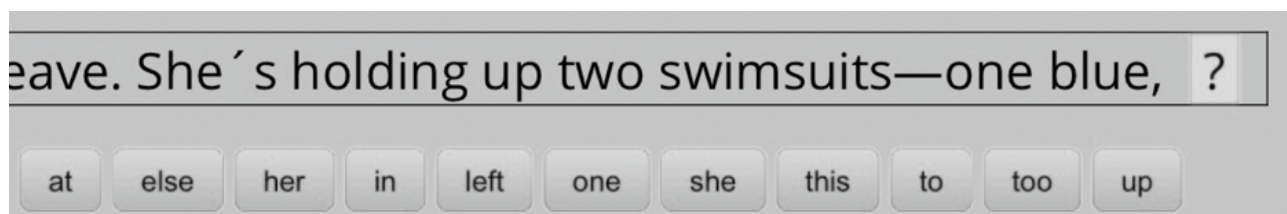2. The results of the three sections of the TOEFL –

Figure 3. A text showing a missing word, with the item choices below. The "?" has the same colour background as the item choices.
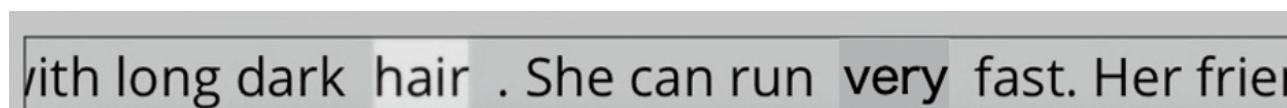

Figure 4. A text showing a correctly selected word ('hair'), and a corrected error ('very')

Listening, Structure and Reading. According to department policy, the students took the shorter "Pre-TOEFL" in April which is set on the same scale as the standard ITP (Institutional Testing Program) version, but with an upper limit of 50 for each subtest instead of 67, with the total score maximum being 500 instead of 667. This shorter version has been deemed suitable since usually no students "top out" in April with a full score of 500, and the test takes less time as well as being less expensive. The full TOEFL is administered in December, towards the end of the academic year

3. The total number of words read, as recorded by the MReader.org quiz program.

Secondary data

In-house reading speed tests, the number of times responses were marked "correct" in Word Engine vocabulary study program over the entire year, and English Central scores which were indicative of the effort and time expended by the students.

Analysis

Hypothesis 1. The SC activity can measure students' ability to guess "what is coming next" in a text.

The assumption is that the students' ability to guess the missing word on the SC activity is truly measuring their ability to guess what is coming next from the limited preceding context. This being the case, from Table 1, we can see that there is a highly significant initial correlation between each component of the TOEFL and their scores on the initial SC. From these data we can assume that the SC is indeed measuring some aspect of language ability. Note that

there is an insignificant, negative correlation with the total number of words read at the end of the year. If there were a direct correlation between language ability and the amount of reading permitted by their own ability, we would expect some degree of correlation with their SC performance, but there was none. (The full correlation matrix is available here: https://www.academia.edu/42948898).

Table 1. Correlations between the April administration of the SC with initial TOEFL scores

Variable	SC_Corr-Apr	
	Pearson's r	p-value
1. SC_Corr-Apr	—	—
4. Words	-0.20	.92
5. TOEFL_L_Apr	0.55***	< .01
6. TOEFL_S_Apr	0.37**	.00
7. TOEFL_R_Apr	0.40**	.00

Hypothesis 2. There is a relationship between the amount of extensive reading and students' ability to guess "what is coming next?" in flowing text.

From Table 2 we can see that there is a highly significant correlation between the words read over the entire academic year and the students' improvement on the SC test, SC test (r=0.44; r2=.19, weak effect size). We cannot expect a "strong correlation" since there are surely other factors or abilities attained during the school year that moderate the size of the correlation.

Principle components analysis

A principle component analysis uses the correlations

Table 2. Correlations between the December administration of the SC with total words of Extensive Reading

Variable	SC_Corr-Dec		SC_Corr-Improv		Words	
	Pearson's r	p-value	Pearson's r	p-value	Pearson's r	p-value
2. SC_Corr-Dec	-					
3. SC_Corr-Improv	0.33* -	.01 -				
4. Words	0.25*	.04	0.44***	<.001	—	—
5. TOEFL_L_Apr	0.49***	<.001	-0.16	.87	0.22	.07
6. TOEFL_S_Apr	0.41*	.00	-0.05	.64	0.17	.12
7. TOEFL_R_Apr	0.52***	<.001	0.01	.47	0.30*	.02
8. TOEFL_L_Dec	0.50***	<.001	0.03	.42	0.20	.09
9. TOEFL_S_Dec	0.37**	.01	-0.18	.89	0.08	.30
10. TOEFL_R_Dec	0.19	.09	0.19	.09	0.10	.25
11. TOEFL-L-Improv	-0.09	.74	0.26*	.04	-0.07	.67
12. TOEFL-S-Improv	-0.02	.56	-0.12	.79	-0.08	.71
13. TOEFL-R-Improv	-0.33	.99	0.16	.13	-0.20	.92

among the variables to ascertain the degree of commonality in what they are measuring. Those variables that have a high value are then arranged under the same "component." A variable may load on multiple components, as do two of the variables in our analysis in Table 3. The analyst assigns a name to each component based on the main reason for their commonality.

In our analysis, we can observe the following:

📖 Ability: All components of the TOEFL save for "December-Reading loaded on this factor." Both of the SC administrations also loaded here.

📖 Grammar: All measures of grammar loaded on the same, separate factor, most likely because this component of the TOEFL is measuring discrete knowledge more than the ability to perform in the language.

📖 Improvement: Improvement in TOEFL Listening and Reading, along with the December Reading score, for which we have no ready explanation.

📖 ER: Only two components, the number of SC correct answers and the amount of extensive reading, had a positive loading on this factor. SC-Corr in April had a negative loading.

📖 Study: Online study activities.

Spinoffs of the Scrolling Cloze activity

Although not directly related to the main focus of this research, two other applications for the Scrolling Cloze activity have been developed and are in active use (Robb, 2018).

1. As a Reading Practice Activity: An interface has been designed so that teachers may input their own texts and use them with their students.

2. As a reading placement test: Teachers may have students use the SC app as a placement test prior to using the http://xreading.com reading software.

Discussion & limitations

Since this study was conducted with English majors at a single university, as in many other countries, the average language level of the students reflects to a great extent the level of the university that they manage to enter. Thus, if the study were carried out at a different institution, or with students with greater or lesser motivation to study, the results might be different. Furthermore, clearer results might be obtained when the students have read a greater amount for their extensive reading work.

The Scrolling Cloze activity is also limited by the number of passages that can be employed without unduly tiring the students, after which the accuracy

Table 3. Principle components analysis: Component loadings

	Ability	**Study**	**ER**	**Grammar**	**Improvement**	
	RC1	**RC2**	**RC3**	**RC4**	**RCS**	**Uniqueness**
SC_Corr-Apr	0.55		−0.68			0.14
SC_Corr-Dec	0.77					0.37
SC_Corr-Improv			0.97			0.10
Words			0.62			0.26
TOEFL_L_Apr	0.76					0.25
TOEFL_S Apr	0.90			−0.54		0.19
TOEFL_R_Apr	0.67					0.25
TOEFL_L_Dec	0.86					0.33
TOEFL_S Dec	0.49			0.61		0.18
TOEFL_R_Dec					0.79	0.24
TOEFL-L-Improv					0.68	0.47
TOEFL-S-Improv				1.02		0.06
TOEFL-R-Improv					0.67	0.29
WE_Correct		0.69				0.34
VW		0.93				0.20
TR		0.97				0.15
GL		0.72				0.35

Note. Applied rotation method is promax.

and validity of the measurement would slowly decrease.

Conclusion

Despite the limited data that could be utilized, it appears that extensive reading may promote a L2 reader's prediction skills for what comes next in an English text. The software used in this study is available for further studies in other educational contexts.

Acknowledgement

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New graded reader releases
Bjorn Fuisting

During these strange times books have proven themselves to remain a great escape for the mind and a way to explore the world while staying at home. For our students, there are a couple of new titles and series that can aid them. Scholastic UK has added three titles to their Scholastic Popcorn Readers series and there is one new Helbing Young Readers title. Eli has added two titles to their Teen ELI Readers and two titles to their Young Adult ELI Readers series. Also, to support online learning they have made 16 of their titles free to access, including audio and teacher resources, on: https://www.eligradedreaders.com/en/free-eli-readers.html As for new series to Japan there are two: one completely new and an old classic in a new form with new and classic titles. The full list of new titles with levels, headwords and word counts can be found on the ER SIG website jalt.org/er.

Culture Readers: Holidays by Seed Learning

This is a non-fiction series that explains various cultural and religious holidays in a graded reader format. There are four levels ranging from 500 headwords (CEFR A1) to 1250 headwords (CEFR B1). The books are relatively short but great to have students learn more about cultural events such as Guy Fawkes Day or Halloween. There are five titles for each level with a total of 20 titles and each book is priced at 1,430 yen.

Penguin Readers by Penguin Random House

The name is familiar but this is a new version separate from English Readers by Pearson. There are 40 titles, 20 of them new for 2020, with a mixture of "popular classics from the likes of George Orwell, contemporary novels including The Kissing Booth and fascinating non-fiction." Interesting titles are adaptations of several Roald Dahl titles, non-fiction books about current issues such as Plastic and Climate Change as well as biographies about Stephen Hawking and Freddie Mercury. There are eight levels (Starter to Level 7) ranging from 350 headwords (CEFR Pre-A1) to 2500 (CEFR B2) headwords. The support material includes lesson plans, self-study worksheets, and a reader's handbook with advice about ER and other activities. Each book is priced at 990 yen.

Recent research in extensive reading and listening

Compiled by Imogen Custance

Bourtorwick, T. J., Macalister, J., & Elgort, I. (2019). Two approaches to extensive reading and their effects on L2 vocabulary development. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 31*(2), 150-172. http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/October2019/October2019/articles/boutorwick.pdf

One avenue for developing second language (L2) vocabulary knowledge is through Extensive Reading (ER). ER can provide opportunities for incidental learning to occur. Class time is often too restricted for sufficient attention to deliberate learning (Hunt & Beglar, 2005) meaning ER is important for L2 vocabulary development. This article builds on ideas in the recent two-part Reading in a Foreign Language ER discussion forum by investigating two implementations of ER and their effects on L2 vocabulary development: a traditional ER-only approach, and an ER-plus approach which supplements ER with post-reading discussion implemented in small groups. L2 English learners enrolled at a university in Aotearoa New Zealand read five graded readers during normal class time. Latent Semantic Analysis was used to measure the development of word association knowledge of 60 target words. The findings revealed facilitative effects of both ER approaches. Supplementing ER with discussion provided opportunities for further development.

Hamada, A. (2020). Using meta-analysis and propensity score methods to assess treatment effects toward evidence-based practice in extensive reading. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1-14. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7188915/

This study aimed to depict the assessment process of treatment effects of extensive reading in a second language (L2) toward the establishment of an evidence-based practice. Although standardized mean differences between treatment and control groups have been applied to interpret the magnitude of treatment effects in observational studies on L2 teaching, individual effect sizes vary according to differences in learners, measures, teaching approaches, and research quality. Prior research on extensive reading has suffered from methodological restrictions, especially due to a lack of appropriate comparison between treatment and control groups.

For these reasons, a retrospective meta-analysis including only studies that ensured between-group equivalence was conducted in Study 1 to estimate the effect sizes of extensive reading expected in specific teaching environments. When the focused skill of the one-semester program was reading comprehension, its effect size was predicted as $d = 0.55$. However, the moderator analysis showed that this treatment effect was overestimated due to selection bias in the analyzed studies and adjusted the effect size from 0.55 to 0.37. In Study 2, propensity score analysis was applied to minimize selection bias attributed to observed confounding variables in the comparison between non-randomized treatment and control groups. Data were collected from 109 Japanese university students of English who received in-class extensive reading for one semester and 115 students who attended another English class as the control group. Various types of matching were attempted, and in consideration of balancing the five covariates that might affect treatment effect estimation, the best solutions were nearest neighborhood matching without replacement, nearest neighborhood matching with replacement, and full matching. The results showed that the average treatment effects of extensive reading on all the participants ($d = 0.24 -- 0.44$) and on the treated individuals ($d = 0.32 -- 0.40$) were both consistent with the benchmark established in Study 1. Pedagogical implications and methodological limitations are discussed for decision-making regarding the implementation of L2 teaching practices based on research evidence.

Iwata, A. (2020). How extensively do we need to read to improve EFL reading ability?: A comparison of two different instructional methodologies. *The Reading Matrix, 20*(1), 66-83. http://www.readingmatrix.com/files/22-15971381.pdf

This study compares two instructional methodologies: extensive reading plus output activity and intensive reading plus grammar-translation with regard to improvement of non-English major EFL learners' reading comprehension and fluency development in a Japanese junior college. It identifies the minimum number of words an individual should read for improvement, developing a classroom instructional model that can be implemented as a national policy. The results indicated that 50,000 words should be

read to be as effective as conventional instructional methodology. Reading fluency can be improved regardless of instruction types or words read. The study time could peak before tertiary study, aligning with extrinsic motivation to study English. The results of questionnaires enquiring about their attitudes towards English learning and extensive reading are also discussed.

Jin, T., Lu, X., & Ni, J. (2020). Syntactic complexity in adapted teaching materials: Differences among grade levels and implications for benchmarking. *The Modern Language Journal, 104*(1), 192-208. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12622

An extensive body of research has investigated the role of syntactic complexity in gauging the linguistic complexity of reading texts, particularly for the purpose of determining their grade appropriateness. However, little such research has focused on adapted teaching materials for English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, and to date there has been no systematic effort in establishing syntactic complexity benchmarks to guide text adaptation practices in such contexts. This paper reports on a large-scale study that assessed the quantitative differences in syntactic complexity among adapted teaching materials for different grade levels in the EFL curricula in China. Our data consisted of 3,368 adapted English texts solicited from a corpus of teaching materials approved for use in the 12 primary and secondary grade levels in China by the Chinese Ministry of Education. All texts were analyzed using 8 syntactic complexity measures representing different dimensions of syntactic complexity. All 8 measures showed significant between-level differences with moderate to large effect sizes and nonuniform patterns of progression, and 5 measures were identified as significant predictors of grade levels in a logistic regression analysis. The implications of our results for establishing syntactic complexity benchmarks to inform future text adaptation practices are discussed.

Jin, Z., & Webb, S. (2020), Incidental vocabulary learning through listening to teacher talk. *The Modern Language Journal, 104*(3), 550-566. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12661

This study investigated incidental learning of single-word items and collocations through listening to teacher talk. Although there are several studies that have investigated incidental vocabulary learning through listening, no intervention studies have explicitly investigated the extent to which listening

Category: Adolescents and Adults: Intermediate

(801-1500 headwords; CEF B1)

Title: *The Diary*

Author: Heather Dixon

Publisher: I Talk You Talk Press-Japan

📖 ISBN: 978-4-909 733-35-1

Readers' comments:

It's easy to read and chapters are very short. Readers enjoy reading the book.

Plot is very interesting and readers like mysteries.

Readers would like to see a few illustrations.

Other finalists:

The Earthkeepers
Author: Elizabeth Ferretti
Illustrator: Lorenzo Conti
Publisher: ELi
📖 ISBN: 9788853626509

Robinson Crusoe
Author: Daniel Defoe
Retold by: Terry Phillips
Illustrator: Global Blended Learning
Publisher: Innova Press Ltd
📖 ISBN: 9781787681422

to teachers in a classroom context might contribute to vocabulary learning. The present study fills this gap. Additionally, the study explored the relationship between vocabulary learning gains and two factors: frequency of occurrence and first language (L1) translation. A meaning-recall test and a multiple-choice test were used to evaluate learning gains. The results indicated that (a) listening to teacher talk has potential to contribute to vocabulary learning of both single-word items and collocations, (b) using L1 translation to explain target word meanings contributed to larger gains on the immediate posttest, (c) frequency of occurrence was not a significant predictor of incidental vocabulary learning.

Kramer, B., & McLean, S. (2019). L2 reading rate and word length: The necessity of character-based measurement. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 31*(2). https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/October2019/October2019/articles/kramer.pdf

Reading rate, usually measured in words per minute, is a common operationalization of reading fluency in second language (L2) research and pedagogy. However, the impact of word length is often not

addressed. This paper presents two studies showing how the number of characters in a text influences L2 reading time, independent of word counts, within classroom-based activities for Japanese university English as Foreign Language students. In Study 1, students (N = 160) read two sets of graded texts manipulated to differ only in the total number of characters. The texts with more characters required significantly more time to read, with a small effect size. In Study 2, the average reading times for students (N = 27) throughout a semester-long timed reading course were strongly associated with text length as measured in characters, controlling for differences in word counts. Together these studies support the inclusion of character-based counting units when measuring L2 reading rate or reading amount.

Lyddon, P. A., & Kramer, B. (2019). Connecting extensive reading to TOEIC performance. In F. Meuiner, J. Van de Vyver, L. Bradley & S. Thouësny (Eds), *CALL and complexity – short papers from EUROCALL 2019*, pp. 257-262. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2019.38.1019

Although Extensive Reading (ER) has been shown to increase reading fluency and comprehension, such benefits are generally slow to appear. The present study investigated the possible contribution of ER to single-semester Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) reading gains. The participants were 497 first-year students from two annual cohorts at a tertiary institution in Japan. All took a preliminary TOEIC before enrolling in the online ER system Xreading, which awarded them a word count for successfully completing a short quiz on each book they read for homework. Hierarchical linear regression analyses of end-of-semester ER words read and TOEIC reading scores showed a consistent positive relationship between the two. However, semester increases in the former were not reflected by proportional gains in the latter, a finding possibly explained by greater consistency in ER's implementation across course sections over time. In short, ER words read might in fact be a proxy for general compliance in homework completion rather than a direct cause of TOEIC reading score improvement.

Maluch, J. T., & Sachse, K. A. (2020). Reading in developing L2 learners: The interrelated factors of speed, comprehension and efficiency across proficiency levels. *TESL-EJ, 24*(1). https://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume24/ej93/ej93a8/

This study investigates L2 reading speed of developing readers. While L2 reading speed has been a topic of research, almost all studies to date investigate L2 adult learners and do not take into consideration samples of middle school students in the earlier stages of L2 development. Using data from a sample of 124 German eighth-graders, who range in their L2 reading proficiency from beginner to intermediate, we examined the patterns of reading speed, text comprehension, and reading efficiency in the students' L2 English and L1 German. Utilizing the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) to estimate students' proficiency levels (A1 to B2), we found that students with intermediate proficiency read faster and more accurately than students with beginner L2 proficiency. However, all students in the sample, on average, read with similar efficiency, the ratio of speed and comprehension. In addition, controlling for L2 proficiency, students who read faster in the L1 are more likely to read faster in the L2, on average, although the relationship of reading speed between the two languages is stronger when students read more slowly. The implications for teaching, curriculum development, and assessment are discussed.

Mikami, Y. (2020). Goal setting and learners' motivation for extensive reading: Forming a virtuous cycle. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 32*(1), 29-48. http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/April2020/April2020/articles/mikami.pdf

This study applied a qualitative approach and investigated the processes of motivational change through goal setting in extensive reading (ER). The one-year ER program integrating goal setting was introduced in a Japanese university. Interviews were conducted with four selected participants from among 23 students. The results revealed different patterns in students' motivational change associated with goal setting. When students used goal setting effectively, they felt a sense of achievement, enhanced their intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, and formed a virtuous cycle toward new goals. On the other hand, when students were unable to use goal setting effectively, they repeatedly failed to achieve goals and seemed less motivated to read. This paper discusses ways to set appropriate goals for increasing reading motivation.

Park, A. (2020). A comparison of the impact of extensive and intensive reading approaches on the reading attitudes of secondary EFL learners. *Studies in Second*

Language Learning and Teaching, 10, 337-358. https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/ssllt/article/view/23367

Extensive reading (ER) which encourages second or foreign (L2) learners to engage in a great deal of reading, has long been recognized as an efficient approach in L2 reading pedagogy. While many attempts have been made to understand the effect of ER on the cognitive domains of L2 learners, there has been insufficient investigation into how ER influences their affective domains. Particularly, reading attitudes, one of the key elements of affective factors involved in L2 reading, have received little attention. This classroom-based intervention study investigated the impact of ER on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' attitudes toward English reading compared to the influence of the traditional intensive reading (IR) approach. In addition, this study explored whether the impact of the ER approach on EFL learners' reading attitudes is different depending on L2 proficiency. The study included two intact classes of EFL secondary learners (N = 72) who received either ER or IR instructional treatments for a 12-week period. For the results, ANCOVA showed that the ER approach fostered positive reading attitudes significantly more than the IR approach. In addition, the analysis indicated that the participants' proficiency levels did not have a significant effect upon changes in their reading attitudes. That is, regardless of proficiency level, the ER approach demonstrated a significantly positive effect on participants reading attitudes in comparison with the IR approach.

Sun, X. (2020). An exploration of students' and teachers' perceptions of a two-year extensive reading program in a Chinese secondary school. *The Reading Matrix, 20*(1), 201-219. http://www.readingmatrix.com/files/22-a0623w45.pdf

To date, many studies have shown beneficial influences of extensive reading (ER) on second language or foreign language (L2/FL) acquisition in various aspects. However, limited research has been conducted to explore the implementation of extensive reading in L2/FL in secondary schools. This study focuses on a two-year ER program to investigate five secondary EFL teachers' and eight students' perceptions of ER and its implementation in a Chinese secondary school. Reading materials were original English novels, selected by teachers and students in the first stage and the second stage of the program respectively. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, students' reading journals, and various forms of documents related to the ER program. The findings of this study indicate that teachers' guidance, supervision, and encouragement facilitate the implementation of ER in secondary schools. Meanwhile, reading original novels and keeping reading journals are beneficial for advanced and upper-intermediate EFL learners. However, secondary EFL teachers are still lacking in related training for ER implementation.

Category: Adolescents and Adults: Upper intermediate and Advanced

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

Title: *The Age of Innocence*

Author: Edith Wharton

Retold by: Nora Nagy

Illustrator: Simone Manfrini

Publisher: Helbling

📖 ISBN: 978-3-99045-942-3

Reader's comment:

A well-crafted reader with ample additional material to understand the narrative better. The activities to be done before reading activates schema and also prepared the learner for the text. From a CBI perspective, the text combines linguistic components with literary, cultural, and historic contexts, which makes the reading purposeful. The post-reading activities are aimed at integrated skill practice, which, in a well-managed class will work very productively. The accompanying CD and supplementary material offered online will be valued addition.

Other finalists:

The Box

Author: Patricia Murrow

Publisher: I Talk You Talk Press

📖 ISBN: 9784909733276

Not Without You

Author: Gill Harvey

Illustrator: Paul McCaffrey

Publisher: Oxford University Press

📖 ISBN: 9780194634359

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

ER Presentations at JALT2020

Saturday 21st November

10:45-11:10

Correlations between reading quantity and writing

Patrick Conaway, Yamagata University

11:20-11:45

Promoting Community in an ER Course

Andre Parsons, Hokkaido University of Education

11:55-12:20

Xreading: Supporting a Community of Readers

David Johnson and Samuel Taylor, Kyushu Sangyo University

12:50-13:15

Why is it so difficult to read books in English?

Satomi Shibata, Tokoha University

13:25-13:50

An Approach to Large-Scale Quantitative Research

Gregory Sholdt, Konan University

14:00-14:25

L2 Reading Fluency and L2 Reading Self-Efficacy

Torrin Shimono, Kindai University

18:30-18:55

XReading to Motivate L2 Reading in Tertiary Level

Lanoke Intan Paradita, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

Sunday 22nd November

9:30-9:55

Implementing ER at a Secondary School

Christopher DeSteffen, Toho High School

10:05-10:30

ER with Authentic Materials

Andrew Blaker and Timothy Ellsworth, Konan University

10:45 (poster)

Using ER to Promote Article Use

Gareth Price, Asia University

10:45-11:10

Increase motivation with the best graded readers

Paul Goldberg , Xreading
Tom Robb, Kyoto Sangyo University

10:45-11:10

When COVID gives lemons: Let 'em read at er-central

Greg Rouault, Hiroshima Shudo University

11:20-12:20

Xreading: What's New and What's Next

Paul Goldberg, X Reading

14:00-15:00

Classroom challenges: Your hard-to-reach students

Alexandra Burke, Independent
Jennifer Yphantides, Soka University

16:45-18:15 ER SIG FORUM

Bridging the Gaps in ER

Willy Renandya, Catriona Takeuchi, Matthew Cotter, Cherie Brown, and Shamsi Ara Huda

18:15-19:00

ER SIG Annual General Meeting

Monday 23rd November

9:30-10:30

Sound Reading Remediation Strategies via Moodle

Greg McNabb and Adam Jenkins Shizuoka Institute of Science and Technology
Peter Lyons, Aichi University

9:30-10:30

Classroom Pilot Study on Semi-Repeated Reading

Jason Goodier, Teikyo-Heisei University

10:45-11:10

ER and TOEIC Reading Performance

Brandon Kramer, Osaka Jogakuin University
Paul A. Lyddon. University of Shizuoka

11:20-11:45

Advanced learner's self-directed Extensive Reading

Mitsue Tabata-Sandom, Massey University

11:55-12:20

Reading fluency training for EFL learners

Brett Milliner, Tamagawa University