



# HOW WE DO IT...

## ... at Tsurumi University

Kevin Miller

Like many teachers who read the ER SIG's journal, *Extensive Reading in Japan*, I have long believed in the effectiveness of reading for pleasure as a means to develop English skills among second language learners. Unfortunately, I am not currently in a position to incorporate extensive reading in a significant way into my own university classes, as my teaching load is heavily weighted towards Oral Communication. At the 2010 JALT Conference in Nagoya, I first became aware of the MoodleReader.org system, and brought the information back to my department with the hope of encouraging our reading teachers to use it in their designated reading classes. I was fortunate to have a veteran colleague, Prof. Hiroshi Takubo, who worked with me to promote the idea in our department meetings, and with the cooperation of my department members, we began the "English Reader Marathon", now in its second year, to encourage extensive reading and to make use of the free MoodleReader.org resource.

The English Reader Marathon is a contest open to all English majors at our university that rewards those who read as many graded readers as possible and then take the designated quizzes on MoodleReader.org. With this format, we have successfully introduced graded readers into all Reading classes in a fairly non-intrusive manner. Reading teachers, many of whom favor intensive reading in their courses, were not forced to change their methodology or grading systems, and were able to introduce the contest on fairly short notice. The results have been modest, but significant.

### Setting

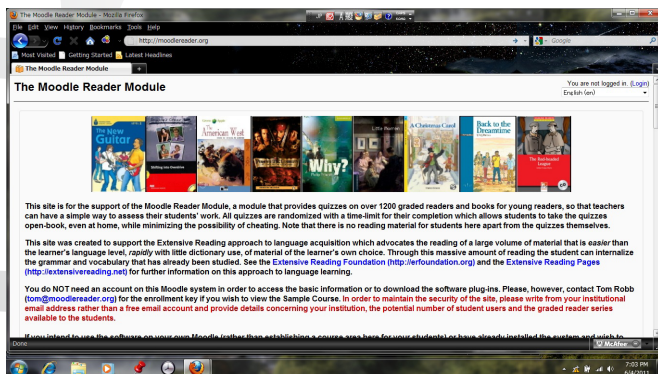
Tsurumi University is a small, private university in Kanagawa Prefecture near Kawasaki on the border of Tokyo. While some of our English majors have hope of becoming teachers or working in service industries where they can use English, many see themselves on a path to becoming office workers in nearby companies. Incoming freshmen display a range of proficiency in English, but their average TOEIC score falls below 350 for those first- and second-year students who voluntarily take the TOEIC institutional test.

Reading is a required course only for freshman students. There are four sections, divided by reading proficiency as determined by the English department's own reading placement test. Reading teachers, who are either full- or part-time staff, are free to teach

reading as they choose. Based on their syllabi, most teachers favor an intensive reading approach, while one teacher appears to favor a reading skills approach with an extensive reading component. There is no department-wide consensus that extensive reading should be emphasized, so from my point of view, any attention placed on extensive reading in general or graded readers in particular is a positive development.

### Materials

Through 2010, the graded reader library at Tsurumi University consisted of the Oxford Bookworms series. This was certainly an excellent start to a graded reader library, but it was underused as a resource and had some limitations. Many of the Oxford Bookworms series were at a level too high for our students to comfortably read without constant reference to a glossary or dictionary. In preparation for the first English Reader Marathon in 2011, we requested that the library add more readers at the MoodleReader 0, 1 and 2 levels. Most of these were found in the graded reader catalogs of Cambridge, Macmillan, Penguin, and Cengage Foundations. I went through the MoodleReader.org book database and ordered only books at levels 0, 1, 2 and 3 that already had MoodleReader quizzes available. The library was very positive about adding the graded readers we



ordered, and they added five copies of each requested title. They also devoted their own time to labeling all graded readers according to the MoodleReader.org leveling system, which does not always match the levels printed on the spine of books due to each publisher having their own system. The library also created an easily accessible space dedicated to extensive reading conveniently located on the first floor of the library.

Computer access to MoodleReader.org can be at home or at school. At Tsurumi University, we have computer classrooms that are open during lunchtime and when not being used for classes. Computers are also available in the library, but the Internet access there is sometimes slow, so the computer classrooms and home computers are the recommended access points to MoodleReader.org. Students have also tried to take quizzes with their smart phones, but results have not been promising.

## Funding

The Tsurumi University Library views the acquisition of graded readers in a positive light, so the library administration has always been cooperative about adding titles. The cost of graded readers is low, but the circulation rate is high, leading to dramatically increased circulation statistics. Higher circulation rates are a point of pride for both the library and for the English Department, with the English majors showing a significant increase in the number of check-outs. The MoodleReader.org system, is of course, free to the public, thanks to the dedication of Thomas Robb and the MoodleReader.org volunteers.

## "English Reader Marathon" contest implementation

### MoodleReader.org registration

Assuming an adequate graded reader library is in place, the first step in having a graded reader contest is to make sure all potential participants are registered on MoodleReader.org. It has now become one of my beginning-of-the-year duties to register all incoming freshmen. At Tsurumi University, I have to wait until they are placed in their Reading class groups, and then I re-type all freshman names from their furigana name lists. Fortunately, once I have the



name lists in roman letters and in their proper classes, I can register them as a batch on MoodleReader using an Excel file. The purpose of putting them in class groups is so their Reading teachers can monitor their progress. Registration of all incoming freshmen takes me about 2 hours, including typing time. Students are typically registered on MoodleReader by their first Reading class in April. Second year students are already registered from the previous year, but their names have to be re-organized to correspond to their enrollment in a required sophomore class called Comprehensive English, which nominally includes a reading component. Third and fourth year students, who typically don't participate in the contest, are advised to self-register if they want to join.

### Informing students of the contest

Students are first told of the contest rules, prizes and procedure in Japanese during Orientation, which takes place in early April. All information is distributed as a handout at Orientation, and again as necessary in Reading and Comprehensive English classes. Information is also available on our department's webpage. Students are welcome to start reading graded readers immediately from the start of school, with a final deadline for all quizzes to be completed by the first week of December. If a December date seems early, note that results need to be tabulated from the MoodleReader.org data, plus winning certificates printed, and certificates and prizes awarded at a small ceremony before school closes for spring break.

In addition to the dates and rules of the contest, MoodleReader log on procedures and book selection advice are included in the handout. Students are advised to start with very easy books at first so they will likely be successful at taking their first MoodleReader quizzes. Once students have passed some quizzes, they are free to go up in level as



they choose. They are also advised to read without stopping to use a dictionary, but if they want to look up words, they should note the words and then look them up later. Ultimately, though, students are free to choose whatever graded readers they want to, and follow any reading procedure they are comfortable with.

When it comes time to take a quiz, students are advised to have the graded reader with them as they take the quiz for quick reference. They are also advised to review the story before attempting the quiz, take note of the names of important characters, and review in their mind the sequence of events that happened in the book. Most of the MoodleReader quizzes include an ordering question, so remembering what happened in what sequence is important.

One contest rule that we struggled with, and which remained vague until the end of the contest, was the difference between scoring by number of books and by number of words. It sounds better to say that a student read 50+ books rather than a certain number of words. However, not all books are equal, so a fair contest would obviously require scoring by number of words. Fortunately for us in 2011, the number of books read by the winning students also corresponded to the number of words read, so there was no conflict in our first contest. However, this is a potential problem, so it is advisable to specify in the rules if scoring will be by number of words, even if most discussion of the contest will focus on the number of titles read. Contest administrators should note, however, that there is a possibility of a higher-level student winning the contest by reading one or two books that have a total number of words greater than the combined 10 books of lower level readers. If a student can win the contest by reading just a few high-value titles, some participants may find the result de-motivating. The PR issue may worsen if it turns



out the student didn't actually read one or more of the books, but got lucky on the quizzes, perhaps because the books were based on movies he or she had seen.

## 2011 English Reader Marathon results

Participation in our 2011 English Reader Marathon can be described as modest. Out of roughly two hundred first and second year students, only 17 students made a serious effort at participating, i.e., they read more than 3 graded readers. The winning student, a freshman, read 64, and the second place student, also a freshman, read 54. Students at third place or lower read an average of 14 graded readers. However, a fair number of students (60) read from 1 to 3 graded readers, due mainly to teachers requiring them in classes to make that minimal effort.

2012, our second year for the contest, is shaping up to have better results. With one contest under our belt, students and teachers are now more aware of the event, and we anticipate greater numbers of books read this year by more students.

One of the most interesting results of the contest, though not apparent until several months later, was the positive correlation between active contest participation and comparatively high TOEIC scores. The highest TOEIC scores among our 2nd year students in spring of 2012 were achieved by the same students who performed highest in the Graded Reader Marathon as freshmen in winter of 2011. Obviously, correlation does not prove causality, but being able to show that students who read many graded readers also scored high on the TOEIC test may help motivate students to read more.



## Pros & cons of the contest format for promoting ER

### Pros of the contest format

- 📖 It promotes graded readers to all students, though on a voluntary basis.
- 📖 It allows for immediate promotion of ER in all reading classes; i.e., consensus re. curriculum or course content is not required.
- 📖 It is fairly non-intrusive for teachers who do not normally feature ER in their reading classes.
- 📖 It is extra reinforcement for teachers who already feature ER in their reading classes.
- 📖 It provides a means of giving positive recognition to those students who read many graded readers.
- 📖 Results can be easily monitored with [MoodleReader.org](http://MoodleReader.org), a free system.
- 📖 Library circulation statistics are boosted by students within the department.

### Cons of the contest format

- 📖 It is a voluntary activity, and participation is primarily among the most self-motivated students.
- 📖 The number of students who actively participate may be fairly modest, as was the case with our students.
- 📖 A fair contest requires scoring by number of words read, which can present a PR problem if the winner has only read a few high-value titles.

### Cons related to the MoodleReader system

- 📖 Someone must take the time to register all students with MoodleReader.org. Students can self-register, but having an administrator register students as a batch with Excel is much faster.
- 📖 MoodleReader.org is primarily a quiz database for graded readers. Other forms of extensive reading are, for now, not included in significant numbers.
- 📖 Not every graded reader published has a MoodleReader.org quiz. However, teachers can assign points as they choose, and, of course, teachers are encouraged to write quizzes to submit to MoodleReader.org to further expand the database.
- 📖 It is possible to achieve inaccurate results on the MoodleReader.org quizzes, either by collusion between students or (as happened with us) by a student watching the movie associated with the book and then scoring well on a quiz. However, MoodleReader.org does have some safeguards

against collusion.

- 📖 There is a certain amount of effort required by students just to take the first step in logging on to MoodleReader.org and taking a quiz. While the procedure is not difficult, some students are actually not up to the task.
- 📖 All reading teachers, regardless of whether they are fully behind MoodleReader as a resource or not, should be somewhat versed in the log on and monitoring procedures.
- 📖 An early Fail on a quiz may be discouraging to some students. Teachers can individually allow second chances, however, by deleting previous records.

In my mind, the cons related to the MoodleReader system are not insurmountable, and use of this free resource is well worth it. At Tsurumi University, we will continue to promote extensive reading with an annual contest, and hopefully, extensive reading will gradually make inroads into our Reading courses as well.



## Why ER?

We have been asking people to put their reasons for doing ER into 20 words, within 140 characters. Any ideas?

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

"ER makes your reading fastER,  
your understanding clearER,  
your vocabulary broadER and deepER,  
your motivation strongER,  
and your English bettER."

Mathew White





## Techniques and activities to encourage extensive reading

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Developing a positive attitude towards reading in a second language is a challenge that all reading teachers face. One of the primary reasons for the scale of this challenge is that for the average beginner to intermediate L2 student, reading is usually confined to a tedious decoding experience. Developing intrinsic motivation—creating an eager want in the student to engage in a given undertaking—is basically the key ingredient to the successful teaching of any subject. Dr. William Grabe emphatically states that in particular, "intrinsic motivation is seen as the major concept underlying motivation for reading and learning" (2009, p. 27). In order to inspire this all-important motivation, teachers need to take students beyond simple decoding by stimulating intellectual curiosity. By using the MacMillan graded reader of *A Christmas Carol* as an example, the following article provides reading teachers some classroom techniques and activities that they can utilize in order to encourage an intrinsic desire in their students to read extensively.

### Reducing anxiety

Simply stated, reading in a second language can be a daunting task; trying to do it without background information can quickly become an overwhelming and exasperating experience. Encouraging students to get beyond the mechanics of reading and to enjoy the process requires careful scaffolding. Being familiar with setting, social context, and character exploration supplies the L2 student with a body of knowledge to fully comprehend the story. Almost everyone who has undertaken the serious study of a foreign language understands that the deep, inherent connection between language and culture cannot be separated. Indeed, as Mikulecky points out, "language knowledge and thinking patterns are socially constructed within a cultural setting, and each language and culture fosters its own way of understanding the world" (2008, para. 7). Assuming that a class of L2 readers has the knowledge to understand the setting and social context of *A Christmas Carol* is very likely a serious miscalculation which can easily result in regression to yet another stressful decoding experience. Providing L2 students with prior knowledge decreases anxiety and generates a more positive learning environment. Psychologist Carl Rogers suggests that "in a person who is open to experience, each stimulus is freely relayed through the nervous system without being distorted by any process of defensiveness" (1961, p. 353). Recognizing the students' defenses and giving them a means of getting past the fear of reading creates a far more productive reading classroom. Anderson specifies that "the notion of prior knowledge influencing reading

comprehension suggests that meaning does not rest solely in the printed word, but that the reader brings certain knowledge that influences comprehension" (1999, p. 12). Creating awareness that a narrative is not merely words, but rather a chronicle of human beings similar to themselves, fosters in students the capacity to empathize with the characters they are reading about, and makes it far more likely that they will have an enriching reading experience.

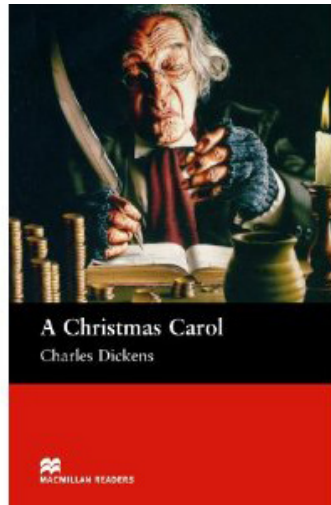
### Stimulating intellectual curiosity

All teachers want to provide an enriching reading experience, but many L2 students feel discouraged upon seeing another reading assignment. Krashen states that "providing extra linguistic support in the form of realia and pictures to beginning classes is not a frill, but a very important part of the tools the teacher has to encourage language acquisition" (1987, p. 66). By providing a dynamic approach to introducing the setting and social context of the reading, students both see the assignment from an alternative perspective and understand how the text relates to the universality of human experience.

### Introducing setting: Time period

Everyone learns differently and by approaching the introduction of a reader as an active process, students can better access background knowledge. Let's take the case of *A Christmas Carol*. One method of establishing setting before any reading is assigned, is to draw a simple timeline from 1750 to Today on the whiteboard and place an enlarged copy of the front cover of *A Christmas Carol* above the timeline. (Cover description: A grumpy elderly man is writing with a

quill by candlelight, with stacks of money piled up around him.) First, prompt students to guess the time period of the story by considering the items on the book cover such as the candle and feather pen. Ask students when they think the ball point pen and electric lights were



invented, and using computer-generated pictures (of electric light bulbs and a Bic ballpoint pen) have students place them where they think the items belong on the timeline. After giving them the correct dates (1880 & 1950), compare and contrast the widely available technologies of the present day to those in the 1820s when *A Christmas Carol* took place: if we compare the items on the book cover to consumer products now, what does that tell us about daily life in the time period of *A Christmas Carol*? Once the students have established that *A Christmas Carol* was set in the 1820s, then it is appropriate to introduce the location the story takes place, Great Britain, and a few brief, general comments about London at that time. This very brief description leads the class naturally into the heart of the book introduction: social context.

### Social context: Incorporating time, place, and society

The *Christmas Carol* reader supports its social context well, particularly in the segments *Notes about the Author* and *A Note About England in the Nineteenth Century*. These sections can be further enhanced by a teacher read-aloud, chorus reading, or silent reading. Students need to visualize the life that inspired *A Christmas Carol*. Charles Dickens worked in a factory at a time when Western society publicly endorsed child labour, and most factories had horrific working conditions. Many in Charles Dickens's situation suffered the cyclical devastation of debtor's prisons, and lived impoverished lives in workhouses. The conviction to publicize the devastating poverty of 19th century Great Britain was one of Charles Dickens's primary motivations in writing this classic novel, and students must grasp this key concept to fully

appreciate the story.

### Character exploration

The understanding of setting and social context provides an excellent foundation to introduce characters. Identifying the different characters in a text presents a challenge for many L2 students. Cognitive psychologists have shown in their research that students learn new strategies or thinking processes most effectively when they are consciously aware of what they are doing (Brown, Armbruster, & Baker, 1986, p. 49). By drawing attention to characters and compiling a list, teachers create an awareness. The character list then provides students with a common frame of reference and the ability to distinguish one character from another. A teacher's introduction of characters stimulates interest and provides an opportunity for students to identify with the characters in the story. Establishing a character list also presents an opportunity to develop intensive reading skills. Chapter two of *A Christmas Carol* introduces several characters and provides an opportunity to introduce students to scanning.

### Scanning

Anderson specifically states that what makes the reader a good reader is that he/she has developed the strategies and skills through intensive reading that are then transferred to extensive reading context (1999, p. 43). Scanning, an intensive skill that easily transfers to extensive reading, can be approached as a class activity where students share the names they have found within the text. As an example in *A Christmas Carol* students scan for names: Scrooge, Fred Scrooge, and Bob Cratchit. Once the character names are established, draw a character tree on the whiteboard and encourage students to discuss how the characters are connected. Recognizing the characters through a simple scanning exercise allows the L2 students to see people in the text, rather than just words.

### Making inferences

Discovering what the text infers about the people in the story stimulates interest and further adds to student comprehension. The following quote from Chapter One provides an excellent summation of how Londoners perceived Scrooge.

He had no friends. Nobody visited his house.  
Nobody said hello to him as he walked along the

street.

No beggar stopped him and asked him for money.

No dog went near him (Dickens, 2005, p. 6).

The L2 student who needs to have a simple concrete foundation of who the story is about can read this passage and readily grasp Scrooge's mean spirited, anti-social character. In Chapter Two, more such lines tell us a lot about Scrooge and his interactions with people. For example, when Scrooge tells a freezing cold Bob Cratchit "If you take any more coal, Bob Cratchit . . . you will lose your job." (Dickens, 2005, p. 7). Students can make inferences about other characters as well. Bob's response to Scrooge's threat was that "Bob told himself that the candle was warm and it would make him warm. But that wasn't true!" (Dickens, 2005, p. 7). Students can see Bob's positivity and good-nature, even in the face of a tyrant boss. Drawing student attention to the above quotes promotes discussion on what the author indirectly writes about the character. Comparing and contrasting characters sets up the story and encourages students to understand the struggles between the positive and negative dynamic which runs throughout *A Christmas Carol*. Characters make a story interesting, and understanding the initial motives of a character further enhances a student's comprehension of setting and social context.

### Readers' Theatre

An understanding of characters within the setting and social context of the reading sets the stage for Readers' Theatre. Readers' Theatre is a basic approach to theatre which puts the emphasis on reading with emotion. Patrick Ng suggests that:

Reader's theatre allows emergent readers to participate in a story and in the process, readers are transformed into participants, and the words become alive as a human experience. As a form of drama, students are able to enter into the world of a book and behave as one of its characters, and thus increase their comprehension of the story that they have read (2011, para. 2).

The teacher can choose from a variety of Readers' Theatre formats. In my experience, beginner students respond well to text scripted as a play. Direct students to use highlighter pens to separate the speaking passages of each character, e.g., Scrooge is yellow, Fred is blue, and Bob is green. Once students understand the process, have them independently do the highlighting. Then divide students into groups and have them read out the text, which is now scripted like

a play. For more advanced learners, student-generated scripts offer a more challenging task. Divide the story into six sections: introduction, Marley's Ghost, Ghost of Christmas Past, Ghost of Christmas Present, Ghost of Christmas Future, and Conclusion. Divide the class into groups and assign a specific section to each group. Then have them rewrite the text while retaining the original framework of the story. Readers' Theatre is a fantastic classroom activity that inspires students to feel the human emotions of the characters within the story.

### Conclusion

Providing dynamic approaches when introducing new reading assignments reduces an L2 student's anxiety. Teachers enrich reading experiences by stimulating a student's curiosity for a story's setting, social context and characters. Activities such as a timeline, character tree and Readers' Theatre bring life to a text. A positive reading experience fosters intrinsic motivation. If students are intrinsically motivated by a positive in-class reading experience, they are far more likely to read outside the classroom and become successful extensive readers.

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# ER ACTIVITIES FOR PRONUNCIATION

## Reading aloud —content and function

Myles Grogan

### SUITABLE FOR:

University/adult learners (younger learners may be possible), mid-programme. This activity is a good starter, allowing for other activities to be built upon it.

### NEED:

Copies of a single page of a low-level graded reader for each pair of students, plus an answer handout or slide. Ideally, the section should be about 50 words long, and not more than 100 words. On the answer page, underline all the content (or information) words. These words are usually question words, nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Students will also need the book they are currently reading

### TIME:

About 30 minutes

### PROCEDURE:

1. On the board, write:

“STUDENTS READ BOOKS”.

Be sure to leave some space between the words.

2. Tell the students that these are content words. These are the words that carry the content of a story. When telling a story, these words receive stress. Have the students say the sentence a few times while clapping, snapping fingers, or keeping the rhythm.

3. Add words to the sentence one by one, and try to get students to keep the same timing and rhythm. For example, “(The) STUDENTS (will) READ (the) BOOKS.” These words are function words, and express the relationship between the content words. These words

are not stressed, so the rhythm doesn't change.

4. Hand out a copy of a page from a low-level graded reader. Have students underline the content words. They should try by themselves and then compare answers with a partner or in a small group.

5. Remembering that content words are generally stressed and function words generally aren't, have students try to coach each other reading the short passage.

6. Display your answer page to the class. There may be exceptions to the rule coming from context or further rules, so keep the discussion as open as possible. You should give a model reading at this stage. (This is a good opportunity to use those CDs or the MP3 from the publisher's site!)

7. Ask students to prepare to read a passage from their current book. Using the first page of the reader is simplest, but random pages or student selected passages are options, depending on the level and interests of your class.

8. The subsequent read-alouds can be used as the basis for other class activities, such as choosing which book students like or want to read next, drawing attention to specific language, or discussion activities.

### EDUCATIONAL RATIONALE:

Pronunciation activities based on reading passages allow students the chance to re-evaluate the meaning of passages and to find the “voice” of an author or a text. It also introduces a more meaningful approach to pronunciation work in general.

Note: This activity can be adapted for many pronunciation targets, such as word or sentence stress, intonation patterns, or linking and blending. A simple model can be applied to a common text from a reader, and then used to introduce readings from student-selected texts.

A good book is a good book. Being able to read and enjoy it is ER great thing!

Steve Hampshire

ER takes students to different worlds, stimulates the mind, and teaches English passively.

It is voluntary enjoyment, anywhere, anytime.

Glen Hill

# Creating a reader library: Practical concerns and implementation

Alison Kitzman  
Kinki University

Whether you are an individual teacher, a small program administrator, or an established library coordinator, creating a foreign-language reader library poses some unique obstacles. Before you begin, it would be wise to brainstorm your specific needs, capabilities, and potential obstacles. Implementation takes time, money, and effort, but with some thoughtful consideration, larger pitfalls can be avoided.

## Materials and usage

The first consideration is what type of materials to include. The appropriate level of your students must be understood as well as whether to include materials aimed at native speakers, such as English-language magazines, newspapers, and manga; which dialects you want students to be exposed to; and how many books of each level the budget can afford. It is also important that the type of materials suit any purpose a teacher or student may have. Even if readers were to be used as an in-class guided activity, students would benefit from a self-access system for pleasure reading. Knowing how students may be assessed, whether it be by comprehension quizzes, word-count goals, number of books read, or journals, is also useful in the planning stage. The question then becomes: if students are not assessed, what other incentives are in place to promote extensive reading?

When we created a reader library at our university's Language Institute we wanted to meet the needs of as many students and teachers as possible. To maximize student motivation, we chose a wide variety of readers from multiple publishers across all genres of fiction and non-fiction. While libraries can only be enhanced with children's books, called young readers, we chose to stock only a few, because the input from them may equate to more than  $i+1$ . This may help higher-level learners, but it may demotivate students reading at a pre-A1 or A1 level. As for movie books that could be "watched" instead of read, we chose to include them as a form of pluralistic input instead of excluding them; however, this issue should be considered—especially if comprehension is going to be assessed. We also took into account the many alternative uses for readers, such as extensive listening, fluency reading while listening, or identifying dialects. Therefore, we included some readers with built-in activities, CDs, or online student support. Additionally, we purchased teacher support

materials, such as teacher manuals, comprehension exercises, and quizzes, which are kept away from students. A recent expansion brought other-language readers to our shelves including Japanese readers for teachers to study. Finally, though wonderfully up-to-date, our library found monthly reader-magazines unsuitable as they were only sold in large class sets.

Different issues arose in a two-year ER grant project at our university—specifically in how readers were used in class. Students would forget to bring readers from the library, requiring teachers to have books of their own for in-class reading. This was particularly difficult for part-time teachers who had neither a budget nor space at school for readers of their own, nor time between classes to retrieve books. Additionally, those teachers who were testing ER in speaking classes questioned whether it was appropriate for the subject. In classes taught once a week, reading time was too limited, yet out-of-class participation was unreliable. Various forms of assessment were tried, which revealed the difficulty in assessing log sheets, plagiarism and the spreading of cheat sheets for publisher-based materials, unauthorized proxies taking out-of-class Moodle quizzes, and students tending to follow a 'path of least resistance' by choosing 'baby books' simply for their low word counts. Overall, problems in our case seemed due to a lack self-motivation and understanding of ER benefits, not the materials themselves.

## Administrative concerns

There are some concerns that extend beyond the library coordinator to the administrative level in the planning phase. The main one is whether the books will be an independent lender library, part of a main or departmental library, a reading corner, class sets that teachers either carry to or keep in class, or sets that students carry to or keep at school. It also needs to be decided at a higher level who will be responsible

for the library—library staff, office staff, a "keeper of the keys", classroom teachers, coordinators, or students, and what the division of labor will be once the library expands. Rules and restrictions need to be in place. Finally, decisions concerning how the library will be funded—budget for general maintenance, money to replace lost and damaged books, and growing the library—often come from higher-ups.

There are a number of ways to fund a reader library, but few teachers, office staff, or departmental coordinators want the responsibility of maintaining one—especially if they do not understand a use for it. Main campus or departmental libraries may allocate money, but be wary of potential budget battles or fighting over who 'owns' the books. Some teachers use their research money to build a library, but part-time teachers rarely have access to this and should not be expected to pay for any books. Research grants may be available. It has even been suggested that each student in a class purchase one book, and then that book is shared amongst the class. Also, spending may be controlled in ways unrelated to actual materials. For example, major departments may not want to fund language books unless they apply to that major, or the desire to expand may not be recognized if current materials appear to be meeting current need.

We encountered a few unexpected administrative problems when developing our Language Institute library. The Language Institute is linked to and funded mostly by our Main Campus library, which had a purchasing rule that stated in essence there could only be a single copy of any book unless it was written in the curriculum, making expansion difficult. Also, we have had non-teaching staff work to intake and maintain all books, but this is in addition to their everyday duties and it asks for a lot of cooperation from them. In a positive development, multiple reader libraries have been built around campus, but there is little coordination amongst them. Finally, it has been difficult to get some faculty, office staff and students to buy into ER, because, as we are a separate non-departmental entity, we have no access to departmental teachers to educate them.

### Physical and organizational concerns

Whoever is in charge of the reader library needs to also consider setting up a system for maintaining it. Upon intake, our Language Institute staff apply a Main Library UPC tracking label, a Language

Center label, and a level-color label all under a protective plastic laminate to every book. Then all books are entered into the university book database.



In some cases, category or grant-financed labels are affixed, CDs are separated into cases, and the CD-book combinations are put in color-coded outer cases with handmade labels. On average, one book takes 15 minutes to prepare before going on the shelf.

While readers with CDs have a multitude of uses beyond ER, there are just as many potential problems in maintaining them. CDs can be kept virtually scratch-free if housed in a hard case, though students occasionally return just the case. The CD and reader can be corralled into a convenient outer carrying case, but these outer cases make titles and blurbs difficult to read. In addition, the wide variety of readers we have means a wide variety of sizes and shapes of these cases, so stacking them with the regular books becomes messy. Students tend to avoid them, complaining that they are troublesome and do not easily fit in schools bags. Our program has matched the outer case color to each level to ensure students can be clear about levels; however, colorized cases are expensive.

Besides the readers, it is important to consider the library itself. If readers are openly available to students, they should be housed in a highly visible, easy to reach, and centralized location. Organizing books on clearly labeled shelves according to level, instead of by publisher, helps students better choose books appropriate for them. This also helps whoever returns books. If possible, informational signs about levels, assignments, goals, or the ER program should be posted at eye level nearby. A best-case scenario would also provide a quiet reading space with comfortable seats, good lighting, and a CD player nearby with headphones to encourage reading on-site even for short intervals.

When developing our program, we soon came to realize a few problems. First, the original bookshelves were too deep and despite using magnet strips, bookends, and spacers to keep books neat, narrow bookshelves for the smaller readers were a must. Interestingly, regardless of level, books on the highest and lowest shelves were rarely looked at. After rearranging the shelves, procuring a stepstool, and



colorizing each shelf to match the level label, students adjusted to looking above or below their sightlines. A more important issue pedagogically was that on several occasions every single book of the lowest level was checked, out leaving gaping holes on our shelves. Over time we have focused the majority of our budget on buying readers at the Common European Framework (CEF) level B1 or lower; however, a change in teaching methodology has been the biggest help. Teachers no longer assign a number of books to read, but instead a number of words to read. Students who used to come in and check out the shortest, easiest reader they could find, now tend to have training in using the Language Center library levels chart and choose a wider range of books.

### Creating a publisher level chart

One unfortunate problem many graded-reader librarians come across is the fact that levels across publishers do not match. Practitioners utilizing multiple publishers must ensure the levels equate the best they can, in an easy-to-read chart with all the necessary information related to their program explained clearly. First, the level of logical progression needs to be addressed. The CEF is a fairly neutral standard that more publishers are conforming to nowadays; however, it begs the question as to whether a European-based standard is appropriate for Asia where many students are at a pre-A1 reading level. Other ways of in-house leveling can include using TOEIC or other test scores as a level marker, but then it is more difficult to equate specific vocabulary or grammar to each level. Arguably, young readers and graded readers should be on separate charts. Finally, to ensure the level progression is absolutely clear, bold visual representations of each are effective.

For our Language Institute library we chose the bright and ordered colors of the rainbow to represent our graded-reader levels and a progression of neutral colors to depict our young-readers. As well as including our university-specific levels, easy-to-read publisher logos, series names, TOEIC and Eiken levels, word count, number of headwords, and country flags depicting the dialect of any accompanying CDs, we also added several clear explanations directly on the chart: a simple "what, why, and how of ER", distinctions between word count and headwords, and a suggested word-per-semester goal were all proffered. A "GØ! Books" category, related to our

G-zero (pre-A1) level, was created with corresponding colorful stickers on the books indicating those readers that can be read within ten minutes.



Not only does this category name describe the G-zero (pre-A1) level, but it playfully evokes a positive "Go" attitude toward reading graded readers.

### Student and staff development

Those on the ER bandwagon often proselytize it; however, not everyone may be so keen on trying what is still arguably an alternative learning approach. It is necessary to consider how to reach reluctant practitioners. No matter how you go about it, access must be easy for students and staff both physically and metacognitively. It is important to suggest clear and attainable goals for the varying levels of your students. Word counts, for example, are clear and potentially gradable while page counts are less reliable. Publishers are beginning to add word counts onto the back covers of their graded readers, though older books may not have them. One problem to be aware of is that headwords are also often on the back cover of graded readers. The potential for confusion between headwords and word count is great so precautions are warranted.

It is also very important not only to explain the purpose of ER, but also to get buy-in, meaning you need to get user support and agreement that ER is indeed useful. Giving students their freedom and showing them how easy it is to choose a book is a first step. Being a positive role model and reading with them during class or using yourself as an example of how you learned a foreign language better using this method, is another. Office staff, other faculty and coordinators might also need some convincing of the benefits of ER before they are willing to pay for your new library. These benefits are not always obvious when research is still catching up to the application. It can be argued to reluctant staff, too, that any goals set create both student and teacher accountability. Without both student and staff support, your library will not be built.

For our ER grant project, our team came up with the English Resource File, to help students understand ER on a metacognitive level (Kitzman, 2009). This 10-page booklet gave an extensive rationale for reading as much as possible, explanations of the resources

available on campus and the differences between intensive and extensive reading, steps on how to choose a graded reader, a publisher equivalency chart, and additional pages to help guide in-class work.

### Marketing and final upkeep

Regardless of how wonderful your library may physically become, if there is no student or staff buy-in and regular maintenance of the total ER program, it will not be successful. As with any product, a library needs regular refreshing and marketing for both new and old consumers. In our Language Institute we created a Reading Corner in part of the main lobby. There we placed cheerful laminated placards at eye level taped to bookends that read, "Recommended by [teacher's name and smiling picture]" under which staff would place and rotate readers. Colorful posters of our rainbow-colored levels charts and student testimonials grace the walls. On a separate shelf near the main door, new book arrivals are regularly rotated with attention-grabbing signs of "What's new!?" We educate our teachers about methodology and encourage them to give extra credit or have class contests. Though there is a lot to consider when creating a graded reader library, once all the pieces are put into motion it can be cost-effective, easy to maintain, and a pleasure for students and staff alike.

### Reference

Kitzman, A., (2009). Promoting Student Autonomy in Extensive Reading: The 'English Resource Notebook', *Extensive Reading in Japan*, 2(2).

## Adolescent and Adult: Beginner

### ARMAN'S JOURNEY



Author: Philip Prowse  
Illustrator: Paul Dickinson  
Cambridge University Press  
ISBN: 978-0-521-18496-0

#### Judges' comment:

This original story is filled with adventure that compels the reader through to the end. The content is especially relevant for adult learners — touching on conflict, economics, prejudice, and romance. The illustrations are supportive of the meaning. There are no exercises to distract from the story.

#### On-line voters' comment:

It is good because it has unique background, and I enjoyed his journey. Quite adventurous.

## Winners of the 2012 ERF Language Learner Literature Award



### Young learners

#### UNCLE JACK AND THE MEERKATS



Author: Jane Cadwallader  
Illustrator: Gustavo Mazali  
ELI Publishing  
ISBN: 978-88-536-0627-3

#### Judges' comment:

This story is good for young learners because it is a nice mixture of adventure, fantasy, and reality, with an animal conservation angle. It also has a cool family theme and intelligent child characters. Well-written, nice design, and fun to read.

#### On-line voters' comments:

I really like this book. It is quite worthy of being read by the youth. This book particularly makes a difference in inspiring us to protect animals and our environment. This story has a brilliant educational meaning - protecting animals from being hurt by the cruel people and loving the whole world even anything alive.

### Adolescent and Adult: Elementary

#### HARRY'S HOLIDAY



Author: Antoinette Moses  
Illustrator: Mikela Prevost  
Cambridge University Press  
ISBN: 978-84-8323-858-5

#### Judges' comment:

This is an intriguing book, with an excellent plot. The reader is kept on edge, wondering what will happen to Harry. Will he get to go on a holiday?

#### On-line voters' comment:

This is a very good book which reflects very common social problems. First sometimes we are unwilling to tell others about something in our home, especially some shabby things. Second, nowadays, many companies just cheat consumers to believe them. And after i finish reading this book, i understand something. So it is a very meaningful book. It is much more profound than it appears to be. It has a happy ending which give us a sense of happiness and hope. The illustrations in this book is very good which go well with the whole story and can arouse readers' interest in reading it.

More winners on p. 21.





## How students have profited from extensive reading: A case study of gains and failures in Easy Reading class

Emilia Fujigaki

Sapporo International Junior College

"Thanks to the ER class, not only my reading skills but, because I had to write comments, my writing skills also improved. Compared to the beginning of this class, reading English sentences became an easier and more joyful task in general. Before ER class, just looking at long English sentences was enough to discourage me, but because the graded readers I read were at my proficiency level, and because I really wanted to improve my English skills, I succeeded in fighting off my initial resistance toward reading."

Sakie Konno, the class champion reader who read 84 graded readers in one semester. (Translated from Japanese.)

The outcome of learning a foreign language, the practical achievement, should be visible to both the learner and the teacher. As often happens, students come to class and seem to study, but somehow they improve only slightly or not at all during their years of studying English. You may say they are studying but not learning. Also, the lack of a reading habit in L1 does not help students establish one in English, so when students do not spend much time on listening activities, do not speak outside of class, and do not read extensively, they have little chance of practicing the English vocabulary they are introduced to in class (Waring, 2006). They become weak learners caught in a vicious circle (Nuttal, 1996), lack of confidence and low motivation preventing them from searching for new approaches to learning as well as discouraging them from being active in class. I have found passiveness to be the most difficult trait to fight in students and the highest challenge for a teacher.

Quite possibly an inadequate perception of what actually comprises improvement can be held responsible for students' weak focus and low motivation. There seems to be a discrepancy between the ideas which take strong root in students' minds and reality. For example, even if it defies logic, some students who never really use English seem to believe that the sheer presence of a foreign teacher in a conversation class will unlatch the flood gates and real conversation will take place. But it almost never happens because even students who have a wide vocabulary and do well on tests do not have enough exposure to English in use to be able to produce their own utterances.

Likewise, in reading class, no more frustrating feeling for EFL learners and ER readers exists than the one which comes with the sense of the futility of their efforts after the lessons have run their

course and students don't see improvement. It may happen that the students have read a considerable amount of texts but their comprehension and speed has not improved. Should they question the readability of the text, or blame themselves for not being apt enough? This is a difficult question to answer when junior college students read only on a 200-headword level, which objectively should not be difficult for survivors of *juken jigoku*, or examination hell. All the same, my students can read graded readers more or less comfortably only on that level.

A teacher is certainly responsible for guiding students toward shaping realistic expectations and enhancing critical thinking in their study of a foreign language. On the other hand, students are expected to follow a teacher's guidance and to "stick to their guns." The final effect is the sum of these efforts. This is very simple and students should know it. Stating learning goals clearly at the beginning of a reading course and being able to deliver results is ideally what one should expect of the learning/teaching process. While experiencing changes in their behavior, EFL learners and ER readers also need to understand the factors responsible for their improvement or failure. I strongly believe that noticing one's own behavior as a learner is what really counts for an adult EFL learner. Thus, during classes we take some time to analyze our behavior as readers and to look for patterns. I ask my students quite often if they are conscious of this or that, and I can see they are surprised because they are not used to analyzing their own behavior.

Through seven years of implementing extensive reading in my Easy Reading class, questions about the sinusoid nature of students' motivation often arose. The following is an overview of the teacher's findings and of how the students of this class see themselves as English readers based on their answers



to questionnaires given at the beginning and the end of the course, and based on group discussions during the last lesson.

### The situation in ER class

To my students, ER class means "Easy Reading" as much as "Extensive Reading." In the first semester of each year, second-year junior college English majors can take this class and begin for the first time to read extensively in English. This one-semester, elective course, for only one credit, is the only course solely dedicated to teaching/learning extensive reading at Sapporo International Junior College and University. It has been taught for the past seven years. Fifteen lessons of extensive reading instruction for an English major are surely not enough, but that is all we have to enhance their EFL learning, build their reading fluency, and allow students to experience real reading. The final results for 2012 show that on average students read 43 graded readers, with only one student who read more than 80 graded readers.

To give some brief background information, I taught myself English through extensive reading starting from 200-headword level books some 30 years ago out of desperation for not having access to books in my native Polish, and I have read voraciously in English ever since. Thus, the methods in this class were first learned by doing and then enhanced theoretically.

### Pre-course attitude and motivation toward reading in English

At the beginning of Easy Reading class, students say that their main reason for taking this elective class is to get better scores on TOEIC and Eiken Tests and to be able to make sense of longer sentences in text, which they used to decipher rather than read in intensive reading fashion. Students agree that they want interesting (exciting, tangible, and funny) stories in their graded readers. They are interested in contents as vehicles which will take them painlessly through reading in English, a task which has always been a hard job beginning from junior high. Initially, students are more concerned about improving their scores than explicitly or specifically having fun in English. In the back of their minds, reading, if not a heavy task, is just another way of spending time in class. They are not very convinced about the ER method, at least not in the same way that they are of

the grammar-translation method, which they consider serious, or *majime*, as opposed to having fun. Fun in studying is often perceived by both parties, students and teachers, as a sugar-coating for the real thing: something that is pleasurable enough but that never gains the status of real studying. In that light, ER is thought of as a supplementary activity by a majority (90%) of the students at the beginning of Easy Reading class. A Japanese teacher of English once told me that the grammar-translation method is a real method for studying a foreign language, and this is how Japanese choose to study. Other methods, in his view, are kinds of experiments, mostly introduced by foreigners who are not aware of the peculiarities of the Japanese language and education system. It is debatable to what extent this view is still shared by the Japanese teachers of English, but judging from the grammar-translation method's persistent presence in many Japanese secondary education institutions, it is not an exceptional one. The same could be said about so-called *juken eigo*, or English required on university entrance examinations. These kinds of views are certainly not without influence on students' beliefs and they are often encountered at the start of the extensive reading course.

### Students' behavior during the course

Students show some interest when the cart-load of graded readers is handed around the classroom and at first become engaged in silent reading. However, when at the library, students don't choose to borrow many titles even though they are encouraged to do so. The behavior of the majority of the students doesn't change dramatically after one month, but some of the students start reading more frequently (up to 3 graded readers a day) and begin showing more interest. After two months, half of the class is reading steadily while the other half is dragging behind reading no more than 1-2 graded readers per week. The required amount of 40 graded readers in one semester in exchange for credit doesn't seem to bother them yet. However, the "late bloomers" try to catch up in the third month of the course. A few wait until the last possible moment to read at least 30 graded readers before the course ends, and then read the remaining 10 as the equivalent of a makeup test after the semester ends. Each book a student reads is listed on a chart for all students to see, but student names are concealed for privacy; only their numbers are visible. Each student discusses their



progress, problems, etc. with the teacher at least three times during silent reading lessons in the library, which are held during 8 of the 15 weeks. The rest of class time is spent doing intensive reading activities, measuring speed, answering questionnaires, and having discussions.

### Student answers to questionnaires

1. Improvement of skills. More than 80% of the students, felt their English skills had improved, rating their improvement as high or moderate on a scale of 5-1, in which 5 meant "extremely high" and 1 meant "insignificant." However, only 40% expressed their intention to continue reading extensively with the rest answering "not sure."

Teacher's comments: This course was perceived by students as an absolutely new approach to EFL, and the majority of them were skeptical of its effectiveness. Those who read regularly and read more than 40 graded readers noticed a significant improvement and changed their opinion of reading in general, with some students really getting "hooked." Students who read a large amount of graded readers in one sweep at the end of the semester just to get credit noticed only moderate improvement and were not as motivated to continue reading after the course ended.

2. Speed and comprehension. "Reading speed increased" and "better comprehension" were listed most frequently among other possible gains and the responsible factors were "reading on the level matching one's proficiency" and "reading many graded readers." Compared to the start of the course, students changed their opinion on the importance of reading speed and started to believe it to be an indispensable factor for a fluent reader. More than 70% of the students read faster at the end of the course and felt they needed to work on reading even faster by increasing their reading activities. The average speed growth was about 20-30 wpm for students who read at 80 wpm or slower at the beginning of the course, thus allowing many for the first time to cross the barrier of 100 wpm. A few students, who initially read faster, noted more significant growth of about 40 wpm.

Teacher's comments: Students noticed for the first time the importance of being able to read faster and its

implications for better comprehension and enjoyment. They also noticed its influence on better scores on TOEIC and Eiken tests. However there wasn't much time to do more accurate speed measuring, which was done in class three times during the semester by the teacher using a stop-watch. Students noted their results on their charts and answered a questionnaire about speed based on these notes. Although the extent to which ER class helped students achieve better scores could not be measured, it was the students' perception that reading many graded readers helped them not only to read faster but also to do better on Eiken interview tests.

3. Motivation. Most students felt more motivated toward reading in English after they completed the course. "Getting confidence" was also mentioned by more than 80% of the students.

Teacher's comments: Different attitudes and motivation fluctuations during the course were observed. Three distinct patterns were visible (percentages vary slightly each year): (a) Not taking the teacher's instructions seriously and generally doing almost nothing outside of class until nearly the end of the course, then suddenly reading a large amount of graded readers in one sweep (about 30%). (b) Feeling one's way cautiously and borrowing a modest amount of graded readers per week, then getting hooked and reading with pleasure (about 50%). (c) Showing enthusiasm and reading regularly and a lot from the beginning to the end of the course (about 20%). Each year after the course finishes, there are one or two students who continue reading on their own. Sometimes they write the teacher emails after finishing their 100th graded reader.

### Student opinions in group discussions

The 17 students formed small groups (3-4 people each) and answered the following questions after they discussed them among themselves:

1. What are the benefits of Extensive Reading in general and this class in particular?
2. What problems did you face in this class and when reading on your own?
3. What plans would you like to realize in the future?

All groups listed an increase in reading speed and its influence on better comprehension as the main benefits from the Easy Reading class. Next highest on the list was learning that reading on a level close to their own proficiency level helps with reading a great number of different texts and with noticing the grammatical structure of sentences, as well as noticing

their own mistakes in grammar. Better scores on TOEIC and Eiken were also noted.

As for the problems or failures, students noted they should persevere and read more, or *motto ganbaru beki datta*. Some groups asked for more 200-headword level graded readers, and some mentioned that 250-headword level readers should be created as a smooth step to the 300-headword level. Although individually not everyone was sure they would continue reading, as a group, students unanimously expressed their willingness to do so. Hopefully this first encounter with ER helps them find their own way to study and enjoy English.

## References

- Nuttal, C. (1966). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Waring, R. (2006). Why extensive reading should be an indispensable part of all language programs. *The Language Teacher*, 30(7), 44-47.

# Write for ERJ!

Deadline for submissions ERJ 6.1: February 28th

- ☐ Anything related to extensive reading or extensive listening, or of interest to members of the JALT ER SIG
- ☐ Maximum length: around 4 sides of A4, 2,500 words
- ☐ APA6 style
- ☐ No footnotes
- ☐ Headings and subheadings sentence-capitalised (only the first letter of the heading and the first letter of proper names capitalised—like this list!)
- ☐ Photos, graphs and graphics submitted as separate, clearly named files
- ☐ MSWord or text format (If you have any layout requests, send separately or consider the position of layout editor!)
- ☐ In English or Japanese, but not both (No Japanese characters within English text)
- ☐ Put your name and part of the title in the filename.

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

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

## 2012 ERF LLL Winners



### Adolescent and Adult: Intermediate A CHRISTMAS CAROL



Retold by: Sean Michael Wilson

Illustrator: Mike Collins

National Geographic Learning

ISBN: 978-1-4240-4287-6

#### Judges' comment:

This version of A Christmas Carol is a graphic novel which has the rare combination of excellent artwork and skillful retelling that can engage readers from start to finish. Graphic novels have the potential to attract students who might not find regular graded readers appealing, and this is a good example of how to make a graphic novel work as a graded reader.

#### On-line voters' comments:

Great artwork. Most of us know the story, but this was original, and the ghosts were excellent.

I found this book really amazing. I have heard of this book and have frankly tried to read this novella many a time but never felt like it. I have even seen the BBC movie version but never read the book. I should say that this graphic novel version is totally readable and this is the book that I read first in this series of books. I found the glossary with the pronunciation very useful. I would love to read the other classic comics in this series.

### Adolescent and Adult: Upper Intermediate and Advanced JOE FAUST



Author: Frank Brennan

Illustrator: Redbean Design

National Geographic Learning

ISBN: 978-1-4240-1796-6

#### Judges' comment:

This is a gripping story, and a moral tale for our times that speaks across different cultures and societies. As one reader put it, this is a "good story that sends across a very important, influential message." It is a clever updating of the legend of Doctor Faustus, relevant to us all. The Devil has many disguises...

#### On-line voters' comment:

The black and white illustrations set the mysterious, moody atmosphere of the story that is very relevant to a Western culture that equates success with wealth and power. This updating of the classic Faust story to focus on a young city trader at an investment company in NYC will generate discussion about values, relationships and personal goals. I liked attention to descriptive detail though I did not like the protagonist.





## ER research design improvement: Measuring time on task

Stuart McLean

Temple University

Despite some recent important developments, Extensive Reading (ER) research would benefit from improvements in research design resulting in increased external, internal and construct validity, which in turn may increase the inclusion of ER in syllabi. This paper presents one method to control for time on task when conducting ER research. The number of words read during thirty and sixty minutes of Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) by five classes of university students was established for further research, allowing the researcher to compare the effect on students' reading fluency of seventy minutes of ER, intensive reading and vocabulary study. Additionally, this research found a statistically significant positive correlation between the number of words read in thirty and sixty minutes and students' reading vocabulary size.

Following the presentation of Beniko Mason at the JALT Extensive Reading Seminar two points were salient. Firstly, yes—Beniko Mason was correct in that the audience was kind because she was preaching to the converted, and secondly, despite the very clear limitations regarding the construct, internal and external validity of the research presented and related conclusions, the audience left her presentation generally very enthused. However, one could not help but ponder the impact that such a skilled speaker could have if presenting research with stronger construct, internal and external validity to those who are not yet "converted". Surely, one role of ER practitioners and researchers is to put forward evidence and balanced arguments to encourage the growth of ER practice. One of the most common and, until now, unaddressed issues facing ER research is time on task. Without addressing this, it is highly problematic for casual studies to put forward arguments that ER is more effective than other pedagogical methods. This article describes one research method utilized as part of a pilot study to establish how many words Japanese EFL university students read in thirty and sixty minutes, in an attempt to control for time on task in later studies.

Nakanishi and Ueda (2011) stated a tendency for ER studies to exclude control groups within their research design, which reduces the internal validity. Additionally, Nakanishi & Ueda make an argument for the inclusion of control groups to strengthen researchers' ability to attribute gains to ER. A major step forward in the validity of ER research and in facilitating comparison between studies was the introduction of the standard word unit to second language reading research by Beglar, Hunt and Kite (2011) in a recent issue of *Language Learning*. One

standard word is six characters long (Carver 1982), including punctuation marks and spaces within paragraphs. The adoption of the standard word as a unit of measurement is more accurate than counting printed words, pages, or books, all of which may significantly vary in quantity between different books. The use of this standard unit facilitates comparison of results across studies (Beglar, Hunt & Kite, 2011). To the knowledge of this author, *Language Learning*, one of the most influential SLA journals, has never previously published an ER research article based entirely on primary data. The research design and the introduction of the standard word unit in the L2 reading research context are among several important strengths that earned the paper's publication in *Language Learning*. The publication of this paper led Richard Day, at the first World Congress on Extensive Reading, to congratulate David Beglar on moving ER research forward a decade. While Beglar, Hunt and Kite have clearly set the standard for future ER studies, their study did include acknowledged limitations. One limitation was the comparison of control and treatment groups without controlling for time on task.

### A pilot study

In an attempt to control for time on task when comparing ER, Intensive Reading (IR) and deliberate learning of decontextualized paired associates for their effectiveness on improving reading speed while sustaining comprehension levels, it was necessary to establish how many words students read during thirty- and sixty-minute periods. Using Word Engine, it is possible to monitor time spent on paired-associate learning, and therefore possible to assign a given quantity of time for decontextualized paired-

associate learning homework each week (McLean, 2012). The IR exercises in a planned larger piece of research, for which this research is a pilot study, have recommended completion times, and all participants in the planned study will record the amount of time spent conducting homework in journals. To establish the minimum number of words to be read each week by students belonging to thirty- and sixty-minute ER reading groups, a pilot study was conducted.

## Method

### Participants

The participants ( $n=107$ ) were from four first-year classes and one second-year class of Japanese EFL learners attending a large private university in western Japan. All the participants had studied English formally for six years in secondary school. The second-year students had completed sixty sessions of ninety-minute EFL classes during their first year of university.

### Instruments and procedure

At the beginning of the semester, in a Japanese university class, about one hundred graded readers from various publishers were placed on eight desks in order of *Yomiyasusa Level* (YL). The readers were predominantly from the series Building Block Library, published by Scientific Education Group Co., Ltd. (SEG), and Foundations Reading Library, published by Heinle Cengage. The lesson was explained to students in Japanese. First, an explanation of the order in which the books were arranged. Second, students were advised to select any book they wished to read and open it to any page. If they found more than two unknown words, they were to return the book to its place and select an easier book until they found a book of an appropriate level. This practice is in line with Nation (2009), and it is also a method that students may use when selecting books independently. Third, students were provided with reading record sheets, and told that they were to read for an hour, marking how far they had read after thirty minutes and then an hour.

If students completed a book within the hour, they were to record the title and publisher of the book, and return the book to its place. Fourth, students were to select books from the same desk or a desk of easier books, and then continue reading. Fifth, after thirty- and sixty-minute sessions of Sustained Silent

Reading (SSR), students were asked to mark the last word they had read in the books they were reading. Then, after reading for sixty minutes, students were asked to count the number of words read and record it on their reading record sheets. Finally, with student-established word counts, students were asked to write the number of books and words read during thirty- and sixty-minute sessions.

As part of the larger study, all participants conducted an online version of Nation and Beglar's 2007 Vocabulary Size Test (VST), which Beglar validated with the Rasch model in 2010. Importantly, this test establishes the reading vocabulary size of the test taker. The online version is identical to the Rasch-validated paper version.

Students had ten minutes to complete a questionnaire to establish students' first languages, languages used at home, time spent abroad and whether students were attending classes outside of their university classes. Students whose first language or language used at home was not Japanese ( $n=2$ ) were not included in the pilot study. Data from students whose first language or language used at home was not Japanese were not included within the analyzed data.

### Data analysis

Before conducting parametric statistical tests, it is necessary to establish whether the data is parametric. When conducting parametric tests, the data's skewness and kurtosis need to be within an acceptable range. In short, these characteristics refer to the degree to which the data diverges from normal distribution. It was established that conducting parametric tests would be appropriate for the data collected. One-tailed Pearson's correlations were utilized to establish the level of correlation between student vocabulary size and number of words read in thirty and sixty minutes. All data analysis was conducted with IBM SPSS software.

## Results

The mean numbers of words read by students in thirty- and sixty-minute sessions were 2,464 and 4,602 words respectively (Table 1). However, the range in reading speed was great, as is shown by the large SD and huge differences between maximum and minimum reading speed displayed in words per minute (wpm).

Table 1. Reading speeds in thirty- and sixty-minute sessions

	30 minutes	60 minutes
Mean Total	2,464	4,602
Mean per minutes	82	77
SD	611	1095
Minimum wpm	27	34
Maximum wpm	135	122

The positive correlations between number of words read and reading vocabulary size, shown in the figure below, were found to be statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). However, it should be pointed out that these correlations are small.

### Discussion

The average reading speeds of 82 and 77 wpm in thirty- and sixty-minute sessions respectively are in line with those found among Japanese EFL students by Robb & Susser in 1989 (79 wpm) and Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass & Gorsuch in 2004 (82 wpm). Reasons for the marginally greater speed during thirty-minute sessions relative to the speed during sixty-minute sessions may be the result of students spending more time recording, returning and selecting books during the second thirty-minute reading period than the first thirty-minute reading period. Additionally, loss of concentration may be expected to be greater during the second thirty-minute period. This is supported by Day and Bamford (1998), who state that less able readers have difficulty concentrating for more than 20

minutes when reading in a second language.

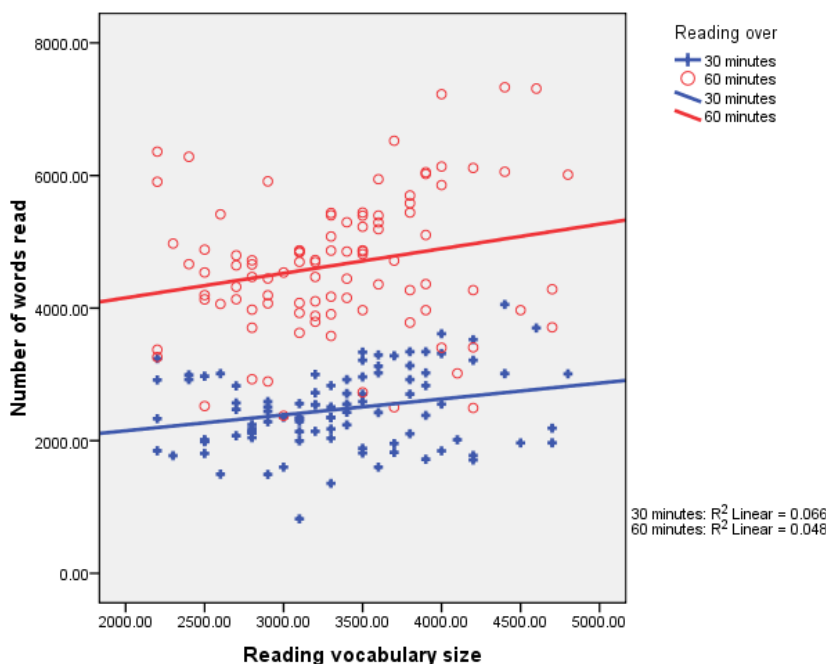
Although not initially part of the pilot study, the statistically positive correlation between reading speed and reading vocabulary size is interesting, and because it is to be expected, it helps support the methodology and findings of the pilot study. Such a correlation is to be expected when considering the importance of vocabulary and sight vocabulary in the comprehension of text, and in the comprehension of text at speed (Davis, 1972; Hirsh & Nation, 1992; Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Hu & Nation, 2000; Huckin & Bloch, 1993; Klare, 1974-75; Laufer, 1992).

The implication of the pilot study for the larger research is that the treatment group conducting ER will be required to read 5,000 words a week and keep homework journals with the hope that reading 5,000 words and completing related tests on the Moodle Reader Module takes seventy minutes. The ER treatment groups will be compared with treatment groups which will conduct vocabulary study and IR for seventy minutes a week.

### Limitation of this investigation

This investigation describes one way in which researchers may try to establish the free reading speed of participants in thirty- and sixty-minute sessions so that a weekly minimum number of words may be set for ER homework, and so that more valid comparisons may be made between control and treatment groups. This was done to increase the strength of arguments that control and treatment groups had equal time on

task. However, while an average number of words read in thirty- and sixty-minute sessions was established, and was in line with figures published for Japanese EFL students, the range between maximum and minimum wpm was great. This is problematic because in practice, when the average number of words read in sixty minutes (4,602) is set for weekly homework, it will result in slower readers reading for more than sixty minutes, and more fluent readers reading for less than sixty minutes a week. However, this will be shown within homework journals, and will be taken into account when discussing the results of the future study. The phenomenon of regression to the mean, however, will result in the





difference not being as great as it appears at present. The only conceivable alternative is for each student participating in the research to have individual weekly reading requirements. However, it was felt that this would displease and demotivate the students.

The second most salient limitation is the degree to which students' social desirability resulted in inflated word counts in attempts to impress fellow students or teachers. Ideally, the researcher would mark and count the number of words read, but this was unfeasible.

## Conclusion

It is understood that the practical issues of finances, resources and time are more common reasons for ER not taking place in various teaching contexts. However, it is also felt that ER research has a duty to strengthen pedagogical arguments for ER. Here, ER research should strive to develop and mature, and to become more sophisticated. While recent publications point toward the development of new standards for ER research, ER researchers need to address the variable of time on task before more internally valid conclusions may be made. However, by its very nature, ER makes it difficult to control for time on task. This paper suggests one simple way in which time on task may be controlled for, and may be incorporated into SSR.

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# The Journal of Extensive Reading—Call for Submissions

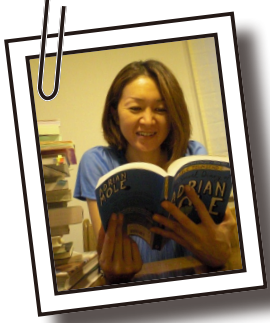
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# Vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading: A review of recent trends

Haruko Kato  
Meijo University

This review surveys scholarly articles, books, and other sources such as dissertations and conference proceedings relevant to the issue of vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading. The purpose is to offer an overview of significant literature published on the topic, and seek implications for classroom practice.

## Extensive reading in universities in Japan

Over the last 20 years, extensive reading in English has become increasingly popular at universities in Japan (Schmidt, 2007, p. 11). One of the reasons for this trend has been the spread of a new style of extensive reading called SSS (Start with Simple Stories) advocated by Kunihide Sakai in the late 1990s (Sakai & Kanda, 2005, p. iii–vi). Atsuko Takase has been successful in implementing extensive reading into several junior high schools and universities, employing "the two most critical tips"—to start reading with SSS and SSR (Sustained Silent Reading) (e.g. Takase, 2008, p. 122). The technique of SSR gives "busy" students time to read in class, and teachers can give students appropriate advice on the spot (Grogan, 2009, pp. 16–17; Takase, 2008, p. 122). Thomas Robb has been promoting extensive reading as part of a compulsory reading programme through a Moodle module (Grogan, 2009, p. 17).

## Vocabulary acquisition through reading

Students need knowledge of vocabulary to gain access to texts and to comprehend them. Krashen (1985, p. 2; 1989, p. 440) argues that comprehensible input may be the single most important factor in second language acquisition, especially when it comes to vocabulary, and continues that vocabulary is most efficiently attained by comprehensible input in the form of reading. It also seems natural to assume from our personal experience in acquiring first language vocabulary that a considerable amount of word learning occurs incidentally through reading. Zimmerman (1997, p. 123) offers evidence that supports this assumption, by citing the research by Nagy et al. (1987, p. 262) that shows that L1 vocabulary doubles in size between the third and seventh grades, and that schoolchildren typically gain 1,000–3,000 words a year. They estimate that such extensive gains suggest that a considerable amount of word

learning takes place incidentally through exposure to new words in meaningful contexts. It should be noted here that this can be applied to both first and second language acquisition, because "a great many words are learnt from reading" (Nuttall, 2005, p. 62). Both first and second language acquisition results support the view that comprehensible input is the major source of vocabulary competence (Krashen, 1989, p. 441). Reading widely is a highly effective means of extending our command of language, so it has an important place in classrooms where language learning is the central purpose (Nuttall, 2005, p. 30).

## Vocabulary acquisition through intensive reading

Intensive reading involves the detailed reading of texts with the two goals of understanding the text and learning language features through a deliberate focus on these items (Nation, 2008, p. 59). The text chosen for intensive reading is typically one that the learners would have difficulty in reading unassisted (Nation). Intensive reading often employs the grammar translation approach using L1 to translate or explain sentence by sentence. Intensive reading can be an opportunity for teachers and learners to work on vocabulary (Nation, 2009, p. 37). Through intensive reading, a teacher can intentionally focus on vocabulary.

Nuttall (2005, p. 64) warns, however, that intensive reading is likely to strengthen students' belief that they ought to pay attention to every detail of a text when they read on their own. Although students must be able to do so when their purpose demands it, it is usually more important to concentrate on reading the text than to be interrupted by frequent dictionary work. Nation (2009, pp. 25–26) argues that the most important feature of intensive reading teaching is to foster the learner's ability to comprehend "texts" not "a text", so that the learner can understand "tomorrow's texts". The features studied in the text should be useful

when the learner reads other texts. Intensive reading should, therefore, make up only a small proportion of a vocabulary development programme.

### Vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading

It is widely agreed that much second language vocabulary learning occurs incidentally while the learner is engaged in extensive reading. Day and Bamford (1998, p. 16) argue that extensive reading is the best way to enhance the development both of a large sight vocabulary and of a large general vocabulary. Huckin and Coady (1999, p. 181) state that incidental vocabulary acquisition is the primary means by which second language learners develop their vocabulary beyond the first few thousand most-common words. Thornbury (2002, p. 74) maintains that extensive reading of simplified readers is a good source of incidental vocabulary learning. The best way of providing the necessary exposure is through extensive reading—that is, the reading of long texts, and reading for pleasure rather than for information (Thornbury, 2002, p. 58). We learn words best when they occur in a well-understood text (Nuttall, 2005, p. 175). Because of Krashen's claims since the 1980s regarding the need for large amounts of comprehensible input and the positive benefits of extensive reading, such reading has become one of the most widely used methods for developing reading and vocabulary skills (Browne, 2003, p. 7).

Lack of exposure is one of the most common problems facing second language learners, and one of the tasks of the teacher is to expedite incidental vocabulary learning by increasing the amount of exposure to the target language (Schmitt, 2000, p. 120). Nuttall (2005, p. 128) contends that the best way to improve knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers; the next best way is to read extensively in the target language. It is not likely that the case of the Japanese learners of English is an exception to this.

What then is the vocabulary size needed for the learner to read? Only a small number of English words occur very frequently, and if a learner knows these words, he or she will know a very large proportion of the commonly used words in written or spoken texts (Nation and Waring, 1997, p. 9). The learner needs to know the 3,000 or so high-frequency English words, because these are an immediate high priority, and

there is little sense in focusing on other vocabulary until these are well learned (Nation & Waring, 1997, p. 11). One way in which to manage the learning of that kind of vocabulary is learning new words in context through extensive reading.

Extensive reading seems to be a good way to enhance word knowledge and to increase the amount of exposure to the most frequently used and useful words. Al-Houmoud and Schmitt compare an extensive reading class in Saudi Arabia to a more traditional class involving intensive reading and vocabulary exercises, and the results indicate that the extensive reading approach was as good as, or better than, the more focused intensive reading approach (2009, p. 383). If extensive reading can show positive results in a challenging environment which includes a short experimental period, relatively weak students, an input-poor environment and students not being active readers, there is little doubt that extensive reading can be a viable language teaching approach. The role of extensive reading and its impact on vocabulary growth has been addressed in many studies in both L1 and L2 contexts (Grabe, 2009, p. 323). Overall, those studies add to the growing evidence that shows the benefits of extensive reading.

### Drawbacks of vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading

Coady (1997, p. 227) shows some negative evidence in the research literature with regard to vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading, by quoting Hafiz and Tudor's (1989, p. 8) three-month ESL extensive reading programme which showed significant improvement in reading and writing, but with the subjects' vocabulary base remaining relatively unchanged. Sökmen (1997, p. 238) indicates several potential problems in facilitating vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading: 1) a very slow process, 2) error-prone when inferring word meaning from context, 3) low comprehension, 4) some learners good at inferring; others not, and 5) most importantly, no long-term retention. We are left with very mixed results from the research in support of Krashen's claims about L2 acquisition through extensive reading alone (Coady, 1997, p. 228). A number of studies have shown that second language learners acquire vocabulary through reading, but only relatively small amounts (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006, p. 1). A case study on a learner of French, however, indicates that more



vocabulary acquisition is possible from extensive reading than previous studies have suggested (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006, p. 15).

Nation (2008, pp. 70-71; 2009, pp. 50-51) clearly states that there are limitations with regard to vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading: learning through extensive reading is largely incidental learning, that is, the learners' attention is focused on the story, not on items to learn. As a result, learning gains tend to be fragile and thus it is important to have quantity of input with substantial opportunities for vocabulary repetition (Nation, 2008, p. 71; Nation, 2009, p.50). Although exposure to a word in a variety of contexts is extremely important when it comes to understanding the depth of a word's meaning, providing incidental encounters with words using only one method is probably insufficient. Grabe (2009, p. 313) argues there are relatively few carefully controlled experimental studies linking extensive reading to the development of reading and vocabulary. Therefore, more research into implicit vocabulary instruction should be expected. Also, if we think about extensive reading from another perspective, extensive reading generally requires a significant effort to motivate students to be successful. Considering these potential problems, ways of supporting extensive reading and their associated programmes should be continuously explored.

### Vocabulary acquisition through a combined approach

Although research demonstrates that vocabulary can be acquired indirectly through reading, Zimmerman (1997, p. 121) poses a question: does vocabulary instruction make a difference? The results of his pilot study demonstrate that an approach combining reading and communicative vocabulary instruction could constructively influence the learning of non-technical academic vocabulary. The consensus is that, for second language learners at least, both explicit and incidental learning are necessary, and should be seen as complementary (Schmitt, 2000, p. 121). Certain important words, such as the ones in the high frequency list, make excellent targets for attention. We could prepare a text which includes those important words as part of the intensive reading process. Infrequent words could be left to later incidental learning, for example, learning through extensive reading. On the other hand, Mason (2010, p. 374)

argues against any combined approach, saying that when reading is combined with output activities such as comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises, writing assignments or speaking practice, students go back to the traditional mode, and reading is no longer fun.

### Vocabulary acquisition through narrow reading

Another method of vocabulary learning through extensive but narrowed reading, motivated by a specialised interest and immediate need of an individual learner, is narrow reading (Thornbury, 2002, p. 59). Cho et al. (2005, p. 58) state that narrow reading means reading in only one genre, one subject matter, or the work of one author. The case for narrow reading is based on the idea that the acquisition of both structure and vocabulary comes from many exposures in a comprehensible context. That is, we acquire new structures and words when we understand the many messages that they encode (Krashen, 2004, p. 17). Narrow reading facilitates this process in several ways and helps ensure comprehension and the natural repetition of vocabulary and grammar (Krashen & Brown, 2007, p. 2). Narrow reading could be more focused and tailored to the needs of individual learners in terms of vocabulary acquisition than the extensive reading of wider genres by many different authors. There is therefore some advantage in using texts all dealing with similar topics, because the recycling of vocabulary is to be expected. If the students are happy with narrow reading, it seems worth trying.

### Vocabulary teaching through extensive reading today

We see classical methods of learning and teaching vocabulary, such as learning from lists, rote learning and drills, still prevail in many classrooms in Japan. Nowadays, however, hardly any expert on vocabulary learning would recommend that people should learn vocabulary only in these ways. One of the most widely accepted views on vocabulary instruction today is probably that deliberately teaching vocabulary is one of the least efficient ways of developing learners' vocabulary knowledge, but nonetheless it is an important part of a well-balanced vocabulary program (Nation, 2008, p. 97). Experts recommend that vocabulary should be acquired in

context (Meara, 2001, p.1). In the same vein, extensive reading of comprehensible and enjoyable texts is highly recommended (Nation, 2009, p. 49). Very high frequency English words occur so often that they should be learned and taught. On the other hand, low frequency words do not deserve teaching time. Nation's proposal is to learn vocabulary both by direct study and by reading. Words should be learned in lists as well as in context.

The role of repetition is very important in vocabulary acquisition (Zimmerman, 1997, p. 133). Further meetings with these words should strengthen and enrich vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2009, p. 51). Hence, extensive reading of graded readers that are written with a limited vocabulary is quite effective and rewarding. Repeated exposure will lead to a better sense of how words are used in actual situations. It is thus important to make sure that there are repeated opportunities to meet the same vocabulary in reading, and these repeated opportunities should not be delayed too long. It can be recommended then that, in our lessons, we should ensure that target words appear in texts, communicative activities in pairs or groups in class, through homework activities on Moodle, and so on. At the same time, we must alert our students to the problem, impressing on them that building vocabulary requires a great deal of effort, and that, as more pieces are added and more connections are made, there must be a continuous process of reviewing.

As Zimmerman's (1997, p. 137) questionnaire results show, students' perceptions are important in that they influence decisions, time and effort with regard to vocabulary learning. Generally speaking, students' motivation is quite variable. Hence teachers should pay more attention to vocabulary, choose contexts carefully, encourage students' self-selection of materials, choose assignments carefully, and possibly combine reading and communicative vocabulary instruction. Extensive reading is relatively easy to organize, enjoyable for the students, and extremely cost-effective (Nuttall, 2005, p. 62). A student must be able to read different texts with great flexibility of purpose and strategy, which certainly implies that a number of different strategies should be used in vocabulary acquisition.



## Conclusion

What can be said with regards to vocabulary learning and teaching is likely to be two-fold. Firstly, it is necessary to focus on the highest frequency words by encouraging extensive reading of graded readers. Secondly, the teacher should provide a number of encounters with a word by connecting in-class activities such as deliberate vocabulary instruction through intensive reading of a text and communicative pair work or group work with out-of-class activities such as extensive reading, and introduce the concept of narrow reading to those who are interested.

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# The ER Colloquium at JALT2012—THE SMALL PRINT

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## Adapting reading circles to the busy ER classroom Michael Furmanovsky (Ryukoku University)

Reading Circles have become an established part of the ER playbook. However, some teachers have found issues with the somewhat complex 6-role OUP model built around the use of selected short stories. Issues include the unwieldy size of the group as well as the use of roles that can be hard to define or redundant. Additional issues arise when using a single-story Graded Reader rather than short stories. The presenter will demonstrate a highly simplified 4-member version of the Reading Circle for use with a single common reader. He will also share customized worksheets that are not only easier for lower-intermediate students to use, but require an interaction that goes beyond the simple asking of questions to other members

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## Understanding motivation in extensive reading Sandra Healy (Kyoto Women's University)

The benefits of extensive reading have been well documented in recent years. However, there has been little qualitative research undertaken which explores extensive reading from the students' perspectives. This study examines the beliefs that learners hold about extensive reading in a two-year programme at a mid-level university in Japan. Through the analysis of questionnaires, interviews, observation and written reports from students it was found that the majority of students understand the benefits of extensive reading and hold positive attitudes towards it. Motivation was complex and varied depending on a variety of factors based on a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, particularly the context in which the programme was undertaken.

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## Book group day Stephen Henneberry (University of Shimane)

Establishing a 'Book Group Day' in your classroom is a great way to incorporate Extensive Reading into any course. Book Group Day is a simple, student-centered discussion activity, based on books which students read outside of class. The activity focuses students on summarizing and describing texts, while also encouraging questions and discussion to help students learn about and share interesting books. Once introduced, the activity can be recycled throughout the semester to help maintain student interest in an Extensive Reading program. This presentation will describe how Book Group Day is incorporated into the English curriculum at the University of Shimane. A clear framework, including everything from preparation to management, will be provided along with examples of materials and handouts to help teachers set-up similar programs with their own students.

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## Reading fluency gains of first-year Japanese nursing students during a one-semester ER course

Jeffrey Huffman (St. Luke's College of Nursing)  
Studies have shown that extensive reading improves reading ability, but few have investigated its effects on reading fluency. This paper presents the results of an investigation of the reading fluency gains of first-year Japanese nursing students during a one-semester extensive reading course, with students in an intensive reading course used as a comparison group (N=75). The

students' reading rate and comprehension were measured at the beginning and end of the semester, and the extensive reading course also included a timed reading component, so their reading rate changes throughout the semester will also be presented. The students' responses on a questionnaire about their experiences and feelings regarding reading in English will also be presented.

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## ER research design improvement: Measuring time on task

### Stuart McLean (Temple University)

The only independent study some students carry out is extensive reading. However, despite MEXT homework guidelines, how much time students spend reading is often unknown. Additionally, how long research subjects spend reading (time on task) is also an issue for researchers. During the first week of term, students were free to select any book they wished from a wide selection of books consisting of various reading levels and publishers. The books were displayed in order of reading difficulty order, according to their yomiyasusa level. After reading for 30 and 60 minutes students marked how far they had read, and a word count was recorded. A positive relationship between vocabulary size and reading speed was established.

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## MoodleReader quizzes: How do the students respond?

### Scott Miles (Daegu-Haany University)

The Moodle Reader quizzes ([moodlereader.org](http://moodlereader.org)) have been used for several extensive reading classes at Daegu-Haany University in South Korea over a 2-year period. In each semester, students completed surveys regarding their use of the website, responding to questions such as how using the site affected their reading, how fair they thought the quizzes were, and whether they preferred having their reading assessed on the moodlereader site or through other assessment methods that were used in the classes. The presentation will discuss the results of the survey, in addition to a few of the presenter's own experiences using the site.

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## ER triage: Helping readers find the books they need

### Michael Parrish (Kwansei Gakuin University Language Centre)

This presentation will outline an activity designed to instruct students in the process and criteria required to select appropriate reading material and determine their correct reading level via the determination of their individual reading speeds and word error counts. This activity also reinforces Krashen's Pleasure Principle, crucial in ER, in that students are encouraged to choose the texts that are not only at the correct level, but which are intrinsically enjoyable to read. It also provides a framework for (self-)monitoring and assessment of student progress.

### MoodleReader for quizzes on ER books

Thomas Robb (Kyoto Sangyo University)

MoodleReader is a free program that allows your students to take quizzes on the books they have read, amass points for each book and gather a collection of book cover "stamps" on their own personal home page. Not only does it motivate students, it can free you of the need to check book reports!

### Choosing a graded reader: Plot-driven versus character-driven stories

Stephen Shucart and Mamoru "Bobby" Takahashi (Akita Prefectural University)

Motivation is considered to be one of the key components that drives second language acquisition, and nowhere is this more evident than in the field of extensive reading. Helping students choose the proper graded reader is one of the keys to increasing and maintaining their motivation. By giving meta-information on patterns found in the text, we can change our students' perspectives, raise their awareness when choosing a book, and increase their enjoyment of the stories they read. This presentation focuses on the narrative itself. Akita Prefectural University has a library of nearly 1,000 graded readers. The authors analyzed the available fictional texts using the criteria of plot-driven stories versus character-driven stories, and they shall present their finding at this colloquium.

### How easy should ER materials be for beginners?

Atsuko Takase ( Kansai University)

Choosing appropriate ER materials is a critical element to lead an extensive reading (ER) program to a success. Several publishers recommend their graded readers to be read at certain TOEIC/TOEFL scores or STEP grades. A total of 370 university non-English major students participated in ER for one academic year. They took the TOEIC Bridge on the first day of school, and the TOEIC approximately after seven months of ER practice. The books they read during two weeks before and after the TOEIC were examined for their difficulty level and were compared with the students' TOEIC scores. The results showed a large gap between the levels of books recommended by publishers and the books students were actually reading comfortably.

### Reading preferences in early learners

Justus Wallen (Ritsumeikan Junior High School)

For students new to English, a positive experience with Extensive Reading may help create a healthy enduring relationship to reading. As such, any information that can assist a teacher in shaping an Extensive Reading program to the needs and interests of her students can be of benefit. Looking at junior high school first year students, this paper will explore student preference in regard to online versus in class reading programs. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative feedback from the students, gathered over the course of a year, it will also examine which aspects of each appeal most to students.

### Online extensive reading resources

Rob Waring (Notre Dame Seishin University)

In the last two to three years more and more publishers are making graded reading materials online or on mobile devices. The aim of this presentation is to showcase these materials. Various types of materials are available, from e-pub files, PDFs and simple webpages. There is also a variety of delivery platforms, some encrypted and

some not. The presentation will review the strengths and weaknesses of each and propose guidelines for their development.

### Making bilateral differences: Old hat, new hat, and a joint venture in an overseas ER outreach program

Mathew White (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies) and Sophie Muller (Chukyo University)

The presenters will elaborate on some of the benefits they discovered of working with a colleague when conducting an overseas ER training program. They will briefly describe their training program and then illustrate how the collaborative element of the workshops increased the benefits not only to the participants of their ER workshops, but also for the professional and personal development of the two ER edutainers. The trainers will give concrete examples of how their cooperation in the preparation and conducting of the workshops increased their understanding and practice of ER thanks to their respective perspectives on ER: one as a native-speaker ER veteran and the other as a non-native speaker ER new convert. From various experiences in book donations, the presenters will also describe some factors and conditions leading to students and teachers empowerment when starting or pursuing a reading program.

### Measuring the effect of "creativity" in a vocabulary quiz associated with extensive listening

Akiho Yamamoto (Kyoto Bunkyo University)

Vocabulary building is essential for better fluency and comprehension competency among L2 learners. However, when teaching vocabulary, the difficulty lies in providing the context. The presenter has taught idioms and phrases through animation films such as Finding Nemo which provide students with the rich context not only through verbal communication but also through non-verbal communication in the film. It will also be discussed that "creativity" measured in the vocabulary quiz seems to correlate with the L2 competency of the students in Kyoto Bunkyo University.

### Investigating extensive listening with graded-reader CDs

Miyuki Yonezawa, Yuka Kurihara and Jeffrey Durand (Tokai University)

The presenters will discuss the results of a year-long study on using Graded Readers (GR) with CDs for listening and shadowing in required English classes at a large university in Japan. The main purposes of the study were to examine how much students' listening skills changed over the course of a year and also to explore the impact of GR-related activities on students' attitudes towards English in general. The study employed pre-, mid-year, and post-tests on listening in addition to surveys. At the end of the year, selected students participated in interviews to provide further insights. Implications of the study will be discussed based on the results.

## ER Outreach Grant

For more details and to apply for the ER SIG's grants to help build libraries, see: [ersig.org/drupal-ersig/grants](http://ersig.org/drupal-ersig/grants)