Ease
Variety
Choice
Quantity
Pleasure
No Tests
No Dictionaries
Individual
Teachers Orient
Role Model

In This Issue

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ER SIG NEWS

Associate Member Liaison

Greg Gagnon has been teaching ESL for 15 year in Japan, Thailand, and the US. He currently works at Fukui University in Japan. His research includes effects of ER in other areas of language learning, and distinguishing the similarities and differences of ER with Extensive Listening (EL). Currently, Greg is researching teacher attitudes in the implementation of ER in the classroom. He hopes that he can help the JALT ER SIG plan and promote reading at all levels, and is welcome to any suggestions or comments on how to best fulfil his duties working with publishers and other businesses that support the SIG.
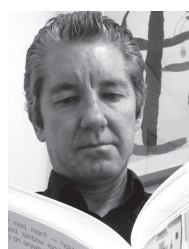
Assistant Membership Chair

Paul Dickinson has taught English in Australia and Japan for over 15 years. He is currently teaching at Niigata University of International and Information Studies. His interest in ER grew from seeing how much it engaged and inspired often unmotivated learners. He is presently researching learner perceptions of ER and the effects of ER on learner attitudes to reading. Having seen the many benefits his learners received from doing ER, in his role as Assistant Membership Chair, Paul hopes to contribute to promoting ER among educators and learners.

ERJ Assistant Editor

Kayvon Havaei-Ahary comes from England and has been teaching English for 4 years in a Japanese senior high school. He is currently studying a masters in TESOL at Nottingham University via distance learning, researching the effects of cooperative task-based learning to teach pronunciation. He joined the ER sig because he is particularly interested in creating stories for his students and giving his students the opportunity to develop their own stories. He hopes that he can help JALT ER SIG find new sources of reading materials and develop creative ways of implementing ER in the classroom.
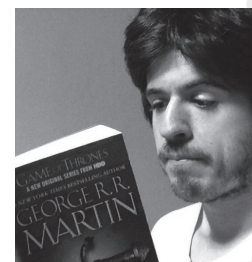
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Stuart McLean has taught in Japan and the UK for 15 years, and presently is teaching and studying at Kansai University. He co-published the Listening Vocabulary Levels Test in 2015, and has published in Language Teaching Research and Reading in a Foreign Language. His research interests include vocabulary assessment, ER, and research methodology. As the publications officer and a co-editor of the *Journal of Extensive Reading* he hopes to build on the *JER*'s present level of prestige, and in turn contribute to the expansion of ER.

Assistant Publicity Chair

Arriving fresh off the boat from England in 1998, Joanne Sato has been teaching in Japan for seventeen years and since 2001 she has worked at the university level, currently an Associate Professor in the English Department of Miyagi Gakuin Women's University in Sendai. She has a masters degree in TEFL from the University of Birmingham. She has spent the last year setting up an ER library for her department, which has proved a most rewarding and pleasurable experience. Joanne's other research interests include harnessing discourse analysis and complexity theory in order to better document and understand the lived realities of EFL classrooms and language learning.
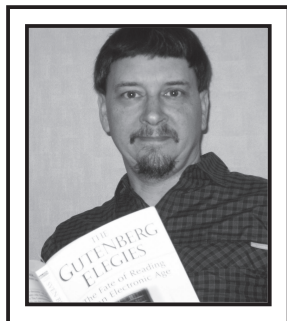
ER definitions and practice: Instructor voices

Thomas E. Bieri

Nanzan University

As an active practitioner and promoter of Extensive Reading (ER), I have often been asked, as well as asking myself, "What is ER?" Many people cite the ten guiding principles of extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002; Bamford & Day, 2004) as their answer. However, this answer is incomplete and leaves many questions. For example, can it still be considered ER if it is required, if the teacher selects some or all materials, if there is assessment, or if there are comprehension activities? Also, from discussions with instructors of extensive reading, it seems many are either unfamiliar or not in agreement with these principles. This article discusses the results of two surveys conducted in order to describe what the actual definitions and practice of a group of ER instructors was, juxtapose them with Day and Bamford's "Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading" (2002), and identify where divergences might give cause for redefining extensive reading.

Surveys

I conducted an anonymous online survey via a link which was sent to all instructors (n = 40) who were required to use ER in English reading courses overseen by the Nanzan English Education Center, but were given great freedom in how they practiced it. The instructors included both native and non-native speakers of English and the courses were taught to students from all majors. It was hoped that the variety in instructors and learners, as well as the freedom afforded the instructors would create a somewhat representative sample of university teachers in Japan. The survey included 46 items, the first two of which were open-ended. I asked, "How do you define 'extensive reading'?" and "How do you use extensive reading in your Nanzan courses?" The other items included 38 Likert-scale items and three each of open-ended items and select-from-a-list items. These items were related to areas such as purpose for using ER, materials used, learner choice, reading volume and targets, ER-related activities, grading of ER, and teacher roles. Twenty instructors responded to the survey, though not all responded to every item in the survey. The first two open items and three of the Likert-scale items each had a single non-response.

Several of the Day and Bamford (2002) principles received considerable support in the instructors' definitions. Fifteen of the respondents referred to choice or pleasure as an element of ER (reflecting principles three and five). These responses included comments such as, "read something you want to read", "choosing your own reading materials", "choose what they want to read, including content and level", "read for fun", and "readers have freedom to choose what to read and when to read." Twelve of the responses seemed to support principle four, indicating that ER involved a high volume of reading. Comments included, "reading a lot", "massive amounts of input", "large amounts of text" and "as much as you can." Nine of the responses referred to ease of reading, with such comments as, "much easier level than...intensive reading", "at your own level", "text within their own English competence", "fairly easy materials" and "little or no dictionary use." These comments support the first principle, but less than half of the responses indicated this directly.

The remaining Day and Bamford (2002) principles had only limited reference made to them within the definitions. Only four responses referred explicitly to variety of materials, as noted in the second principle. These responses include that ER should involve "various kinds of texts, styles and themes", "books of many genre [sic] and levels of difficulty", "a wide variety of topics" and "should offer a variety of books." While some of the comments relating to pleasure and choice could also indicate support for reading being its own reward (e.g. "just for the fun of it" and "done to realize the pleasure of reading"), only three respondents made clear reference to ER not being graded or tested. These included, "not be obliged to do after-reading activities like report or quiz" and "nothing to do with grades or other requirements." Also, only three responses made any reference to teacher roles, with one mentioning the teacher offering a variety of materials to the learners, another mentioning assigning reading materials, and a third referring to "teacher monitoring." With respect to principle seven, again only three responses were directly related to reading quickly, including "students can understand texts more quickly" and "It

must be reading as many pages as possible per hour without missing the drift." One other response stated quite the opposite opinion, saying, "Extensive reading is reading for pleasure not for speed." They added, "This is significantly different to reading skills which require speed, are not fun and involve skills students could employ in their future jobs." No response directly discussed reading being silent and individual, though the number of comments about learner choice could be seen to imply at least the latter.

Several responses defined ER at least partially based on the purposes for it. These included, "to improve learners' language ability independently", "to increase general comprehension and fluency", "improving reading fluency and proficiency", "develop a deeper and more natural understanding of language", and "get a feeling and confidence that one can taste and understand stories or opinions in English." While these may not seem at variance with the principles, two others might be more so. One definition in whole was, "reading experience and practice of various kinds of texts, styles and themes *as well as more materials to prompt further understanding of the topics covered in class*" (emphasis added). I was left to wonder if this instructor is assigning specific reading materials in support of classroom topics and considering that to be extensive reading. Another definition included, "Students learn/review vocabulary, grammar and sentence patterns." I am not sure if this respondent was addressing incidental learning and consolidation of these elements, or expecting explicit attention and learning.

Turning to the descriptions of practice, I found more discordance with the ten principles in two major areas: materials selection and assessment. With respect to choice of materials, on the one hand at least 85% of these instructors ask students to select graded readers from the library. On the other hand, 25% indicated they agreed that the teacher should set specific materials for the learners to use and 35% indicated at least occasionally using class sets (multiple copies of the same title) of graded readers. Also, in their open-ended descriptions of their use of ER, seven of the twenty instructors made reference to materials selected partially or entirely by the instructor. Two mentioned using extracts in their textbook ("extracts of extensive reading", "extracts of graded readers"). Another mentioned having "students read the same book outside of the classroom" while another implied

it by mentioning a title they all read. One more instructor's response seemed to indicate students read the same reader, but it wasn't entirely clear. Additionally, one respondent described a practice which not only does not involve learner choice, but seems to be intensive reading. This instructor asked learners "to tackle a pair of TOEFL reading questions in advance at home - within 11 minutes respectively - and then to study them for complete understanding of everything."

Grading ER seems to run counter to principles five and six, as well as possibly those which refer to teacher roles, and I found assessment to be a key issue. Nineteen of the respondents indicated a grading percentage they assign to ER and all twenty selected at least one ER-related activity they use for grading, with the most common being written book reports/reviews, also indicated by nineteen instructors. Regarding the need to assess the students, one instructor noted, "They are always assigned a report about the storyline, vocabulary, grammar, true or false. So they can't read the book just for fun. But in Nanzan class[sic], I have to grade them, so writing a report is necessary." Another echoed these same feelings, "I do quiz them on it, which I think I might not do anymore as it seems a bit oxymoronic to tell them to just read for fun but I'm going to grade you on it nonetheless!" Yet another chimed in with the following:

> . . . assessment is the biggest challenge, and my tendency towards promoting learner autonomy tussles with the need to check on students and grade them on what they have done. I've tried blogs, both individual and class, paper book reports, reading logs, but none of them have really worked quite as well as I would have liked.

This challenge of reconciling the ideas of ER being for its own reward and a matter of choice for the learners with the idea of assessing students for doing it surfaced as something I felt needed additional investigation.

To probe further, I sent a follow-up survey to the same instructors with six yes/no items and one open-ended question (i.e. What reasons do you have for any contradictions between your definition and practice of ER?). There were eight responses to this follow-up survey, and all of them indicated that both the idea of choice and the idea of pleasure were a part of their

definition of ER, while seven of eight agreed with the principle of ER being its own reward. However, all eight indicated they grade or assess ER in some way, seven that they ask students to do some sort of comprehension activities, and six that they specify an amount of reading for students to do.

The responses to the open-ended question show that the reasons for grading in spite of agreeing with the principles to the contrary can be categorized as needing to meet institutional requirements, crediting learner efforts, holding learners accountable for doing ER, and motivating them to do it. Regarding the institutional requirements, one instructor put it this way, "[The] definition of ER and the requirement to assess and grade students do not seem to go along. However, it can be said that you are expected to assign grades for their ER performance if you are an ER practitioner in any type of institutional education."

One comment succinctly addressed the issue of giving students credit for work done. It said, "If students spend a long time doing ER that effort should be acknowledged via including it in the grading."

Motivation and accountability were common themes. Several comments were made with respect to accountability, including, "Grading is a way for teachers to check ER is being done", "to know if students...have read this number of words" and "to make it fair between students who read a lot and not." Several respondents also linked this accountability with motivation. One noted,

> A certain level of accountability must be built into any system of teaching any subject. . . . Accountability, however, is not just a negative reinforcer by any means: it often spurs on motivation. An example of that is when a student respects his/her teacher and therefore wants to perform well, show their effort, and gain that teacher's praise and respect.

Other related responses included "it is natural that they might not choose to do ER unless the teacher requires it" and, more bluntly, "students won't read if they don't get a mark for it." Finally, one put it all as follows,

> It seems to be reasonable to assign grades and check their feedback on ER if a teacher wants students to (1) make a habit of reading outside of the class more or less willingly and (2) get the feeling of accomplishment (at least) by achieving the assigned goal and receiving the grades.

Conclusion

Definitions and practice of extensive reading are clearly varied, and some elements of the ten principles do not fit well with actual practice in many contexts. We need to continue to discuss how to define and practice ER, and a revision along the lines of that proposed by Waring and McLean at the 2014 Extensive Reading Colloquium may be appropriate (see also Waring and McLean, 2015). I propose that one essential element of this is deeper investigation into instructor practices and rationales.

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Defining extensive reading

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Kansai University

The Top Ten Principles for Teaching ER, are often cited to define ER despite these principles only being a "description of the characteristics that are found in successful extensive reading programs" (Day and Bamford, 1998: 7). While at first these principles guided teachers and researchers to conduct what was for most a new method of learning to read, at times these principles restrict more pragmatic forms of ER. As a result, we hope to start a debate on how to best define ER. We suggest that ER should be defined by the processes it facilitates (its "core attributes"), while how teachers operationalize ER in their teaching settings give rise to variable dimensions of ER. For example:

Purist ER Lots of self-selected reading at home with no or little assessment or follow-up. Often a stand-alone class.

Integrated Lots of self-selected reading at home and in class. Follow-up exercises or reports which aim to build the four skills.

Class reading Students read the same book and work through it slowly. Lots of follow-up or comprehension work and exercises.

ER as 'literature' Students read the same book and discuss it as if it were a work of literature.

Core attributes of ER

The fast, fluent comprehension of text for meaning, sustained over extended periods with minimal distractions is a cognitive activity similar to the L1 concept of rauding (Carver, 1992). We suggest this is an indispensable core attribute of any conceptualization of ER. Rauding represents the optimal reading rate for comprehension, and one at which lexical access, semantic encoding, and sentential integration takes place. These three processes, albeit termed differently, are developed through reading large amounts of running text (Grabe, 2009; Grabe and Stoller, 2011).

Variable dimensions of ER

The pedagogical variable dimensions of ER assume the reading has met the necessary core attributes mentioned above. The variable dimensions of ER are ones that researchers and practitioners can select from in varying degrees depending on their pedagogical aims, research questions, or what is practical within a given ER setting. These would include the amount of time spent reading; what is read; where it is read; whether the reading is required; and who selects the texts. Each dimension might form an independent scale: for example, from low to high volumes of text read; or the absence or presence of varying degrees of assessment.

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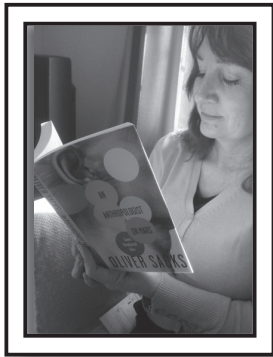
Should we bring back translation?

Meredith Stephens

Tokushima University

In the closing ceremony of the recent JALT (2014) national conference in Tsukuba, the four plenary speakers were invited to give some final comments to the audience. One of them was particularly noteworthy; Claire Kramsch commented that we should consider bringing back translation. The reason this struck me was that my colleague Shirley Leane, from Tottori University, and I had just given a presentation earlier that afternoon which highlighted some of the weaknesses in the translation method of teaching English in Japan. This traditional method of teaching involves translating English to Japanese from right to left, which is often necessitated because of the contrasting word order of English and Japanese.

The appeal of extensive reading

Firstly, I will explain my views of English to Japanese translation as a pedagogical tool, in the context of extensive reading and listening. Day and Bamford's (1998) contrast of extensive and intensive reading is particularly impressive, so I have regularly presented over the last few years it to the students in my English teacher trainee class.

This chart will of course be familiar to other extensive reading and listening practitioners, and it has informed my teaching since I first encountered it. Extensive reading is radical in the Japanese EFL context because it stands in striking contrast to the traditional *yakudoku* ("Translate and Read") approach, which tends to conform to the intensive reading approach outlined above.

One of the reasons I was attracted to extensive reading and listening was that I had observed the mental struggle of my students when responding to me in English, and I speculated that this was because of the preponderance of the *yakudoku* method in their formative years of learning English. *Yakudoku* aims to provide an accurate rendering of the text in Japanese, and therefore does not fulfil one of the aims of extensive reading, "making meaning directly from a text without translation" (Day & Bamford, 1998: 120). I assumed that my students had not made meaning directly from either written or spoken text without translation, and therefore I embarked on an extensive reading and listening programme, hoping to help them make this transition.

Translation is not an intrinsically unhelpful teaching methodology.

Indeed, in the case of languages which map more closely onto each other, such as languages with similar word orders, translation cannot be considered an impediment to developing inner speech in the L2. English speakers speaking L2 French can positively transfer some of the vocabulary, verb tenses and word orders from their L1. Arguably, they may retain their inner speech in the L1 without it obstructing the L2.

The reason I consider translation from English to Japanese to be particularly unhelpful for Japanese learners of English is that it may involve the process of *kaeriyomi* (Kato, 2006), that is, reading from right to left. This is necessitated because of the contrasting word order of English and Japanese. Even Japanese relative clauses and the position of prepositions are in contrast with those of English. Japanese relative clauses are left branching with the noun placed at the end of the clause, whereas English relative clauses feature the noun at the beginning (Kuno, 1974, cited in Odlin, 19890). Japanese has post-positions and English has prepositions. In many important ways the word orders of Japanese and English are dissimilar. Nobetsu (2012) examined the frequency of reading from right to left, and found that it is still commonly

Intensive	Type of Reading	Extensive
Read accurately	Class goal	Read fluently
Translate	Reading purpose	Get information
Answer questions		Enjoy
Words and pronunciation	Focus	Meaning
Often difficult	Material	Easy
Teacher chooses		You choose
Not much	Amount	A lot
Slower	Speed	Faster
Must finish	Method	Stop if you don't like it
Use dictionary		No dictionary"

(Day & Bamford, 1998: 123)

practised in certain contexts such as in preparation for university entrance exams.

Countering arguments in defence of translation

When I discussed Claire Kramsch's comment about bringing back translation with my co-presenter Shirley Leane, Shirley said that she was not sure that translation had ever left. As I write I am in the process of helping an undergraduate prepare for graduate school at a prestigious university. This which involves translation of a text of considerable lexico-grammatical density from English to Japanese. The task conforms to the features of intensive reading listed in Day and Bamford's (1998) chart above, so indeed it appears that translation is still indeed required for gate-keeping examinations in Japan.

As Claire Kramsch suggests, translation can still be considered a useful pedagogical activity. Indeed, multiple advantages of translation have been identified by Cook (2010). Nevertheless, I will suggest reasons why these reasons may not be applicable in the Japanese EFL context.

> It relates languages to each other, rather than leaving them to operate in separate compartments, and is thus very much in tune with global communication. (Cook, 2010: 43)

Relating Japanese to English is more of an exercise in contrast than comparison. It may be helpful for speakers of distant languages such as English and Japanese to let them operate in separate compartments.

> For many students the conundrums of translation provide a satisfying intellectual challenge (along the lines of popular pastimes such as Sudoku, crosswords or chess) and aesthetic satisfaction, in that it involves the crafting of a complex artefact. (121)

This is likely to only be experienced by the most able students. Extensive reading, in contrast, has the pleasure of reading as one of its explicit aims. Extensive reading, rather than translation, is likely to be a source of pleasure for a wide cross-section of students.

> "Form-focused close translation . . . prevents students from simply bypassing difficulties and gaps in their knowledge." (p.136)

Form-focused translation of English to Japanese may not be particularly helpful because of the lack of equivalence between distant languages. Rather than finding Japanese equivalents of English, time would be better spent exploring new meanings that are typically not present in the L1. This of course does not mean that the use of the L1 is to be discouraged, because the L1 can be exploited to rapidly provide critical information about the L2. It is the painstaking process of translation, rather than use of the L1, which I consider unhelpful in compulsory English classes.

Accordingly, I feel that translation between English and Japanese is of limited value in language classes. Translation may have advantages for similar languages because it can aid students to harness positive transfer of related lexico-grammar. However, in the Japanese EFL context, translation is undesirable. This is principally because the process of parsing English from right to left in order to approximate the Japanese word order takes attention away from the task of processing English in its natural order, which is important if we want to foster listening.

Translation may be a useful exercise in some foreign language classrooms, and for those who wish to become professional translators. However it has traditionally been overused in Japanese EFL compulsory classes, and the radically different approach of extensive reading deserves more prominence.

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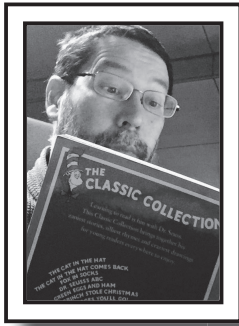
Extensive reading for students' research projects

Joseph Tomei

Kumamoto Gakuen University

Within the Japanese university system, students are often expected to produce a research paper, termed *semiron* or *sotsuron*, as a requirement of graduation. While each institution has their own requirements, this task can be particularly challenging for non-Japanese instructors with the responsibility of supervising such papers. In my own case, I was asked to conduct a 1 year course in *sotsuron shidou* or guidance when I first was employed by my university. While I have no idea of the number of non-native teachers tasked with this, recently, a group within the Learner Development SIG has been organized in order to share insights and help each other in this process. (Join us at groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/jpnzemisotsuron/info.)

The first challenge for students is finding the appropriate topic and in my initial attempts I imposed topics on students rather than students selecting something themselves, leaving me particularly dissatisfied with the process. However, four years ago, after the extensive reading program had been in existence for about 5 or 6 years, I reduced the scope of potential topics, and made the main requirement a topic that could be supported by our collection of extensive reading materials.

By doing this, I linked the reading students had done for their 2nd year writing course with their seminar topic. In a previous newsletter, Rick Lavin and I discussed how to reference graded readers (Tomei and Lavin, 2012), a task that grew out of the required book reviews for the writing course (Tomei, Lavin & Beaufait, 2012), to provide support for citation and reference for these papers.

So, what sort of seminar papers can be written with extensive reading as a base? Below is a list of topics that students have explored with me that I offer as a starting point.

Writing about a particular set or series of books

In ER programs, we often observe that students will fall in love with a particular series or character, and eagerly read all of the works associated with that character or that author. A seminar paper can be crafted from discussing that series or that author. These papers take the form of a literature based paper, introducing the author, characters, plots.

Analysing a particular set or series of books

While superficially similar to the previous line of research, rather than discussing the series as a work of literature, students have written about how a particular series illustrates or reflects society. For example, the Oxford Reading Tree series has a large cast of characters in a generic UK setting. One student wrote about how the ORT reflected points of British culture, including the diversity shown, the neighborhood setting and multi-generational characters. Another student is in the process of completing a paper about Takashi Mukoyama's *Big Fat Cat* series (see the website for more details at www.studioetcetera.com/bigfatcat, discussing the background of the author, the illustrator, and how the themes of the story support and interact with the purpose of the series, which is to provide an entry into English reading for Japanese learners.

Tackling literature through extensive readers

One student wanted to write about King Arthur, so she looked at all of the extensive readers we had for this myth and found several at different difficulty levels. She then compared the versions and tried to understand which aspects of the story were deleted in the easier version and added in the more difficult ones. Another student used the ER versions of Sherlock Holmes stories and compared them with the Detective Conan manga (in Japanese *Meitantei Conan*), whose name is a tribute to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Identifying the aspects of the manga that were changed from the original inspiration, such as the fact that the protagonist in Conan cannot reveal his identity, but must unmask the criminal without revealing his identity, allowed the student to point to potential cultural differences between the UK and Japan. The student also used the extensive readers as a scaffold to be able to work with the original versions.

Manga

Several students have used the sets of English manga translations in our holdings to write a seminar paper. In some of these cases, the translations help the student get a foothold on talking about a manga in English, providing vocabulary and phrasing to help them. More ambitious students can discuss questions of translation and how concepts aimed at a Japanese audience are explained or translated for a foreign readership. Titles that have been investigated have been researched have included Takahiko Inoue's *Slam Dunk*, Azumanga Daioh's *Yotsuba&!*, and Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece*, all available in English translations

Film and readers

Most extensive reading collections have a number of novelizations of films, and several students have written papers that begin with that. Similar to the manga topic, the reader can provide the student with vocabulary and ideas so they are not writing the paper in Japanese and then translating it. While not a standard feature of extensive reading collections, the university English Reading Garden has a number of graphic novels that are not graded, but have been added as a way of expanding the holdings we have. Because many films such as *300*, *The Watchmen*, and *the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* were originally graphic novels, their presence allows students to use them as the starting point for a seminar paper.

Writing about extensive reading and literacy

Writing *sotsuron* about extensive reading as a practice is also possibility. There are a number of articles, texts and websites for this in both Japanese and English. In addition, ER has piqued some students' interest in understanding what literacy implies and entails. One student, encouraged by her encounter with ER and inspired by a monograph by Laurel Kamada (2012), a long-time JALT and founding member of the Bilingual SIG, on the identities of bicultural children, conducted email interviews with several bicultural parents and children in Japan to understand the role of reading and language in their lives. While this is stretching my initial requirement, to find something that can be supported by our extensive reading holdings, it seems very much in the spirit of ER, especially as the student concentrated on what books the bicultural children encountered and their impact on their literacy.

Corpus linguistics and ER.

One of the foundations of extensive reading is the use of the insights of Corpus Linguistics, specifically, the utilization of frequency information. In this issue of the newsletter, one of my student's papers, edited for length, appears. I don't want to take anything away from her work, but that paper was made possible by the previously mentioned topic of *King Arthur* in Extensive Readers. While that research examined what points of the student, utilizing a corpus approach, was able to discover some interesting facts about distribution of word types in Macmillan readers. In this way, student work can build on previous students' efforts.

As I work with students, more avenues open up and while the requirement of running sotsuron shido classes may be limited to a small number of teachers, the opportunity to present Extensive Reading to colleagues who may not consider it as an academic avenue cannot be dismissed. In addition, many universities provide budgets to help acquire library materials for students working on their sotsuron, and this can allow materials to be obtained for Extensive Reading. If you are a teacher charged with seminar or sotsuron guidance, you may want to consider having your students use your ER collection as a starting point for their papers.

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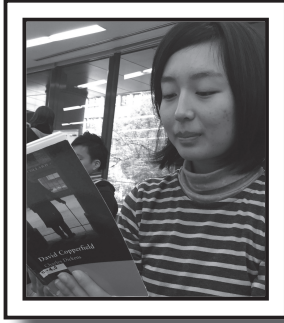
Researching the factors of difficulty through an examination of Macmillan Readers

Kaori Kuribayashi
Kumamoto Gakuen University

Difficulty is an intuitive concept but there are many factors that make up the idea. In the various sets of graded readers, factors of difficulty are controlled according to learners' levels. The range of basic words, in particular, is strictly divided by level. The Macmillan Readers are typical:

Level	Word count
Starter	1st 300 basic words
Beginner	600 words
Elementary	1100 words
Pre-intermediate	1400 words
Intermediate	1600 words
Upper	2200 words

However, these 300 basic words are not simply the most commonly used words but are related to the background information needed to explain the stories, as revealed by a close analysis of the word types used in the different levels.

Word types

Word types are the occurrence of both the fundamental form and derived forms of a word. Word tokens count all words in a text, but word types represent the lemmatized words. As an example, while make and makes are counted as two word tokens, they only represent one word type. To determine word types, I used the software program AntConc (from www.laurenceanthony.net/software.html) along with Yasumasa Someya's lemma list, to obtain these figures.

Average number of Word types (per text) and sentence length in each level

Level	Word Types	Sentence length
Starter	228	5.4
Beginner	252	7.3
Elementary	264	8.2
Pre-intermediate	296	10.9
Intermediate	298	9.6
Upper	324	10.1
Original	514	31.0

This increase shows us that the limited words are repeatedly used in the lower level texts, and as the level increases, the books are written with a wider vocabulary.

However, there are some interesting departures from the standard list of frequency. For example, though pronouns are much more common in English, (Leech, Rayson, & Wilson, 2001), they are less common in the starter books, and replaced by proper nouns. Masahiro Hori (personal communication) suggested that this may be due to the fact that character introductions are usually found in the first part of any stories. However, frequently, the names of characters are often repeated, probably in order to reduce the difficulty of texts, which inverts the notion of basic frequency, in that the most frequent words, in this case pronouns, are being specifically avoided.

Sentence length

It is also natural that sentence length increases as the level becomes higher. In the Macmillan readers, the table below charts the average sentence length:

Specific vocabulary items

The table below shows from which level conjunctions, relative pronouns, and relative adverbs appear from most frequent 50 words from the first 1000 words of these texts.

Words first appear in the top 50 words

Level	Conjunctions	Relative pronouns Relative adverbs
Starter	and, but	Ø
Beginner	Ø	who
Elementary	that	that, what
Pre-Intermediate	so, after, as, because, if, when	when, where
Intermediate	Ø	which
Upper	for	Ø

This list can help us understand what words should be reviewed to support student reading. This list does not simply conform to the word frequency order found in English texts, so the teacher should

be aware of the need to introduce them clearly. Though it is obvious that sentence length increases as the difficulty increases, the reason why there is an increase of the sentence length is worth considering. I suggest that the frequency of the grammatical words, conjunctions, relative pronouns, and relative adverbs, which add more information, increases as the level becomes higher, so the more information increases, the more complicated sentences become. Coping with presenting that information leads to the next factors to be considered.

Word balloons and illustrations

The Macmillan Readers series offers simplified classical stories written from a wide range of perspectives and readers need to have background information to enjoy reading these books. Word balloons and illustrations help present background information without increasing text difficulty. The colorful illustrations and word balloons are used in the starter level, and they help readers to understand the story

Only used at the starter level, word balloons and illustrations let readers know the situation and the feelings of the men at a glance, providing explanations, who is speaking to whom and other information. From the beginner books, the illustrations are monochrome, and their appearance reduces with every level, so the situation of the stories, instead of being initially explained with illustrations and word balloons, is gradually explained by text, but even in these upper level books, the illustrations show difficult-to-understand situations.
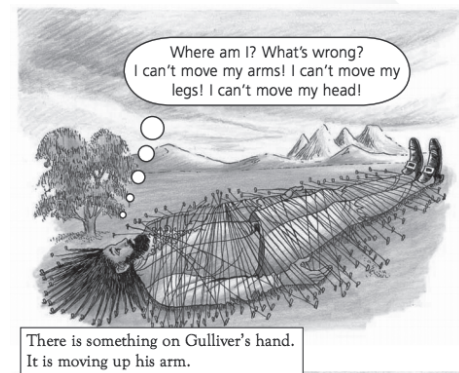
We can see how illustrations function by comparing sentences which show almost the same meaning between the Macmillan Readers and the originals.

As we can see, both passages are written in the first person but the starter level uses the more basic present tense. Word balloons allow conversational language, not possible in the original. The original shows what is presented through illustrations and word balloons, allowing us to see how they reduce difficulty. If there were only the sentences from the starter version with no illustrations and word balloons, it would be impossible to understand the situation.
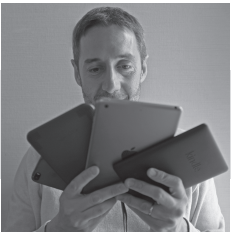
Conclusion

We can see some of the factors of difficulty in one set of graded readers and get a better understanding of the elements learners should tackle in order to improve their English skill. Although it is not surprising that word level increases as the level becomes higher, I found that the word level is not simply based on frequency, but related to three factors, word types, word balloons, and illustrations. Future research will include expanding the examination and comparing this series to other graded reader sets, as well as comparing graded readers to leveled readers.

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(Verne, as retold by Lobo and Subirà, 2008, p. 3)

I found my arms and legs were strongly fastened on each side of the ground; and my hair, which was long and thick, tied down in the same manner. I likewise felt several slender ligatures across my body, from my arm-pits to my thighs.

(Swift, Project Gutenberg)

(Swift, as retold by Lobo and Subirà, 2008, p. 5)

eER

Is it time to get e-books in your library?

Germain Mesureur

Keisen University

eBooks have arrived, so is it time for you to jump on the electronic bandwagon?

The past year has seen a dramatic increase in the amount and availability of electronic graded readers in Japan. Virtually all of the major publishers now offer a significant part of their catalogue in electronic format. So, is it time for you, your students, or your institution, to move to electronic extensive reading? In this column, I am going to try to give you an overview of the various ways you can start using eBooks for extensive reading. There are basically three approaches, the individual, class, or institution-level adoption.

By definition, it is difficult for an individual to make their own extensive reading program, as it would involve purchasing a very large number of books, and is therefore beyond the reach of most people's pocket. Nonetheless, it is likely that some learners complement their library or classroom readings with books they have purchased themselves. From this point of view, eBooks make perfect sense for the learner. A quick review of the titles available on Amazon Japan shows that Kindle titles are on average 15%-30% cheaper, and the number of free, albeit non-graded, eBooks available online is considerable.

Obviously, having more publishers on board and a larger number of graded reader titles available should make this practice easier for learners. However, Marcos Benevides of Atama-ii books reports that, despite offering their catalogue in both print and electronic format, eBook sales still only make up a very small proportion of total sales. Marcos points out that many students don't have a credit card and sites like Amazon make it difficult to purchase through university bookstores. This is one more hurdle in addition to the issues I mentioned in this column last year: although they are cheaper, eBooks have no resale value, and they cannot be lent to friends or classmates easily.

In spite of these problems, publishers are still promoting eBooks, partly because there is effectively no cost involved in producing and selling an electronic version of a print title. After all, most of these eBooks are simple text files, sometimes including static illustrations. In addition to such regular eBook titles, Atama-ii plans to take another approach and to market eBooks as having added-value compared to their print counterparts, by adding multimedia content and packaging this into a standalone app.

When it comes to classrooms or institutions, rather than individuals, there are two main products that show great potential: XReading and OverDrive. Daniel Stewart covered all aspects of the XReading service in the October 2014 issue of *ERJ*, and it remains a very useful and affordable option for running an electronic ER programme. It is particularly useful for individual teachers as it is very possible for a single class to use XReading for just one semester, for example, and for students to keep up their subscription to the service once the class or program is over.

In terms of introducing electronic extensive reading at the full institutional level, a significant piece of news recently has been the decision by American Digital Library company OverDrive to expand and open in Japan. This represents a catalogue of more than 1 million eBook and audiobook titles to be available to Japanese libraries and schools who take up the service. The service itself is likely to be costly, as the US pricing exceeds $1000 per year for small libraries. Also, OverDrive's business model is very different from the one-off purchase system that most libraries are used to. OverDrive functions on a yearly subscription model, and if your library ever decides to leave OverDrive, it will lose all access to their catalogue. In addition, while the catalogue is extremely large, the English Language graded readers obviously only make up a small proportion of that catalogue. Nonetheless, gaining access to this huge catalogue of books might be appealing to some library managers, regardless of the graded readers.

While a number of issues still need to be addressed, things are falling into place for eBooks to become a larger part of extensive reading programs in Japan.

The ER fail blog

(and yes, some success)

Chris Madden
Keisen University
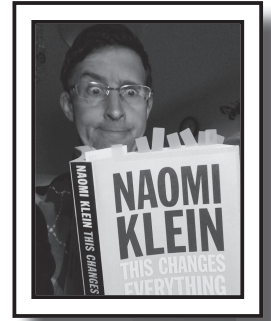
Tuesday, April 14th

Dear Blog, oh my god, today was the strangest day of my eleven years of teaching English! First time I taught an Extensive Reading class, and nobody knew what the heck was going on! I thought the students would have had some kind of explanation in Japanese about it but they didn't. I took them to the graded reader section of the library and showed them a word count and, horror of horrors, one girl asked what 'Head Words' meant … and I didn't know!

Note to self: Be ready to explain all terminology!

I let them choose their books and finally herded them back to class. While I did give book report forms and asked them to finish the books for next week, the whole 90-minutes felt a little odd. I sure hope Friday goes better at my other school!

Friday, April 18th

Dear Blog, wow! My second time teaching an ER class was a thousand times better, partly because I discovered this excellent website, er-foundation.org/wordpress, and partly because this school has a great ER program. The Reading Program Coordinator, Marcos Goodlife recommended that we hand out the first two pages the "ERF Guide" from that site, in the "Toolkit" section. Another bonus is the students were already registered with the Moodle Reader and I put our Moodle class page on the projector and showed them how to take a test.

Note to self: Read the book first so you can answer the questions quickly and pass the test while the students watch!

Then I happily explained that 'headword' is like a dictionary heading and says how many different words are in the book, and 'word count' is the total number of words. I also told them the ERF Five Finger Rule: Pick a book, flip to any page and start reading. If the number of unknown words is 1 or 0, that book is too easy. If the unknown words are 2 or 3, that's perfect, but 4 or 5 new words per page is too hard. I told them, 'Pick easy, fun books!'

Tuesday, April 22nd

Dear Blog, well, I backtracked on my class today, and gave them the same first two pages of the ERF Guide in Japanese, and told them about the "Five Finger Rule". Even though it was a week late, I saw a lot of nodding heads, and some even took last week's book back because they were too difficult. Oh, well, live and learn!

Friday, April 25th

Dear Blog, I started the other half of the ER program today: Timed reading! They have a great textbook called "Reading for Speed and Fluency" (Level 1) by Paul Nation and Casey Malarcher. After a chaotic unit 1 experience I wrote and displayed these rules on the projector, next to an online stopwatch:

Step 1: Read vocabulary list, check meanings.

Step 2: Stand up. Wait until I say '3,2,1, Go', then start reading.

Step 3: When finished, look at stopwatch, sit down, write your time.

Step 4: Do comprehension questions on the next page.

Step 5: Check your answers in back of book, and write your time in the chart there.

Interestingly, all three boys in the photo are not looking at their textbook… Hmmmm.

I decided to have them stand up while reading because during Unit 1 some of them were not reading at all, and the nasty sleep fairy was sprinkling her dream dust liberally upon the heads of a few. After 45 minutes we moved to the Graded Readers, and I projected Moodle again but this time I clicked, 'Total Words This Term' which arranged the class in descending order so they could all see the extrinsically motivating ranking.

. . .

2015 Language Learner Literature Awards

The Extensive Reading Foundation will select one winner in each category, taking into account the votes and comments of students and teachers of English worldwide. If you or your students feel that any of these books are worthy of the LLL Award, vote for them at http://erfoundation.org/moodle/course/view.php?id=18. Login as a "guest" with the access key: 2015-evals.

The winning books will be announced at the Third World Congress on Extensive Reading in Dubai, 18-20 September 2015. See the listing of each finalist book below, in alphabetical order within each category.

Very Young Learners

Granny Fixit and the Monkey
by Jane Cadwallader
Illustrator: Gustavo Mazali
Young ELI Readers
ISBN: 9788853613233

The Leopard and the Monkey
retold by Richard Northcott
Illustrator: Cristiano Lissoni
Helbling Languages
ISBN: 9783852727813

Young Learners

Backstage Pass
by Lesley Ito
Illustrator: Alice Carroll
Atama-ii Books
ISBN: 9781941140345

A Land of New Hope
by Andy Hopkins and Jocelyn Potter
Illustrator: Lizzy Stewart
Pearson Penguin Kids
ISBN: 9781447944430

Life in the Desert / The Stubborn Ship
by Paul Mason
Illustrator: Andy Elkerton
Publisher: MacMillan
ISBN:9780230460454

Adolescents & Adult: Beginner

The Canterbury Tales
retold by: Michael Lacey Freeman
Illustrator: Simone Massoni
Teen ELI Readers
ISBN: 9788853617439

Merlin
by Janet Hardy-Gould
Illustrator: Ollie Cuthbertson
Oxford University Press
ISBN: 9780194249744

Adolescents & Adult: Elementary

The Bookshop
by Denise Kirby
Illustrator: Paul Fisher Johnson
Heuber ILTS
ISBN: 9783191029944

Hunter in the Darkness
by Ramy Habeeb
Illustrator: Alice Carol
Atama-ii books
ISBN: 9781941140352

Sharks
by Izabella Heran
Illustrator: David Shephard
Penguin Active Reading
ISBN: 9781447954316

Adolescents & Adults: Intermediate

Amelia Earhart
by Janet Hardy-Gould
Illustrator: Simon Gurr
Oxford University Press
ISBN: 9780194237956

Kilimanjaro
by Margaret Johnson
Illustrator: Redbean Design
National Geographic
ISBN: 9781424048753

Mystery in New Orleans
by Gina D. B. Clemen
Illustrator: Ivan Canu
Black Cat
ISBN: 9788853014153

Adolescents & Adults: Upper Intermediate & Advanced

Checkmate
retold by: Karen Holms
Pearson Education
ISBN: 978144793060

The Confession
retold by: Fiona Beddall
Illustrator: Paul Davidson
Pearson Education
ISBN: 9781447954330

Wuthering Heights
retold by: Peter Viney
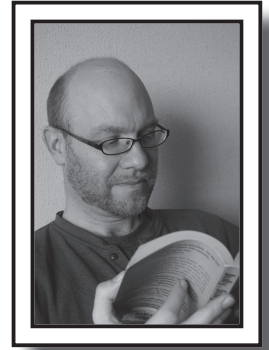Garnet Publishing Ltd
ISBN: 9781782602293

All finalist books can be ordered online from the ETJ Book Service: etjbookservice.com/extensive-reading-foundation. Find out more at erfoundation.org/wordpress/awards/2015-finalists.

Game-inspired character sheets as learning materials

Jeremiah Dutch

Yokohama City University

Character sheets are intended for Pen and Paper Role-Playing Games (P&P RPGs) such as Dungeons and Dragons. This paper will show how character sheets from such games can be adapted and used in ESL/EFL classes. The focus will be primarily on creating a character sheet as an alternative or supplement to a book report in an Extensive Reading (ER) program.

Neither teachers nor learners need to be familiar with role-playing games to use these character sheets, although knowledge of these games may enhance learning and teaching. Creating character sheets in class has a lot of potential, especially to help build reading and vocabulary skills. Furthermore, they are highly adaptable and easy to implement. More than being a means of assessment, they can also help a budding reader enjoy a book more by understanding the characters better, rather than just writing a synopsis of the plot.

What are P&P RPGs?

Paper & Pen Role Playing Games, sometimes known as Tabletop RPGs, are a form of interactive and collaborative storytelling with rules. A variety of genres exist, such as fantasy and science fiction. Players take on the roles of characters in fictional settings, introduced by a Game Master. The Game Master acts as a narrator, referee, and player of characters not created by Gamers. Gamers must make decisions and choices within the context of the game—for example avoiding traps, pitfalls, or adversaries hiding in the shadows—within the story introduced by the Game master. There is a usually a strong element of chance with many outcomes left up to the roll of dice, though the probability of success depends on a character's skills and traits.

Interestingly, a Wikipedia article on one common type of gaming system suggests that a large number of people do not play the games, but buy the materials because of the skilled and creative writing.

What are character sheets?

Character sheets are essentially a summary of a particular character's abilities, characteristics, and possessions. They help Gamer and Game Masters develop and record new information. The specifics and nomenclature may change from game to game, but typically character sheets include common details, such as name, age, gender, background, occupation, and the physical description of a character. A character's clothing and equipment are also listed. Importantly for the assignment, the sheets also include attributes which characters may need for the game, such as a certain amount of strength, speed, and dexterity, as well as character-specific skills, such as karate, horseback riding, or marksmanship. Attributes and skills may change over the course of a play session and new skills, clothing, and equipment may be acquired or lost. These details are often expressed on a numeric scale called "Game Statistics", so that a gamer and Game Master can determine the character's capabilities and chances when faced with a challenge.

A page of blank character sheet (Appendix A) from the 3rd Edition of the Generic Universal RolePlaying Basic Set (1999) shows that authentic character sheets are very likely to be too complex and confusing to be adopted unchanged as an educational tool. Students would have to know the rules and special jargon first! Conversely, a Character Sheet and Traits List (Bromley, Modlo, & Irwin-Devitas, 1999) developed by Scholastic Press as a learning tool seems too simple, although the list of vocabulary is useful. There may be other more helpful character sheets specifically developed as learning materials, but adapted authentic character sheets may be the most suitable for teaching English to speakers of other languages.

How can character sheets be adapted?

For the pedagogical purposes described in this paper, game statistics and other details of play can be omitted, leaving a description of the character as the basis for the assignment. The words can be simplified leaving a more basic blank character sheet, possibly including the following headings: Character Name, Description, Strong Points, Weak Points,

JEREMIAH DUTCH—GAME-INSPIRED CHARACTER SHEETS AS LEARNING MATERIALS

Character Name:
Alice
Description:
Thin, Blond hair
Strong Points:
Brave, has many funny things in her dream
Weak Points:
when she eats something, her body size changes
Skills:
Strength
Clothing:
Blue and white dress
Equipment:
A book

Skills, Clothing and Equipment. Appendix C shows a simple, complete character sheet that can be used as an example. It describes Lupin III, an anime character well-known to Japanese students.

Films are an opportunity to introduce character sheets in class as a viewing activity, either as a stand-alone activity, or as an introduction to a post-reading exercise. Learners do not need to view an entire film to get used to filling out a character sheet as the main characters are usually introduced early. Within the first half hour of viewing *Back to the Future* (1985) my students were able to record, with assistance, that Marty McFly is a good-looking brown-haired, young man. He is a nice guy, but is habitually late. His equipment includes a skateboard he can use well and guitar he plays well. He also travels through time in a sports car. In the beginning of the film he wears a red vest, a checked shirt with suspenders, and blue jeans. Similarly, within the first thirty minutes of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) learners could outline Indiana Jones as a clever, brave treasure hunter/professor of archeology. He is muscular, with short dark hair. He wears a hat and a leather

jacket and carries a gun and a whip (or glasses and suit when teaching). A major weakness for him is a fear of snakes. *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) was more challenging, but students could describe Sam Spade as thin, dark-haired, and clever. He wears a suit and smokes too much. Spade knows about guns and keeps one in his office, but never carries it.

Once students are familiar with character sheets, they are ready to complete them for the main characters in graded readers. Character sheets are probably most useful in an ER program, and I believe that understanding a convincing character makes reading compelling. Completing a character sheet may be a helpful pre-writing activity for a character or book report. Furthermore, they can serve as a basis for guided discussion. Whichever way character sheets are used, they are an opportunity for students to practice and build their descriptive vocabulary.

Not all researchers agree as to what should characterize an ER program, but of the four views of ER outlined by Waring (see page 7 of this volume), "Integrated" probably best describes the ER scheme in my university English classes, and character sheets work well within this approach. However they could

Character Name:
Lupin III
Description:
Thin, dark hair
Strong Points:
Clever, athletic, kind
Weak Points:
Criminal, easily tricked by Fujiko
Clothing:
Suit
Equipment:
Fast car, gun

ERJ 8.1

be applied to any version of ER. While an ER purist may object to character sheets as too much of an assessment, the activity need not be characterised as a "follow-up activity". Rather, it could be perhaps thought of as notes on a character that can be filled out and revised while reading to improve comprehension and enhance enjoyment. Just as my students complete character sheets while viewing the same film, students could complete character sheets for the same book in a Class Reading type of ER approach. Critics may contend that Marty McFly, Lupin III, Indiana Jones, and arguably even Sam Spade are not the "deep" characters one might find in literature, especially if one does not consider *The Maltese Falcon* a "serious film" or the novel it is based on as literature. Yet, when challenged with more sophisticated texts, my students ably completed sheets from graded adaptations of such classics as *Of Mice and Men*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and *Moby Dick*. Below is a student's complete character sheet for the main character in Alice in Wonderland.

Limitations

The character sheets described in this paper may not be suitable for all reading material. Non-fiction is a good example. But information on the subjects of biographies and autobiographies can be recorded in the same manner as fictional characters.

Some stories have more than one main character, or it is unclear or debatable who the main character is: In this case students can be encouraged to pick one, or write about more than one.

The terminology of the character sheets was an obstacle for some students; for example, many were confused about the difference between skills and strong points. Others could not find anything to list under "equipment". In this situation a teacher may need to guide the students in completing the exercise or explain what each heading means, or simply omit or change some headings. Conversely, a teacher may also want to add more headings such as "occupation".

Ultimately, the main objective of the exercise should be understanding the character better, not filling in the sheet "correctly".

Conclusion

This paper has introduced a relatively unexplored area in pedagogy. It has advocated character sheets as learning tools. Furthermore, it has given examples of their adaptation and use with the aim of encouraging educators to follow suit.

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Tuesday, May 6th

Dear Blog, I learned a new trick for using M-Reader from my colleague Helen Richardson to combat the absence of computer and projectors: She brings her laptop to class and calls each student up individually, shows them their ranking, and asks them about their current book. Another of our functions is to delete their failed tests so students can re-take them but the problem was, most were reading a different book by then! Arg! I could almost hear the sickening sound of the Demotivation Demon grinding his hoary heel into their fragile hearts! So I decided to give them points for the book anyway and give them the option to fill in a paper book report. I added a vocabulary task of writing five new words from the book and five of their own sentences using the new words.

Friday, May 9th

Dear Blog, the learning continues, mine, that is! Colleague Randy Boon confided that his ER students use the Quizlet website. "It has preloaded vocabulary sets for each Unit in the 'Reading for Speed and Fluency' text, keeps 'em busy learning." In class I showed them how to use the vocabulary games and then at lunch another colleague, fellow Canadian David Judo, showed me how to make customized tests from Quizlet and print them out. Thanks for the great resources, gents!

Marcos Benevides
The 98% question: Too easy?

ER literature invariably claims that we need to understand 95%-98% of the words on a page to be able to read at an acceptable rate of fluency. However, this number is sometimes disregarded or outright dismissed by teachers, with the argument that 90%—even 80% or lower—can in fact be enough. This poster presentation demonstrates the importance of the 95-98 number, and clearly shows how going below it does indeed drastically reduce the reader's rate of fluency.

Marcos Benevides
Practical steps to implementing ER in a non-major undergraduate curriculum

This paper outlines practical steps taken to successfully implement ER as part of a large scale undergraduate program for required "core" English credits for all non English majors at the university. The program includes 2,000 first-year students from different majors, streamed into three broad proficiency levels across 88 classes. Courses are taught by 50+ full and part-time instructors. The steps undertaken include continuing teacher training, maintaining a large GR library, setting goals and assessment standards, requiring in-class reading time, and more.

Thomas E. Bieri
Talking with your friends about ER

This session is expected to be useful for students of English as well as instructors looking for ways to engage learners in ER-based speaking activities. The presenter will show how ER can be discussed with friends and classmates in fun and interesting ways. He will also provide some language support such as a list of questions and other structures that can help start and extend conversations about reading. To enjoy this even more, read a graded reader or some story (in any language) before coming to the session.

Mark Brierley
The ERF Placement Test

言語学習者がどの程度すらすら読めるかを測定する，Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF) プレスメントテストを紹介する．テストに使用するテキストは，出版されている多読用図書からの抜粋を蓄積したものから選ばれる．テストは，それぞれのテキストを読むスピードを測定し，理解度を測る質問を行う．また，これに加えて，どの程度難しかったかなどの印象に関する質問も行う．このテストは無料であり，インターネット経由で誰でも使うことができる．また，教員として登録すると，それぞれの生徒の進捗状況が確認できるようになる．

Heather Doiron & Ana Maria Flores
Shared reading

This session will be useful for students of English as well as their instructors and parents who are looking for ways to engage in pair reading activities. The presenter will show how parents, teachers, or older students can be reading role-models and help to develop a love of reading among elementary-school students. Through "reading buddies" all participants will have a chance to practice and further develop English language skills.

Ana Maria Flores
see Heather Doiron et al.

Paul Goldberg
Research into ER is much easier when reading is done online

While extensive reading is certainly mainstream now, there are still many educators who question its efficacy. Therefore, there is a need for more high quality research to show its benefits. Xreading, the virtual library that allows students to read graded readers online, is also a powerful tool for doing research on extensive reading due to its ability to accurately track students' reading. The detailed metrics provided by Xreading reveal how many words students have read, their reading speed, which words they've looked up, and much more. The presenter will explain the full potential of Xreading's research capabilities.

Glen Hill
Casting a wide net with extensive reading

This presentation will describe the use of extensive reading (ER) coupled with Moodle Reader (MR) in six types of undergraduate courses (required, semi-required, or elective; series or stand-alone) over several years at one university in Japan. Each employed ER in various ways with unique word count targets, level restrictions, and scheduling limitations. Due to the different nature of the courses, the amount of ER accounted for a different percentage of each course's final grade. Data from surveys and the MR database will describe student performance, capabilities, and attitudes towards ER and MR quizzes.

Trevor Holster & J. Lake
Measuring the difficulty of graded readers

The presenters developed an on-line extensive reading monitoring system, allowing students to rate books by difficulty and interest, and researchers to download data formatted for Rasch analysis. Interim analysis of 240 graded readers found sentence length to be the best predictor of book difficulty, accounting for approximately 30% of variance. Surprisingly, Lexile measures, combining

both vocabulary frequency and sentence length, improved this to only 33%, suggesting that an L2 corpus may be preferable to the native speaker derived Lexile corpus. This research is supported by *kakenhi* research grant #25370643

Akemi Kawamura & Yoshiko Matsubayashi
フォニックス指導が多読に与える影響 ― 読むスピードと内容理解を中心として―
日本人学習者にとって、英語の本を読むことは難しい。読みの学習では音韻や音素認識が必須だからである。日本人大学生を対象に、ebook の多読と Phonics 指導で読む速度と読解力に影響があるかを検証する

Brandon Kramer & Stuart McLean
Extensive reading and listening at the appropriate level
Students make the greatest gains from Extensive Reading and Listening when the materials properly match their ability. Nation (2013) recommends that students read or listen to materials with 98% known words for easy comprehension. When developing student fluency, 100% known words are ideal. This presentation will introduce the available written receptive vocabulary tests, and a newly formed listening vocabulary levels test, designed to help teachers quickly measure their students' ability. After discussing how to use these tests most effectively, the presentation will give recommendations for materials which can be used after interpreting the students' results.

J. Lake
see Trevor Holster et al.

Yoshiko Matsubayashi
see Akemi Kawamura et al.

Stuart McLean
The relative inappropriateness of the Top Ten Principles for ER for compulsory students of English
This presentation reports on the opinions of 293 Japanese university students who study English as a compulsory subject regarding what motivates them to read large amounts, and what facilitates the development of a reading habit. Participants were presented with Day and Bamford's (1998) Top Ten Principles for ER and other statements on how ER might be conducted. Quantitative and qualitative evidence argue that the Top Ten Principles for ER are not seen as motivating reading, nor facilitating the development of a reading habit, relative to the use of M-reader, target setting, assigning grades for reading and teachers monitoring reading amount.

Stuart McLean
see Brandon Kramer et al.

Ron Murphy
Positioning ER in a non-ER proscribed curriculum
A balance of intensive reading and extensive reading is often sited as an ideal approach for maximizing reading outcomes. But when a tightly proscribed curriculum excludes ER in its various skills-based course syllabi, a feeling of non-relevancy toward ER can seep into faculty members' mindsets. This presentation will outline the ways that Ehime University's ER coordinator is making ER a valid participant in a curriculum 'constrained' by proscribed learning aims, common classroom textbooks, and common tests. Results of a trial in an oral English course, and the development of supplementary material for the reading skills course will be presented.

Hitoshi Nishizawa & Takayoshi Yoshioka
How much do they need to read, and from which readability levels?
From a case study of a 7-year long ER program, where 14 students' major English input was ER, we tried to answer the often-asked questions: how much needs to be read, and what are the optimum readability levels for elementary EFL learners? Responses to the questionnaire showed that students sensed some change after reading 300,000 words, and felt that they could read without translation at around 800,000 words. Their TOEIC scores started to increase around 600,000 words, and the increase rate was the highest around a million words. We suggest that reading picture books was an influential factor on the score increase.

Kyoko Otsuki
see Atsuko Takase et al.

John Patrick Owatari-Dorgan & Brendan Van Deusen
Highs and lows in ER implementation
The practical implementation and integration of an ER component can be a serious challenge for educators. This paper discusses the various techniques, successful and unsuccessful, attempted by the presenters over the course of a pilot ER program. The program was conducted with 1st year students in an intensive English program. The elements to be covered will include management of student progress, integration of technology and assessment. Student feedback will be presented to put the techniques into context. The presenters hope to open a dialogue with other attendees in order to improve the ER experience for students and educators alike.

Emiko Rachi
see Satomi Shibata et al.

Thomas Robb
Mreader update

Mreader is a free browser-based program that delivers 10-item random quizzes to students so that they can prove that they have actually done their reading. Quizzes are available for over 4500 books. Students are rewarded with a cover of the book on their own homepage and a growing word count progress bar. Mreader.org is continually being improved. This short paper will, after reviewing the basic functionality, discuss some of the improvements in the past year, such as the ability to specify multiple reading deadlines within the term.

Garry Sheahan
What is extensive reading and how can we motivate our students to engage with the concept?

Having recently instructed students who had little experience with extensive reading, the author was compelled to formulate creative exercises and activities to engage the learners and to encourage them to develop their reading skills, semi-autonomously, through practice and reflection. The introduction of key ER exercises has led to heightened interest in reading for pleasure and increased levels of enthusiasm, participation and engagement. These exercises include book clubs, video diaries, blogs, comic strip summaries, dramatization and strategically orientated poster presentations. Coinciding with this injection of variety, there has been a notable improvement in students' overall language competency.

Eric Shepherd Martin
ER in the preschool bilingual classroom

In my experience, a well-planned extensive reading program for young learners can guide Japanese children to read English with a proficiency similar to that of children who speak English as their first language. Such a program has the added benefit of motivating Japanese children to continue reading English as they grow. In this presentation I will outline the reading program implemented in my bilingual preschool classroom, which is based on the use of graded readers, theme-based book series, and teacher-created resources. Participants will have an opportunity to discuss the possible benefits of adapting a similar program for their own classes.

Satomi Shibata & Emiko Rachi
How do audiobooks help learners read in excess of one million words?

This presentation focuses on how audiobooks helped a variety of learners read in excess of one million words in English a year. Through this five-year Extensive Reading practice, the presenters have developed an ER system in which 90 % of learners read in excess of 500,000 words a year and 15 % reach one million. ER word count data collected in the last five years show audiobooks are likely to play a key role in our ER system, supporting learners with different learning styles and levels, facilitating learners reading higher levels of books, and enhancing pleasure of ER.

Yuko Suzuki
The practice of extensive reading and listening in class

Extensive reading and listening (Tacho-Tadoku) is a method which provides a perfect opportunity for learners of English to read and listen to a large number of books. This method not only improves the learners' fluency in English, but also gives enjoyment to and motivates them. The presenter will introduce a unique way of Tacho-Tadoku, where the learners are prompted to focus on the pictures in a book carefully. This fun but often forgotten activity helps the learners use their imagination while reading, which serves to develop their reading fluency and enables them to understand English as it is.

Mamoru "Bobby" Takahashi
Plot-driven versus character-driven stories in graded readers

Students who have never experienced extensive reading in foreign language need facilitation in choosing graded readers because they lack the knowledge of genres. We can encourage them to read more books by giving them the information of genres. By giving meta-information on the patterns to be found in the texts, we can raise their awareness when choosing a graded reader and increase their enjoyment of the stories they read. The presenter analyzed Oxford Bookworms Level 3, Level 4, and Level 5 using the criteria of plot-driven stories versus character-driven stories and he shall present his findings.

髙瀬敦子、吉澤清美、大槻きょう子
文法力に及ぼす多読の影響

当発表では、日本人学習者の文法力に及ぼす英語多読の効果を研究した結果を報告する。多読が学習者の英語力に及ぼすプラスの効果に関しては様々な 分野で研究・発表されているが、文法力に関する研究は数少なく、日本人学習者を対象に行った研究は Maruhashi (2011) のみである。当研究の参加者は日本人大学生 450 名(実験群 278 名、統制群 172 名)で、授業開始時と授業終了時にエジンバラ大学開発のクローズテストと当研究者グループ作成の文法力診断テストを受け、実験群は1年間の多読を行った。多読により彼らの文法力がどのように変化したかを発表する。

Atsuko Takase, Kiyomi Yoshizawa & Kyoko Otsuki
Effects of extensive reading on improvement in some grammatical categories

Although Extensive Reading (ER) is recognized as one of the most effective ways to improve various aspects of learners' English and an abundance of studies have been reported, the effects of ER on grammar has hardly been researched except Maruhashi (2011). In this study 450 Japanese EFL learners participated: 278 in the extensive reading group and 172 in the control group. They took the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) cloze test, and a diagnostic grammar test three times over the course. This presentation will illustrate which grammatical categories made improvement on learners' English after one year of ER program.

Joseph Tomei
Book reviews for extensive reading: Lessons from genre-based literacy pedagogy

While a pure Extensive Reading approach avoids any type of testing of students, practically speaking, in most curricular contexts, some sort of output is necessary. In this poster presentation, Genre-based Literacy Pedagogy, an approach growing out of Systemic-Functional Linguistics in what is known as the Sydney School, will be introduced and specific recommendations will be drawn out for use in Extensive Reading book reviews. As genre based approaches have been expanded into the teaching of reading, this presentation will recommend that ER practitioners consider the resources that this approach could bring to ER contexts.

Kevin Trainor
Extensive reading in a junior high school classroom

Research has indicated numerous benefits that extensive reading provides for language learners. Yet, many language learners are not introduced to extensive reading until they reach the college level. Why are learners not introduced sooner to such a useful approach to language learning? The presenter will discuss some of the obstacles in introducing a reading program in a junior high school classroom. He will describe some of the graded readers, materials, and activities introduced in the classroom such as sustained Silent Reading (SSR), shadowing, the use of iMovie with graded readers, and book reports.

Brendan Van Deusen
see John Patrick Owatari-Dorgan et al.

Rob Waring
Updates on ER-Central.com

This presentation follows on from a presentation two years ago about ER-Central.com - a free extensive reading and extensive listening website. This presentation will update the audience on current additions and features added to the site. These include bulk registration and data download; updated stories and texts; updated wordlists and vocabulary games; redesigned interface; automatic language translation and so on. There will be time for questions and discussions.

Takayoshi Yoshioka
see Hitoshi Nishizawa et al.

Kiyomi Yoshizawa
see Atsuko Takase et al.

Friday, May 16th

Dear Blog, after four semi-successful weeks I consulted with Mr. Goodlife. "Did you start them with a class reader set?" Pregnant pause. "You should pick an easy one and bring all thirty books to class. Then, they can help each other take the test on Moodle Reader together." It worked! Finally everybody had at least one book on the board, and I finally feel like I know what I'm doing with ER. Yay!

Tuesday, June 3rd

Dear Blog, new snag! Two of my students couldn't take out books for a month because of overdue books! What the bleep?!? I gave them Book Report forms and told them to go read in the library, which was really just a license to sleep.

Note to self: Bring some of my own books or magazines to each class.

Another colleague, Leslie Ato pointed out that most students don't even read Japanese books, so ER is doubly foreign. Too true!


Friday, July 11th

Dear blog, I've decided to ask my students about ER, so I made a survey with five questions with a five point Likert scale: Did you like the ER course, did you like the graded readers, did you like M-Reader, did you think M-Reader was helpful, and did you find M-Reader motivation-al? Questions six and seven were open-ended: Please tell us what our university can do to help make the ER program better, and please give your advice to new students for how to do better with ER.

. . .

New graded readers releases

Bjorn Fuisting
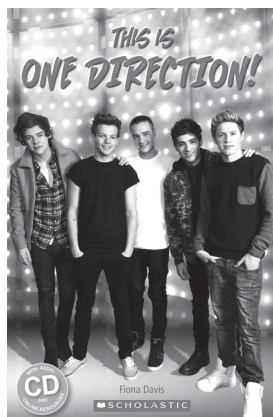
Springtime usually means new series being released and this year we have two new graded readers series for EFL learners and one series for ESL/native children, as well as close to 200 new titles spread over 23 different existing series. Among other things, Page Turners are now complete and have the full set of 60 books available, Penguin Kids have added 14 more titles (including 7 Roald Dahl books), Oxford Read and Imagine continue to expand, and there are more books from Macmillan, ELI, National Geographic, Scholastics and Cambridge University Press. See the full-list on the ER SIG website: jalt.org/er/graded-readers.
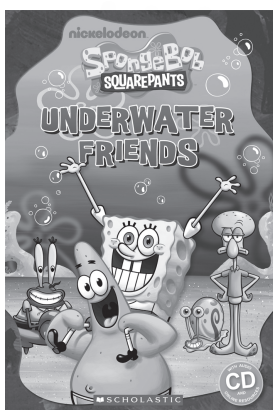
## Garnet Oracle Classics
ENGLISHBOOKS.JP

Englishbooks.jp have added Garnet Oracle Classics to their offerings. This is a sister series to the Garnet Oracle Readers series and use the same grading system and levels. So far there are only 3 titles but more coming in the future. Each reader includes resource pages of scaffolded exercises to reinforce learning and free audio download is available from the publisher's website.
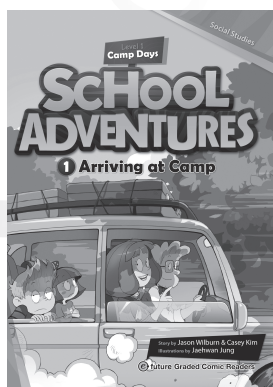
School Adventures
ENGLISHBOOKS.JP

School Adventures is a graded comics series. It has two levels (800 and 1000 headwords) of six books with CD and the characters are from the related series Magic Adventures. All books contain a CD and have activities and background information in back of the book.
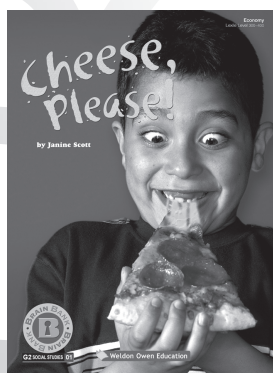
Brain Bank by Weldon Owen Education Inc.
R.I.C. PUBLISHING

Brain Bank Social Studies and Science readers are originally aimed for grade 2 native speakers. R.I.C. Publishing have made the 48 titles available in Japan.
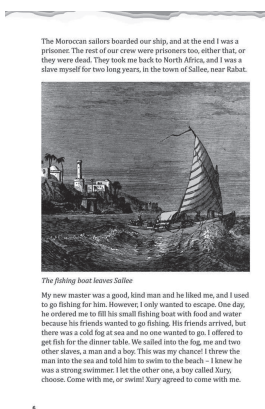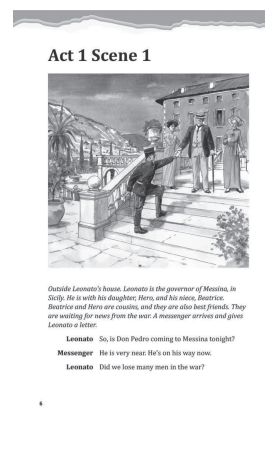
Recent research in ER

Laura Huston

Allington, R. (2014). How reading volume affects both reading fluency and reading achievement. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 7*(1), 13-26.

The volume of pupils' in-school reading is generally unmonitored. We know that the commonly used commercial core reading programs provide only material that requires about 15 minutes of reading activity daily. The remaining 75 minutes of reading lessons are filled with many other peripheral activities. Studies designed to enhance the volume of reading that children do during their reading lessons demonstrate one way to enhance reading development. Repeated readings have been widely used in fostering reading fluency, but wide reading options seem to work faster and more broadly in developing reading proficiencies, including oral reading fluency.

Fujita, K. & Yamashita, J. (2014). The relations and comparisons between reading comprehension and reading rate of Japanese high school EFL learners. *The Reading Matrix, 14*(2), 34-39

The current study investigated the relation and comparison of reading comprehension and reading rate in Japanese high school EFL learners. Results showed that the relation between reading comprehension and reading rate was weak, but significant ($r = .24$, $p < .01$, $N = 127$). The participants were divided into four groups based on their scores: the low to middle-comprehension, low-rate group (LMCLR), the low-comprehension, the high-comprehension, low-middle rate group (HCLMR), middle-rate group (LCMR), and the high-comprehension, high-rate group (HCHR). It is suggested that reading rate can be improved independently from reading comprehension, but the two variables can compete in some students.

Hemmati, T. & Binti Asmwai, A. (2015). Incidental vocabulary learning and retention through reading a graded reader among Iranian EFL learners. *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education, 5*(1)

This experimental study investigated 30 Iranian first-year high school EFL learners' acquisition of English vocabulary from a graded version of A Little Princess. Researchers employed Nation's (2001) Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) to choose a suitably graded text for the students, as well as tests of word-form recognition, meaning recognition (multiple choice), and meaning translation, to assess word knowledge. Immediately after treatment (reading the graded reader), participants took word knowledge tests. Results showed a considerable vocabulary gain at all levels of word knowledge, but not to the same extent. Knowledge of form was strongly enhanced and knowledge of meaning was increased as well.

Huffman, J. (2014). Reading rate gains during a one-semester extensive reading course. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 26*(2), 17-33

Few studies have looked at ER's effect on reading fluency. This article reports on an investigation of the reading rate gains of Japanese nursing college freshmen during a one-semester ER course, with students in an intensive reading (IR) course serving as the comparison group ($N = 66$). The ER group achieved significantly higher reading rate gains (20.73 wpm) than the IR group (-.62 wpm), without sacrificing comprehension. These results add to a growing body of empirical evidence of the effectiveness of ER.

Khansir, A. & Bafandeh, L. (2014). The study of effect of extensive reading on enhancing reading comprehension and word recognition of Iranian learners. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies, 3*(3), 266-281

In this paper, 90 Iranian high school EFL students participated and were divided into experimental and control groups, based on their reading comprehension and vocabulary test scores. Narrative texts were used in this test, and its reliability (KR20) was found to be 0.94. The experimental group was given two extra storybooks to read outside the classroom at a rate of one chapter from each book (two chapters total) per week. At the end of ten weeks, both groups were administered a posttest. There was a significant difference in reading comprehension ability and vocabulary recognition between the experimental and control groups.

Lake, J., & Holster, T. (2014). Developing autonomous self-regulated readers in an extensive reading program. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal, 5*(4), 394-403.

Students and teachers made use of an extensive reading module for an open-source audience response system. This system provides autonomous learning

conditions that enable students to read extensively through its facilitation of choosing books, monitoring, and reflecting on books read. Teachers can monitor students through summaries of the number of books read by each student, estimates of book difficulty, and popularity ratings of the books. Empirical data from our work-in-progress that was presented in Lake and Holster (2013) shows how extensive reading leads to gains in reading speed, reading motivation, and a positive reading identity.

LeBlanc, C. (2015). Investigating high school students' self-efficacy in reading circles. *The Language Teacher, 39*(1), 15-20.

The purpose of this quasi-experimental longitudinal study is to investigate the effects of EFL reading circles on Japanese high school students' reading self-efficacy and reading anxiety. The participants (*N* = 316) took part in regular reading circles over the course of one academic year. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires measuring reading self-efficacy, reading anxiety, and attitudes towards reading circles. A repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to evaluate changes in reading self-efficacy and anxiety. Reading self-efficacy was shown to improve significantly over the course of the academic year, while reading anxiety significantly decreased. Reasons for these changes are discussed.

Lin, C. (2014). Learning English reading in a mobile-assisted extensive reading program. *Computers & Education, 78*, 48-59.

The aim of the present study was to investigate the effects of using mobile tablet PCs in an online extensive reading program (ERP) on two intact classes of Taiwan adolescent English learners' online activities, reading ability and users' perceptions. One class was assigned to the mobile group, reading their assignments on their tablet PCs and the other, the PC group, reading theirs on desktop PCs. The results favored the mobile group who not only outperformed the PC group in online activities and reading achievement but also showed greater appreciation of the online ERP than their PC counterparts.

Mayora, C., Nieves, I., & Ojeda, V. (2014). An in-house prototype for the implementation of computer-based extensive reading in a limited-resource school. *The Reading Matrix, 14*(2), 78-95.

The purpose of this paper is to report a project in

which the authors developed an in-house software prototype to allow students from a high school with limited resources in a developing country to do extensive reading in a computer without Internet connection. The software development process was based on the systemic quality approach to educational software design (Díaz-Anton et al., 2002, 2003). Implications for different educational contexts are drawn from the experience. In-house teacher-produced software may be a more adequate alternative for implementing extensive reading since the developers have more control on certain options and are not restricted by issues of Internet access.

Mermelstein, A. (2014). Improving EFL learners' reading levels through extensive reading. *The Reading Matrix, 14*(2), 227-242.

This quantitative study examined the effects of ER on Taiwan EFL students' reading levels. The 12 week study was conducted using applied communicative language teaching (CLT) and student-centered teaching approaches. Two formal reading level assessments were taken and two informal assessments were carried out throughout the length of the study. The statistical analysis indicates significant reading level gains within the treatment group and significantly higher reading level gains within the treatment group vs. the control group. The findings suggest that utilizing ER and a student-centered teaching approach can provide a successful alternative to the traditional teacher-centered or curriculum-centered approaches currently in use in Asia.

Milliner, B. & Cote, T. (2014). Effective extensive reading management with Xreading. *The Language Teacher, 38*(6), 32-34.

Key issues in ER implementation include the cost of establishing and maintaining a graded reader library, keeping students accountable for their reading, and most importantly, finding the time to oversee the ER component, especially if it is extensive reading done outside of class. The release of Xreading <www.xreading.com> represents a technology-based solution to these and many other challenges teachers face when implementing an ER program. This article will introduce the web-based program and reflect on some observations of its implementation in the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) program at Tamagawa University.

Tuesday, July 22nd

Dear Blog, last class today (phew), and I gave them the survey, and I will give it to my Friday school at the end of the second semester.
I decided to give it in Japanese (translated by my lovely wife) and make it anonymous, which I think was the best way to get their real opinions.

Nation, I.S.P. (2014). How much input do you need to learn the most frequent 9,000 words? *Reading in a Foreign Language, 26*(2), 1-16.

This study looks at how much input is needed for enough repetition of the first 9,000 words of English for learning to occur. It uses corpora to find how many tokens of input would be needed to gain at least twelve repetitions and to meet most of the words at eight of the nine 1000 word family levels. Corpus sizes of just under 200,000 tokens and 3 million tokens provide an average of at least 12 repetitions at the second 1,000 word level and the ninth 1,000 word level respectively. Freely available mid-frequency readers have been created to provide the suitable kind of input needed.

Yoshida, H. (2014). An approach to extensive reading: Active involvement during sustained silent reading. *The Language Teacher, 38*(6), 19-22.

A number of studies have demonstrated that extensive reading (ER) can result in a variety of language learning gains; however, how ER programs should best be implemented in the EFL classroom has not been fully explored. This article provides practical advice to instructors in this regard and asserts the effectiveness of active involvement in sustained silent reading (SSR) to foster ER learning.

August 26th

Dear Blog, it's been a while since my last post, and I have finally tabulated all 60 responses. Here are the salient points, middle of the bell curves excluded:

Ten students said ER was 'very enjoyable' and only one said it was 'awful'. Nice!

Six said the graded readers were 'very interesting' while only three said they were 'awful'. Not bad…

Five students said M-Reader was 'very enjoyable' but two said it was 'awful'; uh-oh!

Nine students said M-Reader was 'very helpful' yet only one said it was 'useless'. Great!

Four students said M-Reader was 'very motivating' and four students said it was 'very demotivating', which I think totally validates the system. Keeping it!

Here are some of their suggestions to improve the ER program:

- Expand the reading time in class.

- Set a time limit for each book.

- Clarify the purpose of extensive reading.

- All books are about foreign culture and conversations only, this was difficult to understand.

- More books of Hollywood movies.

- More manga, books with illustrations and sports magazines.

- I enjoyed when the whole class read the same book together.

Here is their advice to new students:

- Don't read difficult books.

- Read your favorite books.

- Read on the bus and train.

- Read a little every day.

- You will get used to the online quizzes.

So hopefully, dear ER Fail Blog reader, you will be able to learn from my failures as well as my successes, but most of all I hope that you can learn something from my students.

This was a fictionalized account of Chris's experiences teaching ER, however the survey was totally real. If you should like any of the documents listed in the blog, or have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to email him: christopherp.madden at gmail.com.

The JALT Extensive Reading SIG and JERA present

The 8th Annual Extensive Reading Seminar

at Seinan Jo Gakuin University, Kitakyushu

Sunday June 21, 2015

What is extensive reading

Keynote Speakers:

Dr. David Beglar
Temple University, Japan Campus
The DNA of Extensive Reading

Dr. Takayuki Nakanishi
Dokkyo University
英語多読の活用と実践
Extensive Reading Practices in and outside your classrooms

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