In This Issue

An action research study into reader response journals for ER

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This study investigates the use of Reader Response Journals (RRJs) as a means to help students respond personally and critically to Extensive Reading (ER) materials. These RRJs are aimed to help the students have better in-class discussions of ER materials. An opinion questionnaire showed that students found RRJs valuable and that writing RRJs aided their ability to discuss the ER materials.

Extensive reading (ER) is an excellent way to build students' familiarity with common English phrases, structure, and vocabulary. An input-rich environment, encouraged through ER, may be the most important feature for successful second language acquisition, but this input must be aligned with learners' needs and general language abilities (Ellis, 1999). In many cases, the students also need support in productive language skills along with ER. The use of productive language practice has a long history in ER programs. Mason and Krashen (1997) used summaries as a means to measure the effectiveness of an ER program and found that the students who wrote summaries outperformed the students who only practiced with cloze exercises. To make ER more relevant in a conversation classroom setting, I decided to undertake a short action research study on how guided journaling could bridge the gap between reading, critical thinking, and discussion when using ER materials.

Reading response journals (RRJs) are designed to help students formulate opinions and reflect more deeply on texts. These were designed as an informal and concise means for students to practice writing and to receive personal feedback. These journals were also designed to provide students with a means to participate in group discussions and express their own opinions about the ER materials more easily.

These journals are based on reader-response theory (Hirvela, 1996) which highlights the reader's role in creating meaning. This can provide a framework for students to discover meaningful connections to their own lives (Dhanapal, 2010). Reader-response activities are able to create a non-threatening atmosphere so that students have space to express their own ideas (Iskhak & Hartono, 2020). Mizuno (2015) highlights the need for Japanese university students to expand their interpretive reading ability to encompass skills such as drawing on personal experience, giving opinions, and questioning text.

RRJs are used as an informal means for the students to surface and communicate their opinions on a reading. These journals increase communication between the writer and the chosen audience or teacher (Strackbein & Tillman, 1987). It also gives teachers the ability to peek at students' understanding of the reading and how they are internalizing the text by connecting it to their own experiences (Fulps & Young, 1991). RRJs are designed to be a pleasant way for students and teachers to interact and a vehicle for students to express themselves. This is supported by a study by Zainal et al. (2010) which found that the majority of students enjoyed writing a journal, that it helped them respond to a text, and construct their own meaning from the reading.

Writing a RRJ facilitates communication between students. By discussing and responding to the ideas in the journals, students can develop an appreciation for multiple interpretations (Spiegel, 1998). This allows students to learn from each other and judge their own work based on what their peers are producing. Group reading-response activities help students come to terms with the inconsistencies in their interpretations of a text and become more open to the ideas offered by their peers (Dias, 1990).

Methodology

This study involved 33 students, who were taking a first-year English conversation class at a national medical university between 2021 and 2022. This was the first year of university for all of the participants. The portion of the class discussed in this study was conducted entirely online through video chat. Xreading was used for all ER materials.

The students were first tasked with deciding on a book for the group to read. While these small book clubs may force less vocal members to read a graded reader they would not have chosen for themselves, the short-term book club approach aims to create a sense

of community. The groups were also encouraged to choose books of an appropriate level for all members of the group.

The students were given a set of prompts to help them respond to the text (Lee, 2013. See Appendix). The prompts for the weekly journaling activities were divided into categories to ease students into reader-response. The first week the students chose a topic to explore their feelings and the story itself. The second week they reflected on stand out portions of the story. The third week the focus was on characters. The final week they were encouraged to make connections to their own experiences or write creatively.

After reading the text, each student prepared a journal entry. The following week, the students' responses were shared in online video chatrooms (3-6 students each), to spark discussion. The students were encouraged to reply to the other students' responses and try to keep the conversation going for as long as possible. The students generally started by reading their journal entries in English, but often switched to their native Japanese during these discussions. While this was not ideal for a language class, it demonstrated engagement with the text and a desire to share ideas. The students also submitted their weekly entries online and received a response to the journal from the instructor each week.

Results and discussion

At the end of the RRJ treatment the students were requested to share their opinions via a Likert-scale questionnaire which was developed based on Zainal et al. (2010). The scale was set from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree.' For the purposes of analysis, a higher average indicates a greater degree of agreement with the statement.

Figure 1. What learners liked about the RRJ component
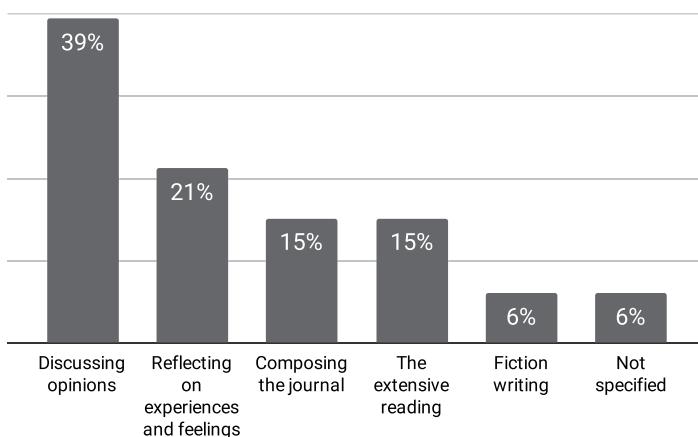
Table 1: Students' opinions concerning the reader response journal treatment.

Number	Question	Average
1	Writing a journal helped me make an opinion.	4.52
2	Writing a journal helped me understand the story.	4.64
3	Writing a journal made the story more memorable.	4.48
4	Writing a journal let me write about my experiences.	4.27
5	Writing a journal helped me think critically.	4.18
6	Writing a journal helped me practice summary writing.	4.15
7	Writing a journal helped me write a better summary.	4.21
8	Writing a journal let me communicate better with the teacher.	3.94
9	Writing a journal helped me talk to my classmates about the story.	4.33
10	Writing a journal should be part of the coursework.	4.27
11	Group discussion showed me different meanings in the story.	4.30
12	Group discussion was useful for me.	4.36

The overall data has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.91 which shows a great deal of reliability in the students' opinion for the 12 items. This illustrates a very positive attitude towards the RRJ treatment as a whole.

In terms of individual items on the survey, the highest degree of positive response was to RRJs helping the students understand the story better. This correlates with research showing that RRJs aids students in interpreting a text (Shin, 2019). On the other end of the spectrum, the students felt the least positive about the treatment aiding them in communicating with the instructor. While the students were provided with individual written responses to each journal entry, I was only able to visit a couple of groups per group discussion session.

Two short response questions were included at the end of the questionnaire. The first question asked students to list what they liked about the RRJ and discussion component. The second questions had them reflect on what they found to be challenging about the treatment.

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I was surprised to see that the largest proportion of students responded that they enjoyed discussing their journal entries in groups. Reflecting on my research notes shows that this activity did not achieve the level of engagement I intended. The students generally read their journal entries one at a time and did not comment on other members' journals without a great deal of prompting. However, the students seem to have found journal sharing to be gratifying and enjoyed listening to others' opinions even if they were not prepared to discuss them. The journals succeeded in providing a means for students to share their opinions. This can be seen in one student's response– "I think I gained English skills by trying my best to make sentences in English to convey my thoughts to others."

As far as the writing portion of journaling was concerned, the students enjoyed the compositional aspects the most. The students mentioned both a greater understanding of their own feelings concerning the story and more appreciation for the characters' motivations after composing a journal entry. The remaining 15% of students mentioned reading as the most pleasurable element. Although the development of reading skills was not intended to be part of this survey question, the fact that ER remains gratifying while journaling for these students was welcome news.

Students named many different difficulties in composing and discussing journals in English. Numerous students mentioned feeling like they didn't have adequate vocabulary for writing tasks. Students wrote that it was difficult to avoid using the same words repeatedly, use their own words, and deal with unfamiliar vocabulary. One student delved into the difference between their expectations and actual abilities stating, "I didn't like the fact that I couldn't translate with the nuances that I thought I could." This statement illustrates how composition can be enjoyable for the student, as a means to reflect on and internalize the story, while still being frustrating. Writing in a second language can be demoralizing when students cannot clearly express what they are thinking (Leki & Carson, 1994). While students were encouraged to view the journals as a development exercise, adjusting personal standards can be difficult.

Responses dealing with the journaling content and formulating an opinion are also of interest because they reflect directly on the RRJ treatment. Some of the problems here seem to stem from graded

Figure 2. What students disliked about the RRJ and discussion activities
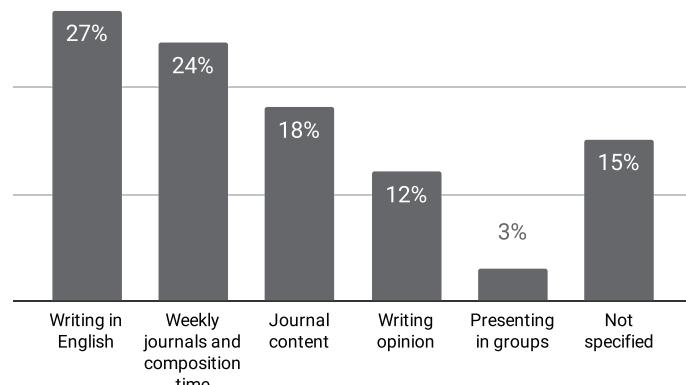
readers themselves. The stories the students selected were often difficult to engage with because they were too simple. This hampered the students' ability to formulate opinions and add their own interpretations to the story as well. It is possible that the students would have found the journaling topics and discussion more beneficial with more mentally stimulating texts.

Conclusion

The RRJs were successful in helping students both construct and communicate their critical ideas about ER materials. RRJs provide an opportunity and scaffolding for the students to formulate their own opinions and then discuss those ideas. They are a worthwhile inclusion in an ER program that is also concerned with productive language skills. It is very difficult for language learners to spontaneously express their opinions about a text, only through active reflection can the students be expected to be able to speak about ER materials. While RRJ based discussion does facilitate the sharing of ideas, the students still find it difficult to actually move into discussion. Extemporaneous use of English may develop over a longer treatment but was not largely apparent during this study.

Further research ought to evaluate use of periodic book clubs to increase engagement with ER. Also, research into the types of journaling prompts that lead to better engagement in oral discussion could aid in creating more effective journaling assignments.

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Appendix

Reader Response Journal Prompts (adapted from Lee, 2013)

Your feelings & the story

What made you sad/happy/surprised/angry/bored/excited/shocked from the story?

What lesson did you learn from the story?

What do you want to know more about?

What don't you understand about a character?

What event surprised you? Why?

Stand out portions

What was your favorite part?

What part did you dislike?

What made the climax exciting?

What was the author's plan?

The characters

Who was your favorite character? Why?

Who was your least favorite character? Why?

How did the characters change?

What motivated the characters?

What character was similar to someone you know?

How are you similar to a character?

Making connections

What does the character/plot/setting remind you of?

What experience do you have that are similar to the story?

What movies, books, games, news, etc. did you remember when you read the story?

What real people did this book make you think of?

Creative writing

Write dialogue between the main character and a character from a different story.

What would you do differently if you were the main character?

Write a new ending.
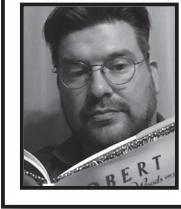
You and ER

Patrick Conaway
Shokei Gakuin University

What is Extensive Reading?

Reading lots of books, magazines, and other things that are both interesting and understandable.

When did you first hear about ER?

About 2016. My English conversation school was starting an ER class.

Who inspired you in your ER journey?

Deb Roy's TED Talk, 'Birth of a Word' really got me thinking about how reading books gives us input into the ways we learn as kids. We encounter words time and again together with their natural friends.

How do you implement ER in your classes?

ER is a part of most of my classes. In speaking classes students introduce and talk about the books that they read as well as sometimes reading to each other. In my writing classes, students read to help widen their experience and move away from relying on cookie cutter essay patterns.

Where do you keep the books?

Our graded readers are in the library, on three shoulder-level shelves that allow 5-6 students to comfortably browse the books and maintain some distance for covid precautions. We also have several sets of manga in English together with the other manga.

Why ER?

Because it's immersive. Reading a story is like a short study abroad. One might say that movies are similar, but so much is communicated visually. With reading, the more you know, the richer the experience can become. What a natural incentive to learn and grow.

Do you have any tips or advice for anyone else doing ER?

Teachers who do ER as well can connect with their students in different ways. When you read the same books as the students, you can share your impressions of the books. My students tend to be a bit more open and smile more after I hear them talking about a story that I know and jump into the discussion. Reading in our L2 or L3 is also good to make us really understand where our students might need help in their reading activities. Our struggles to find good books and finding time to read can help us sympathize and to give advice from experience.

Atsuko Takase
Iwano Private English School

What is Extensive Reading?

ER is the most effective and enjoyable method to improve English proficiency.

When did you first hear about ER?

I heard about ER over 40 years ago.

Who inspired you in your ER journey?

Nation, Krashen, Day, Hill, Waring, Hunt & Brychta, the author and the illustrator did.

How do you implement ER in your classes?

First, I explain the importance of ER for EFL students to achieve in any languages, then show the graph of the improvement of English proficiency of students with ER and those without ER. Then I talk about some keys to succeed in ER and show different kinds of books with some explanation. Before they start reading, they have to take a pre-test. I give students in ER class plenty of time for SSR (45-80 minutes), while checking and advising how to read effectively, and encourage them to enjoy reading. At the end of the course, they take the post-test, and realize how their English proficiency has improved.

Where do you keep the books?

I keep them in the classroom, library, teachers' office, and home, depending on the institution.

Why ER?

Intensive reading and Grammar-translation methods are not enough to achieve any foreign language.

Do you have any tips or advice for anyone else doing ER?

First, read a lot of books, which are written in comprehensible English at the beginning or ER practice, which enables you to read fast without translation. Second, read several books from the same series and the same level at a time, which makes it easier and faster to read. Third, choose books from your favorite genre, so that you can enjoy reading, which will motivate you to keep reading. Finally, try to read for 15-30 minutes every day. If possible, ask your teachers to give you time to read in class with your classmates, as SSR in class is very effective.

Tell us about your ER Journey:

https://forms.gle/Ewzis5CSqHFtWMh4A
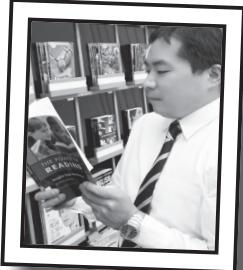
Using speed reading as an entry point for ER in a private high school

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Although there has been an increase in articles regarding extensive reading in private schools in the ERJ (e.g., Flanagan & Custance, 2017; Stein, 2018; Trainor, 2016) many successful school programs have students starting extensive reading from junior high school, which I agree is the best time to start. In this article, I will introduce using speed reading as an entry point for extensive reading for English teachers who are teaching compulsory high school classes that have a strict syllabus.

Barriers to starting extensive reading from high school

First of all, let me explain the key barriers that I had to overcome in order to start extensive reading (ER), which are (a) students do little reading in the L1, (b) there is no place in the curriculum, and (c) the influence of high stakes exams. Although Japanese junior high school students read 4.7 books per month, according to the 67th school reading survey, high school students only read 1.6 books per month (School Library Association, 2023). Getting students to read one book per week in English is very difficult when they do not do it in their first language. Furthermore, there is very little time for ER in compulsory English courses. Teachers are busy finishing the government-approved textbooks, and to make things worse, in many upper-level schools, students are simultaneously taking 12 courses and need to study for 12 exams each semester. In my pilot experiment with ER in my first year, a homeroom teacher even told me to leave homework to a minimal amount, which made it difficult to assign reading outside of the classroom. Lastly, if we are to start ER from high school, we need to overcome the influence of high-stakes university entrance exams. Despite growing evidence that ER can enhance Japanese high school learners' reading abilities (e.g., Aka, 2019, Fujita & Noro, 2009), many students prefer to be taught intensive reading techniques, much like in their cram schools.

Getting started

My pilot speed reading course was conducted among science course students in a grade 12 English expressions class. The deviation (hensachi) level of the students ranged from 45-65 and although I was supposed to be teaching writing based on the grammar questions used in past university entrance exams, I noticed that many of the students did not understand grammar from the earlier years. Therefore, the SSS Extensive Reading Study Group SSS principles of "start with simple stories" (Furukawa, 2023) were implemented at an extreme level using the Yomitore 50 and Yomitore 100 books from Hamajima Shoten. The difficulty level started at grade 8 level English in Japan. Since all of the teachers had to finish the textbook at the same time to match the same test content, speed reading was only used as a short warmup. Students then progressed to the speed reading course created by Quinn et al. (2017a & b) at the 500 and 1000-word levels. Although some students complained because there was no grammar-translation or explanations of grammar points, more students were happy because they could finish their university entrance mock exams with some time to spare. What was unexpected was that students lost motivation very quickly because they could not comprehend the passages at the 1000-word level. Their study of Target 1900 vocabulary for university exams further constrained their ability to comprehend English while reading because they only studied the English word and its Japanese translation. There was also not enough comprehensible input for my students in any of their other English classes.

In the second year of the speed reading program, the program was adapted to include a 750-word level course. Created for literature course students in the English Exercises II class, students voted on their favorite Japanese fairy tale and ghost story, and a 15-story course was developed. Once again, since the focus of the course was to teach a four-skills textbook for the proposed four-skills university entrance exam, speed reading was only used as a warm-up activity. Students thoroughly enjoyed the Japanese ghost stories in English, and students were introduced to a four-skills activity using graded readers where students would read the book, write a quick summary, and interview two classmates about the book that they

read. Later in the second semester, students were also asked to write their own 200-300-word ghost story and present it to their classmates. Both activities had more success in comparison to my first year when I started without speed reading.

Variations of implementing speed reading

If one is lucky enough to be part of a year group, another way to conduct speed reading is to use it after morning homeroom. At Junten Junior High School, a one-year group that supports ER has introduced speed reading using Yomitore 100 during morning homeroom before the first period. This concept of spending time during morning homeroom was also used in a public high school that conducted 10-minutes of ER (Fujita & Noro, 2009). In order to please the traditionally-minded senior teachers, speed reading via Google Forms was combined with vocabulary study from the Target 1900 textbook and formative vocabulary testing with the online application Tagetomo, by Obunsha.

Reflections on the course

Although speed reading 2-3 passages a week can only amount to 800-1200 words read per-week, this is the same amount as an Oxford Classics level 2 reader. Students received much-needed comprehensible input, and because students' reading speeds generally improved, most would finish their mock exams quicker and have more time to read graded readers on their own. Although one can argue that there is not enough reading to produce a significant learning effect, I see speed reading as a tool to build a foundation for students to do extensive reading. Also, reading these short passages could give some students the home run book experience, and one book, or passage in this case, could, "[start] them on the path to becoming dedicated readers" (Henkin & Krashen, 2015, para. 1). Through speed reading, students were exposed to stories from all over globe in easy, accessible English. It was a great opportunity for me to find my students' interests and recommend a graded reader from the school library so they could become avid readers.

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

Also, the ERJ is always looking for your ideas, opinions and experiences. Write to erj@jalt.org

Sixth Extensive Reading World Congress report

Cory J. Koby

Tezukayama Gakuin University

After a 4-year hiatus and two online conferences in the interim, the Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF) was thrilled to host the sixth iteration of its Extensive Reading World Congress (ERWC6) in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia over a 5-day span from 8 to 11 August, 2023. Working with the Indonesian Extensive Reading Association and three Bali-based universities—Udayana University, Ganesha Pendidikan University, and Mahasaraswati University—the conference organizing committee was able to provide what some veteran attendees have called "the best ERWC yet".

In total, 302 paid participants joined the conference. Of these, 164 came from some 21 countries outside Indonesia, 88 from the island of Bali, and 50 from the other Indonesian islands. Working with the Regional English Language Office of the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta the ERF was able to provide funding for many of these 138 Indonesian participants. In addition, seven fully-funded scholars from five countries in Africa and Asia were able to attend thanks to an ERF outreach program. Most conference attendees stayed at the main conference venue, The Aston Denpasar Hotel and Convention Center, Bali, Indonesia where all daytime and evening events were held from August 8 through 10. This provided an ideal environment for attendees to mix and mingle morning, noon, and night throughout the conference. Conference sponsors XReading, e-Future, ELI publishing, and ELLLO also greatly contributed to a successful conference experience.

A half-day series of pre-conference workshops took place on August 7 in the postgraduate building of the Udayana Language Center of the Udayana University Denpasar Campus. The conference then moved to the convention center for the main conference 8-10 August. Three plenary sessions—one on each day—offered a wide variety of scholarly and professional insight into three very distinct circles of practice. The first plenary speaker, Francisca Maria Ivone (Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia) addressed the emerging challenges and opportunities the Digital Age has afforded educators engaging in extensive listening and extensive viewing in their language programs. On day two, Doreen Ewert (Professor, Department of Rhetoric & Language at the University of San Francisco, and Director of the Academic English for Multilingual Students Program) raised the question of how we can build fluency in both ER and non-ER contexts. On the final day, author of several award-winning graded readers, Michael Lacey Freeman, skillfully wove the conference theme, "Bridging the Literacy Gap," into his engaging talk about the journeys both writer and reader embark upon when taking up any engaging story.

In addition to the three plenary sessions, Featured Speaker Willy A. Renandya spoke to a standing-room-only audience about the connections between developing writing skills and the practice of focused ER. On the final conference day, the closing panel was also chaired by Willy. This panel consisted of the three plenary speakers who shared their observations on the major concerns for the future of extensive reading and extensive listening.

In total, ERWC6 offered over 150 sessions that provided an abundance of opportunities for congress attendees to enrich and expand their ER practice. In addition to these sessions, conference attendees had the chance to join a Gala Dinner and Cultural Showcase on August 8 as well as an epic 14-hour excursion on August 11 that showcased many of the natural and cultural wonders of this tropical island.

As a member of the organizing committee, it is impossible for me to offer an unbiased review of the event. However, I am thrilled with the positive feedback and great spirit this ER World Congress has generated—just ask anyone who was lucky enough to attend. I am very much looking forward to ERWC7 which will return to Japan in 2025 and be co-hosted by ERF domestic partners including JALT's ER SIG. See you there!

New graded readers releases

Bjorn Fuisting

For teachers doing ER the choice of books keeps expanding. In the last year another 49 titles have been published, some in physical format, some electronic only and some in both versions. Pomoka is a small independent publisher that has a growing list of books that now includes 11 titles (more details below in this issue' new series highlight), I Talk You Talk Press, another local independent publisher, has expanded with another 8 titles. Their titles are now also available on Maruzen and Kinokuniya's digital library as well as via Amazon and Xreading. Oxford University Press (OUP) continues to expand their offerings with 4 new Dominoes titles and 1 new Bookworms Library title. Penguin Readers are also expanding with 19 new books with a mix of original titles as well as adapted classics. Finally, Halico, another local publisher, has 5 new titles in their Pocket Readers series "10 things to see and do in…". There should be something interesting for most reading programs that are looking for more graded readers. The full list of new titles with levels, headwords and word counts can be found on the ER SIG website.
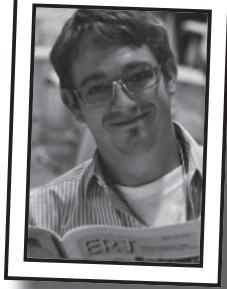
University Diaries, Stranger in Japan, Tips for English Language Learners and Pomoka Series by Pomoka

Pomoka is a small but growing independent publisher of graded readers based in Japan. The writer and teacher behind the publisher is Paul McAleese. The University Diaries series consists of 5 titles about Ria, a nineteen-year-old university student, and the problems in her life and her dreams. It has shown to be very popular among readers in the same age group. The books are all at CEFR A2 level with 800 headwords.
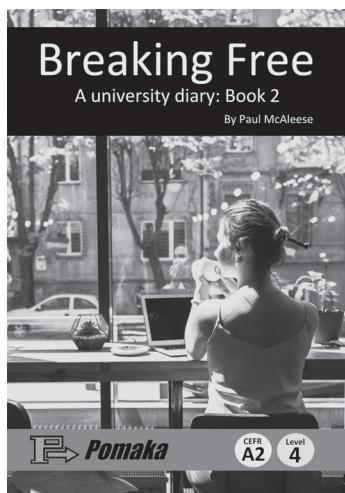
Stranger in Japan is similar to University Diaries in that it is following one main character, a 17-year-old high school student Jen, but in this case, Jen is on a six-week homestay in Japan. The series is at CEFR A2 level (900 headwords) and consist of 3 titles. Tips for English Language Learners is a non-fiction series aiming to help language learners with useful tips. Currently there are 2 titles, Conversation Skills and Self-Study Skills, but the series is being expanded during 2023. The level is B1 (1000 headwords). Finally, there is the Pomoka Series at the A1/A2 CEFR level (400 headwords). Currently it only has one title in it, but more are in the works. Overall, the Pomoka graded readers are engaging and another good example of teacher-created graded readers. They are available on Amazon in both print (1,099 yen) and digital (499 yen) versions, as well as via Xreading with a subscription. Most titles have or will soon have quizzes on Mreader.
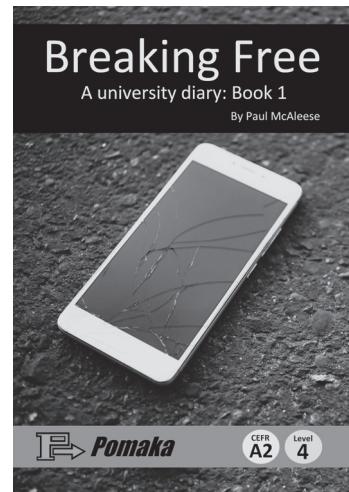
Write for the ERJ!

Send anything related to extensive reading or extensive listening, or of interest to members of the JALT ER SIG to erj@jalt.org.

Use APA7 style, no footnotes, MSWord or text format. If you have any layout requests, send separately or consider the position of layout editor!

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

Headings and subheadings sentence-capitalised (only the first letter of the heading and the first letter of proper names capitalised—like this list!)

Photos, graphs and graphics should be separate, clearly named files, with high resolution and good contrast.

Tables should be sent as data, not images.

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

Add your academic affiliation if you would like that to appear in print.

Back issues can be seen at jalt.org/er.

Winners of the 2023 LLL Awards

The Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF), an unaffiliated, not-for-profit organization that supports and promotes extensive reading in language education, takes pleasure in announcing the winners of the 19th Annual Language Learner Literature (LLL) Awards for books published in 2022. An international jury chose the winning book in each of six categories, taking into account the internet votes and comments of students and teachers around the world. All books mentioned on this page can be ordered online in Japan thorough the ETJ Book Service: https://www.etjbookservice.com/extensive-reading-foundation/.

Very Young Learners

Thomas and the Dragon

Adapted: Mary Taylor

Publisher: Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241533697

Online voters' comment: This book helps readers to focus on vocabulary that can be used daily and supports understanding with simple text and repetition. The story is relatable to the culture, and the language used is suitable for a beginner reader The story was interesting, especially the Dragon was impressive. Students were familiar with Thomas the train.

Jurors' comment: A very impressive retelling of a classics story. The story is very well written. The illustrations are classic, yet don't look outdated. Beginner readers could read this on their own as the sentences are short and the language is graded very well with lots of repetition. I can also see this being useful for teachers who wanted to turn it into a drama activity.
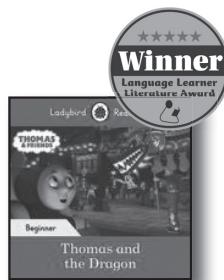
Finalists

The Animal Band

Author: Catherine Eisele and Serina Eisele

Illustrator: Connie Liao

Publisher: Caves Publishing

ISBN: 9789576069680
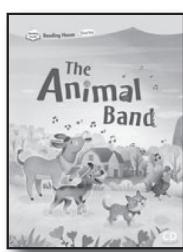
Thomas and the Giant Pandas

Author: Mary Taylor

Publisher: Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241533673
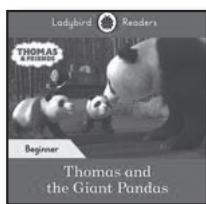
Young Learners

The Fox and the Stork

Author: Andy Prentice

Illustrator: Tania Rex

Publisher: Usborne English Readers

ISBN: 9781801312578

Online voter's comment: A very nice and easy story to understand for young learners. Presented through two main characters: a stork and a fox. It teaches children that not all jokes can be funny.

Jurors' comment: This book is a great adaptation to a classical story and it passes a beautiful message to children.

Finalists

Coding and AI

Author: Mandeep Locham

Publisher: Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241559420

The Cheetah's Whisker

Author: K.P. Kojo

Illustrator: Moka Celess

Publisher: Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241533611

Adolescent & Adult: Beginners

Winner — Language Learner Literature Award

Harriet Holmes and the Portrait

Author: Jane Cadwallader

Illustrator: Gustavo Mazali

Publisher: ELI

ISBN: 9788853635020

Online voter's comments: That book has an interesting story because it can teach us about critical thinking and problems in our life. So, it can makes us good at thinking. This book uses simple words that I can understand. The story has a good plot so this book is very exciting. This book also has clear pictures that can make me understand the story.

Jurors' comment: Attractive book design with good quality production. Interesting characters of young kids trying to solve the case. Illustration is beautiful and coordinates with the story very well to help improve comprehension.

Finalists

Merlin, The King Maker

Author: Janet Hardy-Gould

Illustrator: Ollie Cuthbertson

Publisher: Oxford Dominoes

ISBN: 9780194607629

The Railway Children

Author: E. Nesbit

Illustrator: Dynamo Ltd

Publisher: Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241553305

Adolescent & Adult: Elementary

Winner — Language Learner Literature Award

The Story of Tracy Beaker

Author: Jacqueline Wilson

Retold by: Kirsty Loehr

Illustrator: Nick Sharratt

Publisher: Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241553329

Online voters' comment: My opinion is that it is an interesting book and it attracts attention. It entertains you very well and it is an easy book to read. Nobody loved Tracy but there came a point in her life that everything changed in her life. This book is easy for me to read because it doesn't have difficult words that can make me confused. This book also presents a interesting story with simple phrases.

Jurors' comment: An unusual, sometimes amusing, frank story on fears and hopes growing up in an orphanage, from the perspective of a young kid. Structures are short, vocab is simple and direct. Illustrations are basic yet funny, big print makes it easy and fast reading, layout is spacious. Theme on friendship, family and growing up. Can appeal to all age groups, storyline is realistic in any setting, community.

Finalists

Out of the Maze

Author: Martyn Hobbs

Illustrator: Francesca Protopapa

Publisher: Helbling Readers Red Series

ISBN: 9783990897928

Steve Jobs

Author: Rachel Bladon

Publisher: Oxford Bookworms

ISBN: 9780194633994
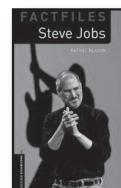
Adolescent & Adult: Intermediate

Boys Don't Cry

Author: Malorie Blackman

Retold by: Maeve Clarke

Illustrator: Ana Latese

Publisher: Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241553381

Online voter's comment: Very readable and will promote purposeful reading. Theme of a teenaged single male parent, along with the issues related to the complexities of being gay in a largely heteronormative society very relevant. The teacher will need to plan additional before-reading activities in cultural contexts where the themes above mentioned are either hushed up or still taboo. This book is really compelling. I like the conflicts very much. It beautifully depicts human basic longing for love. Young adults must love this book!

Jurors' comment: This book is in the category of young-adult/adult, which allows the exploration of non-traditional roles and viewpoints that may be still taboo in some parts of the world, through a clever, plentiful, fast-passed, easy to read story narrated in the 1st person.
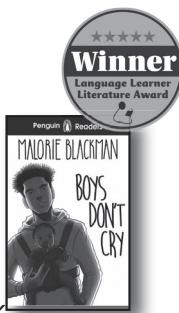
Finalists

1984

Author: George Orwell

Retold by: Alex Raynham

Publisher: Blackcat

ISBN: 9788853021373
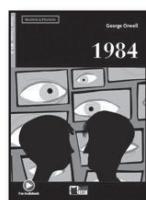
A Christmas Carol

Author: Charles Dickens

Retold by: Elizabeth Ferretti

Illustrator: Veronica Ruffato

Publisher: ELI

ISBN: 9788853632425
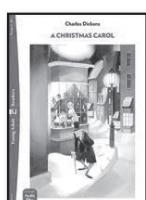
Adolescent & Adult: Upper Intermediate & Advanced

The Godfather

Author: Mario Puzo

Retold by: Bill Bowler

Publisher: Readable Stories

ISBN: 978-0241553466

Online voters' comment: The book reads well. The before, during, and after reading questions, the exercises and the glossary are good. It is a very engaging adaptation of the novel and the genre is well-represented. The characters are very well painted and the events are clear and logically connected. Should make a very good reader to initiate and promote extensive reading.

Jurors' comment: Having seen all the Godfather movies and tv shows, I was not looking forward to this read, but was pleasantly surprised, not only with the ease of reading but how engaging the story was and how many nuanced details were not developed in the films for lack of time. I found myself quickly immersed in the unrealized dreams and aspirations that made up the lives of the Corleone family. There were many characters to keep up with, but I found the story was so well developed that it was not hard to follow and remember the roles each character played in moving the story along. It is a page-turner book, literally.

Finalists

Girl, Woman, Other

Author: Bernardine Evaristo

Retold by: Saffron Alexander

Publisher: Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241553428

Twelfth Night

Author: William Shakespeare

Retold by: Bill Bowler

Publisher: Readable Stories

Book review of Links: A communication course with extensive reading

Amanda Mashima

The University of Shiga Prefecture

At long last, we have a well-developed course textbook that directly links extensive reading and classroom activities. Xreading founder Paul Goldberg has partnered up with authors Justin Harris and Paul Leeming of task-based learning renown to fill the gap in the market with *Links: A Communication Course with Extensive Reading*, fresh off the presses in March 2023. For those of you unfamiliar with Xreading, it is a virtual library of graded readers that was was launched in 2014 featuring titles from major international publishers as well as smaller local publishers. It is available for a monthly, six-monthly, or yearly subscription. The first textbook of its kind, *Links* can be bundled with a yearly subscription to Xreading, a highly cost-effective solution for students. For institutions that already subscribe their students to Xreading en masse, *Links* can be purchased separately. There are different ISBNs for the two options.

A cursory glance at the table of contents will reveal that each of the eight thematic units includes two extensive reading assignments: The first has all students reading the same book together and the second has students choosing one book from three suggested titles. Unit 1: Friendship features an autobiographical story Egghead to tug at your heartstrings and covers how we make and keep friends. Unit 2: Technology considers the pros and cons of smartphone use and has students learning about famous inventors. Unit 3: Study abroad takes the students on a homestay in New Zealand and other countries while they contemplate the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad. In Unit 4: Peace, the main story takes place on the Peace Boat where – surprise! – pirates show up. The additional ER options of the unit are biographies of inspirational people who tried to make the world a more peaceful place. Unit 5: Money includes the story of Robin Hood (the original story, not the cryptocurrency), discusses government spending, and introduces different ways people make money. Unit 6: Science and Progress explores how science has changed the world, with the main story taking place amongst researchers in Antarctica and the additional non-fiction readers on jobs related to science. In Unit 7: History, the main story spirits readers away on a trip through time before exploring ancient civilizations throughout history. In Unit 8: Stories, learners will read a collection of folk tales and try their hand at creative writing by writing their own story.

The eight course units are sandwiched between two shorter units, the Preview Unit and the Review Unit. In the Preview Unit, students learn what extensive reading is and how to do it effectively. The Review Unit has learners reflect on the experience of extensive reading and gives them a teaser for speed reading. At the back of the textbook, there is a two-page spread for each unit that provides space for students to practice constructing conversations related to the theme of the unit, do supplementary vocabulary exercises, and write a book review.

At eight pages per unit, packed with activities, even the staunchest of completionists may have a difficult time of it. The flow of each unit is the same, making it very user-friendly for both teachers and students. Units begin with pre-reading activities ('Speaking', 'Split Reading', a 'Mini Task', and 'Pre-reading Questions') to activate schemata for the unit topic, provide input, and give students time to interact with each other before reading the first graded reader for homework. In the following lesson, the post-reading activities ('Comprehension Check', 'Speaking', 'Listening', and a larger 'Communication Task') heavily rely on having read the graded reader for homework, creating built-in accountability. Finally, students choose one of the three suggested graded readers for the second ER homework assignment, which becomes the focus of additional activities ('Writing', 'Discussion', and 'Presentation') in the following class. If adhering strictly to the flow of each unit as it is designed, three class sessions will be spent on each unit, although in my case, one unit took four classes.

It is evident right from the Preview Unit that the authors have first-hand experience using ER in the classroom. The four pages of the Preview Unit introduce learners to the world of ER with persuasive evidence from current ER research before they read the story of Masa who, like them, has recently started extensive

reading as part of English class at his university. That first reader, Masa's Mission, just manages to straddle the line between charming and preachy. With the inclusion of the Preview Unit, even teachers new to ER as a core component of their course can tackle it with confidence. In the main units, each activity naturally builds on the one before it. Though certainly activities could be cut for the sake of time or rearranged to suit the preferred method of instruction, overall, fans of interactive activities with genuine information gaps, and task-based learning aficionados will rejoice.

One oft-cited tenet of ER is having the freedom to choose what to read for the intrinsic motivation found in reading to your interests. Reading predesignated titles does not provide students with the autonomy to self-select reading material and not all topics will hold students' attention equally. Level suitability is also an issue. Assigned texts are unlikely to be a suitable level for every student in a class unless those texts are particularly simple. Given these constraints, the graded readers featured in *Links* were well-selected for their balance between whimsical and informative and aim for a mid-range of proficiency. Nevertheless, some of the pleasure of reading may be lost. As students using *Links* will have unlimited access to the entire Xreading library of nearly 2,000 graded readers, they are sure to find something they enjoy at the appropriate level for them that they can read beyond those required in the textbook.

I have it on very good authority that the current book is meant to be a pilot, and after some revisions, will be part of a series comprised of several levels. This is welcome news, as the current iteration is likely too difficult for lower-proficiency students. As it is, with minor modifications to the pacing and scaffolding of the activities, users of the current edition can still reap the benefits of doing extensive reading with much more support than they would have otherwise had with any other coursebook. For taking on the challenge of providing us with the missing link between ER and classroom tasks, I tip my hat to the authors.

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

The speaking book

These stories were written by first-year Science majors at Shinshu University as part of a project to write a series of graded readers in an Academic English course taught by Mark Brierley.

Rainy day

Kanezawa Hime

There is a boy named Keita. He is a healthy and cheerful boy.

Keita is a high school student. He does not like to study math, science, English, or anything else. But, he has a special book. The book can speak, and it knows everything in the world. Keita liked listening to its stories. Thanks to the book, he learned to like studying and gaining more knowledge. But he was not good at reading printed words. That was one reason why he liked the Speaking Book.

One day, Keita listened to stories late into the night. Keita and the book talked about how rain falls. Of course, he did not like science. But it was more interesting than his science class in high school. He went to bed very late.

As a result, he overslept.

"Oh no, I overslept. I must go straight to school now!" Keita was in a hurry because his homeroom teacher, Mr. Onigawara, is scary. He must not be late for school.

But, it was raining. Unfortunately, He forgot his umbrella because he was in a hurry. He ran through the rain and he made it to school on time. But Keita and the Speaking Book got wet.

The wet part of the book could not be read. The book loses memory of the unreadable parts. Keita thought that if the book is wet, it cannot speak about the story of the wet part and he became very sad. Keita desperately tried to dry the book, but to no avail. Once something is lost, it never comes back. Keita felt sorry for himself for staying up late.

And he learned the weak point of the Speaking Book. The book will not be readable if it gets wet, torn or stained.

Keita decided to take good care of the book. He wanted to discuss many more matters with the Speaking Book. And he wanted to be friends with the book.

On the way home from his high school, he said to the book, "I'm sorry I got you wet this morning. I forgot

my umbrella. I want to talk to you all the time. Please tell me more things." He worried that the book might be angry and not speak to him anymore.

"I forgive you," said the book. "I had a good time yesterday talking to you all night. It's not your fault. And as for your request, of course, no problem. I still have a lot to teach you. Let's talk again this evening. But I'd better be careful not to make you oversleep."

Keita was happy to hear those words. When he looked at the sky, the rain had stopped. There was a beautiful rainbow, and everything they talked about was rainbows. The two were so happy.

Keita is going to get smarter because of the Speaking Book. Eventually, the book will no longer have anything to teach him. If that future comes, what will happen to the two of them?

First date

Takezawa Mio

Keita is interested in Fumika. Fumika is a girl in Keita's class. She is friendly and her smile is nice. He makes up his mind that he will ask her out.

"I have a crush on you," he said one day. "Can I ask you out?"

"Of course," she said.

They decided to go on a first date. Keita knew Fumika liked a guy who leads, so he had to decide where they would go.

"Umm.... Where is the best place?" Keita asked himself.

He thought about this for a few days, but he couldn't come up with an idea. At first he didn't want to ask the Speaking Book because he wanted to decide by himself. However, he had no idea.

After a week, Keita asked the Speaking Book, "Where should I go on my first date with Fumika?"

"Fumika likes the planetarium," The Speaking Book said.

"Ok... thanks," said Keita. He didn't know that. The Speaking Book knows everything, he thought.

Keita searched for a planetarium near Mito station. He found Mito planetarium. He decided to go there, but he didn't tell Fumika where they were going because he wanted to surprise her.

On the day of their date, they met at Mito station.

"Keita, where are we going today?" Fumika said.

"Follow me, Fumika," Keita said.

They talked to each other as they walked to Mito Planetarium. They arriveed at the gate. The planetarium was completely silent. Keita realized that there was nobody there, and he wondered why. He found a piece of paper on the gate. They looked at the paper and saw that the planetarium was closed today.

Keita was in a panic, and he was frozen for a minute.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know it was closed today," he said. "It's my fault."

"It's ok, Keita. Don't worry." Fumika said.

They walked back towards the station. They saw a cafe and went inside. In the cafe they talked to each other for a long time.

"We couldn't get into the planetarium, but I'm glad that you chose that place because I love looking at the stars," Fumika said. "How did you know that?" she asked.

Keita was upset because he didn't choose the place by himself. He thought it was not cool. Also, Fumika didn't know Keita had the Speaking Book, so he could not tell her the truth.

"It just happened," he answered.

"I see… Anyway, thank you for thinking of me."

"It's a pleasure."

They left the cafe as the sun was setting. They went to the station and said goodbye.

"Thank you for today, it was such fun." Fumika looked so happy.

"Me too." Keita was also happy. "Let's go somewhere together again."

"Of course, see you."

"See you later."

They got to know each other better and got closer on their first date.

But when Keita got back home, he was so angry with the Speaking Book.

"Why didn't you tell me the Planetarium was closed today?" he asked the Speaking Book, but it didn't answer.

Keita searched for the Mito planetarium again online. One site posted reviews for the planetarium. The reviews of Mito planetarium were all really bad. Keita started to be suspicious of the Speaking Book.

In fact the Speaking Book knew the planetarium was closed today, but it didn't tell Keita on purpose.

... to be continued

Recent research in extensive reading

Compiled by Imogen Custance

Arai, Y. (2022). Perceived book difficulty and pleasure experiences as flow in extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 34*(1), 1-23. http://hdl.handle.net/10125/67410

In second or foreign language (L2) extensive reading (ER) studies, learners have been encouraged to read easy books despite the lack of consensus concerning how to define book difficulty. In light of previous studies reporting that book difficulty can play an important role in learners' affect in ER (e.g., Bahmani & Farvardin, 2017; Chiang, 2016; Yang et al., 2021), the present study explored the relationship between perceived book difficulty and pleasure experiences from the perspective of the flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975/2000), as an important reading purpose in ER is for pleasure. Ninety-nine Japanese university students participated in a flow questionnaire survey, five of whom also participated in the follow-up interviews. It was found that some characteristics of flow were found in relation to the difference in perceived book difficulty, and that the participants' perceptions were affected by some factors related to the flow theory.

Arai, Y. (2022). Exploring perceived difficulty of graded reader texts. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 34*(2), 249-270. http://hdl.handle.net/10125/67425

Although proponents of extensive reading (ER) have recommended easy reading material, book difficulty has been poorly defined and operationalized in previous studies. The present study argues for the use of perceived text difficulty for operationalizing book difficulty based on empirical findings (Holster et al., 2017), reading purposes in ER, and the importance of readers' perspectives. A total of 162 Japanese English-as-a-foreign-language university students rated the difficulty of 15 texts excerpted from graded readers (GRs). The data were analyzed by conducting a many-facet Rasch analysis (Linacre, 1989; Rasch, 1960/1980), where a rating scale model (Andrich, 1978) was tested with persons, texts, and graded readers' levels as the facets of measurement. The results revealed that perceived text difficulty could not replicate the stated difficulty level provided by the GR publisher, reinforcing the necessity of examining perceived text difficulty in ER research and practice in the second and foreign language classroom.

Conaway, P. & Parsons, A. (2023). ER and reading targets: An investigation into teachers' choices and their rationales. *Journal of Extensive Reading, 10*(3), 1-23. https://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer/article/view/1176/115

Language teachers make many decisions in the course of their lessons, and those choices can be influenced by previous training, beliefs, or external pressures. The setting of reading targets and grading policies for extensive reading (ER) is one such choice. While there is both quantitative and qualitative research on teacher rationales in general education and language teaching in general, there has been little focus on extensive reading targets and grading. Examining how teachers have arrived at their decisions may assist new and future ER practitioners in setting reading targets for their own contexts. This study used an open-ended questionnaire to investigate the rationales of ER practitioners within Japan for their choices of reading targets and grading policies. Through thematic analysis of responses, the authors found five themes: Student-oriented, Practice-oriented, Socially-oriented, Contextual-oriented, and ER principle-oriented rationales. Based upon these findings the authors suggest ways in which teachers can develop extensive reading targets for their own contexts.

Fujii, K. (2022). The effects of a two-year-long extensive reading program on TOEIC Bridge IP scores. *The Reading Matrix, 22*(2), 108-120. https://www.readingmatrix.com/files/29-x7gy4m1b.pdf

The purpose of this study is to examine whether a difference exists in TOEIC Bridge® Institutional Program scores between Japanese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at a technical college who did extensive reading (ER) for one year and those who did ER for two years. Furthermore, by dividing the students who experienced ER for two years into two subgroups according to their level of English achievement at the end of ER, their reading tendencies were statistically analyzed in terms of the number of words and books they had read. The results suggested that two-year-long ER may be more effective in improving TOEIC Bridge reading scores than a year-long ER program, and that students may be able to reach a high level of English proficiency without reading too many books as long as they are suited to the students' English levels.

Additionally, students with high English proficiency made greater progress through ER. These results highlighted the significance of incorporating ER into the reading course to develop balanced reading skills; the need for careful consideration in setting goals for ER in the number of books read; and the need for teachers' support and guidance, particularly for beginners.

Goto, T. (2022). The relationship between extensive reading duration and reading volume. *The Reading Matrix, 22*(2), 63-73. https://www.readingmatrix.com/files/29-1gy5ww0u.pdf

This study statistically examines students who conduct extensive reading in the first and second semesters by focusing on the reading volume of word counts to address the following research questions: 1) Is there a difference in word counts between students who conduct extensive reading in the first semester and those who continue it in the second semester? 2) Are there any differences in word counts between the three groups: students who conduct extensive reading for the first time only in the first semester, those who conduct it for the first time only in the second semester, and those who conduct it in both semesters? In 2017, extensive reading was implemented for 31 second-grade nursing students. No significant differences were detected for the first question. However, approximately 73% of students increased their word counts. Regarding the second question, a significant difference was found between the two groups such that certain students decreased their word count, which practitioners should be aware of. If a class includes experienced students who read extensively, they can serve as role models for novice students practicing it for the first time.

Green, C. (2022). Extensive reading for a 9,000-word vocabulary: evidence from corpus modeling. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 34*(2), 232–248. http://hdl.handle.net/10125/67424

This paper contributes to a research program within extensive reading (ER) and Reading in a Foreign Language using corpora to simulate ER input to develop vocabulary through incidental learning to 9,000 words. This helps researchers/teachers evaluate ER. If corpora indicate no 'pathway' from smaller to larger vocabulary sizes through authentic ER input, with vocabulary recurrence rates sufficient for incidental learning, then graded readers or other pedagogy appear essential. Studies offer different conclusions

due to modeling issues. This study replicates previous research on a larger corpus of general fiction, with improved modeling. For every vocabulary size, a substantial amount of comprehensible fiction is found, with enough repetition of vocabulary from subsequent levels that pathways from smaller to larger vocabulary sizes are possible without graded readers. Prior estimates of approximately 3 years to acquire 9,000 words at 1 hour a day are underestimates, with modeling indicating 2 hours a day would be required.

Habib, F., & Watkins, P. (2023). Investigation of attitudes and barriers to extensive reading project in Saudi female English as a foreign language preparatory year program students and teachers. *The Reading Matrix, 23*(2), 47-66. https://www.readingmatrix.com/files/31-dtj6vjbs.pdf

This study investigated the attitudes of Saudi female EFL students and teachers, and the barriers to the uptake of the extensive reading program at a preparatory year program in Saudi Arabia. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the extensive reading research, a mixed method research design was employed using an online questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews in a Saudi university context. 111 Saudi female EFL students participated in the questionnaire. The quantitative result revealed positive attitudes toward extensive reading. It found that students understand the benefits and importance of reading extensively in the English language. In addition, interviews with six Saudi female EFL students and two Saudi female EFL teachers further demonstrated that students possess positive attitudes toward extensive reading programs supporting the quantitative findings. However, the qualitative interviews also highlighted the barriers to extensive reading related to the materials, students, teachers, program, and culture. Limitations, suggestions for the improvement of the existing extensive reading program at PYP, and recommendations for future research are also included.

Iwata, A. (2022). An extensive reading program as an educational intervention in an EFL classroom. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 34*(2), 208–231. http://hdl.handle.net/10125/67423

This study aims to investigate the influence of an English as a foreign language college extensive reading program on different types of motivation to study English within the framework of Self-Determination Theory in order to identify and clarify students'

motivational changes. Identical questionnaires were administered to a group of non-English major learners before and after the program to identify changes in their general motivation, four motivational regulatory styles (intrinsic, identification, introjection, and external), and three psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness). Another questionnaire elicited students' perceptions of their experience of the course. The questionnaire results indicate that extensive reading is effective in enhancing identification and intrinsic motivation to study English. The results of the other questionnaire are also discussed to provide a fuller understanding of the benefits of extensive reading and to assist practitioners who teach students of a wide age range.

Lee, J. H., Shin, D., & Noh, W. (2023). Artificial intelligence-based content generator technology for your English-as-a-foreign-language learners' reading enjoyment. *RELC Journal (Online First)*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882231165060

Artificial intelligence has recently seen tremendous growth, and been applied to several fields, including the second-language domain. In this article, we share an innovative practice based on one of potential artificial intelligence technologies for second-language teaching and learning – artificial intelligence-based content generator, which generates texts based on user's keywords. In total, 121 young English-as-a-foreign-language learners participated in the study, with half of them having engaged in the artificial intelligence-based content generator-based activity, and the other half having received traditional English-as-a-foreign-language reading instruction. We examined the extent to which the artificial intelligence-based content generator-based activity could influence the participants' foreign language enjoyment and interests in reading English books, and the participants were given the survey addressing these variables, prior to and after the innovative practice. It was found that the condition based on the artificial intelligence-based content generator-based activity was more effective in terms of enhancing the target variables, and that the group which engaged in the artificial intelligence-based content generator-based activity was largely in favor of artificial intelligence-based content generator technology. Pedagogical implications for employing this technology in second-language contexts are provided.

Malakowsky, D. (2023). A modified extensive reading and repeated reading intervention with adult ESL students. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 35*(1), 72–99. https://hdl.handle.net/10125/67439

Twenty adult ESL students at a community college participated in a semester reading intervention. Participants received a modified extensive reading treatment, and some participants received an additional repeated reading direct instruction reading intervention. The author examined the impact of the reading interventions on ESL students' reading fluency and reading comprehension. Within the two reading groups, students were selected randomly and placed into either the modified extensive reading group or the repeated reading intervention and modified extensive reading group. ESL students in the modified extensive reading group read graded readers; ESL students in the repeated reading and modified extensive reading group read graded readers and 12 nonfiction Read Naturally passages. Results of the quasi-experimental quantitative study indicated no significant difference between the intervention and comparison groups regarding reading fluency and reading comprehension; however, within group results were statistically significant regarding student reading rate and accuracy.

Nakano, T. (2023). Exploring the possibility of incidental grammar learning through extensive reading: Effectiveness of form-focused Japanese graded readers. *The Reading Matrix, 23*(2), 1-12. https://www.readingmatrix.com/files/31-eoaa50ms.pdf

For elementary learners of Japanese, one of the main difficulties in reading is to distinguish words written in kana. This paper reports on a survey of elementary level learners with two different levels of proficiency to investigate the effectiveness of Japanese graded readers with parts of speech color-coded to distinguish nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Compared to those who read normal texts, the participants who used this form-focused text tended to obtain higher scores in the post-tests which tested word recognition, function word recognition, and the relationship between modifiers and modified words. In addition, based on the recording of reading activities, form-focused text readers tended to read faster than their counterparts.

Nicklin, C., Patterson, A., & McLean, S. (2023). Quantifying proper nouns' influence on L2 English learners' reading fluency. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition (First view)*, 1-24. https://doi.org/10.1017/S027226312200050X

Proper nouns constitute a lexical class with special properties and are thus treated differently from other words by second language acquisition researchers. An assumption exists that even low-proficiency learners will find them unproblematic, yet research suggests this assumption might be misplaced. The present study involved two self-paced reading experiments designed to investigate proper nouns' influence on Japanese university students' reading fluency. In Experiment 1, participants were presented with 60 decontextualized sentences containing 30 proper nouns and 30 common nouns to determine whether they are processed in a similar manner. In Experiment 2, participants read another 60 sentences comprising a book chapter to explore the effects of repeated exposure to a set of proper nouns. The results indicated that proper nouns are processed in a similar manner to common nouns in terms of disrupting reading fluency. The implications for language learning pedagogy, in particular extensive reading, are discussed.

Parent, K., Mclean, S., Kramer, B., & Kim, Y. (2023). The Counts of Dracula and Monte Cristo: Homonym frequencies in graded readers. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 35*(1), 48-71. https://hdl.handle.net/10125/67438

Graded readers are a great asset to learners acquiring the vocabulary of another language. Homonyms, on the other hand, are a recognized source of trouble for students with that same goal. Publishers of graded readers control the presentation of old and new words, but does this control extend to homonyms? Are only the word forms controlled for—in which case, the unrelated meanings of match (a pairing and a stick for starting fire) would together constitute two uses of the word? Or would these tally as separate words which, semantically and etymologically, they are? A comparison of a 4.2 million-word corpus of graded readers with previous research on the distributions of homonymic meanings in general English reveals that the meanings presented to learners are frequently quite different to those in general-purpose texts.

Peterson, J. (2022). Japanese extensive reading: Reading goals and learner perceptions. *The Reading Matrix, 22*(1), 114-136. https://www.readingmatrix.com/files/27-sld3j1b6.pdf

Extensive reading (ER) research has suggested that completing the equivalent of 7,200 standard words of extensive reading per week facilitates substantial reading rate gains. Research has also suggested that 100 minutes per week is sufficient to complete this goal for most English language learners (Beglar & Hunt, 2014). However, experimental and quantitative studies have yet to fully investigate the feasibility of such large amounts of ER in a limited amount of time for learners of languages other than English. The goal of this study was to investigate the feasibility of a 7,200- standard-word (12,000-character) per week reading goal for intermediate-level learners of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL). Another aim was to ascertain learner perceptions of ER that followed strict adherence to ER principles. Using a quantitative single-subject study and observation design, I monitored eight intermediate-level learners of Japanese engaging in ER for over two and a half to four months. Results indicated that given 100 minutes per week, a reading goal of 12,000 characters (7,200 standard words) is likely feasible for most intermediate JFL learners and that participants had overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward ER.

Sowter, A. (2023). Paper or silicon: Evaluating Xreading as a replacement for an existing graded reader collection. *Journal of Extensive Reading, 10*(2), 1-29. https://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer/article/view/1197/113

The existing extensive reading program at the author's university uses a collection of graded readers held in the campus library and the online MReader platform to calculate the number of words each student reads. In 2018, student surveys were conducted to investigate the existing extensive reading program's effectiveness and to determine if the online XReading LMS would be a better alternative. The results indicate that although most students preferred XReading because of its convenience, other student responses were considered equally important in the final selection of which extensive reading system to use. The students' responses also highlighted a problem with many students cheating the system and offered solutions to reduce this problem. Other students' responses provided insight into how much extensive reading students complete, where they complete it, what devices they use for the digital version. This report will describe all these issues and their implications for the extensive reading program going forward.

Sun, X. (2021). Integrating extensive reading into school curriculum: A veteran EFL teacher's perspective. The *Reading Matrix, 21*(2), 17-31. https://www.readingmatrix.com/files/25-4t7t96a9.pdf

Numerous studies have tested the effects of extensive reading (ER) on L2 acquisition, while limited research has investigated the implementation of ER, especially in secondary L2 teaching contexts. In line with the advocacy of integrating ER into L2 curriculum, this qualitative case study explores a veteran EFL teacher's perceptions of ER implementation and his practice of integrating ER into the school curriculum. As the English department leader of a middle school in downtown Beijing, the teacher participant, with rich experience in EFL teaching and ER implementation, initiated the compilation of several textbooks and study guides as part of the school curriculum, accompanied by in-class activities and after-class assignments. Data were collected from three in-depth interviews with the teacher participant, respectively at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the school year. Other sources of data include related study materials and students' assignments. Findings of this study indicate that school-based textbooks, complemented with in-class activities and reinforced by assignments, contribute to school curriculum development and ER implementation. Based on the results of the study, an ER-curriculum integration model was proposed for further discussion and exploration.

Tabata-Sandom, M., Banno, E., & Watanabe, T. (2023). The integrated effects of extensive reading and speed reading on L2 Japanese learners' fluency. *Journal of Extensive Reading, 10*(1), 1-24. https://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer/article/view/1206/112

This study seeks to fill a void in the current body of research on extensive reading by investigating the integrated effects of extensive reading and speed reading on L2 reading fluency. It examined the effects of an extensive reading program that included speed reading trainings and found that the reading rates of the participating L2 Japanese learners (N = 11) increased statistically significantly over two academic terms when analysed by three methods. The participants' reading rate gains occurred without the expense of comprehension and when speed reading trainings were given only once a week. This study has proved that Nation and Waring's advice—that extensive reading programs should ideally have a targeted speed-reading component—was sound, and if followed, positively impacts learners' reading fluency.

In memorium: Philip Prowse

The Extensive Reading Foundation is deeply saddened by the passing of Philip Prowse in June 2023. Philip was a founding member of the Board of the Extensive Reading Foundation. Despite his status as a series editor which restricted the scope of his activities within the foundation he found many ways to support the ERF from the sidelines.

Philip had written numerous graded readers first as an author for Macmillan and then later when he was series editor of the Cambridge English Reader series. Two of his books stand out to me, "The Death of a Soldier" and "Why?" both of which concerned the futility of war couched in language that even beginning learners could reflect upon.

The Cambridge English Reader series itself was in a class by itself – a well-edited series of original stories only, in clear genres, perfectly graded into six levels that epitomized the quality that the Extensive Reading Foundation was attempting to promote through its ERF Language Learner Literature Award programme.

While Philip's work with a publisher meant he could not have direct input into the award process itself, he took it upon himself to organize the Language Learner Literature Awards nights at the annual IATEFL conferences. With his connections, he was able to arrange British Council funding for the event for over a decade, for which the ERF will be forever thankful. Upon his retirement, Philip kindly donated his huge collection of graded readers to the "Graded Reader Giveaway", a feature of the Fourth Extensive Reading World Congress (Tokyo, 2017) to which he had been invited as a featured speaker. Typically, he also paid for their shipment to the winners.

A few years later, he followed up by sharing his files containing the outdated word lists and author instructions from various publishers that he had gathered over time. These now comprise the "Graded Reader Historical Archives" on the ERF website.

When the ERF established a website called "Freegradedreaders.com" with PDFs of out-of-copyright readers, Philip not only supplied copies of his own early readers but also put us in contact with other authors whom he believed might also have books to share.

If only there were more Philips in this world!

Compiled by Thomas Robb

20 June 2023

JALT2023 Sessions

Tsukuba International Congress Center
Saturday, 25th November

11:00 AM - 11:25 AM **Online A**

Manabe, Shoichi & Sevigny, Paul -Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University

Developing the Mindset of a Bilingual Literacy Activist

Undergraduate international and domestic students were hired as ""Community literacy activists"" (CLAs) and asked to develop a series of six, bilingual graded readers that draw inspiration from six cultures in Asia. The CLAs and faculty leaders experienced many challenges in this undertaking that pushed everyone to the limits of their mindsets. Excerpts from interviews with CLAs and samples of writing, translation, and transcripts will illustrate some of these challenges and how they were overcome.

11:35 AM - 12:35 PM **303**

Brierley, Mark - Shinshu University

Writing a Series of Graded Readers In A University Classroom

This presentation will discuss the development of a writing activity for a compulsory one-year university English course. The activity emphasizes story-writing as a meaningful and imaginative experience that helps students focus on linguistic features and the writing process while using their imagination and writing at a level suiting their proficiency. In writing installments of a series of graded readers, students also have intrinsic motivation to engage with each other's ideas.

12:10 PM - 12:35 PM **Convention Hall 300**

Peacock, Rob - Oxford University Press

Read Your Way to Better English With the Oxford Reading Club

Graded readers provide many benefits to learners, but how can technology enhance the learning experience? In this session, we will explore techniques for increasing motivation and student agency using e-books from the Oxford Reading Club, an exciting platform with over 1,000 titles available.

12:10 PM - 12:35 PM **304**

Goldberg, Paul - Xreading

COIL + ER: A Combination for Success

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), which allows students to communicate with peers around the world, can be highly motivating; however, programs often suffer from a lack of content to foster engaging discussions. Extensive reading (ER) provides students with input, but many students lack motivation to read. Combining the two, a COIL program in which each week students read about a different aspect of their partner's country and prepare questions can result in more engaging interaction.

12:45 PM - 2:15 PM **303**

Carle, John; Conaway, Pat; Neff, Joel; Bridge, Steven; Meiki, Susan; Patterson, Rachel

MW+ER: Graded Readers Authorship and Publication Experience

The main focus of this talk will be our ongoing joint project, the Graded Readers Authorship and Publication Experience (GRAPE). This project has involved several months of work, including group feedback, mentoring, leveling tools, student piloting, audio recordings, quiz creation, and ultimately publication. If you have an interest in writing and publishing materials for extensive reading, we invite you to join us.

1:55 PM - 2:20 PM **Online A**

Tabata-Sandom, Mitsue - Massey University; Ikeda, Yoko - Ibaraki University

Impact of ER Experience on L2 Japanese Teacher Perceptions

Twelve L2 Japanese teachers conducted online extensive reading for 10 months using Xreading in this mixed methods study. Multiple individual interviews as well as pre- and post-project questionnaire surveys revealed, qualitatively and quantitatively, that after the project, there were four significant changes in their perceptions regarding extensive reading: a deeper acknowledgement for teachers' roles, a stronger support for the use of a dictionary, and lower ratings of extensive reading's effects on vocabulary and grammar acquisition.

5:35 PM - 6:00 PM **101**

Madarbakus-Ring, Naheen - University of Tsukuba

Dear Diary: A Journaling Approach to L2 Listening

This workshop outlines using journals in extensive listening programs. First, the workshop details the journal structure used in this study. Next, journal guidelines illustrate how to support learners in their listening resource selections, level suitability, and topic appropriacy. Finally, the workshop suggests how educators can implement a listening journaling component into their own teaching contexts. The presentation concludes by providing a practical L2 listening journal framework for educators to use in their own classrooms.

6:10 PM - 6:35 PM **403**

Goldberg, Paul - Xreading

Speak With an Author – Connecting Students and Authors

To increase students' motivation to read, a series of online events called Speak with an Author were organized. For each event, an author of graded readers was invited to give a short presentation about their books. Students were then encouraged to share their feelings about the book and ask questions directly to the author. In this session, the presenters will discuss how the events were organized and share feedback from both the students and authors.

JALT2023 SESSIONS
Tsukuba International Congress Center

9:15 AM - 9:40 AM 406

Mathieson, Paul - Nara Medical University; Murray, Claire - Nara Medical University; Bolstad, Francesco - Nara Medical University

Student-Inspired Academic Vocabulary Learning Materials

This presentation focuses on the creation and use of a graded reader series (The AWL Readers). It includes an examination of the role of the presenters' students and institutional environment in its creation, and also student feedback about the perceived effectiveness of the AWL Readers series as a tool for supporting academic vocabulary learning. We hope that insights from this presentation might inspire other teachers to involve their learners in the materials development process.

10:25 AM - 11:10 AM 404

Carle, John - MW SIG Program Chair

Materials Writers SIG AGM: Publishing Textbooks, Readers, Etc.

Join the Materials Writers SIG's AGM for comprehensive insights into textbook publishing, writing graded readers, online content, and more. We offer support to members in all aspects of publishing, be it for personal classrooms, established publishers, or independent publishing. Opting for the right SIG will enhance your JALT experience, and becoming an officer opens numerous doors for professional development. Members enjoy article publishing opportunities in our journal, Between the Keys.

11:35 AM - 12:35 PM 202A

Goldberg, Paul - XReading

A Textbook for Extensive Reading: A Novel Solution

Most language teachers acknowledge that extensive reading provides significant benefits for their students. However, integrating extensive reading into general English classes can be challenging, especially at institutions that require a compulsory textbook for each course. One potential solution is Links, a four-skills communication textbook that seamlessly integrates extensive reading through Xreading.com. Links, which is now available at multiple levels is designed with a task-based approach and features engaging and relevant topics for learners.

4:25 PM - 4:50 PM 403

Talken, Jackie - Kyorin University

Integrated Dictionary Usage During Online Extensive Reading

Reading strategies, particularly guessing meaning from context, are valuable tools for developing vocabulary knowledge. The current research project, supported by a Japanese federal grant, is investigating how access to an integrated dictionary during Extensive Reading (ER) affects learners' usage of these strategies. First-year English majors use the ER application Xreading. Interestingly, test results indicated that the experimental groups with access to the integrated dictionary showed greater gains in the ability to guess meaning from context.

5:00 PM - 5:25 PM 202B

Parsons, Andre - Hokkaido University of Education - Hakodate Campus

Strategies for Achieving Goals in ER: Student Suggestions

In extensive reading (ER), encouraging students to read regularly is important, and often teachers set targets and deadlines to achieve this. Considering students' schedules, how do they go about completing such tasks? To shine light on this topic, the author asked his students (N =13) to give advice to future students for achieving their goals based on their own experience with ER. Results will interest teachers looking for potential strategies to share with their students.

11:00 AM - 11:25 AM 301

Gallacher, Andrew - Fukuoka Women's University

Implementing X-Reading: What Can We Learn Upon First Use?

This study focuses on the implementation of the online library X-Reading within a language program at a university in Southern Japan. Surveys were taken to gauge students' understanding, attitude, and interest in extensive reading before and after using X-Reading in class. A controlled trial with a post-reading reflective intervention was also conducted to evaluate its impact on students' reading speed, accuracy, and vocabulary acquisition. Findings are discussed throughout the presentation.