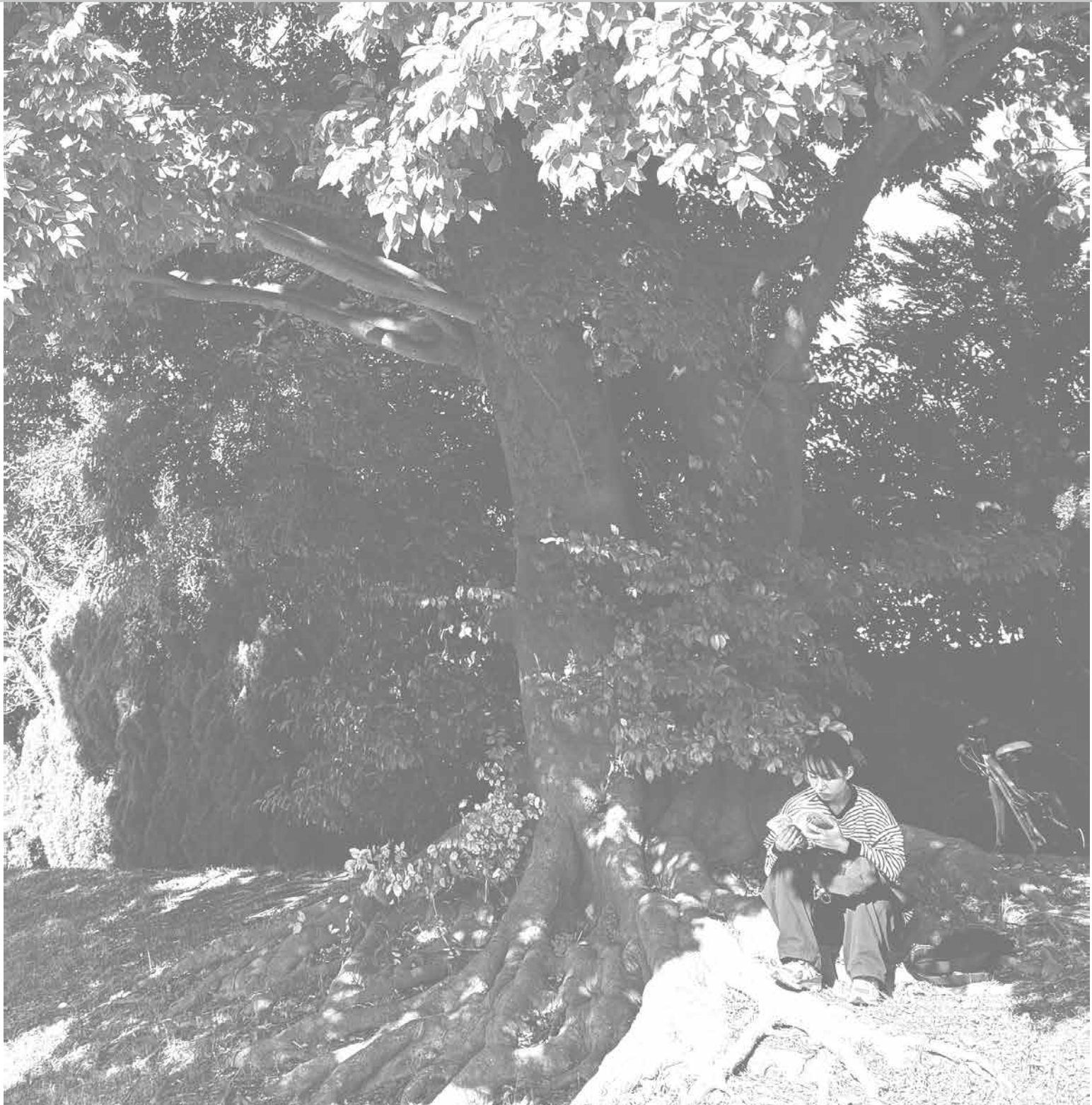


ISSN 2187-0527



EXTENSIVE READING IN JAPAN

ERJ



VOLUME 17.1

DECEMBER 2024

THE JOURNAL OF THE EXTENSIVE READING SIG OF THE JAPAN ASSOCIATION FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING

## In This Issue

### PanSIG 2024 and the ER SIG Forum

Tekka Chang

3

### Minimizing Performance: Rethinking Extensive Listening and Extensive Reading Assignment Design to Foster Authentic Engagement in the Reading Process

Kevin J. Jambor

4

### ER and You

Tom Robb

7

### Gnomeville Comics: Taking Extensive Reading to the Extreme

Alexandra L. Uitdenbogerd

8

### 2024 LLL Award Winners

12

### ER and You

Kemper Johanson

15

### ER and You

Ann Mayeda

15

### Does M-Reader Increase ER Motivation Compared to Book Reports?

Christopher Philip Madden

16

### Recent Research in Extensive Reading

Compiled by Imogen Custance

20

#### ERJ 17.1

Published by the JALT ER SIG

[jalt.org/er](http://jalt.org/er) ISSN 2187-0527

Printed by [mojoprint.jp](http://mojoprint.jp) with  
highest available recycled  
content

Distributed by I Talk You Talk

#### Editor

Mark Brierley

#### Copy Editors

Brett Milliner

Dan James

Ann Mayeda

#### Proofreaders

Navinder Kaur

Tom Robb

Kevin Jambor

#### Cover Image

Sandra Yamane

# PanSIG 2024 and the ER SIG Forum

Tekka Chang

Meikai University



Thank you everyone for presenting or coming to PanSIG! This year, there were ten presentations on extensive reading. The topics were broad and ranged from multi-modal input to extensive reading and STEM education.

The ER SIG forum focused on Extensive reading in different parts of English education in Japan from young learners to ER with seniors. Each presentation was comprised of a self-introduction, information about the institution, results from the presenter's ER program, and observations from the implementation. After each presentation, there was a Q&A session and group discussion on each topic.

To start, Lesley Ito gave a presentation on ER for young learners in her Eikaiwa school. In her school, since there are no grades, she mentioned the importance of motivation and getting students to find their home-run book that leads to reading for pleasure. According to some of her research, she mentioned that one effective way to get students to read is through indirect recommendations of books by the teacher. In her school, she would read aloud the first book of a series or a chapter of a long book and set the books out on the table so students could choose their books. Students are allowed to borrow up to five books a week.

The next presentation focused on ER with junior and senior high school students. Tekka Chang talked about starting an ER program in his private high school in Tokyo and the importance of classroom research in order to get support from his students and school. In his first year of teaching a TOEIC/TOEFL course, he found that his students had weak reading skills. After researching different ways to improve reading skills he came across ER and decided to gather the graded readers that were scattered all over the school and created a graded reader section in the library. Students read two graded readers a month, and in only one semester, his students improved their English test scores on the National Bessene exam by 3.8 points. During the course, students started to ask Tekka for book recommendations, and the homeroom teachers commented that his students were seen reading books during breaks, which led to more support from his colleagues.

Beniko Mason, professor emerita at Shitennoji University Junior College explained her transition from ER to The Unified Pure Input (UPI) Approach,

which included story listening with Guided Self-Selected Reading (GSSR). She observed that some of her students and adults in the open campuses had trouble with ER, so she added story listening to offer comprehensive auditory input. In her approach, she would tell a story with the aid of drawings and teach vocabulary while she was doing this. She talked about the importance of natural input and how we should avoid activities such as comprehension questions or weekly tests. The results from her program showed that students' language acquisition was twice as fast as reported in her previous studies. Finally, she observed that no matter what the level, her students could gain an increase in listening comprehension and vocabulary size much faster than when doing form-focused activities.

The final presentation by Greg Gagnon was on ER in university. He showed how he conducted ER in his institution by having 30 minutes of silent sustained reading in each class. He emphasized the importance of having large access to books, the encouragement of department leaders, and support from the administration. In order to get support from the institution, he emphasized the importance of having an elevator speech ready. Instructors should be ready to explain the benefits of ER, in a way that is easy to understand and appealing to the administration. If prepared ahead of time, when an instructor at a university has time to talk with key decision makers, he or she would have a better chance to convince them to support ER in the university.

Each presentation had an abundance of questions, and the discussion was so lively that it was difficult for the MC to move to the next presentation. For those who missed the ER SIG Forum, you can watch the video recording at [www.youtube.com/@ERSIGPresenters](https://www.youtube.com/@ERSIGPresenters) (QR code below).

Next year's PanSIG conference will be held at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba. Get your proposals ready, and happy reading! We hope to see you next year!







## Minimizing Performance: Rethinking Extensive Listening and Extensive Reading Assignment Design to Foster Authentic Engagement in the Reading Process

Kevin J. Jambor  
Chubu University

Extensive reading (ER) and extensive listening (EL) programs, or course components requiring students to prove they have read via a product or performance, often undermine core principles of ideal ER, such as reading for pleasure. This paper presents an approach to EL/ER assignment design aimed at fostering authentic engagement in the reading process. This paper outlines an EL/ER component in a beginner-level English as a foreign language (EFL) course at a university in Japan. By minimizing the performative aspect of the reading process and providing a low-stakes learning environment, students are encouraged to experiment with the reading process at their own pace and discover the joy of reading in a second language. This paper advocates for a shift in EL/ER program design towards authentic engagement and highlights the positive impact on students in the course.

---

Keywords: extensive listening, extensive reading, task design, student autonomy, self-efficacy

A fundamental flaw with many extensive reading (ER) or extensive listening (EL) programs or assignment designs inside of a course or curriculum is that the reading experience is inauthentic in regards to three of the pillars that undergird effective ER: (1) students should exercise autonomy in selecting reading materials of interest to themselves, (2) students should read for pleasure, and (3) reading is its own reward (Day & Bamford, 2002). Instructors should teach and train their students how to follow these principles within an ER program, but ultimately the students are completing a course component that they are not likely to carry forward after the course or graduation when they lose access to the online system or school library. The assignment cycle of reading to complete an objective, where the student is monitored by the teacher and then given points towards a course grade may increase extrinsic motivation, and students may even derive enjoyment from the structure of completing assigned tasks. If an instructor is lucky, the students may even enjoy the actual act of reading. However, this often seems to be a side effect rather than the guiding philosophy used to design the ER/EL component of many classes and programs. Once students leave the class or program, most do not autonomously choose to continue reading graded readers for pleasure because, in part, they do not experience reading as a reward.

I will neither criticize nor argue against any style or implementation of ER in this piece since variables of teaching context and other constraints mean there is no one-size-fits-all solution. In my teaching experience, and in my current teaching context however, I find

that the method or style I outline below most closely simulates and promotes the authentic reading experience of an intrinsically motivated, fluent reader who reads because they want to and because they enjoy it, thereby adhering as much as I am able to the three effective ER pillars mentioned above. I encourage other instructors to adopt the same or a similar approach or to adapt it in whatever way makes sense to your teaching context as long as you faithfully maintain the principles of student autonomy, reading for pleasure, and reading for reading's sake.

Let me clarify that I am describing an EL/ER assignment design that is part of a university elective English-language course that most of my students take to earn foreign language credit towards degree completion. Regardless of how far I swing the pendulum towards student autonomy, I am still responsible as the instructor for assessing students' achievement of course learning outcomes. Therefore, I must monitor the completion of all course components, including any EL/ER component. In other words, I have to check that students are actually reading. How I do this is critically important to how students perceive and experience the reading process. If there is some assessment, product, or in-class task wherein students must perform to demonstrate they have read, the fundamental purpose for reading is corrupted by this performative end goal. Examples may include taking a comprehension quiz, writing a book report (of any length), selecting and reading a favorite passage out loud to a partner, or "no-spoiler" summarizing the plot for a classmate. The performance inherently shifts

the purpose for reading away from the actual act of reading and towards the performance itself. Students are in fact reading to perform instead of reading to read.

While it may be impossible to completely remove the performative aspect from the act of reading in a classroom context, making the performance as inobtrusive and painless as possible should be the primary focus of any instructor running an EL/ER component.

### My Approach to an EL/ER Component

The following paragraphs outline my approach for minimizing the performative aspect of an EL/ER component. The teaching context is a beginner-level (CEFR A1) listening and speaking skills-based course (90-minute sessions, twice a week) at a Japanese university.

The course syllabus outlines that half of the out-of-class work will be an extensive listening component in which students listen to one audiobook per week, for 12 out of the 15 weeks of the semester. Out-of-class work comprises 50% of the total course grade, so the EL component is worth 25% of the course. To get students started on the EL component, I briefly explain to students the benefits of extensive reading and listening, outline a few simple means of participation (e.g. listen and read at the same time, start from an easy level, abstain from using dictionaries, skip difficult parts, and switch books when bored), and then monitor the students in class for the first one or two sessions. The class meets on Mondays and Thursdays. On Thursdays, I bring a box of graded readers to class: National Geographic Learning's Page Turners, Level 1-2 and Oxford Bookworms, Starter Level (with some Level 1 titles introduced later in the semester). I chose and purchased these sets because they have audiobook versions. Students select and sign out a book to be listened to before the following Monday's class. The "performance evaluation", or my way of checking that the students have read, is a simple digital survey, provided in the second language (L2) and the first language (L1) until mid-semester (see Appendix 1). Students may write comments about the content of their audiobook or their reading experience in either the L2 or L1. On the first day that students select an audiobook, I tell the students:

📖 the goals for the EL component, especially the importance of enjoying the experience

📖 why research indicates that it is important

📖 why I am asking them to do it

📖 how I will check for completion and how that factors into their grade for the course

📖 how they should approach the act of extensive listening, i.e. general guidelines for listening/reading for fun and fluency as opposed to comprehension

The bulleted information above is also provided in the students' L1. After students select their first book, I show them how to access the audio files through the course learning management system, and then the class spends the last 15-20 minutes of the lesson listening to their audiobooks and reading along with the physical book. The students at this level often struggle with sound-symbol recognition and decoding the written language, even with "known" vocabulary. Beginner-level learners use their available working memory to recognize words and struggle with syntactically complex sentences and using top-down processing to apply meaning based on recent input (Field, 2004, pp. 326-327). Therefore, I emphasize that listening and reading along at the same time will help students to develop automaticity—quickly recognizing words—when processing spoken and written language as it provides students with richer input and pushes their word-recognition speed towards the rate of English spoken between strangers, around 152 to 170 words per minute (Yuan et al., 2006) or that of English read aloud, 183 words per minute (Brysbaert, 2019).

Students who are provided with a space to experiment and explore the language sans the pressure of a performative end goal are more able to enjoy the experience of listening and reading in the L2 because with each passing week of listening/reading the students realize they are succeeding at the task simply by doing it. This weekly success enhances students' level of self-efficacy, the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3), and is believed to be a strong predictor of success in language learning (Raofi et al., 2012). By training students with EL/ER guidelines and strategies to listen for enjoyment and to ignore most new words and gaps in comprehension, I am arguing, in line with Graham's (2007) findings, that teachers can improve levels of student self-efficacy, which may enhance students' ability to persevere through challenges in language

learning.

How do I help my students realize that they are succeeding in the EL/ER process? As long as the students fill out the survey, even late, they earn full points. I read and respond to the content of each student's comment. I write my reply from the perspective of another reader, not as a teacher evaluating a student's comprehension. There is a caveat: once students realize that they can skip listening/reading to most of a book and write a generalized comment and still get full credit, some students opt to do just that each week. However, in this course component, I choose not to police the students closely as it undermines the principles of EL/ER. I feel this approach is justified because every semester thus far, the majority of the students have completed the weekly survey honestly, admitting when they did not listen according to the guidelines or finish their book. Furthermore, around mid-semester and without being prompted, students begin to reflect and comment on their own successes and improvement in comprehension. For example, here is one student's survey comment from week 12 of the fall 2023 semester (translated from the student's original Japanese):

This was a book I forgot I had already borrowed once, but last time I barely understood the contents. This time I understood more and it was more interesting. Specifically, the first time I read it, I thought the two main characters decided to sing together at the end, but this time I realized that part way through only one character was chosen as the winner and they called the other character up to sing together at the end.

I quote the student's comment in full not because it highlights a student with superior study-skills, comprehension, dedication, or language ability, but because it showcases exactly what I hope my low-level, often low-motivated learners accomplish through the EL/ER component: exercise a bit of autonomy in their learning, do some simple but honest reflection on their listening process, and most importantly, enjoy the act of listening and reading in the L2 in a low-stakes context.

Furthermore, usually one or two students really take to the approach each semester, finding that they actually enjoy listening and reading in their L2. I know this because these students ask if they are allowed to continue borrowing books after the semester ends. Of course, I am delighted to say yes when this happens. It


is not all of my students, but in any of the other ways in which I have incorporated EL/ER into my classes, I have not had students routinely ask for permission to continue listening and reading after the class ends. Also, many students mention the audiobooks positively in course evaluations, some mentioning it as their favorite or the most beneficial component of the class. In sum, by distancing grades and the performative aspect of classroom transactions from the EL/ER process as much as possible, students, on their own terms and at their own pace, discover that they enjoy listening to audiobooks in English.

## References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Brysbaert, M. (2019). How many words do we read per minute? A review and meta-analysis of reading rate. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 109(104047), 1-30.
- Day, R., & Bamford, J. (2002). Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 14(2), 136-141.
- Field, J. (2004). *Psycholinguistics: The key concepts*. Routledge.
- Graham, S. (2007). Learner strategies and self-efficacy: making the connection. *Language Learning Journal*, 35(1), 81-93.
- Raofi, S., Tan, B. H., & Chan, S. H. (2012). Self-efficacy in second/foreign language learning contexts. *English Language Teaching*, 5(11), 60-73.
- Yuan, J., Liberman, M.Y., & Cieri, C. (2006). Towards an integrated understanding of speaking rate in conversation. *Interspeech*, 2006(204), 1-4.

## Join the ERJ staff!

The **ERJ** team needs:

-  Copy editors
-  Proofreaders
-  Photographers
-  Conference correspondents
-  Cartoonists
-  Story writers
-  Gossip columnists ...

Unlimited working hours with absolutely no pay or benefits (guaranteed)! [erj@jalt.org](mailto:erj@jalt.org)

## Appendix

### Audio Book Survey

Best: Listen and read at the same time. (Improves your listening and reading skills the fastest.)

OK: Listen only. (Excellent practice, but you may not understand the story as well.)

Not so good: Read only. (Doesn't improve your listening skills.)

1. What audio book did you listen to?

2. Did you finish listening to the whole book?

Of course!

Almost.

About half

No...

3. How did you listen?

I only listened to the book. I didn't read.

I listened and read the book at the same time.

I listened to and read the book separately.

I only read the book. I didn't listen.

4. Did you like this story?

I loved it.

I liked it.

It was OK.

It was boring.

I hated it.

5. How difficult was this story?

Super easy

A little easy

Just right for me

A little hard

Super hard

6. Would you recommend this audio book to your classmates?

Yes!

No!

7. Write a comment about the book or your experience listening/reading. English or Japanese is OK. You should write a comment that shows that you at least tried to listen to the audio book. You should mention something about the characters or story.

## ER and You

Tom Robb

Kyoto Sangyo University

(Retired)



### What is Extensive Reading?

For students, ER is reading a volume of text that is much greater than what they might have read with traditional reading instruction.

### When did you first hear about ER?

A few years after I started doing it!

### Who inspired you in your ER journey?

My attempt to get my students to read more but without them spending time on other non-related activities such as summary writing. (Which would be okay, if you were supposed to be teaching them writing, too, I guess...)

### How do you implement ER in your classes?

Most reading is done at home, but in class, we often bring in class sets of shorter readers that they can pick up, read and proceed to answer brief quizzes on Mreader, and then repeat the cycle until class is over.

### Where do you keep the books?

Originally outside my office, but I was losing 200+ books a year despite a sign-in/out sheet. I finally managed to get the library to accept them against stiff resistance for many years -- until the head librarian retired. I should add that the librarians now love ER since it draws students into the library and they also learn to use its other functions. We now have a self-access center in the same building as our classes, which also stocks books as well as about 20 baskets of class readers for the teachers to borrow and return after class.

### Why ER?

Reading is the best way to improve one's fluency and to gain a better understanding of how English works and how words are connected in discourse.

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

Start small with your own class and perhaps privately purchased books and build up. 80%+ of the students however, will only do the reading if there is some extrinsic motivation for them to do it -- requirements, competitions, book sharing or whatever works.





# Gnomeville Comics: Taking Extensive Reading to the Extreme

Alexandra L. Uitdenbogerd

RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

This article describes the history, theory and possible future of the Gnomeville comic book series for absolute beginners in French with an English-speaking background (Uitdenbogerd, n.d.).

## My journey to Gnomeville

It was about 1990 when I first started tinkering with the idea of a story in French written for learners, where they know all the words they are reading. I studied French for five years in high school, where I was a top student, but years later was shocked at how poor my ability was to understand a French speaker, and how difficult it was to read a book written for native speakers of French. This will be no surprise to language acquisition experts.

I wanted my story to start from a vocabulary of zero, apart from English vocabulary. I wanted to only add one new word of vocabulary per page. This meant that at least in the early stages, the story would need to be partly told with pictures, and therefore in comic book format. I also wanted to ensure “bang per buck” by prioritising highly frequent words, having learnt about the highly skewed word frequency distribution in text. I had an encyclopedia of language in which the 20 most frequent words occurring in newspapers in several languages were listed (Crystal, 1987). This was the basis for my first two comics.

My first story ideas ended up in the Taxi additional story in each episode. It took somewhat longer to come up with Gnomeville. I went through my old Cassell’s French-English dictionary, making lists of all the words that were identical to their translation. I noticed that there were useful words like “dragon”, “gnome”, “prince”, and “sabre”, which I added to themed lists. And so the story was able to commence. I didn’t know how it would proceed, since it was largely driven by the words available to me. When I read some X-Men comics, I noticed that they would end in a cliff-hanger, making people keen to read the next issue. I thought this was an excellent idea for a comic aimed at language learners. It also meant I didn’t need to know how it ended to finish the first comic!

After finishing my PhD in music information retrieval technology in 2002, I was able to explore other research topics. I looked at extensive reading and readability, which I considered to be a stepping

stone to building an information retrieval system that recommended reading material for language learners based on its readability. One of my papers showed the importance of cognates in readability – at least for French and English in the early to intermediate stages, and that existing readability measures were a poor fit for French as a foreign language (Uitdenbogerd, 2005). Another showed that you could probably retrieve web pages that are very readable, as defined by readability measures (Uitdenbogerd, 2006), but they were likely to be boring! A colleague in the US reached the same conclusion, but with much more funding (Heilman et al., 2006). A third paper explored the idea of filtering text to find excerpts that are more readable, and also noted that sentence structures have an incredible amount of variability (Uitdenbogerd, 2010). Later I received a small amount of funding for a research project on extensive reading in English with students from RMIT English Worldwide (Uitdenbogerd et al., 2017). While the number of long term participants was small, there seemed to be some evidence that there was more incidental vocabulary acquisition (measured by asking “Do you know the meaning of these words?”) by those who read more difficult texts, as judged by the learner – a result I wasn’t expecting, given that a model I created based on published research suggested greater vocabulary gains when coverage was higher (Uitdenbogerd et al., 2017, p13). There are still many questions to be answered related to efficient language acquisition via reading and how to best measure the readability of texts for specific audiences, or linguistic complexity, as it is known in the natural language processing and computational linguistics fields.

While all this work was going on, I continued to develop my comic book series. The songs that go with each episode tend to be finished first – I’m more fluent in music. My university choir club performed the songs from the first three episodes in front of stills from my comics back in 2010. Episode 1 was finally launched in 2014 at a choir concert with a French theme. I have since released two more issues and continue to agonise over



the fourth one – but have already performed the music in concert!

## The theory and evidence behind Gnomeville

Readers of this newsletter will already know the evidence that exists regarding extensive reading: that it increases language skill, that it is more efficient for language acquisition than intensive reading (Bell, 2001), that learners should know at least 95% (but preferably 98%) of the words in the text for fluent reading (Hu & Nation, 2000), and that words need to be encountered quite a few times before they become known (Webb, 2007). Other research demonstrates the value of images and glosses (Abraham, 2008), in helping to retain language. Comics can also assist lower proficiency learners to process text (Liu, 2004). While I didn't know all of this when I started my journey, I certainly found out as much as I could to ensure that my comic would be effective.

Given the recommended 95-98 percent target coverage and the comic book design that aims to have one new word per page, I try to have at least 20 words of text per page, and preferably at least 50. This is not possible for the first few pages of a story, but starts being feasible from Episode 2 onwards. Meanwhile, the number of introduced words that have had fewer than five meetings remains small enough to be in working memory, with further reinforcement occurring on the subsequent pages.

## Writing Gnomeville comics

The basic plot of Gnomeville is a simple fantasy story in which a mage, two gnomes, a griffon and an adolescent go on a quest to stop a dragon that is terrorising the land of Fantasia. Along the way there are objects to be acquired and obstacles to overcome. The mage is powerful but bumbling. The gnomes are smart and practical, but fearful. The griffon is in his own little world, but does help eventually. We also meet Chantal the oracle, who has a different idea about solving the problem. In later episodes we meet more characters.

Each issue contains the Gnomeville story, a revision article, the simpler Taxi story, a crossword in French that revises all the words introduced in the story, including some of the cognates, and a song. When constructing the comic, I try to ensure that each new word occurs at least five times, without being too obvious about it. The first page of the comic from Episode 2 onwards recaps the story and includes all

the vocabulary covered so far. If any vocabulary is unfamiliar or forgotten, readers are encouraged to revisit the previous episode. The revision story (*La question du moment*) occurs immediately after the Gnomeville episode and has some repetition to ensure that words and language concepts encountered in the Gnomeville episode occur at least five times, and relies on Fido to provide a humorous punchline at the end (see Figure 1). The crossword clues and song lyrics provide further repetition. While I don't succeed in having each new word or concept appear ten times, I come pretty close.

My original lists were based on my old Cassell's dictionary, which provided cognates as definitions for many words, without indicating which meaning applied, in the case of homonyms, such as "plant" and "steamer". I have since acquired the much more principled Oxford Hachette French-English dictionary, which is based on corpus analysis. I haven't fully updated my lists yet, which is a painstaking manual process. I also use various word frequency lists I have acquired (New et al., 2001) and some that I have made. I prefer to use word types rather than word families, except for simple variants, such as plurals and regular verb endings. Lumping all forms of an irregular common verb together hides that some forms are much easier than others (Brown et al., 2022). For example, *est* (is), is much easier than *fûmes* ("were" in first person plural preterite tense) for most learners of French. Using a parser and some computer scripts, I also made a frequency list of sentence forms and grammatical forms. I track the vocabulary and grammar introduced in the comic books manually on paper with colour coding, as they occur in the comic, as well as via some computer programs written by colleagues and myself.

All these ingredients don't write the story. With my word and grammar lists, I dream of what it is possible to write. Sometimes I do web searches to see how some topics are written about in French. Sometimes I check if I am using a word the right way by searching to see if others have used it similarly – like concordance use. This has become more difficult over the years due to changes in search engine ranking algorithms. On a side note, about twenty years ago when I was writing the first episode, I searched for "la saga continue" – the final sentence in the episode. Back then the only occurrences of the phrase were on web pages about Star Wars. Now the expression is used much more widely.

As I write, I keep hoping that the next episode will be easier, thanks to the increased vocabulary size. Certainly, some sentences are easy to create once you can say things like “What is it?” “It’s a ...”, and so on. Nevertheless the repetition constraint continues to make it challenging, as does my limited knowledge of French. The story still remains driven by the limited vocabulary available to me. Maybe Episode 5 will be easier.

## Beyond Gnomeville

While I have been most successful in writing the Gnomeville comics, I also have drafts of stories in Dutch and German, plus a few scribbled ideas in Japanese and other languages. Writing the Dutch story is quite a different experience from the French one, and not only because I am a heritage speaker. For Dutch, it is the easy, frequent words that are in common with English, thanks to them belonging to the same Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family, while most of the hard words are different – the opposite way round to French and English. I had little difficulty filling the first page or two in Dutch with at least twenty words of text for one introduced vocabulary word – a target text length per page that I only achieved at the end of Episode 1 of Gnomeville. However, the story is still not satisfactory. I expect I will need more cognate variants than were necessary for French, where there was an enormous range of exact cognates to choose from.

My knowledge of Japanese is very basic, but I tinkered with the idea of writing a comic book in Japanese for beginners. The challenges are considerably greater than going between two European languages that share an alphabet. Fortunately, there are many loan words in Japanese. I proposed to render the katakana loanwords in romaji while slowly introducing frequent hiragana words. There were challenges with resources for Japanese. I acquired a frequency list that had been generated from a Japanese corpus (Kelly, 2003), but word boundaries are less clear-cut for Japanese, so it wasn’t entirely useful. Technology has advanced since the last time I looked at such things, so perhaps the resources for writing a Gnomeville-like comic in Japanese for English speakers or English for Japanese speakers might now be feasible.

## References

- Abraham, L. B. (2008). Computer-mediated glosses in second language reading comprehension and vocabulary learning: A meta-analysis. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 21(3), 199-226.
- Bell, T. (2001). Extensive reading: Speed and comprehension. *The reading matrix*, 1(1).
- Brown, D., Stoeckel, T., McLean, S., & Stewart, J. (2022). The most appropriate lexical unit for L2 vocabulary research and pedagogy: A brief review of the evidence. *Applied Linguistics*, 43(3), 596-602.
- Crystal, D. (1987). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Heilman, M., Collins-Thompson, K., Callan, J., & Eskenazi, M. (2006). Classroom success of an intelligent tutoring system for lexical practice and reading comprehension. *INTER\_SPEECH*.
- Hu, M., & Nation, P. (2000). Unknown vocabulary density and reading comprehension. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 23(1), 403-430.
- Kelly, C. I. (2003). *Words from Japanese Newspapers in Order of Frequency*. Charles Kelly’s Online Japanese Language Study Materials. <http://www.manythings.org/japanese/>
- Liu, J. (2004). Effects of comic strips on L2 learners’ reading comprehension. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(2), 225-243.
- New, B., Pallier, C., Ferrand, L., & Matos, R. (2001). Une base de données lexicales du français contemporain sur internet: LEXIQUE™/A lexical database for contemporary french: LEXIQUE™. *L’année psychologique*, 101(3), 447-462.
- Uitdenboger, A. L. (2005). Readability of French as a foreign language and its uses. In *Proceedings of the Australian Document Computing Symposium* (pp. 19-25).
- Uitdenboger, A. L. (2006). Web readability and computer-assisted language learning. In *Proceedings of the Australasian Language Technology Workshop 2006* (pp. 99-106).
- Uitdenboger, A. L. (2010). Fun with filtering French. In *Proceedings of the Australasian Language Technology Association Workshop 2010* (pp. 58-66).
- Uitdenboger, A., Kablaoui, S., & Martin, A. (2017). *Defining a unified model of vocabulary acquisition via extensive reading*. Australian Government Office for Learning & Teaching.
- Uitdenboger, A. L. (n.d.). *Comic Books in French for Complete Beginners. Gnomeville*. Retrieved August 8, 2024, from <https://gnomevillecomics.com/products/>
- Webb, S. (2007). The effects of repetition on vocabulary knowledge. *Applied linguistics*, 28(1), 46-65.

Figure 1 (opposite): The revision story for Episode 1 as a colouring activity page. After Episode 1’s final page, the words “que” and “du” have only occurred twice and “des” only once. By the end of the revision story, only the word “une” has fewer than five occurrences, but it gains another nine in the crossword.



Excerpt from the "I Can't Believe I'm Reading French" Comic Book Series, Episode 1.  
 Gnomeville: Dragon! Available from Amazon. [gnomevillecomics.com](http://gnomevillecomics.com)  
 Copyright ©2018 Alexandra L. Uitdenbogerd. Permission to reproduce with attribution.

## 2024 LLL Award Winners

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 21st Annual Language Learner Literature (LLL) Award for books published in 2023. 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. Reactions from readers of these books follow the judges' comments. These books can be ordered online in Japan through the ETJ Book Service and [englishbooks.jp](http://englishbooks.jp).

### Very Young Learners

Four Friends and the Hunter

by Herbert Puchta and Gavin Biggs

Helbling

ISBN: 9783711400444

Juror's comment: This warm tale delivers a positive message emphasizing the values of friendships and teamwork. The vocabulary is well-suited for young learners and fun to read. The illustrations of the animals in the forest are soft and appealing, including beautiful elements of the jungle.

Online voter's comment: The story is interesting and easy to read, the children love the animals and the pictures. How true friends can help was a very exciting topic, what can one do for a friend? The interactive games were really engaging and facilitated learning on the part of the students.



### Young Learners

The Girl & the Magpie

by Herbert Puchta and Gavin Biggs

Helbling

ISBN: 9783711401434

Juror's comment: This story presents and promotes several universal moral values such as friendship, collaboration, and loyalty. These messages are shown in a simple manner so children can see them clearly through the characters of the story. The girl is looking for some friendship and she finds it in the magpie that is even more than a good friend.

Online voter's comment: The novel excels in creating a deep emotional impact through its characters and storyline. It explores themes of loss, resilience, and the power of friendship in a way that resonates with readers of all ages. The protagonist and supporting characters are well-developed, each with distinct personalities and arcs that contribute to the story's depth.



### Finalists

Aladdin

by Catherine Eisele and Serina Eisele

Caves Publishing

ISBN: 97862672314630

Juror's comment: A wonderful retelling of a classic story told through dialogues between the characters.



Hao to Celebrate New Year

by Andre Louw

Caves Publishing

ISBN: 9786267231401

Juror's comment: Celebrates the ways different Asian countries celebrate Lunar New Year.



### Finalists

Deer Me

by Joel Finnestad

Caves Publishing

ISBN: 9786267231395

Juror's comment: This book shows how important family and ancestors are in everyone's lives.



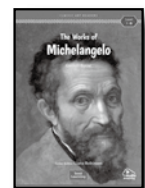
The Works of Michelangelo

by Garrett Byrne

Seed Learning

ISBN: 9798886680386

Juror's comment: This book presents Michelangelo's life and works in an amazing way.





## Adolescent & Adult: Beginners

Harriet Holmes and the Pirate  
Treasure

by Jane Cadwallader

Illustrated by Gustavo Mazali

ELi

ISBN: 9788853637543

Juror's comment: Harriet Holmes, the daughter of Sherlock Holmes, tries to solve a case, to find the thief of the pirate treasure. It is full of adventures and mysteries. The cover design and the colorful illustrations are artistic and attractive, functioning as good comprehension aids for beginners. The folded cover design is unique, including a picture dictionary and an introduction of the author and illustrator with their photos.

Online voter's comment: Harriet Holmes is a compelling and relatable heroine. Her intelligence, resourcefulness, and wit make her an enjoyable character to follow, and her growth throughout the story adds depth to her character. The pacing is well-balanced, maintaining a steady rhythm that keeps the reader engaged without overwhelming them with too much information at once.



## Adolescent & Adult: Elementary

The Yellow Sticker Girl

by Sarah Gudgeon

Illustrated by Luca Tagliafico

ELi

ISBN: 9788853639622

Juror's comment: This story captures attention through its engaging illustrations and presentation. The theme resonates with a broad audience, likely touching on universal experiences or emotions that readers can relate to. The narrative encourages authenticity and self-acceptance. The character of the Yellow Sticker Girl serves as a role model, demonstrating the importance of embracing one's true self. It also emphasizes resilience and readiness to confront challenges. It imparts valuable lessons that are easy for readers to grasp.

Online voter's comment: It has a really good story flow. It was easy to follow and dealt with some serious topics in an approachable manner. The language used also stayed at a nice level, with no sudden introduction of difficult vocabulary or concepts that might be overwhelming or confusing for some. I was extremely pleased to read it, and I believe my students will really enjoy the story, with its positive ending and good examples of coping skills.



## Finalists

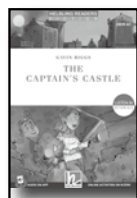
The Captain's Castle

by Gavin Biggs

Helbling

ISBN: 9783711400444

Juror's comment: Discover the magic of The Captain's Castle – where imagination meets adventure!



The Fishing Trip

by Sue Murray

Heuber

ISBN: 9783194029972

Juror's comment: Exciting and engaging summer holiday story that involves a family secret.



## Finalists

Boloroo's BIG Question

by Michael Lacey Freeman

Illustrated by Baasankhuu Tsogt-  
baatar

Michael Lacey Freeman

ISBN: 9781739445928

Juror's comment: Dive into happiness with clear words, captivating pictures and surprising answers!



Riri: My South Africa

by Grace Lani

ELi

ISBN: 9788853639691

Juror's comment: Riri's captivating journey through South Africa, exploring culture, education, and nature!



## Adolescent & Adult: Intermediate

Brooklyn

by Colm Tóibín

Adapted by Kate Williams

Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241589106

Juror's comment: "Brooklyn" intricately weaves the immigrant experience with themes of identity and belonging. Its emotive narrative resonates globally, offering a relatable exploration of finding one's place. The story's depth and character development engage readers without spoon-feeding, allowing for personal interpretation. Through Eilis' journey, the novel introduces Irish culture, immigration, and societal tensions. With its efficient yet captivating storytelling, "Brooklyn" stands as a compelling choice for language learners, blending complexity with accessibility.

Online voter's comment: A powerful story and intimate voyage. Not as mind-racking as Agatha Christie's. The introduction is a hook to the story as the author introduces the characters right away which makes it less boring for the readers. Besides that, the build-up to the plot of the story is interesting as it is hard to guess why Miss Kelly treats Eilis in that way.

### Finalists

And Then There Were None

by Agatha Christie

Adapted by Alex Raynham

BlackCat (CIDEB)

ISBN: 9788853022462

Juror's comment: Agatha Christie's gripping mystery keeps you guessing until the final revelation.

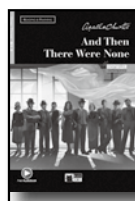
The Works of Vincent van Gogh

by Jenna Myers

Seed Learning

ISBN: 9798886680485

Juror's comment: Comprehensive exploration of Van Gogh's life and art of this ahead-of-his-time artist.



## Adolescent & Adult: High Intermediate & Advanced

Animal Farm

by George Orwell

Retold by Bill Bowler

STANDFOR

ISBN: 9788596040006

Juror's comment: This retelling of a classic piece of literature showcases meticulous craftsmanship and insightful interpretation. The narrative effectively integrates subtle yet significant changes without redundancy, sustaining reader engagement. The incorporation of rich symbolism in illustrations adds depth to the text. While minor issues like small font and tight spacing exist, the rendition stands as a compelling tribute to enduring themes, offering ample material for scholarly discourse on the evolution and interpretation of literary classics.

Online voter's comment: The story is very compelling. This story touches upon the many lies of systems that kill democracy and how they oppress the people to fulfill their own agendas. The text is very accessible and is well-graded to the B2 level. It poses a very good level of challenge with vocabulary at the level but also with some complex sentences slightly above students' level which are great to help students be stimulated.

### Finalists

Black Gold

by Jeremy Taylor

Wayzgoose Press

ISBN: 9788853632425

Juror's comment: An orphan's heart-touching recovery through supportive friends and a caring community.

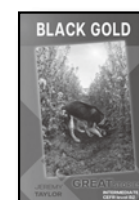
Brick Lane

by Monica Ali

Penguin Random House UK

ISBN: 9780241553381

Juror's comment: Nazneen's inspiring journey from a rural village towards self-actualization and empowerment





## ER and You

Kemper Johanson

### What is Extensive Reading?

Extensive reading is reading for extended periods of time at a level which is easily understood.

Generally, 80% or more of the vocabulary should be known.

### When did you first hear about ER?

I think ER is part of the zeitgeist now-a-days. It's commonly talked about with any sort of immersion-based language learning.

### Who inspired you in your ER journey?

No one in particular.

### How do you implement ER in your classes?

Online using x-reading.

### Where do you keep the books?

As a part-timer, I don't have any. They are all online.

### Why ER?

So, the students can get more English input and hopefully internalize basic grammar and vocabulary.

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

Weekly class time does need to be dedicated to ER or some students won't engage with it on their own time.

Do you get the ERJ?  
Subscribe now!

Join JALT. Join the ER  
SIG at [jalt.org](http://jalt.org)



## ER and You

Ann Mayeda

Konan Women's University

### What is Extensive Reading?

Reading, reading, reading what you enjoy and/or have an interest in in a foreign language.

### When did you first hear about ER?

Many moons ago I was slated to teach an ER class, so I read everything I could get my hands on in order to prepare for it. I've been hooked ever since.

### Who inspired you in your ER journey?

The children of Nepal.

### How do you implement ER in your classes?

It is a required component in a fluency-based course for all first- and second-year students.

### Where do you keep the books?

Students have access to the physical books in our self-access center and they also have Xreading accounts.

### Why ER?

Reading is fundamental.

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

While reading at the appropriate accessible level is important, I also think it is important to encourage our learners to read whatever suits their fancy (fan magazines, cereal boxes, brother's diary, etc.) without having to think about the level but rather on interest.



Tell us about your ER Journey:

<https://forms.gle/Ewzis5CSqHFtWMh4A>



## Your professional community needs you!

Help the JALT ER SIG to put on events and produce high-standard publications about extensive reading and listening. Contact the SIG at [er@jalt.org](mailto:er@jalt.org) about becoming an officer.

Become a reviewer for the Proceedings of the World Congress on Extensive Reading and the Journal of Extensive Reading! Drop a line to [proceedings@erfoundation.org](mailto:proceedings@erfoundation.org) letting us know which areas of ER you are interested in, and please register here: [jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer](http://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer)

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

Also, the ERJ is always looking for your ideas, opinions and experiences. Write to [erj@jalt.org](mailto:erj@jalt.org)



# Does M-Reader Increase ER Motivation Compared to Book Reports?

Christopher Philip Madden  
Hiroshima Shudo University

When teaching Extensive Reading (ER) in a Japanese University EFL context, there are two basic ways of assessment; having the students write book reports, or having them use an online system such as X-Reading or M-Reader. In this study, students had completed half a school year using the written book report method, and then changed teachers to this researcher. At the start of the second half of their school year students were given a questionnaire about ER, motivation, and book reports, and then introduced to the online M-Reader system for ER assessment. At the end of the year students answered another questionnaire, the results of which indicated a largely favorable effect of M-Reader on the motivation to read more books.

---

Keywords: ER, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, autonomy

Motivation is the underlying factor in all successful second language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) and it therefore must play a significant role in Extensive Reading (ER). Countless English language educators suggest that writing book reports is an effective tool for measuring reading comprehension and other linguistic factors (Helgesen, 2005). Additionally, the very field of ER is somewhat of an amorphous entity, with numerous definitions about what entails Extensive Reading (Susser & Robb, 1990; McLean & Waring, 2015) and what the definitions and characteristics of either moniker encompass (Lipp, 1990), without even including the differential factors that online assessment systems introduce.

While the purposes of this research is not to challenge the efficacy of writing book reports as an educational tool, nor to precisely classify the variety of foreign language reading and related activities in the English classroom, it does attempt to measure the effectiveness of online ER assessment versus writing book reports as seen through the lens of motivation.

Knowing that motivation consists of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that interplay (Dörnyei, 1990), this researcher chose to allow as much autonomy as possible by letting the students choose their own books and how much to read without forcing strict targets on them. However, they were informed that ER would compose 15% of their grade, and that points would be allotted by ranking. Students were told that whomever read the most words would get the full 15 points towards their grade, and that it was also possible for two, or three, or more people to get 15 out of 15 if they all read similar amounts. They were told that to receive a passing grade of 8 out of 15 they would have

to read a minimum of 10,000 words, and the ranking for points allotment would continue downwards if they did not surpass that amount. Incidentally, this University has no requirements for ER to be part of the assessment, and many instructors do not use it at all.

## Participants

The students in this study were first year English Major students at a medium sized private university in Hiroshima, Japan (n = 15). Their level on the CEFR scale would be straddling the B1 / B2 line for most students, but the precise results of their university placement tests were not able to be accessed by this researcher. Students have two 90-minute English classes per week with one instructor and an additional two weekly classes with another teacher. Therefore students see each teacher 30 times in a semester of 16 weeks.

Additionally, our university has a four quarter system in each academic year (but only in the English Major program), wherein two terms / quarters / semesters are from April until August. In the first two quarters these particular 15 students were taught by another instructor who utilized the book report method of assessment for ER. That teacher and this researcher both used a 15% allotment to ER for the overall grade in the class, and students selected books from the same graded readers in the university library. It was unable to be determined which books they used, or how many they read, only that they used written book reports for assessment in the Spring Semester.

In the academic year of 2023 it was determined that the students would change teachers after the summer break, which was a new program, whereupon this researcher learned that the Spring Semester teacher used book reports to assess their ER participation. This was the first time such a scenario had been presented



to be able to measure the effectiveness of the online M-Reader system of assessment versus writing book reports. It is not known if the students read some of the same books with this researcher's classes that they had already read previously, but they were asked to only read new books.

## Instruments

In the second class of the new semester, before being introduced to the online M-Reader system, students were asked the following questions in English on a paper-based questionnaire. A four point Likert scale was chosen in order to avoid the common middle point of having no opinion:

1. Please rank your motivation for Extensive Reading in general:

- A) Very much like it
- B) Like it
- C) Don't like it
- D) Very much dislike it

2. Please rank your motivation for writing book reports on paper:

- A) Very much like it
- B) Like it
- C) Don't like it
- D) Very much dislike it

After the end of the fourth semester in January, students were asked on paper:

1. Which did you prefer, writing book reports or using M-Reader?

- A) Book Reports
- B) M-Reader

2. Why? Please answer in Japanese. Please say all the reasons.

3. What did you like about M-Reader? Please answer in Japanese. Please say all the reasons.

4. What did you not like about M-Reader? Please answer in Japanese. Please say all the reasons.

5. After using M-Reader, compared to writing book reports, my motivation for Extensive Reading has:

- A) Increased a lot
- B) Increased
- C) Decreased
- D) Decreased a lot

## Method

In the third class students were introduced to the online M-Reader system which had been already populated with their names and student numbers set into our "Classroom". The method of introduction was as follows:

Step One: On a PowerPoint projected onto a large screen at the front of the classroom, students were shown the teacher's view of our M-Reader Classroom with their names awaiting their log-in. They were then explained via PowerPoint slides what M-Reader is, their current level of 3, how to move up levels, and finally the URL for M-Reader was displayed with instructions for how to log in.

Step Two: Once all students had successfully logged in, the system for the comprehension test of each book to get points was explained.

Step Three: On the PowerPoint students all read one short book that had been scanned for this purpose. The book had been borrowed previously by this researcher from the University library, each page scanned, as well as the test for said book was clarified to exist on the M-Reader website.

Step Four: All students wrote the test for that book at the same time. Some of the more adept students who quickly passed helped others, and the researcher helped other students complete the task so that everyone passed, got the points, and received the thumbnail image of the book in their M-Reader library.

Step Five: It was suggested that students bring their phones to the ER section of the library, so that they could check if a book had its test on M-Reader before borrowing it, since many of our graded readers do not have tests online. All students were escorted to the university library, and they all borrowed books.

As there were 27 remaining classes in the following two quarters of the Fall Semester, students were often given approximately 30 minutes during class time to read, which sometimes included going to the library to get new books. Often students were told that their homework over the weekend was ER, and to get new books on their own time.

One of the extrinsically motivating factors of M-Reader is experienced by showing the whole class teacher's view on the projector screen at the front of the class. This was often done just before sending them to the library to get more books, while clicking the columns overhead to show who had read the most

so far, and then clicking it again so that the column reorganized itself showing the least number of words at the top and most at the bottom.

From the outset they had been told to get easy, fun books that did not require large amounts of dictionary usage, in accordance with the traditional ER approach. It was hoped that by having autonomy and self-regulation, students would feel motivated and empowered to carry out their ER requirements themselves. Some certainly did. The first book we read in class was 875 words, so this pass ceiling level was actually quite low, and yet curiously almost half of the students did not surpass that margin by the end of the fourth quarter.

## Results

In the initial survey before the treatment, three students out of 15 answered “Very much like it” to the question, “Please rank your motivation for Extensive Reading in general.” Eight students answered “Like it”, three answered “Don’t like it”, and one student responded with “Very much dislike it”, meaning 11 were positively motivated and four were demotivated by ER using the written book report method of assessment.

The results of the second question about the writing of book reports was slightly different, with three students in the “Very much like it” category and five in “Like it”. However, there were six students who answered “Don’t like it” and again, one student with “Very much dislike it”. Interestingly, it was two different students who answered “Very much dislike it” for those two questions, indicating that they most likely did answer the questionnaire honestly.

Table 1. Questionnaire in the second lesson

1. Motivation for ER in general			
Like very much	Like	Don’t like	Very much dislike
3	8	3	1
2. Motivation for writing book reports			
Like very much	Like	Don’t like	Very much dislike
3	5	6	1

After the treatment of 13 weeks of M-Reader, the answers were as follows: only three students said they preferred writing book reports on paper while 12 responded that M-Reader was more enjoyable. However, it is in their written responses to the other questions that English language instructors might find

practical applications for the classroom.

Table 2. Final questionnaire

Which did you prefer, book report writing or M-Reader?

Book Report		M-Reader	
3		12	
After M-Reader, compared to writing book reports, my motivation has			
Increased a lot	Increased	Decreased	Decreased a lot
6	7	2	0

What follows are translated quotes from their responses. The three students who preferred writing book reports gave these reasons:

“Writing reviews suits reading books more.”

“You can write book reports if you can understand the main story and the characters, but you can’t pass M-Reader if you don’t understand the details and contents of the conversations.”

“The quizzes that ask ‘Who said this?’ on M-Reader are hard.”

For the same question to the students who preferred M-Reader, here is a sample of their responses to why, some of which have been amalgamated with the third question, “What did you like about M-Reader?” for the sake of brevity.

“It’s handy and easy that you can do it anywhere on your phone.”

“You don’t have to write words, which is harder.”

“The quizzes make it more entertaining to do, and adding up the scores is fun to see how many books you’ve read. The book images are enjoyable.”

“You can pick what books you like and what’s suitable for your level.”

“I like seeing the ranking of everyone at once.”

Perhaps more instructional to the teacher than the above are the answers to the question “What did you not like about M-Reader?”

“It doesn’t improve your writing skills. Book reports make your writing skills better.”

“Some books don’t have quizzes.”

“On questions like, ‘Who says this?’ they don’t tell you what page it’s on.”

Another comment, mirrored by three students, was:

“It’s a little inconvenient because it doesn’t save your password and you have to re-login every time.”

The final negative point, summed up by “You can’t retake the tests that you couldn’t pass,” was said by a total of six students. To be clear, students were told that if they failed a test they should come and tell this researcher at the beginning of the following class, or, if they had failed during classroom reading time, to come up immediately so that the settings could be changed to allow another chance. Additionally, all students had my email address and were told that they could request a second test writing opportunity through that method, which was acted upon only once.

## Limitations

As this study was designed to measure the effectiveness of M-Reader for motivation on freshman university students in an English Major program, the common procedure of recommending one book per week was used (Nation & Wang, 1999). Students were given approximately 30 minutes per week to read in class, and were expected to do some reading at home each week to satisfy the minimum goals of the two-semester time period of 10,000 words. However, only seven students out of 15 surpassed that relatively low margin, which seems to support the findings of Setsuko Mori when she states that, “the more grade-oriented motivation to read students have, and the more they like reading, the more they read,” (Mori, 2024).

## Discussion

The results are very clear that for these 15 students, 13 of them found M-Reader to be a positively motivational factor for Extensive Reading. These results are quite likely to be similarly generalizable to the online platform of X-Reading as well. However, one clearly de-motivating factor is failing a test. The fact that over one third of the students responded thusly has inspired this researcher to be much more vigilant in searching for those students who have failed tests and allowing them to take them again, however, that action is not as simple as it seems. When told in the following class that they were allowed to retake tests, the bulk of the students had already returned that book, and most of

them did not attempt to pass those books’ tests again.

If the settings on M-Reader were more flexible and controllable by the individual teacher, such that six correct answers were a passing score for example, or if a setting could be organized wherein students could get partial points according to the percentage of correct marks, it may increase motivation further.

Regarding the noted importance and efficacy of writing book reports, this practice can easily be combined with M-Reader, as a separate assignment that could be part of the written assessment for a four-skills class.

This study was limited due to the small number of students, and yet it is likely that the results could be generalizable to other university students in Japan at a similar academic level, as well as a much more diverse group of students anywhere in the world. For each practitioner to customize variables such as reading requirements and book levels to further improve the effectiveness of using the online M-Reader system is likely to increase student motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, for extensive reading.

## References

- Dörnyei, Z. (1990). Conceptualizing Motivation in Foreign Language Learning. *Language Learning*, 40, 46-78.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Motivation*. Pearson.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). *The Psychology of the Language Learner Revisited*. Routledge.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Motivation (2nd ed.)*. Longman.
- Helgesen, M. (2005). Extensive Reading Reports - Different Intelligences, Different Levels of Processing. *Asian EFL Journal*, 7(3).
- Lipp, H. (1990). Extensive reading through Sustained Silent Reading: Developing Comprehension in Adult Learners. *CATESOL Journal*, 3(1). 75-91.
- McLean, S. & Waring, R. (2015). Exploration of the core and variable dimensions of extensive reading research and pedagogy. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 27(1), 160-167.
- Mori, S. (2024). *The Role of Motivation in the Amount of Reading*. Temple University, Japan. <https://www.tuj.ac.jp/grad-ed/publications/working-papers/vol-14/mori>
- Nation, P. & Wang, K. (1999). Graded Readers and Vocabulary. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 12(2), 355-380.
- Susser, B. & Robb, T. (1990). EFL Extensive Reading Instruction: Research and Procedure. *JALT Journal*, 12(2). <https://www.cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp/~trobb/sussrobb.html>



## Recent Research in Extensive Reading

Compiled by Imogen  
Custance

Fan, H. (2023). Talking past each other: Chinese EFL teachers'

understanding of extensive reading. *Journal of Extensive Reading*, 10(4). <https://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer/article/view/1308>

Researchers have long been asking the question: Why aren't teachers doing Extensive Reading (ER)? A lack of knowledge on ER has been proposed as one of the reasons, but there is a scarcity of studies investigating teacher cognition in ER. Using quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews, this study examined attitudes and understanding of ER among a group of Chinese college professors. The results showed that these professors held a strong positive attitude toward ER. However, they looked down upon simplified readers, and regarded extensive reading as a means for linguistic study instead of a way for information or enjoyment. Because of these misconceptions, the ER in the mind of the participants resembled more intensive reading done by their students independently. The study revealed an urgent need for teachers in the Chinese EFL context to learn what ER really is and why it works.

Kim, H., & Ro, E. (2023). Additive extensive reading and syntactic development in second language writing: Analysis of syntactic complexity and sophistication in young EFL learners' book reports. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 61, 101040. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2023.101040>

This study explores how input-driven activity through extensive reading leads to syntactic growth in young students' written production. Twenty-six young students learning English as a foreign language participated in extensive reading as an additional activity after school for a month (ER group), and their syntactic development was inspected by analyzing 14 syntactic complexity and six syntactic sophistication indices in the students' book reports written preceding and following the reading activity. This group's performance in writing was compared with that of another group of students who did not participate in the reading activity (comparison group). Results of

analyses for syntactic complexity showed that the ER group significantly improved in the length of sentence, the number of clauses, the number of instances of coordination, and the number of verb phrases. This group also improved in syntactic sophistication by using less frequent verbs and less frequent verb-construction combinations in writing after the reading activity. In contrast, the comparison group showed improvements only in the length of sentence. We discuss these findings and pedagogical implications in light of usage-based approaches to language learning.

Pan, M., Guo, K., & Lai, C. (2024). Using artificial intelligence chatbots to support English-as-a-foreign language students' self-regulated reading. *RELC Journal*, (Online First) <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882241264030>

Self-regulated learning (SRL) has been integrated into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading instruction to enhance students' reading achievement. Evidence indicates that providing personalized support is critical to SRL. However, providing personalized support is time-consuming and challenging to implement in language classrooms. Although it has been built into many online reading systems, this support is often delivered in a one-way manner, with little chance for follow-up discussions. This innovation in practice introduces an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot developed to provide personalized SRL support for EFL students in reading. The AI chatbot was designed as a reading companion to facilitate active, out-of-class reading that expands in-class instruction. By giving autonomy to students to engage with appropriate reading materials and receive personalized self-regulated reading (SRR) guidance, the innovation empowered learners to overcome challenges in the reading process and facilitated their use of SRR strategies. The pedagogical values of the innovation were explored from students' perspectives. Future pedagogical directions for AI-supported SRR instruction are also discussed.

Peters, E., Puimège, E. and Szudarski, P. (2023), Repetition and incidental learning of multiword units: A conceptual multisite replication study of Webb, Newton, and Chang (2013). *Language Learning*, 73(4), 1211-1251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12621>

This multisite study replicates Webb, Newton, and Chang's (2013) study on the effect of repetition on incidental learning of multiword units (MWUs). Even though more researchers have started to investigate MWUs, most data have been collected from university



students. Furthermore, the large effect of MWU repetition on learning reported by Webb et al. has not yet been corroborated. Data in our study were collected from two university samples (EFL students in Poland and Flanders) and one non-university sample (Flemish EFL learners in secondary schools). Unlike Webb et al., we adopted a counterbalanced within-participants design. Participants read and listened to a modified graded reader in which target MWUs occurred 1, 5, 10, or 15 times. In line with the initial study, we found a positive effect of repetition. However, the learning gains were smaller, and the number of repetitions needed was different. The findings were consistent across the university and non-university samples. The study concludes with a discussion of these findings in relation to both pedagogical implications and the benefits of multisite replication research.

---

Ro, E. (2024). Students' display of willingness to participate in an extensive reading book club. *Language Teaching Research*, (Online First). <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688241232208>

This study examines interactions in an extensive reading (ER) book club intended to provide opportunities for students to practice English as their second language (L2). Utilizing multimodal conversation analysis, the study shows how students display willingness to participate (WTP) when they are free to initiate or avoid communication. The analysis of seven and a half hours of video recordings of meetings held over six weeks at a Korean university demonstrates that several practices, particularly responding to questions and expanding on storytelling, reflect WTP. The study particularly highlights the importance of non-verbal cues in signaling and managing the WTP. The study suggests that student initiative can lead to more interactive and engaging learning environments, which may be especially significant in L2 settings where promoting student talk is a primary objective. The findings have implications for educators regarding the dynamics of student participation and agency, and contribute to our understanding of the nuanced relationships between learner initiative and WTP in fluency-oriented language learning contexts.

---

Robb, T. N., & Ewert, D. (2024). Classroom-based extensive reading: a review of recent research. *Language Teaching*, (First View). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444823000319>

This survey of recent research on extensive reading (ER) for language learners focuses on ER in the classroom.

While early adopters of ER imagined the quick emergence of an intrinsically motivated independent reader, the reality of much classroom-based language learning is that without considerable teacher guidance and supportive transitional activities, students are not likely to reach self-motivated independent ER either in or out of the classroom. Many of the studies included here, mostly non-experimental and classroom-based, reflect this reality. These studies confirm previous research on the general efficacy of ER in promoting motivation, vocabulary, and fluency development, but they also provide evidence for a variety of ways to support reluctant and grade-focused students who are only willing to engage with the target language in the classroom. This review also considers the many impediments that restrict the implementation of ER with language learners in school contexts. Separate sections discuss ER motivation and attitudes, ER and vocabulary, the effects of ER on reading fluency, as well as speculation on the relationship between "time on task" and progress in the various reading subskills. Each major section concludes with a table summarizing the research that has been discussed and suggestions for future investigation.

---

Rothville, K. (2024). Japanese extensive reading: Aesthetic and efference engagement of learners with texts. *Journal of Extensive Reading*, 11(1). <https://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer/article/view/1261>

Conventionally, reading in the L2 Japanese classroom focuses on intensive reading of texts (Tabata-Sandom, 2015; 2017). Texts are treated simply as language data, and reading is equated with correctly translating the literal propositional content from the text (Kumagai, 2007; Warnick, 2001). Conversely, L1 Japanese speakers focus on their personal experiences or relate content to their previous knowledge when reading (Warnick, 2001), which evokes Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading. While evidence suggests that extensive reading improves L2 Japanese learners' attitudes and motivation towards reading in Japanese, the extent to which it encourages the development of more natural reading stances along Rosenblatt's aesthetic efferent continuum has not been established. Data collected over one to two semesters as upper beginner L2 Japanese learners began to read extensively showed participants demonstrating a variety of reading practices and stances related to the experience of reading for their own purposes. Although participants

displayed efferent stances, such stances were not limited to Japanese language study. Participants also adopted aesthetic stances, both exclusively and in conjunction with efferent stances, suggesting that L2 Japanese learners can engage both aesthetically and efferently when reading extensively.

---

Rothville, K. (2024). Developing a Japanese vocabulary levels test for the purposes of extensive reading. *Journal of Extensive Reading*, 11(2). <https://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jer/article/view/1221>

When assessing L2 English learner vocabulary to guide learners to an appropriate reading level, teachers and researchers typically focus on highly frequent words determined by analyses of L1 English corpora. This does not yet appear to be the case for Japanese, with teachers and researchers either focussed on textbook or Japanese proficiency test vocabulary lists to determine learner vocabulary knowledge. This may be due to the lack of vocabulary tests based on Japanese word frequency. In order to partially address this gap, this paper reports the creation of a vocabulary levels test based on Matsushita's (2012a) General Learners' Vocabulary List. The first iteration, developed in 2017, covered only the first 2000 words, and was found to assess too few words to be suitable for L2 Japanese learners. The current version was therefore expanded to cover the 5000 most frequent Japanese words. Four test forms were created, which have been used with second- and third-year learners at a large New Zealand university. The test was found to be highly reliable (Kuder-Richardson 21 = .98), and arguments are presented here for its validity in the L2 Japanese extensive reading context.

---

Sakurai, N. (2023). Potential influence of extensive reading on controlled productive vocabulary. *Language Teaching Research*, (Online First) <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688231171267>

This study explored a possible impact of extensive reading (ER) on vocabulary learning. Participants were 62 English majors who entered a private university in Japan in April 2019 and experienced ER for 13 months. They took the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test at the 2,000-word level 3 times: in April, December and May 2020. The outcomes of paired t-tests with Bonferroni correction revealed that participants achieved higher scores on the 2nd test, but their performance deteriorated on the final test. The model yielded by multiple regression analysis was comprised of the number of series participants read books from and the

average percentage grade of MReader quizzes they passed, whose contribution to the post test scores was 14.1%. Follow-up tests were run between 12 students who retained or improved their scores on the delayed test and those who did not. It was found that these 12 participants read more constantly during the spring vacation. They also read more books from one graded reader series and books with fewer than 2,000 words, but read fewer 4,000-to-4,999-word-long books from April to December.

---

Shimono, T. R. (2023). The effects of extensive reading, timed reading, and repeated oral reading on Japanese university L2 English learners' reading rates and comprehension over one academic year. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 35(2), 190-221. <https://hdl.handle.net/10125/67447>

The effects of extensive, timed, and repeated oral reading on 101 lower-intermediate Japanese university L2 English learners' reading rates and comprehension were investigated over one academic year. The participants were divided into four quasi-experimental groups: (a) Group 1 did extensive, timed, and repeated oral reading with prosody and chunking training; (b) Group 2 practiced extensive and timed reading; (c) Group 3 did extensive reading only; and (d) Group 4 did not receive any reading fluency treatments. Three different texts of varying length and difficulty were used to measure reading rate at three times during the year. The results indicated that all three reading fluency treatment groups made statistically significant reading rate gains on the three measures while maintaining comprehension. Notably, Group 1, the group that received the most wide-ranging treatment, outperformed the other groups. Therefore, this study underscores the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to developing reading fluency in L2 contexts.

---

Tabata-Sandom, M. (2023). A case study of the impact of online extensive reading on the L2 reading motivation, habits, and linguistic abilities of advanced L2 English learners. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 35(2), 160-189. <https://hdl.handle.net/10125/67446>

This mixed-methods case study examines how an online extensive reading project impacted the 11 participants' motivation, habits, and linguistic abilities regarding L2 English reading. The participants engaged in extensive reading for one year on Xreading (an online extensive reading website). They were all female Japanese nationals aged between 30 and 65 whose L1 was Japanese. Previous studies have reported the benefits

of extensive reading for elementary/intermediate learners, but have not fully looked at outcomes for learners at higher levels. This study's findings suggest that extensive reading is equally beneficial for those above the intermediate level. Throughout this project, the participants accessed graded readers on Xreading, and quickly established reading habits in English, transforming from reluctant to engaged, avid L2 readers. The qualitative data obtained from interviews, journals, and records on Xreading revealed the sources of the participants' positive changes to be: how engaging and easy to comprehend the graded readers were, a sense of commitment to the project, consistent support from the researcher, and the Xreading's useful functions. Additionally, the participants' vocabulary sizes and reading rates, increased significantly (vocabulary size gains,  $p < .0005$  and reading rate gains,  $p < .05$ ) in parallel to the substantial amount of reading they were doing.

---

Tabata-Sandom, M., & Ikeda, Y. (2024). How practical extensive reading experiences changed the perceptions of L2 Japanese teachers. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 36(1), 1-27. <https://hdl.handle.net/10125/67465>

This study examines how the perceptions that twelve teachers of Japanese as a second language (L2) had of extensive reading (ER) changed following 10 months of online English ER. Interviews provided much of the study data, supported by pre-project and post-project questionnaires. The participants' pre-project and post-project vocabulary sizes and reading rates were measured to examine whether changes in their perceptions coincided with their linguistic change. The participants' usage of ER led to their discovering the power of ER in overcoming psychological barriers toward L2 reading, the difficulty of routinizing reading, the importance of facilitators' support, and the benefits of occasional dictionary use. While their reading rate gains corresponded with their unchanged high rating of ER's benefits for reading skills, their vocabulary growth did not correspond with their decreased rating of ER's benefits on vocabulary development. Furthermore, the participants agreed that teachers are learners' role models more after the project.

---

Ye, Y., & Kaplan-Rakowski, R. (2024). An exploratory study on practising listening comprehension skills in high-immersion virtual reality. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 55(4), 1651-1672. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13481>

Holding learners' attention is challenging, especially when they are asked to listen to long passages. High-immersion virtual reality (VR) can immerse learners in listening tasks, even in such complex languages as Chinese. This exploratory study examined the effect of VR on 43 Chinese language learners' listening comprehension, enjoyment, sense of presence, and cognitive load. Participants were self-selected into two groups without knowing the purpose of the study or the details of their activity. The experimental group ( $n1 = 23$ ) experienced an interactive multimedia story in VR, and the comparison group ( $n2 = 20$ ) watched a screencast video recording of the same story. Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) indicated that VR may have a positive effect on the development of listening skills. Compared with the video group, the VR group had significantly higher listening comprehension scores, reported significantly more enjoyment and sense of presence, and reported experiencing less cognitive load. Thus, the findings suggest that VR could be used as a pedagogical tool to enhance foreign language listening skills.

---

Zhou, J., Day, R. R. (2023). Establishing an extensive reading program in a Chinese as a foreign language context. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 35(2), 222-246. <https://hdl.handle.net/10125/67448>

Extensive reading (ER) has been widely practiced in teaching English as a foreign or second language contexts. However, reports on how ER was practiced in Chinese as a foreign or second language (L2) contexts are not commonly seen. This study reports how an ER program was established in a liberal arts college in the U.S.A, and how ER affected L2 Chinese readers' reading attitudes. The study also examined L2 Chinese learners' perceptions of language abilities improved through ER, and their enjoyment of ER activities. Data were collected over thirteen weeks through pre- and post-reading attitude surveys, weekly ER activities, and the end of the semester reflections. The findings suggest ER significantly improved L2 Chinese readers' confidence in reading Chinese and devotion to learning Chinese. Some students also perceived that ER improved their reading fluency, reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, character recognition, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

**Write for us!**

See [jalt.org/er](http://jalt.org/er) for details or [erj@jalt.org](mailto:erj@jalt.org)

The Seventh Extensive Reading World Congress at  
**Hokusei Gakuen University**

Sapporo, Hokkaido

**5th to 9th August, 2025**



Featuring:

**YOKO YAMASHITA, DAVID BEGLAR, AKIO FURUKAWA,**

**LOTS OF PEOPLE WHO LOVE ER**

and

**YOU!**

Send in your idea for a presentation to [erwc7.edzil.la](http://erwc7.edzil.la)



**Important Dates**

**Start of Earlybird Registration**

**1 December 2024**

**Deadline for Submissions of Papers and Scholarships**

**28 February 2025**

**Announcement of Decisions**

**31 March 2025**

**Deadline for Presenter Registrations &**

**End of Earlybird**

**30 April 2025**

**Announcement of Selected Sessions**

**15 May 2025**

**Announcement of Preliminary Schedule**

**1 July 2025**

**Close of Pre-registration**

**31 August 2025**

**Pre-Conference Workshops**

**5 September 2025**

**Ainu Art Project: Opening ceremony**

**6 September 2025**

**Plenary & Concurrent Sessions**

**Saturday-Monday 6-8 September 2025**

**Gala Dinner**

**6 September 2025**

**Excursion Event**

**9 September 2025**

**Deadline for Proceedings Submissions**

**31 October 2025**