

**WORLD CONGRESS IN  
EXTENSIVE READING**  
*Lighting new ways to language learning*

# **Extensive Reading World Congress Proceedings, 2013**

**Proceedings of the Second World Congress on Extensive  
Reading**

**Seoul, Korea, September 13-15, 2013**

**Extensive Reading Foundation  
Korea Association of Foreign Language Education  
Korean English Extensive Reading Association**

**Second World Congress on Extensive Reading Proceedings,  
2013**

*Lighting New Ways to Language Learning*

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# Using M-Reader to Motivate Students to Read Extensively

**JODIE CAMPBELL and YORK WEATHERFORD**

*Kyoto Notre Dame University*

M-Reader is an online quiz system that allows teachers and students to keep track of their reading progress. This article describes a trial program using M-Reader at a small, private university in Japan. After explaining the initial set-up and implementation of the program, the article will provide survey results from students that reveal their first impressions of the M-Reader system. Although many students recognized a number of advantages of M-Reader over traditional methods of assessment such as book reports, slightly more of the students indicated that they would prefer book reports over M-Reader. Their main criticisms of M-Reader included the difficulty of the quizzes and the limitation on the number of quizzes that could be taken each day. These results suggest that students need more instruction on the basic principles of Extensive Reading before M-Reader is able to reach its full potential to motivate them to read extensively.

One of the main problems faced by teachers in an Extensive Reading program is checking whether students have done the assigned reading, especially when there are hundreds of students to keep track of. Most teachers simply do not have time to read thousands of book reports, for example. Additionally, book reports may impose too much of a burden on students when one of the main goals of any Extensive Reading program is to encourage students to read with minimal accountability (Krashen, 1993). Moreover, book reports can be easily faked, for example by simply reading the blurb on the back of the book and scanning the text for a few additional details. One solution to these problems is to use online quizzes for keeping track of the books students have read. The MoodleReader is one such tool (Robb and Kano, 2010). The MoodleReader is an online database of quizzes that cover thousands of popular graded readers. Students take timed multiple-choice quizzes to check whether they have read the books. The system keeps track of the number of words students have read, and teachers have access to these word counts, allowing them to monitor the students' progress. This paper describes a trial project using a simplified version of MoodleReader called M-Reader (mreader.org), which is meant to be easier for administrators, teachers, and students to use (Robb, 2013).

## **Participants**

Participants were 104 freshman and sophomore university students (female; mostly 18-19 years old) in the Department of English Language and Literature at Kyoto Notre Dame University in Kyoto, Japan (an all-female private Catholic university). Five teachers were asked to volunteer their classes (Reading & Writing classes), and this request resulted in the recruitment of ten classes in total. Of the 104 participants, 96 students responded to survey questions about M-Reader, with the remaining 8 leaving their responses blank because they had not used the website during the semester. None of the participants had previous experience with M-Reader, although 7 of the second-year students had used MoodleReader in the final semester of their freshman year.

## **Materials and methods**

We employed a quantitative and qualitative survey to gain insight into the nature of the M-Reader as a method to motivate students to read extensively. We were also interested in determining the value of M-Reader as an effective and reliable tool for assessing the students' reading. We administered our survey to the entire population of freshmen and sophomore students in the Department of English Language and Literature in order to gauge the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and characteristics of all of the students.

We used a paper-based questionnaire (see Appendix), which the students completed in approximately ten minutes in class and returned to us via their teachers. The survey was in Japanese and included twenty-five individual items: one question about the number of books students took quizzes on; twelve 6-point Likert scale items to gauge student opinions of the enjoyability and usefulness of the reading materials; four semantic differential items concerning the difficulty of the books; five semantic differential items about the M-Reader website; and two qualitative questions regarding students' assessment preferences (M-Reader versus book reports) and their suggestions for improving the website. A third qualitative question asked students who did not take any quizzes to explain their reasons why.

## **Results**

The results for the Likert scale items are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. Student Opinions of the Enjoyability/Usefulness of the Readers**

| ITEM  | MEAN                                   | SD   |
|---|--|------|
|   | (6=strongly agree 1=strongly disagree) |      |
| Q2. The readers were...   |  |      |
| a. fun reading materials.   | 3.98                                   | 1.31 |
| b. enjoyable as English learning materials.                           | 4.08                                   | 1.29 |
| c. fun to read each week.   | 3.17                                   | 1.38 |
| d. not my favorite assignment.  | 3.93                                   | 1.39 |
| e. boring reading materials.  | 2.98                                   | 1.3  |
| f. materials that I want to keep reading even during school vacation. | 3.41                                   | 1.43 |
| g. useful for increasing my vocabulary.                               | 4.17                                   | 1.2  |
| h. useful for improving my reading fluency.                           | 4.24                                   | 1.24 |
| i. useful for improving my reading comprehension.                     | 4.47                                   | 1.02 |
| j. useful for improving my reading speed.                             | 4.30                                   | 1.13 |
| k. useful for improving my overall English ability.                   | 4.15                                   | 1.16 |
| l. unsuitable as English learning materials.                          | 2.5                                    | 1.19 |

The first six items cover the enjoyability of the readers. The results indicate a slight tendency to agree that the readers were enjoyable. Perplexingly, however, the negative item d “not my favorite assignment” ( $\mu=3.93$ ) is also on the agreement side of the scale. The other six items

deal with the usefulness of the readers. The results again show a slight, though somewhat greater, tendency to agree.

The students' perceived difficulty of the readers was measured using four semantic differential items. The items and their mean results are summarized in Table 2. The scores ranged from -3 to +3, with 0 as the midpoint on the scale. (However, students were not given the choice to mark 0, in order to force them to choose one side of the scale or the other.)

**Table 2. Student Opinions of the Difficulty of the Readers**

| -3 -2 -1                      | MEAN | SD   | 1 2 3                               |
|-------------------------------|------|------|-------------------------------------|
| too easy (in content)         | 0.55 | 1.35 | too difficult (in content)          |
| contained only familiar words | 0.13 | 1.52 | contained too many unfamiliar words |
| not at all difficult to read  | 0.34 | 1.55 | extremely difficult to read         |
| easy to finish                | 0.36 | 1.65 | difficult to finish                 |

The results indicate that the students found the readers slightly difficult, with all items on the positive (difficult) side of the scale.

The survey also included five semantic differential items to gauge the students' impressions of the M-Reader website. The items and their mean results are summarized in Table 3.

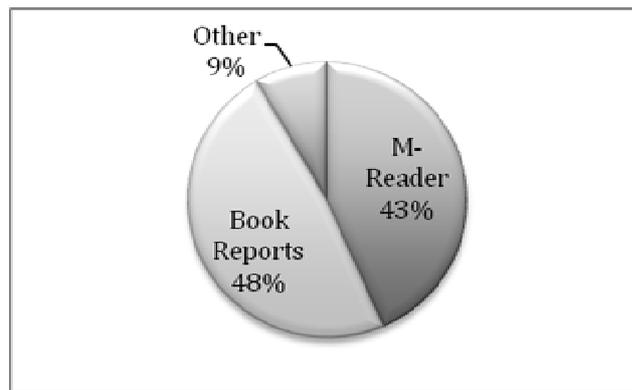
**Table 3. Student Opinions of the M-Reader Website**

| -3 -2 -1   | MEAN  | SD   | 1 2 3       |
|--|-------|------|-------------|
| The M-Reader website was...<br><br>difficult to use  | 0.02  | 2.00 | easy to use |
| The M-Reader quizzes were...<br><br>difficult        | -0.52 | 1.76 | easy        |
| The 15-minute time limit was...<br><br>insufficient  | 0.02  | 2.07 | sufficient  |
| Reaching the word-count goal was...<br><br>difficult | -0.89 | 1.84 | easy        |
| The 24-hour time delay was...<br><br>short           | 2.3   | 1.27 | long        |

The mean score for the first question is very close to zero ( $\mu=0.02$ ). This suggests that overall the students found the M-Reader website to be neither particularly difficult nor especially easy to use. The results for the following question are slightly negative ( $\mu=-0.52$ ), which indicates that students felt the quizzes were somewhat difficult. The mean score for the next question is close to zero ( $\mu=0.02$ ), meaning that students felt that the 15-minute quiz time limit was not too short, but also not enough. The mean for the next-to-last question is again on the negative side ( $\mu=-0.89$ ), suggesting that reaching the word-count goal was slightly difficult. Finally, the last question

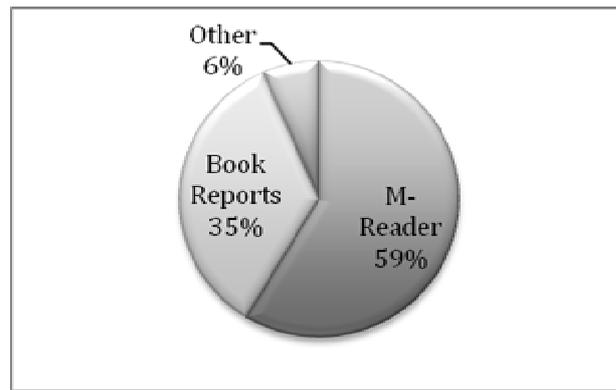
provides the most definitive results—with a mean score very near the edge of the positive side of the scale ( $\mu = 2.3$ ), students clearly felt that the 24-hour time delay between quizzes was too long.

One crucial question on the survey asked students whether they would prefer to use M-Reader as a way to demonstrate their reading progress, or to use other means such as writing book reports. As this was one of the open-ended qualitative questions, several students left their answers blank, resulting in a total of 83 responses. The results are presented in Graph 1.

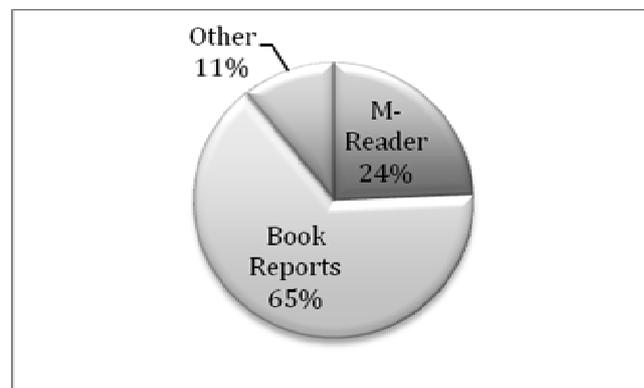


**Figure 1. Assessment preferences for all students (n=83)**

Overall, the students were nearly evenly divided, with slightly more indicating a preference for book reports (48%) over M-Reader (43%). (Approximately 9% of the responses were ambiguous.) Interestingly, however, there was a significant difference between first-year and second-year students' preferences,  $\chi^2=9.88$ ,  $p=.007$ . First-year students (Graph 2) and second-year students (Graph 3) reported nearly opposite preferences, with 59% of first-years preferring M-Reader versus 24% of second-year students. On the other hand, 35% of first-year students stated a preference for book reports, while a large majority (65%) of second-year students would rather write reports. Possible reasons for this disparity will be covered in the Discussion section.



**Figure 2. Assessment preferences for first-year students (n=46)**



**Figure 3. Assessment preferences for second-year students (n=37)**

Many of the students who preferred book reports did not like certain aspects of the M-Reader system. Their biggest complaint concerned the time delay that forced them to wait for 24 hours before they could take their next quiz. In fact, in response to question 8 discussed above, over 80% of all students felt that the 24-hour time delay between quizzes was too long (67% gave a score of 3 and 13 % gave a score of 2). Another reason that students chose book reports over M-Reader was their inability to retake quizzes if they failed, which meant they had no way of getting credit for a book that they had read. Concomitantly, several students also noted that they felt that the quizzes were too difficult, and they did not like worrying about the time limit. Another complaint was the inconvenience of accessing the Internet and dealing with connection troubles. Other students pointed to some of the advantages of book reports over quizzes. They said that writing book reports would allow them to express their own thoughts freely and help them to think more deeply about the books and understand the content better.

As for those who chose M-Reader, the main reasons for their preference include the convenience and efficiency of doing online quizzes compared to written book reports. A few

students noted that they could even take the quizzes on their mobile phones (although quite a few others lamented the lack of a dedicated smartphone app). Additionally, many students appreciated the short amount of time it took to complete the quizzes, and they enjoyed the related sense of accomplishment that came with learning their results immediately. Some students also said that doing the quizzes was a fun way to keep track of their reading progress.

Although slightly more students stated a preference for book reports over M-Reader, it should be pointed out that many students (especially first-years) may not have had any experience with writing book reports for graded readers, and therefore had nothing to compare M-Reader to. In fact, one student explicitly stated that she chose M-Reader mainly because she did not know what doing book reports would entail. Overall, though, students who preferred M-Reader could imagine that doing book reports would be less convenient and less efficient than taking online quizzes.

## **Discussion**

Overall, students demonstrated a lukewarm response to the graded readers and the M-Reader website. They found the readers to be only slightly enjoyable and only marginally more useful. The disparity between item 2d (“not my favorite assignment”) and the other measures of enjoyment suggests that, while students might have found the materials slightly enjoyable to read, they did not really enjoy reading as an assignment. Additionally, the fact that students found the readers moderately more useful than enjoyable hints that they understood the utility of extensive reading but were not convinced enough to put their full efforts into the assignment. The perceived difficulty of the readers, combined with the difficulty of the quizzes, indicates that students need more help in choosing books at an appropriate level. Students were allowed for the most part to choose their books themselves, but more controlled guidance from teachers may result in greater satisfaction with their book choices. This guidance could be informed, for example, by administering individual level tests to determine appropriate starting points for each student.

Students were also not entirely positive about the M-Reader website. The main student complaints with M-Reader are similar to those found in Campbell’s (2012) investigation of students’ initial responses to MoodleReader: students thought the quizzes were too difficult and they wanted to be able to take more than one quiz in a 24-hour period. As Campbell points out, these results reveal a potential weakness in the way extensive reading is presented to the students. In principal, the quizzes should not be difficult because the students should be selecting books that

are easy for them to read and understand. Similarly, students should not need to take more than one quiz per day since they should be reading consistently and taking quizzes periodically throughout the course of the semester. Although these principles are self-evident to proponents of ER, it is clear that students require more time and explanation to be convinced.

Perhaps the most surprising results were the students' assessment preferences. Overall, students indicated a slight preference for book reports over M-Reader (47% to 41%). The difference between first-year students and second-year students, however, was striking. A large majority of first-year students indicated a preference for M-Reader, while the complete opposite was true for second year students. This may be explained by the fact that the second-year students had participated in an ER program with book reports in their first year and had become accustomed to that method. It is hard to believe, however, that doing a proper written book report—in English—would be easier and less time consuming than completing a 15-minute multiple-choice quiz online. We suspect that students who have done book reports in the past have found ways to circumvent the process of actually reading and comprehending the books and are simply faking their reports, as suggested in the introduction. Passing the online quizzes requires students to at least read and understand the books in their entirety, and that may be more effort than some students are willing to invest.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study highlight the importance of the M-Reader for holding students accountable for the reading they claim they have done, mainly because it is possible for students to fake other means of assessment such as book reports. In terms of practical implications, our research suggests that over time the M-Reader will become a reliable and valid tool for holding our students accountable for their reading and for assessing their reading progress. However, to improve the use of the M-Reader as a way to motivate our students to read extensively, students need clearer explanations of what is expected of them in an extensive reading program in addition to more experience with the M-Reader system. Further longitudinal research is needed to determine the differences between the first-year and second-year students' opinions and beliefs about using M-Reader versus other means of assessment such as writing book reports. Overall, we are confident that as teachers explain the extensive reading program more clearly to their students and demonstrate how the M-Reader can benefit their reading, the M-Reader will become a valuable tool

not only for assessment purposes, but possibly, and more importantly, for motivating our students to read extensively in their second language.

*York Weatherford is a lecturer in the Department of English Language and Literature at Kyoto Notre Dame University in Kyoto, Japan. He has been teaching at universities in Japan for eighteen years. His research interests include CALL, ER, and childhood bilingualism.*

*Jodie Campbell is a lecturer in the Department of English Language and Literature at Kyoto Notre Dame University in Kyoto, Japan. He has been teaching English as a Foreign Language for fourteen years, mainly in Japan. His main research interests are ER, vocabulary acquisition, CALL, and learner autonomy and independence in language learning.*

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**Appendix**

**M-Reader Survey July 2013**

Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

A.

B.

1. How many books did you read and take M-Reader quizzes on this semester?

1. 0 2. 1-2 3. 3-4 4. 5-6 5. 7-8 6. 9-10 7. more than 10

If you answered 1 (0 books), please skip to question 11.

A. How much do you agree with the following statements?

2. The library readers were:

|  | Strongly agree |   |   |   |   | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a. fun reading materials.  | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| b. enjoyable as English learning materials.                              | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| c. fun to read every week.   | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| d. not my favorite assignment.   | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| e. boring reading materials.   | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| f. materials that I want to keep reading even<br>during school vacation. | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| a. useful for increasing my vocabulary.                                  | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| b. useful for improving my reading fluency.                              | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| c. useful for improving my reading comprehension.                        | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| d. useful for improving my reading speed.                                | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| e. useful for improving my overall English ability.                      | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
| f. unsuitable as English learning materials.                             | 6              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |

A. What did you think of the levels of the readers?

3. The readers were:



## Using Web-based Extensive Reading in the Classroom

**DOUGLAS E. FORSTER**

*Japan Women's University*

**JOSEPH W. POULSHOCK**

*Tokyo Christian University*

A growing body of research suggests that extensive reading (ER) is one of the best ways to improve all language skills, including writing, listening, and even speaking. Moreover, ER correlates to improvements in learner vocabulary and TOEIC and TOEFL scores. ER also enhances cross-cultural awareness, and it helps students develop more positive attitudes regarding language and culture learning. Though much ER is done with graded readers, this paper highlights how some ER websites can help students to learn not only English, but also big ideas and valuable lessons for life. Most practically, this paper outlines nine tried and true techniques to help teachers use content from these sites that provide engaging and motivating activities for reading, vocabulary, listening, and speaking.

A growing body of research suggests that extensive reading (ER) is a one of the best ways to improve all English as a foreign language skills, including writing, listening, and speaking. It builds students' vocabulary and fluency and improves their TOEIC and TOEFL scores. Rob Waring (n.d.) characterizes ER as

the only way in which learners can get access to language at their own level, read something they want to read, at the pace they feel comfortable with which will allow them to meet the language enough times to pick up a sense of how the language fits together.

In short, as Richard Day puts it: “good things happen when learners engage in extensive reading” (n.d.).

Indeed, “[t]here is a robust literature in scholarly journals that reports the results of investigations into the impact of ER on learning English in both second and foreign language contexts” (Shaffer, 2012). Studies have shown that ER increases learners’ reading rate and proficiency. These increases have been reported in numerous studies in Asia and North America (See Elley, 1991; Lai, 1993; Robb and Susser, 1989; Masuharu, et. al, 1996; Bell, 2001; Kusanagi, 2004; Taguchi, et. al: 2004; and Iwahori, 2008).

However, as we adopt extensive reading in our EFL classes, we should always keep in mind Richard Day and Julian Bramford’s (2002: Online) ten principles for teaching extensive reading.

1. Read easy texts. We define easy as when learners know 95-98% of the words in the texts.
2. Read a wide variety of texts. We emphasize that online texts offer a great deal of variety.
3. Choose what to read. Giving students choice can increase their motivation.
4. Read extensively. Students can set goals for word counts and track them with online systems or on paper.
5. Read for pleasure. Teachers need to help students find texts that they like and help them broaden their horizons.
6. Read as its own reward. The focus is on reading as its own reward, not on comprehension questions and after reading activities.
7. Read for fluency. More than slow and careful study oriented reading, students read for fluency and increase fluency by reading.
8. Read silently and alone. This allows students to read at their own pace.
9. Teachers support readers. Teachers need to be familiar with materials and texts to suggest for students.
10. Teachers model reading for students. Teachers of ER need to be avid readers, so that they can be role models and so that they can suggest texts to students.

A number of websites allow instructors to bring these benefits into the EFL classroom in ways that printed materials cannot. For example, online materials are available anywhere, wherever students have access to the Internet. If students use their own computers or smart phones, these materials do not take up classroom space. Most importantly, they are also highly adaptable for use in class.

### **Online resources**

There are many online resources to choose from in using extensive reading in the classroom. For example, an easy to use extensive reading website is BeeOasis.com, where members read stories, set reading goals, and track their progress. This site presents easy and interesting stories in the arts and sciences. In this way, members not only learn English, but they also learn big ideas and valuable lessons for life. In addition, teachers can use the site to track the reading progress of every student assigned to a group or class. Other valuable sites include Voice of America ([learningenglish.voanews.com](http://learningenglish.voanews.com)), an English learning website that offers leveled audio, video, lessons and practice activities that can easily be used in the EFL classroom. Extensive Reading Central ([er-central.com](http://er-central.com)) offers students and teachers a variety of graded readers and extensive reading resources. And MedlinePlus ([nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus](http://nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus)) offers an extensive collection of a variety of health topics. These are just a few of the many online extensive reading resources that can be used to enhance English language instruction in the classroom.

### **Activities**

There are a myriad of activities that can be used to bring online extensive reading into the EFL classroom that focus on improving vocabulary, speaking, listening, writing, and of course, reading skills. This paper focuses on seven that have proven effective and keep students motivated and on-task.

The first is a cloze listening exercise (See Figure 1) in which a passage from a story with audio is taken and key vocabulary words are removed. Students listen to the passage and fill in the blanks with the missing words. This can easily be done using Hot Potatoes. Students can do this online and/or the passage can be projected on a screen in class. Follow-up activities can include students working in pairs or small groups to review their answers, or the instructor can shadow the passage with the students and repeat the missing words. This exercise can also be used to work on

improving pronunciation, particularly with words containing sounds that are difficult for students to produce. For Japanese EFL learners, these would include “th,” “l” and “r” sounds.

## Cloze Listening (Hot Potatoes)

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After finishing university in 1983, JK Rowling was living in London. She worked for the human [ ] group Amnesty International. But in 1990, she decided to move to Manchester. After spending a weekend looking for an [ ], she took the train back to London. It was then, she says, that “the idea for Harry Potter simply fell into my head.”

On that train ride, she did not have a pen that worked, and she was too shy to [ ] one. But as she sat on the train, the idea for Harry Potter began to [ ] in her brain. She imagined a thin boy with glasses who was a [ ] but didn’t know it. When she arrived home that night, she began writing the first Harry Potter book, *The [ ] Stone*. And that is how the history of Harry Potter began.

But before the stories could begin, 12 publishing houses [ ] her first book. And *The Philosopher’s Stone* was not published until June 1997. Ten years later, the last book in the [ ] was published. It sold 15 million copies in its first 24 hours. As of June 2008, the BBC reported that the Harry Potter books have been [ ] into [ ] languages, and they have sold more than 400 million copies. They have also been made into some of the most successful films of all time.

JK Rowling clearly has [ ]. Before publishing her first book, she was a [ ] [ ] on welfare. Ten years later, she became a best-selling billionaire. In her appealing stories, she also gives us something more than magic. She shows us the power of friendship. She reminds us to fight for good and stand against [ ]. She [ ] us to never give up. And with her life, JK Rowling teaches us to keep working on our dreams until they become real.

Check

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**Figure 1**

An alternative cloze listening exercise can be seen in Figure 2, in which students are given a print (which can also be projected onto a screen in class). Here, the missing words are numbered and after students complete this listening exercise, they can work individually, in pairs, or in small groups and write three comprehension questions and two discussion questions. After completing these questions, the students can ask other students/groups to answer the comprehension questions they have written, followed by answering the discussion questions as a group. Alternatively, the instructor can collect the questions and assign them to the class as a whole or to pairs/groups of students in class. The worksheet also contains a box where students can write difficult words or words that they did not know, as well as translations in their native language.

# Cloze Listening

**The Story of JK Rowling and Harry Potter by David Bello**



After graduating from university in 1983, JK Rowling was living in London. She worked for the human rights group Amnesty International. But in (1) \_\_\_\_\_, she decided to move to Manchester. After spending a weekend looking for an apartment, she took the train back to London. It was then, she says, that "the idea for Harry Potter simply fell into my head."

On that train ride, she did not have a pen that worked, and she was too bashful to borrow one. But as she sat on that train, the (2) \_\_\_\_\_ of Harry Potter began to brew in her brain. She imagined a thin boy with (3) \_\_\_\_\_ who was a (4) \_\_\_\_\_ but didn't know it. When she arrived home that night, she began writing the initial Harry Potter book, *The Philosopher's Stone*. And that is how the tale of Harry Potter began.

Today the saga of Harry Potter comes in seven books, but before this modern (5) \_\_\_\_\_ could begin, 12 publishing houses rejected the first book. And the *Philosopher's Stone*, which Rowling started in 1990, was not published until June 1997. Ten years later, the seventh book in the series was published. It sold (6) \_\_\_\_\_ million copies in its first 24 hours. As of June 2008, the BBC reported that the Harry Potter books have been translated into (7) \_\_\_\_\_ languages, and they have sold more than (8) \_\_\_\_\_ million copies. They have also been (9) \_\_\_\_\_ as

screenplays and made into some of the most (10) \_\_\_\_\_ films of all time.

JK Rowling clearly possesses magic. Before publishing her first book, she was a single mother on welfare, but ten years later, she became a best-selling billionaire. In her (11) \_\_\_\_\_ works, she also gives us something more than (12) \_\_\_\_\_ and magical stories. She shows us the power of friendship and (13) \_\_\_\_\_. She reminds us to fight for good and resist evil, and she encourages us to (14) \_\_\_\_\_ and never give up. And with her life, JK Rowling demonstrates for us how to (15) \_\_\_\_\_ for our dreams until they become real.



**ASK QUESTIONS AND BE IN CONTROL.**

- Write 3 comprehension questions.
  - 
  - 
  -
- Write 2 discussion questions.
  - 
  -

| ENGLISH WORD | TRANSLATION |
|--------------|-------------|
|              |             |

Beoasis Step: 0E Super Easy 1 Very Easy 2 Easy 3 Moderate 4 Advanced 5 Near Native

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Figure 2

In the Grammar Awareness exercise (See Figure 3), students work in pairs with a short passage that they read and find the grammar mistakes that have been written in bold, all-caps. Depending on the students' level, the mistakes can be left in the same font and size as the rest of the text, thereby making it a more difficult and challenging exercise. After reviewing the mistakes and the students' corrections, the students can write comprehension and/or discussion questions based on the reading passage, which can then be reviewed and discussed in class. Here again, the exercise can be projected onto a screen in the classroom.

# Grammar Awareness

## Change Yourself in 59 Seconds

### Change Yourself in 59 Seconds BeeOasis Step 3

59 Seconds is about the science of self-help. So one part of the book **EXPLODING** commonly held myths. So for example the idea that to motivate yourself, you have to visualize the perfect you. From a scientific perspective, **THAT** a disaster. What you want to do is visualize the steps it will take to obtain your goal, rather than you obtaining the goal itself.

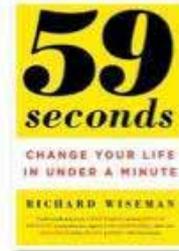
Another part of the book **DESCRIBE** a whole load of techniques, which are scientifically supported and very quick to carry out. So if you want to lose weight, placing a mirror in your kitchen makes you more self-aware and reduces unhealthy **EAT** by around about 35%. If you want to be more **CREATION**, placing a potted plant on your desk results in around about 15% more original ideas. And when it comes to praising your children, praising effort over **ACHIEVE** makes them far more resilient. So these are techniques that are scientifically supported and can be carried out in less **THEN** a minute.

### Change Yourself in 59 Seconds BeeOasis Step 2

The book 59 Seconds is about the science of self-help. One part of the book shoots down common but **WRONGS** ideas. For example, in

order to encourage yourself, you have to picture the perfect you. From a scientific point of view, **THAT** a bad idea. Here's a better idea. Rather than seeing yourself reaching your goal, clearly **IMAGINATION** the steps you need to take to reach your goal.

Another part of the book describes many **TECHNIQUE**. These are scientifically supported, and you can do them very quickly. If you want to lose **WEIGHTS**, put a mirror in your kitchen. This makes you more self-aware and **REDUCE** unhealthy eating by about 35%. If you want to be more creative, put a potted plant on your desk. This results in about 15% more **ORIGINALITY** ideas. When you praise your children, praise effort more than achievement. This makes children much stronger. These are **SCIENTIFIC** supported techniques, which you can do in less than a minute.



### THINK ABOUT IT

1. With a partner, find and correct the grammar mistakes.
2. Write your discussion and comprehension questions.

BeeOasis Step 1: SE-Super Easy 2: WE-We Easy 3: CAN 4: MORE 5: A-Advanced 6: SHOT-Native

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Figure 3

An alternative exercise is Grammar Word Order Awareness (See Figure 4). In this activity, the passage contains mistakes in word order, which are again highlighted using bold, all-caps. Again, the students can work individually or in pairs and correct the word order mistakes. The print also provides a space for writing comprehension and/or discussion questions that can be asked and answered in class, as well as a “Word Focus” section in which students can write new or difficult words.

# Grammar Word Order Awareness

**Beauty and the Beast (Part 1)**



There once was a man who worked as a Merchant at sea. He had many ships, and he was rich. He had three daughters. The youngest **SO WAS BEAUTIFUL** that everyone called her Beauty. This made the two older sisters jealous. They were mean and rough by nature. **LOVE THEY DIDN'T** their younger sister, and they felt nothing but jealousy and hatred towards her.

Then one day **TERRIBLE WAS A THERE** storm at sea. Most of the Merchant's ships were sunk, and he became poor. He and his family **LIVE TO HAD** in a small house, and they could no longer enjoy servants and fine clothes. The **CHIED SISTERS OLDER** and cried about their bad luck. But Beauty did her best to keep the house bright and cheerful. She **MAKE TO TRIED** her father comfortable and happy after his loss.

One day the Merchant called his daughters to a family meeting. He said, "I'm going on a journey to try to recover my wealth." Then he said, "If I am successful, **WOULD WHAT LIKE YOU** me to bring home for you?" The oldest daughter asked for beautiful clothing. The second daughter asked for gold and silver jewelry.

"And Beauty, **LIKE WHAT YOU WOULD?**" asked the father.

Beauty **HAPPY WAS ALWAYS** in her heart, and she rarely wanted anything. She thought for a moment; then she said: "Most of all, I would like a red, red rose!" The other sisters laughed at **REQUEST HER SIMPLE**. But her father promised to bring her what she wanted. Then he said good-bye to his children and set out on his travels.

The Merchant was away **YEAR FOR A NEARLY** and was very successful. He won back a great part of his lost riches. Then it came time for his return. He **BUY COULD EASILY** the things his oldest daughters wanted. But though he looked in many places, he could not find a red rose for Beauty. At last **RETURN TO HAD HE** without the flower.

As he was nearing his home, he lost his way **THICK IN FOREST A**. A wall of darkness came upon him, and he became afraid. He thought to himself, "I'm going to **HAVE NIGHT SPEND TO THE** under a tree in the dark all alone."

He searched for a tree, but then...

**THINK ABOUT IT**

1. Write your discussion and comprehension questions.

**WORD FOCUS: LIST NEW OR HARD WORDS**

|          |                                    |
|----------|------------------------------------|
| vertical | He's a *** person. He talks a lot. |
|----------|------------------------------------|

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Figure 4

In both of these activities, the grammar mistakes are morphological and easy to manage, and they provide a communicative platform for raising students' grammar awareness.

An effective speaking activity is Mini Presentation. Here, students read a short, easy story either assigned by the instructor or chosen by the students. Each student prepares a three-minute presentation about the story. For example, they can summarize the three key points in the story. The students also learn patterns for introduction, body and conclusion. This can be purely a speaking activity, or students can prepare posters, flip charts, use PowerPoint, or even iPads to give their mini-presentation. We have found this activity to be particularly effective when students are asked to evaluate their classmate's presentation using a form (See Figure 5) on which a student evaluates his or her classmate's first, second, and third try and then calculates the average score. The students listen and grade their partner's presentation based on eye contact and gestures, tone of and volume of voice, and content: Was it clear and logical? Was it interesting and appealing? There is also a space for writing the evaluator's comments as well as the speaker's own reflections on his her presentation. These evaluations can then be collected and reviewed by the instructor.

## Evaluating Mini Presentation

| 1st Try                                  | Rating |     |                  |     |      |
|--|--------|-----|------------------|-----|------|
| A. Eye Contact and Gestures              | 1      | 2   | 3                | 4   | 5    |
| B. Tone of and Size of Voice             | 1      | 2   | 3                | 4   | 5    |
| C. Content was Clear and Logical         | 1-2    | 3-4 | 5-6              | 7-8 | 9-10 |
| D. Content was Interesting and Appealing | 1-2    | 3-4 | 5-6              | 7-8 | 9-10 |
| <b>Total Points</b>                      | /30    |     |                  |     |      |
| Comments:                                |        |     |                  |     |      |
| Speaker's Name:                          |        |     | Listener's Name: |     |      |

| 2nd Try                                  | Rating |     |                  |     |      |
|--|--------|-----|------------------|-----|------|
| A. Eye Contact and Gestures              | 1      | 2   | 3                | 4   | 5    |
| B. Tone of and Size of Voice             | 1      | 2   | 3                | 4   | 5    |
| C. Content was Clear and Logical         | 1-2    | 3-4 | 5-6              | 7-8 | 9-10 |
| D. Content was Interesting and Appealing | 1-2    | 3-4 | 5-6              | 7-8 | 9-10 |
| <b>Total Points</b>                      | /30    |     |                  |     |      |
| Comments:                                |        |     |                  |     |      |
| Speaker's Name:                          |        |     | Listener's Name: |     |      |

| 3rd Try                                  | Rating |     |                  |     |      |
|--|--------|-----|------------------|-----|------|
| A. Eye Contact and Gestures              | 1      | 2   | 3                | 4   | 5    |
| B. Tone of and Size of Voice             | 1      | 2   | 3                | 4   | 5    |
| C. Content was Clear and Logical         | 1-2    | 3-4 | 5-6              | 7-8 | 9-10 |
| D. Content was Interesting and Appealing | 1-2    | 3-4 | 5-6              | 7-8 | 9-10 |
| <b>Total Points</b>                      | /30    |     |                  |     |      |
| Comments:                                |        |     |                  |     |      |
| Speaker's Name:                          |        |     | Listener's Name: |     |      |

| Calculate the Average                    | Rating |  |  |  |  |
|--|--------|--|--|--|--|
| A. Eye Contact and Gestures              |        |  |  |  |  |
| B. Tone of and Size of Voice             |        |  |  |  |  |
| C. Content was Clear and Logical         |        |  |  |  |  |
| D. Content was Interesting and Appealing |        |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Total Points</b>                      | /30    |  |  |  |  |
| Speaker, write your own reflections.     |        |  |  |  |  |

**Figure 5**

A related activity to the mini-presentation is Story Retelling. In this activity, students work in pairs and retell (paraphrase) a story to each other. These stories should be very short and appropriate to the student's level. This activity can be expanded to small groups or even as a whole-class activity.

A very effective way to use extensive graded reading to improve speaking ability is the information gap/shadowing activity. First, one student faces the screen and reads a story aloud, one sentence at a time. The second student faces away from the screen and repeats what the first student says. As the second student repeats, the first student corrects his or her mistakes. A good follow-up is doing the same passage again, but this time the instructor reads aloud and the entire class repeats.

Another speaking activity that has been proven to be effective is the "4-3-2 Fluency Activity" developed by Paul Nation (1989). In this activity, students prepare an easy, short talk about a simple story they have read in class (simple narratives work best). The speaker then talks for four minutes and the listener listens, without asking questions or interrupting. After four minutes, the speaker moves to a new listener and repeats the process, this time for three minutes. After three minutes, the speaker moves to a new listener and repeats the process, this time for two minutes.

Next, all the listeners become speakers, repeating the 4-3-2 process. This is a very lively activity that keeps students motivated and on-task, and it allows the instructor to walk around the class and monitor the students.

Finally, an extensive reading speaking activity is Find Someone Who. In this activity, each group of students is in charge of a story they have read in class. Using a print (See Figure 6) provided by the instructor (and/or projected on the screen), students follow the instructions and find students who have read a particular book and can answer questions about the story, find students who like different things, such as “likes to sleep in class,” and finds students who match the other information provided in the boxes on the print. This is a very flexible exercise that can be changed and adapted to the different levels of stories read by the students in a particular class.

## Find Someone Who

|   |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each group of students is in charge of a BeeOasis story we read in class. Follow the instructions and find them.</li> <li>Some students have read a particular book. Find them!</li> <li>Some students like many things. See below and find them.</li> <li>Example. "likes to sleep in class." You ask: "Do you like to sleep in class." If the person says "Yes," then they sign the box.</li> <li>Find someone who...</li> </ol> |   |   |  |   |
| Stories: Brain Rules, Better than Coffee, The Rabbit, Gregor Mendel, Trial of Galileo, Drifting Cowboy.   |   |   |  |   |
| thinks a short sleep gives you more energy than a cup of coffee.  | has read the book "Alice in Wonderland."                  | grew up on a farm and came from a family of farmers.            | was called the "Singing Kid" when he was young.                    | dreams about having boys who will grow up to be lazy.           |
| needed medicine for back pain, drank too much, and marriage failed.   | has seen the movie "Titanic."                             | studied pea plants between 1856 and 1863, for eight long years. | has read the book or seen the movie, "Jaws."                       | became a professor of mathematics in Pisa and taught astronomy. |
| thinks that multi-tasking is not a good way to work or study.   | has read the book "A Christmas Carol."                    | did not have breakfast this morning.                            | plays a musical instrument, like the guitar, piano, flute, etc.    | thinks napping can help you study more than energy drinks.      |
| said that the Sun is the center of the universe. Earth moves around it.   | likes to watch sports on TV.                              | was buried or "laid to rest" in Montgomery, Alabama.            | had to stop teaching his ideas in public.                          | has a pet, a dog, a cat, a bird, or even a turtle.              |
| likes to eat "NATTO" for breakfast.   | died in the back seat of his car on the way to a concert. | wants to have a ranch and marry Elizabeth Smith.                | gave us a model for making ideal songs.                            | believes that exercise is a good way to boost brain power.      |
| thinks that it is a good idea to have an exercise machine at your desk.   | saw a rabbit in a field.                                  | has seen the movie "Avatar."                                    | showed the basic rules of genes and became the father of genetics. | sometimes drinks coca-cola for breakfast.                       |
| is an important country musician and singer-song writer.  | is a brain scientist. What's his name?                    | helped improve the telescope.                                   | was a religious leader called a "priest."                          | has a mother who played organ at church.                        |

Figure 6

## Conclusion

The nine activities explained above are just some of the many ways that online extensive reading can be used in the EFL classroom to enhance language learning. These activities can be

used separately or in different combinations in order to keep students motivated and on task. No matter how EFL instructors decide to use online extensive reading in their classes, it is important to stress to the students that nothing will improve their English language skills--reading, listening, speaking, and writing--more than extensive reading. And for students trying to improve their TOEIC or TOEFL score, their key to success lies in increasing their English vocabulary. Here again, extensive graded reading is the best way to achieve this goal. Finally, because there is such a variety of websites and texts available, teachers can choose those that best match their students' level and needs. Furthermore, websites such as BeeOasis.com offer teachers many worksheets and lessons related to the stories, thereby reducing teacher prep time.

*Dr. Douglas E. Forster is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Japan Women's University in Tokyo, Japan. He earned his PhD in film studies at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, England. His research interests include extensive graded reading to enhance EFL instruction and American film and television cultural studies.*

*Dr. Joseph Poulshock is Professor of English Linguistics and Director of English Language Education at Tokyo Christian University. He specializes in extensive reading in the liberal arts and sciences for language learners and is the Editor of BeeOasis.com.*

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# **Literature Circles in the Indonesian Context: Benefits and Challenges**

## **(A Case Study at a Private English Course in Bandung)**

**LINDA NURJATI**

*Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung State Islamic University*

This study aimed to investigate the benefits and challenges of the implementation of the literature circles program in an Indonesian context. The sample of this study was 14 students of a private English course in Bandung. The data was gathered from an open-ended questionnaire distributed at the beginning of the study to find out the students' attitude towards reading English text before the study, from the researcher's field notes, a questionnaire and from the collections of students' documents. The results indicated that literature circles could increase students' interests towards reading, and improve their speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary. In general, the students had positive attitudes towards the implementation of literature circles in their class.

Reading is undoubtedly the most important skill among the language skills because through reading students can improve the other skills (Nunan, 2009). However, the reading habit of Indonesian people is still low (Indonesian Statistics Biro, 2006). As a result, Indonesian students' reading achievement is also low (Analisis Media Indonesia, 2004).

Considering the importance of reading for the students and realizing the Indonesian students' poor reading habit described above, it is imperative that they be encouraged to be avid readers. However, it is not enough to tell the students to read a lot; they need a program which includes appropriate materials, guidance, tasks, and facilities. One of the programs that can enhance students' interest in reading is literature circles. Previous research revealed that literature circles could improve students' interest in reading and students' reading levels and performance on tests, and promote development of reading and writing skills (Brabham & Villaume, 2000; Davis et al.,

2001). Moreover, Day's (2003) and Lin's (2004) findings show that the reading comprehension and vocabulary scores in the schools where literature circles were implemented have risen consistently and significantly. In addition, since literature circles integrate the four English skills in one strand, it will also elevate the students' listening, speaking and writing skills as revealed by Scharer (1996; Kaufman et al. (1997) in Daniels (2002)).

Using the issues above as the point of departure, this study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of literature circles to enhance the students' reading interests in an Indonesian context.

### **The literature circle**

Daniels (1994) proposes the definition of literature circles as small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same story, poem, article or book. While reading each group-determined portion of the text (either in or outside of class), each member prepares to take specific responsibilities in the upcoming discussion, and everyone comes to the group with the notes needed to help perform that job. The circles have regular meetings, with discussion roles rotating each session. When they finish a book, the circle members plan a way to share highlights of their reading with the wider community; then they trade members with other finishing groups, select more reading, and move into a new cycle. Once readers can successfully conduct their own wide-ranging, self-sustaining discussions, formal discussion roles may be dropped.

This study applied the 12 basic principles suggested by Daniels (1994) with several modifications:

1. Students *choose* their own reading materials.\*
2. *Small temporary groups* are formed based on book choice.\*
3. Different groups read *different books*.\*
4. Students groups meet on *regular, predictable schedule* to discuss reading.
5. Students use written and drawn *notes* to guide their reading and discussions.
6. Students generate discussion *topics*.

7. Group meetings are *open, natural conversation about books*, so personal comments are welcome.
8. Discussion *roles are rotated*.
9. The teacher is a *facilitator*, not a group member or an instructor.
10. Evaluation is conducted by *teacher observation and student evaluation*.
11. *Playfulness and fun* are maintained in the classroom.
12. Upon finishing books, *readers share with others*, and new groups form new reading choices.

The modifications (see the \* above) were done due to the researcher's consideration of the Indonesian students' characteristics which are different from the L1's characteristics (Furr, 2004). Using a framework suggested by Morris and Perlenfein (2003) in the beginning of the literature circle program, the course consisted of four steps: 1) class read aloud, 2) small groups read the same books, 3) small groups read different book, and 4) independent book choice. Morris and Perlenfein (2003) suggest that students read the same books at the beginning of the literature circles to prepare the students with the skills to run independent groups. Schlick Noe and Johnson (1999) add that literature circles work best when the whole class read the same books. This sets the stage, provides guided practice with all of the components of literature circles which students will later apply in their groups formed around book choices.

Therefore, in the beginning of the literature circle program (in the second and third meetings):

1. Students read passages from the textbook.
2. Small groups were formed by the teacher's indiscretions
3. The whole class read the same books.

In the fourth and fifth meetings, the literature circle program then applied all of Daniel's (1994) basic principles.

In the literature circle program, aside from the basic principles, there are several notions which are important: role sheets, response logs and discussion roles.

The most important ingredient in literature circles aside from kids and books is the set of role sheets, which give a different task for each member – both for individual reading and for the group discussion. The discussions revolve around students' role sheets (Daniels, 1994). The success of each group depends on the quality of the conversation that is facilitated through the role sheets (Morris & Parlenfein, 2003).

According to Daniels and Steineke (2003), one of the most natural and open-ended ways for a reader to capture her own responses is through keeping personal log or journal. Reader's response means responses given by the readers towards what they read. It is not focusing on the questions posed by the teacher in comprehension questions. Rather, it is what they understand, what they feel towards the text (Purves et al., 1990). In the response logs, students can write their feelings, reactions, questions, opinions; they can also draw or diagram their ideas (Daniels & Steineke, 2003).

The discussion roles used in the study are discussion director, literary luminary, illustrator, summarizer, and vocabulary enricher.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research questions***

This study aimed to:

1. Investigate the benefits of literature circle programs.
2. Find out the students' perception on the implementation of the literature circle program.

### ***Research design***

This study utilized a case study with purposive sampling involving 12 Higher-Intermediate 1 students in a private English course in Bandung. This class was chosen because as High Intermediate students, it was expected that they already had adequate mastery of speaking, reading, and writing in English. Since literature circles involve reading, writing, and speaking in English, it was hoped that the students would be able to carry out the tasks given in the class because the tasks were at the level of their capabilities.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

Data collection methods employed in this study were teacher's field notes, questionnaires, and the collections of students' documents such as role sheets, reader's response logs, book pass reviews, observation sheets and individual rating sheets.

The data from observations comprised of data from researcher's field notes, students' role sheets, response journals, observation sheets, individual rating reports and book pass review sheets. The data from observation was categorized and then interpreted based on the twelve principles of the literature circles.

Data from questionnaires were categorized and interpreted to answer the research questions. Students' names were replaced with pseudonyms during the transcriptions of the data.

The data from questionnaires were analyzed in several steps. The first step was to put the questions in the questionnaire into several central themes. Then, critical analyses were applied to analyze the data. All data were presented in a condensed body of information and then were interpreted.

## **Results and discussion**

### ***The benefits of literature circles***

The data from the questionnaire disclosed that after literature circles, the students are more motivated to read in English. This can be seen from the excerpts below:

When I understand what I read I become more enthusiastic. With literature circle, I can understand what I read so literature circle makes me more enthusiastic to read in English (Sisi).

I'm already enthusiastic to read in English before, now I can be more enthusiastic since literature circle has provided me with some ways to understand it better (Tri).

This finding corresponded with Davis, Resta, Davis, & Camacho's (2001) findings that literature circles promote students' motivation to read. In addition, Fox and Wilkinson (1997) in Daniels (2002) suggest that literature circles increase students' enjoyment of and engagement in reading.

Aside from the benefit above, the participants acknowledged that literature circles are effective to improve their reading comprehension, vocabulary, speaking and writing skills:

Literature circle is effective to increase my reading comprehension because there are many stages in the literature circle which can help us to investigate the reading to be understandable (Puput).

Literature circle is a new method that we had and I think it is very good to us to boost our understanding about the text and help us to get or to increase our vocabulary or the experience out of or beyond the text that we read, because in that method we share our view with our friends based on their roles or their understanding (Ami).

After doing literature circle, my vocabulary increased, I'm more confident to speak in discussion with my friends and lecturers, and I can develop my opinion in reading and writing (Metha).

I think doing literature circle improves my speaking skills a lot since we discussed the text; it also improves my vocabulary since I got many new vocabularies. It also improves my writing skills since I wrote much in literature circles (Ima).

The finding above is similar to other researchers' findings: using literature circles has raised test scores for readers (Wallen Institute, 2006; Coley, 2006); reading comprehension and vocabulary scores (The National Council of Teachers of English, 1996, Klinger, Vaughn, Schumm, 1998),

expanded children's discourse opportunities (Kaufmann, et al., 1997; Scharer, 1996), and improved students' achievements scores in reading and writing (Daniels, 2002).

### ***Students' perceptions on the literature circles program***

The data from the observation and the second questionnaires suggested that the students perceived that literature circles have achieved what it set out to do. In general, all of the participants had positive opinions on literature circles in that they saw it as enjoyable and useful. Firstly, the literature circles give them freedom to choose the books they are going to read, which in turn better motivates them to read. Secondly, the structure of literature circles made them confident and comfortable to engage in the discussions about books. This was achieved through the small group discussion. Another factor which contributed to make a comfortable classroom climate was the teacher's roles in the literature circles; all interviewees conceded that teacher's roles in literature circles encouraged them to be more active and independent. Thirdly, all of the participants noted that the role sheets indeed are useful to help them read and discuss better. Finally, all participants agreed that the discussion stage was of utmost importance to guide them in making meaning of the text they read. One student stated that when she read alone, she could not directly discuss the part that she did not understand; therefore some questions were left unanswered. However, through discussion students can work cooperatively and collaboratively to understand the text.

### ***The kinds of adjustments necessary to implement the literature circle program in the Indonesian setting***

Basically, there are three suggestions given by the students in order to improve the teaching program. The first suggestion is regarding the short stories. Three students suggested that the teacher find more interesting stories. One student particularly suggested that the teacher find thicker stories, so there will be more interesting things to discuss (Ima).

The second suggestion is concerning students participation in the discussion as mentioned by Fisa:

Sometimes some people are silent and don't give any opinions. Everyone should read the story well and in the discussion they must give their opinions. So the discussion will be more communicative and not boring.

Group work in reading class, as suggested by Brown (2001) has many advantages in generating interactive language, offering conducive atmosphere, promoting learners' responsibility and autonomy, and a step toward individualizing instruction. On the other Hand, Wallace (1992) reveals a weakness of group discussion task that quieter or less confident students may contribute nothing.

The third suggestion is about teacher's role in the classroom.

When we share with our group, everyone has different opinion and sometimes it makes me confused. But I what feel in the last literature circle, sometimes the discussion stuck. I can say that happened because our skill is the same (with the member of the discussion) so, sometimes we don't get the point of what we discussed. Because anything that we don't understand, we can't find the answer because all of us doesn't know the answer. So, I think it still needs the participation of the teacher (Puput).

In literature circles, the teacher must be present in each group, while also leaving groups to have their own discussion, free from a teacher's supervision. However, this balance can be difficult for a teacher to achieve, especially if she or he is the only adult present in the classroom, or if certain groups end up needing more help than others (Alwood, 2000).

Moreover, students' assertions that they still need supervision may indicate that the students still need to be taught explicitly. "Explicit teaching is needed to be done in teaching literacy by giving the students the knowledge and strategies that will make them become powerful literacy users" (Wilkinson, 1999). Therefore, some teacher direct intervention is required in every educational program (Christie, 1989; Wilkinson, 1999).

## **Conclusions**

Based on the theories, the findings, and the analysis done in this study, the present study arrives at the following conclusions. The first research question is about the effectiveness of the

literature circle program in enhancing students' reading motivation. Most students stated that they were more motivated to read in English after participating in the literature circle program. This could be discerned from students' engagement in the literature circle discussions and from the result of the questionnaire data which showed that after the literature circles, the students' attitude toward reading in English had improved significantly.

The second research question relates to students' opinions on the implementation of literature circles in their classroom. In general, the participants agreed that they enjoyed doing the literature circles: Firstly, the opportunity to choose the short story which was interesting and not too difficult for them made reading in the literature circle program enjoyable. Secondly, the small group discussion also enabled them to participate more actively. Thirdly, the use of the response logs and role sheets aided their comprehension, improved their writing skills and allowed them to have meaningful discussions. In addition, the teacher's role as facilitator also made them more comfortable and confident in discussing the texts of their own choices. Moreover, the opportunities to make their own questions and make personal comments about the short story facilitated their making emotional connections with the text which, in turn, led them to become critical readers. Furthermore, the chance to evaluate their participation in the literature circles helped the students not only to participate more actively in group discussions, but also to be able to gauge their own weaknesses and strengths and use this assessment accordingly for better performance in the subsequent circles. Last but not least, participating in the discussion allowed the students to work cooperatively and collaboratively with their peers to negotiate the meaning of the texts which increased the students' comprehension of the texts as well as their vocabulary, listening, speaking and writing skills.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the study which may not be generalized into other contexts, there are several recommendations for further study. Firstly, concerning the teacher's role in literature circles, the finding showed that the students still need teacher's intervention, especially in distributing the discussion roles. As described in the details previously, some students were reluctant to do the roles of a discussion director and an illustrator. Therefore, instead of letting the students distribute the roles at their discretion, the teacher should distribute the roles herself until the students have tried all of the roles and internalized them.

Secondly, the study was conducted with a small number of participants. For the implementation of literature circles in Indonesian public schools where the number of students amounts to 40 – 50 students in a class, the teacher may utilize the help of other teachers or students who have experienced literature circles to help in the classroom, especially at the initializing stage when the students still need teacher's guidance.

Thirdly, in connection with the time span needed for literature circles which need regular and predictable meetings, further study in different settings - where literature circles can be done on a regular and predictable schedule all year long - need to be carried out. In that case the students can have time to try all of the roles, internalize them, and do the sharing sessions when the students can pull together their thinking about the books they have read and to celebrate and culminate their reading.

Fourthly, in relation to the availability of English texts which are scarce in Indonesia, the teacher may elicit students' contributions and make use of the internet for recommended literature circle books.

*Linda Nurjati* presently works for *The English Education Department, The Faculty of Teaching and Teachers' Training, Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung State Islamic University*. She gained her bachelor degree from *Bogor Agricultural University* and her master degree from *Indonesia University of Education*.

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[http://guahira.or.id/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=2](http://guahira.or.id/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=2)
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## Literature Circles: Acquiring Language through Collaboration

**KEVIN M. MAHER**

*University of Macau*

In addition to the power of extensive reading programs, I would suggest the collaborative nature of literature circles to enhance student's reading skills, to create classroom bonding, and to scaffold the meaning of difficult text passages, with teacher support. For students to experience even one of the books to be collaboratively read together, it could highly enhance a running extensive reading program. The collaborative nature of literature circles demands each student to take on a role. Each member is responsible to type their respective 'rolework.' This will be used for assessment and discussion. The experience of studying literature together, in a meaningful way, can be a very bonding and collaborative experience for students. This may enhance the reading experience, and create a shared interest in novels for discussion, which may even extend further into a much larger extensive reading program.

Day and Bamford (1998) introduced extensive reading in the second language classroom. They discussed how students, teachers, and faculties could setup a library, and encourage independent reading. In turn this could create a love of reading, which is a factor in language acquisition. This paper will further introduce a complimentary activity, to introduce literature circles to examine literature collaboratively with teacher scaffolding and peer-assistance. This could be done with either student-chosen books from the extensive reading library or a collectively chosen book by the larger group with the teacher's guidance. Its purpose would be to complement a program, and show a collaborative nature by sharing the reading experience.

By examining research on reading, particularly in reference to language acquisition, and collaboration, this paper attempts to answer the question if this is a worthwhile endeavor by the teacher. In addition, how a teacher might setup and run a literature circle to implement into the classroom is discussed. After reading this paper, a teacher can examine the value of such an activity.

## **Complementing an extensive reading program**

An extensive reading program is critical to have the books available, particularly to EFL students, who might not have as ready of access to books in foreign languages as native speakers might have in their own library. However, a teacher can utilize this library, to introduce a very student-focused activity, sharing the reading experience collaboratively through literature circles.

## **The value of students working together**

Teachers, by nature, consistently look for activities that increase students' confidence and skills, so that students become more autonomous and capable learners (Hisatsune, 2012). Literature circles are very autonomous in nature and student-centered, allowing them to take control in the learning process, with some initial teacher-direction on the outset.

Rouault, Eidswick, and Praver (2012) felt that they could also blend autonomous self-study goals by implementing Reading Circle role sheets for students to collaborate with their peers after completing graded readers outside of the classroom. From their research, they concluded that regardless if the books were originally rated as high or low interest titles, that the students found the literature circle tasks equally meaningful regardless of their preconceived notions based on the book title. They found that collaboration with classmates was interactive, and triggered situational interest regardless of the book title.

The interactive collaborative tasks of studying literature together have many meaningful side effects. Bibby (2013) states that literature circles can allow the students to interact more with the literary text, promote their L2 communicative competence, and increase their ability to interpret the text and critically evaluate the text. Additionally, Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) mostly aptly applies with literature circles. Students, who may not understand the text by themselves, can confer with peers and the teacher, to make meaning out of any difficult material. They can make sense of difficult text collectively, that they may not have been able to make a connection with on their own.

## **Meaningful input**

Krashen (1982) states that for students to increase their language skills, they do not need to focus on grammatical form as much as they need authentic and meaningful input. In some countries like Japan, Bibby (2012) states, the grammar-translation method is still implemented in language classrooms, where studying a foreign language is for cognitive coding, rather than as a means for communication. Literature circles offer this needed type of interaction, as incidental learning occurs and self-directed noticing through the meaningful input of authentic text (Shelton-Strong, 2012).

Additionally, students can link personal experiences to the content of the stories, which assists in their own personal development (Lin, 2004). Because students often change their opinions and viewpoints on various topics, simply from reading and discussing the novel, this enhances their critical thinking skills (Brown, 2009). This type of change in thinking can be meaningful to students, to challenge the way they think of things.

## **Studying the same text**

Due to the nature of literature circle, and contrary to extensive reading programs, it would be necessary that students study the same text (Furr, 2004). This however may open up larger opportunities. While graded readers are ideal for language students, as they simplify the language, collaborative reading opens an opportunity for authentic text. As a literature circle in the classroom requires a teacher to organize it, there is therefore an expert to scaffold and help students make sense of it.

Shirakawa (2012) compares authentic text and graded readers, and suggests that teachers could point out significant differences in the text. This could complement graded reader material, by examining the authentic text in the classroom. Claflin (2012) also suggests the role that teachers could have in bridging the gap between the two. Particularly, the teacher could focus on irregular grammar, slang, sarcasm and social commentary from the original literary text.

This certainly opens up other realms of reading beyond graded readers. Students, for example, can work together with a teacher to study authentic text, or may experience more collaborative opportunities enabling deeper learning and discussion.

### **Building background knowledge, cultural norms, and cultural awareness**

A secondary benefit of a shared text is that students can build cultural background knowledge through reading a novel together. Teachers can elicit questions in regards to the content of the novel. This can create a schematic understanding of the text. Literature becomes a prism to view the context of the place and time of the text, and of the target culture (Iida, 2012). Language learners may learn what the aspirations of the society from where the literature originates and their sociocultural features were (Bibby, 2013). Through this, students become introduced to the social norms and the common practices of the target L2 culture (Allington & Swann, 2009).

### **Language acquisition through literature circles**

It should be noted that Krashen (2004) is a strong proponent of studying novels for language acquisition. Much of his research supports this statement. Additionally, reading reinforces vocabulary, grammar, and culture found within the reading material (Iida, 2013). In addition to discussing text, students have an opportunity to recycle new words that they might have previously learned (Mark, 2007). Recycling vocabulary is essential for learning new words (Nation, 2009). While supporters of extensive reading use these theoretical points to support its implementation, these principles also underpin literature circles' inclusion in the language learning environment.

However, the communicative and collaboration tools are other features that can be acquired to enhance the reading process even more than extensive reading. Harmer (2007) discussed Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which stresses meaningful communicative tasks, which increase language acquisition. This interaction, according to VanPatten (2003), heightens learner's awareness, and pushes them to being more active in their input processing.

Maher (2013) connected neuroplasticity with second language acquisition theories. The findings demonstrated that communication, actively using the target language, and interacting with others, were all essential for connecting synapses and increasing language ability. This was also connected with a previous study by Maher (2012), which focused on pair work and group work, suggesting that regularly working with new and different people, increased input, and language acquisition.

## **The collaborative nature of literature circles**

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development applies to this section. Students working together increase what they can learn collectively, than what they might learn individually.

### **Literature circles scaffold by the collaboration of its participants**

When students learn in groups, students are exposed to more ideas than if they were working alone (Kanamura, et al., 2013). They often become more engaged in the reading, where they point to texts in the reading to support arguments and question each other on the deeper meaning of the text (Furr, 2007). This makes the literature circles very student-led, which deepen student interactions, build classroom community, and nurture friendships and collaboration (Daniels & Steineke, 2004).

In this sense, students essentially talk with each other more. They increase both language input and language output (Kanamura, et al., 2013). They practice and utilize the language of the book in discussion, collaboration, and output. This interacting with the text and with each other, promotes their L2 communicative competence (Iida, 2012).

### **Critical thinking through discussion**

As students examine and discuss collectively, critical thinking skills are enhanced. Students must analyze the text, question cultural assumptions, look at emotional conflicts and social dilemmas, and create value judgments (Brown, 2009). In short, literature circles promote critical awareness as students assess, discuss, and evaluate issues that arise in the text (Iida, 2012).

### **Implementing a literature circle into the classroom**

Setting up literature circles should be set up with each student in each group having a 'role' each week. This role will involve doing 'rolework,' which they will submit to their teacher, and share with their fellow classmates. This section will address with those aspects of literature circles for teachers to implement.

## **Vocabulary lists before reading**

Nation (2009) stresses the importance of recycling vocabulary as a way for students to learn new words. One way to recycle important vocabulary is create vocabulary lists or idiom lists, that students will pre-study before their actual reading.

If they study and take a quiz before their actual reading, they will encounter it again in context within the reading itself. This not only recycles the vocabulary, it also allows the students to later see it within a proper context.

## **Student roles**

Daniels (2002) lists potential student roles, such as Questioner or Discussion Leader, Illustrator, Passage Master, Connector, Summarizer and Word Wizard. Furr (2007) uses Discussion Leader, Summarizer, Connector, Word Master, Passage Person, and Culture Connector. I have modified my own assigned roles, and would like to share what they do, and what 'rolework' each of my students is assigned prior to their literature circle. Some of these I combined into my own assigned roles, as well as created new ones.

For organization of their literature circles, I create a list of five roles, and each group consists of five members. This means that the group will stay together for five weeks, for each student to experience each role. After five weeks, I construct different groups so they are later working with different people. All rolework is typed to ensure that students work on rolework at home, and not immediately prior to the beginning of the class. A literature circle generally lasts for approximately 30-40 minutes per session.

Of the following list, I only select five roles per five week session of group work. I have added many more roles, as I often change them for the next five week sessions after they have changed group members and start the process again with new members. The roles I use are as follows:

*The Discussion Leader:* Rolework consists of ten discussion questions. They must be something that stimulates good discussion. They must also be open-ended questions, as opposed to closed-ended (yes/no) questions. Rolework to be submitted: Type ten discussion questions to submit to the teacher and the group. In addition to their assessment of their questions, they will also be

graded on keeping their discussion members in a good discussion. If the Discussion Leader's group finishes too quickly, and the members are not engaged, the discussion leader will be held accountable for the group's failure.

*Real Life Connector:* Rolework consists of three connections between the literary text and that member's real life experiences. For example, if the literary text discusses an encounter with a police officer, then the real life connector may want to connect that to his own experience with a police officer. Rolework to be submitted: Type the three connections to share with other group members, as well as create questions to stimulate more discussion among other group members if they'd had similar real life experiences.

*Visualizer:* Rolework consists of either drawing or pasting Internet pictures which visualize images from the literary text. An example might be a photo of a West Virginia coal miner, a maple leaf, or a product like Bounty fabric softener. Rolework to submit: Ten images in some visual form, displayed on paper.

*Graphic Organizer:* Rolework consists of graphically organizing a timeline or other types of graphs that help group members understand the story better. Rolework to submit: The graphic organizer they will use with their group members.

*Vocabulary Wizard:* Rolework consists of ten vocabulary words that are different than the ones the teacher did for pre-reading. Not only must the student list the words with short definitions, they must also create a short matching quiz for the students to work on after they study the list. Rolework to submit: vocabulary list and matching quiz.

*Passage Person:* Rolework consists of collecting the four most interesting passages that this group member would like to discuss further with their literature circle. This might be very an important passage to understand for the overall story meaning, or it may be a passage that is difficult to understand, and student would like to discuss in further detail with group members. Rolework to submit: Four passages that are typed, and why the student chose them for discussion.

*The IF Person:* Rolework consists of four 'what if' situations to present to the group. For example, what if you were Character A, and you were in Situation B, what would you do? This assessment will be based on how creative and discussion-creating their 'what if' scenarios are for their group. Rolework to be submitted: Four typed 'what if' scenarios to discuss.

*Character Organizer:* Rolework is simply to record and organize the characters and what has happened with each so far in the story. Who is who, and what have they done. Rolework to be submitted: Character names and their character development so far.

*Culture Connector:* Rolework consists of listing four different cultural differences between the literature text and the student's native culture. Rolework to submit: The four typed cultural differences, and some discussion material based around these.

*Summarizer:* Rolework consists of summarizing the text. The student will pay attention to grammar, structure, organization, and story development focused on the week's assigned reading. Rolework to submit: Summary.

*Character Creator:* Rolework consists of this group member creating a new character to interact within the text. Any character is fine, the more creative the better, with the main idea being to systematically understand the text and characters, to successfully place the new character into the text. Rolework to submit: New character and how they interact with the text.

### **Teacher's role in a literature circle**

The teacher role is to monitor group discussions, and help the student's collectively understand the text. Particularly, the teacher should focus on problems based around language, idioms, and cultural concepts that prove difficult to understand.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, literature circles can complement any extensive reading program. Students can expand and increase their reading skills, with a concentrated collaborative effort with their fellow students to further study the culture, language, and nuances of the text. This enables a very Vygotskian approach to language learning. Students can collaborate for meaning and understanding, helping each other in the process. The teacher can additionally scaffold aspects of the reading that might be collectively difficult for many students to understand.

In short, I believe that literature circles have a strong purpose and enjoyable element to creating a student-led and language-oriented classroom. I would highly recommend any foreign language

teacher to try it in their classroom. It also gives yet another dimension to reading, one that might later be applied to individual students in an extensive reading program who might later work on understanding novels together.

**Kevin M. Maher** teaches English at the University of Macau. He has previously taught at Hongik University (Seoul, South Korea), Keiwa College (Niigata, Japan), and Kansai Gaidai University (Osaka, Japan). He currently lives in Macau with his wife and two kids.

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# **Motivating the Unmotivated: Integrating Extensive Reading and Listening through Social Media in Academic English Class of Undergraduate Students**

**IMROATUL MUHSINAH**

*Pusat Bahasa FIB Universitas Airlangga*

*Kampus B Universitas Airlangga, Jl. Dharmawangsa Dalam Surabaya*

This paper focuses on an exploration of two Social Media programs, namely Facebook and SoundCloud, used to promote ER and EL implementation and students' perception and motivation on such implementation. In this paper the writer describes strategies for the teaching of ER and EL via Facebook and SoundCloud and the results of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) focusing on task value as well as students' perceptions.. The questionnaire was given to 40 Indonesian students of the Faculty of Humanities of Airlangga University taking "Academic English 2". It directed the students to compare ER and EL implementation in the course with the so-called traditional way of teaching or strategy based teaching implemented in "Academic English 1", which they had taken in the previous semester.

It has been widely accepted that the failure in language learning, especially measured by proficiency tests, could be affected by a lack of motivation in learning the language. The expectancy-value motivation theory suggests students can be successful in language learning if they are well motivated and appreciate the value of the learning activities. In undergraduate contexts the term 'Academic English course' itself sounds boring and uninteresting, particularly for non-English Department students with low proficiency level. Moreover this kind of course subject, in Airlangga University of Indonesia, is also expected to prepare students to take a proficiency test, covering listening, grammar, and reading comprehension, as one of the requirements to graduate from the university. Therefore the curriculum in this kind of course generally directs students to master

specific skills appearing in the test. This might contribute to discouragement in the unmotivated students since the materials presented in the class are typically above their level for they still face word recognition problems. To make matters worse, this kind of class is a relatively big class with at least 40 students in it. This, in fact, discourages most teachers in handling this kind of class. As a result, rarely are lecturers enthusiastic about teaching these classes as they do not even believe that their students can make progress in learning. It contradicts the six key motivational factors suggested by Dornyei (2001), two of which cover teacher enthusiasm and feelings of encouragement from the teacher.

Having this situation and hoping to have a positive change, this author (who happened to be one of the teachers) decided to adopt a more suitable approach for her students in “Academic English 2”. A large body of experimental studies on ER has been documented that shows the profound effects of extensive reading, cited from Robb (1990) and Renandya (2011), and as EL has lately been promoted to enhance word recognition skills and increase fluency in processing spoken language and comprehension skills (Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Stephens, 2011; Renandya, 2012), the writer applied an integration of Extensive Reading and Listening through Social Media in her Academic English Class 2. This was done to, at la minimum, motivate the students to read and listen, promote ER and EL in the university, and ultimately gain the objectives of ER and EL which were to provide opportunities to develop good reading/ listening habits, build knowledge of vocabulary and structure and encourage a liking for reading and listening. At the end of the program the writer gave a survey questionnaire to explore students’ perception and motivation toward the ER & EL program implemented.

### **Academic English 1 and 2 in Faculty of Humanities of Airlangga University**

These two compulsory course subjects are designed to prepare the non-English Department students for the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) in Airlangga University. The test is comprised of Listening Comprehension, Structure, and Reading Comprehension consisting of multiple choice questions ranging from Pre Intermediate up to Advanced levels of difficulty. From the placement test results that the students took before entering the class, most students attending these courses are lower proficiency learners. However, since the class is for test preparation, the materials provided in class are suited to what appears on the test, most of which are for Pre Intermediate up to Advanced student levels.

### **Combining extensive listening and reading in “Academic English 2”**

After implementing strategy based teaching in “Academic English 1” in the previous semester and getting feedback from the students about the course, the writer offered the integration of ER and EL for “Academic English 2” to the students. Firstly, the writer proposed ideas about ER and EL including the advantages, the links and sources of potential reading and audio materials and a guide to choose online texts suitable for them as the university does not have any graded readers. Then the writer continued to explain about the project for the whole semester, what to do with the ER and EL plan as well as what to do with the materials originally given for the course.

The implementation of the combination of ER and EL in this class was based on principles which have been summarized by such writers such as Renandya & Farrell (2011) and Renandya (2012). There are similarities that can be drawn from ER and EL principles: (1) Students are allowed to choose the books/ recordings they read/listen depending on their interests, and there is not always a follow-up discussion or work in class, (2) students are encouraged to read/ listen for pleasure and should become better readers/ listeners (3) learners need simplified texts that are at their comfort zone to develop skills, and (4) both aim to improve automaticity of recognition and the chunking of text.

### **Strategies of teaching extensive listening and reading via Facebook and SoundCloud**

The writer generally used the following questions as a guide to be used by both the teacher and students to choose reading/listening materials (cited from Renandya, 2012, adapted from Nation & Newton, 2009, and Waring, 2008) either for Facebook or SoundCloud.

1. Is the material personally meaningful to the learners?
2. Does the material contain interesting information that attracts the learners’ attention?
3. Can the students comprehend over 95-98% of the language in the material?
4. Can the students listen and/or view the material without having to stop and replay the audio or reading material?
5. Can the students understand 90% or more of the content (the story or information)?

6. Does the material contain language features (words, phrases, collocations) that can engage the students' attention?

A "yes" answer to all these questions would mean that the materials are suitable for extensive reading and listening activities. A negative answer to these questions means that the materials are either incomprehensible or uninteresting.

### **ER and EL in Facebook (FB) and SoundCloud**

Facebook(FB) and SoundCloud are two different types of social media that are well-known among students all around the world. They both are popular for their unique features. FB is very social-oriented with written items and pictures, whereas SoundCloud is a good media to upload, record, promote and share audio materials. Moreover, SoundCloud and Facebook can be accessed anywhere using mobile phones and Android apps. Therefore, using these media for teaching activities will not be such a burden for students because they are already a part of their lives.

The writer specifically used Facebook for Extensive Reading activities and SoundCloud for Extensive Listening activities. However, these two social media forms can be integrated to each other. So the activities of ER and EL in those two media can be easily connected. The following outlines each step::

1. The teacher creates a group account in Facebook and another group account in SoundCloud specifically for the project. This is to record the ER and EL activities the class do during the whole semester.
2. The teacher gives her students explanation about the plan and the purpose of joining the group and gives them ideas about ER and EL, including the advantages, the links and sources of potential reading/ listening materials and a guide to choose materials suitable for them. In the FB group, what they have to do is to write the title and source of any reading materials under their own name and student ID, which are based on their interests and levels, which they read every week. In the SoundCloud group, they have to listen to any audio material uploaded or recorded by the teacher every week and then give their comment on it. They can also upload audio recording under the moderator/teacher's approval so that the recordings can be heard by the other members of the group. At the end of the semester, the list of students reading activities can be seen on the group link under each student's name

and student ID on FB and EL activity on SoundCloud. So basically these activities are done outside the class.

3. During the time, the teacher interrupts the students' regular activity by giving some other instructions, such as specifically assigning them to read graded readers or by giving assignment relating to their reading/ listening activities.
4. In the class, the activities include discussion and sharing largely based on the materials suggested by the students in the group. This is the time to practically give students examples and experience to do the ER-EL activities on their own, in which the combination of audio materials and written texts of the same topics provides opportunities for students to practice and refine their listening processes, recognize linguistic and lexical features, and increase cultural knowledge related to the target language.

### **Follow-up activities**

In the class most activities are based on the idea that students should be encouraged to simultaneously listen and read. The turn of conveying materials can be presented variously; ER material could come first and then followed by small talk over the material, and it can be continued with the presentation of EL material. The activities can also be accompanied by activities other than listening and reading.

Here are activities done by the writer to engage students with materials for the purpose of promoting extensive reading and listening (taken from Muhsinah, 2013):

#### ***You tell me yours, I tell you mine***

Teacher provides a recording of a podcast that could be a story/ talk/ conversation/ monologue and its transcript. S/he divides the script into three or four parts, based on the length of the script. Students listen to the podcast. After playing the podcast, teacher gives a piece of the story to students (approximately one third of the story). Students are instructed to guess which part of the podcast they get (is it the first, second, third, or fourth of the recording?) Students are asked to make a group consisting of students who got the same part of the piece. After being confirmed by the teacher, they start to discuss about the script they received. Then, they are split and asked to make a

new group consisting of those getting a different story. By this they can tell what they received, and then listen to the rest of the story they have not received. This activity can be ended with the discussion of the story or retelling the other part of the story that they just heard from their friends.

### ***Listen, predict and read activity***

The teacher stops at interesting points of the podcast and encourages the students to predict what will happen next. This technique supports and helps learners to think ahead and predict the contents of the next portion of the story. Then the rest of the true story can be presented in the written form, as some podcast makers provide the transcript of the audio file.

### ***Let's read, listen, read, and listen***

Teacher provides an easy listening podcast to be presented first. As soon as it stops s/he tells his/ her own (make-up) experience closely relating to the story. Next, s/he gives out a handout or displays a written story on LCD about a similar story. After students finish reading it, the teacher can ask students to share their similar experiences to the story. After that, the teacher can give another text which is still on the same topic to discuss.

### **Student perception on the implementation of ER and EL**

The questionnaire given to 40 students includes two kinds of areas. The first one is a perception questionnaire to explore students' perception adapted from Jimoh & Kawu (2012) as they use it to find out their students' perception of Computer Based Test (CBT) for undergraduate Chemistry courses examination. The second one is a motivation questionnaire adapted from Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). It focuses only on "task value" which is part of the motivation scale of the MSLQ. According to Raynor (1981) and Schunk (1991) cited from Taylor (2012), "task value" refers to an individual's appreciation for a task's relevance. Task value relates to the degree of personal interest a learner has for a given task and includes beliefs about utility, relevance, and importance.

The result of the questionnaire can be seen in the following table:

**Table1. Students' Perception on Extensive Reading & Extensive Listening Approach Implementation (%)**

|   | ITEM  | Strongly Disagree | Moderately Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Moderately Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Attending Academic English 2 was a positive experience                |                   |                     |                   | 17             | 60               | 23             |
| 2 | Academic English 2 was confusing                                      | 15                | 37                  | 23                | 25             |                  |                |
| 3 | This Academic English 2 course was efficient                          |                   |                     | 12                | 10             | 63               | 15             |
| 4 | I feel threatened by this class                                       | 25                | 31                  | 43                |                |                  |                |
| 5 | This class was undertaken in a conducive environment                  |                   | 5                   |                   | 15             | 70               | 10             |
| 6 | Academic English 2 was tedious  | 10                | 25                  | 57                | 8              |                  |                |
| 7 | This class exam was better than Academic English 1                    |                   | 5                   | 7                 | 7              | 63               | 18             |
| 8 | I prefer Academic English 2 teaching approach than Academic English 1 |                   | 2                   | 5                 | 17             | 68               | 8              |

The result in Table 1 above shows that from the respondents' perspective there is much more positive feedback rather than negative. It suggests that having an ER and EL class constitutes a positive experience (moderately agree: 60% and strongly agree: 23%). They think that this class is

efficient (63 % moderately agree and 15 % strongly agree). Finally, they prefer to have this approach than the traditional one (68 % moderately agree and 8 % strongly agree).

**Table2. Students' Motivation on Extensive Reading & Extensive Listening Approach Implementation (%)**

| No | ITEM  | Strongly Disagree | Moderately Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Moderately Agree | Strongly Agree |
|----|---|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1  | I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses. |                   |                     |                   | 12.5           | 75               | 1.,5           |
| 2  | It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.          |                   |                     |                   | 17             | 55               | 28             |
| 3  | I am very interested in the content area of this course.                    |                   |                     | 5                 | 10             | 70               | 15             |
| 4  | I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.        |                   |                     |                   | 22             | 73               | 5              |
| 5  | I like the subject matter of this course.                                   |                   |                     | 7                 | 23             | 65               | 5              |
| 6  | Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me.    |                   |                     |                   | 25             | 60               | 15             |

More importantly, as this implementation is initially aimed to motivate the students, it can be seen from the task value questionnaire (in Table 2) that those students are strongly motivated by this ER and EL approach. The answers expected to support this survey are supposed to be ranging

from slightly agree to strongly agree. There are only a few of them said that they are not interested in the content area (5% slightly disagree) and subject matter of the course (7% slightly disagree). Most of them think they will be able to use what they learn in the course in other courses (100% from slightly agree to strongly agree). They supported that it is important for them to learn the course material in the class. They believe that the course material in the class is useful for them to learn and they said they like the subject matter of the course.

## **Conclusion**

This ER and EL implementation was done to help learners with low motivation and proficiency levels, especially when they deal with listening and reading materials in an environment where graded readers are not provided. It was expected that this program could at least help learners develop familiarity with decoding problems they have been facing and improve their automaticity of recognition of text and comprehension in spoken as well as written language. The gain in the students' proficiency test results, aimed by the curriculum, was not prioritized in this study, since this program was firstly intended to promote ER-EL implementation which has not been addressed before in the university. As suggested by the questionnaire results that the students generally prefer and are motivated to have this ER-EL implementation in this class, it is expected that this approach could be adopted not only by other lecturers in Airlangga University but also in the curriculum of English language classes in Indonesia.

*Imroatul Muhsinah is a teacher and manager of test and training in Pusat Bahasa FIB Universitas Airlangga Surabaya. Recently, she has actively applied extensive reading and listening approach in her typical classes of Academic English, Academic Reading, and Preparatory Courses of proficiency tests. Email: imuhsinah@gmail.com*

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## Idioms in Graded Readers

AISSA MESSAOUDI

*Seoul National University*

This presentation is about questioning engendered by idiomatic expressions in extensive reading, and in particular its effects on graded readers. Idioms belong to phraseology, a relatively new field where debates are animated about what limits to give to the more or less fixed expressions (proverbs, collocations, and of course idiomatic phrases). It turns out that each field where idioms occur carries some interrogations, and extensive reading is no exception. In the case of graded readers, it is possible to report that idioms are largely absent at the first levels despite specialists' recommendations arguing for their inclusion from the beginning levels. Counting idioms as a single word or as many is also problematic, and further, idioms can be semantically transparent or opaque depending on the learners' native language. Transparent idioms allow learners, on condition that they know each word of the expression, to access directly to the idiomatic meaning even at a very low level. This fact argues contextualising language in accordance with reader's first language.

According to the Oxford dictionary, an idiom is “a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words”. So groups of words like as *a nest egg* (money saved for the future), *to see red* (to become very angry), *a banana skin* ([UK] an embarrassment or causes problems), *to take the fifth* ([US] to choose not to answer) can be called *idioms* or even *idiomatic expressions*. Indeed, still nowadays the terminology and the definition vary largely depending on linguists and didacticians. In education, despite recommendations of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 120), they are in general not treated as deserved by actors of foreign language teaching despite of their preponderance in daily speech.

As we could guess, all the outstanding issues related to idioms remain when applied to the extensive reading. It is evidently impossible to draw up an exhaustive list, so this study focuses only on graded readers, one of the spearheads of extensive reading, if not the primary one, to show some relevant points selected for their diversity inherent to idioms (lexicography, cross-cultural, contextualisation, etc.) to encourage people to take an interest in this part of the language which is seen as the best indicator to distinguish a native from a learner.

### **Idioms from the very first level?**

The Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF) through their Guide to Extensive Reading (2011:4) recommends, rightly, to read graded readers instead of authentic books (newspapers, magazines, novels for natives, etc.) until a certain level has been achieved. Readers are especially designed for foreign language learners, and their popularity seems not have decreased and naturally several editors have taken place in this rapidly expanding market. The other side of the coin is each publisher develops and follows their own criteria such as headword selection or word count numbers (Bankier, 2012). That is why the ERF, in part, made the ERF Graded Reader Scale.

The difference between an authentic book and a graded reader is that the latter gives priority to high frequency words at early levels. In this lexicological simplification, it appears that all complex lexemes are outright changed into simple lexemes. In other words, all idioms are substituted by literal synonyms. But according to the phraseo-didactician González Rey (2007), the teaching/learning of idioms should start from the beginning level if the learner does not want to find her/himself drowned by the 5000 current idioms among the 25 000 listed by Jackendoff in 1997 just for English language.

### **How can we count words?**

The fact of counting words takes on its full meaning when it is about idioms. How to count *to get the picture*, *to eat one's hat*, *on pins and needles*, or *to keep one's nose clean*? The most commonly adopted position would be to count each word of these complex lemma. It is a possibility however, that knowing all the individual words of an idiom does not necessary give the key to the meaning. Therefore, most (if not all) specialists of phraseology consider an idiom as one unique fixed block that does not allow any changes. Words constituting an idiom are welded to each

other. Therefore, in didactic of foreign language, it is always strongly suggested to learn idiomatic expression as one (long) unity.

### **Contextualising graded readers with the learner's first language**

Generally cited by specialists as the third variable for understanding reading (Adams, Davister, & Denyer, 1998:20) is an understanding of the context. Kramersch (1993) explains that “contexts are alignments of reality along with five different axes: linguistic, situational, interactional, cultural and intertextual” (p.46). Idioms, according to their double nature, appeal to at least two axes (linguistic and cultural) at the same time when they are included in graded readers (usually after B2/upper intermediate of the CEFRL).

Some idioms are more or less semantically transparent depending on the learners' language. For example, French speakers will understand without any difficulties *to eat one's hat* (said when someone is sure about something), *not to be someone's cup of tea* (not to be what someone likes), *to save one's skin* (to avoid problem), etc. The French language has exactly the same idioms; they respectively say *manger son chapeau, ne pas être [adj. poss.] tasse de thé* and *sauver sa peau*. Since the words involved in some idioms (like *eat* and *hat*) appear frequently and the syntax (verb+noun) is basic grammar, it would not be senseless to find these kinds of transparent idioms even at beginner levels for French learners of English. On the contrary, for Korean or Japanese learners of English language it would be semantically opaque with a risk of being understood literally

With above examples, we might think that just linguistically and culturally close languages are relevant to the inclusion of idioms at early levels. However, in fact, it is relevant even with languages from different families or with different referents. Korea and Japan share idioms in common with English (to close one's eyes = , When in Rome do as the Romans do = =ローマではローマ人のする通りにせよ, An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth = , =目には目を, 歯には歯を). Also without having idioms in common, some can be guessed thanks to referents shared by both: like a fish out of water, safe as houses, dumb as a rock, etc.

## Conclusion

It is not uncommon for learners of a foreign language to apply directly their native idioms translated word by word to their targeted language. François Hollande gave a nice example when he wrote to Obama by signing at the end of the letter “Friendly” (a mistranslation of the French sign off “Amicalement” which is equivalent to “Yours”). The French movie director Francois Truffaut’s masterpiece *Les 400 coups* was directly translated to *The 400 Blows* which means idiomatically nothing in English. “To raise hell” would have been better. Those kinds of careless mistakes could often happen because the learner is not aware of idiomaticity in his own language (González Rey, 2007).

Moreover, it is impossible for the learner to know which word additions would give an idiomatic result in a foreign language. So with careful consideration of idioms that exist in learner’s first language, the learner can unconsciously confirm that such and such idioms exist and increase her/his accidental vocabulary. Starting at the very beginning and classifying idioms by difficulty order is one of the keys to pick up a large number of idioms and be able to talk as a native.

*Aissa Messaoudi is from Paris, France, and is a Ph.D. at Seoul National University in the Department of Foreign Language Education. Aissa has master degrees in French Language Education (Denis Diderot University, Paris) and in Language Sciences (Denis Diderot University., Paris). Aissa has taught in China and South Korea. aissa81@snu.ac.kr*

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## **The Extensive Reading Foundation Placement Test: Teacher Interface**

**MARK BRIERLEY, MASA AKI NIIMURA, AKITO SUMI & DAVID RUZICKA**

*Shinshu University, Japan*

The Extensive Reading Foundation's online placement test is designed to find the appropriate reading level for learners of English as a second language who are intending to engage in an extensive reading programme either as part of an institutional course or simply for their own private study. The test employs reading passages extracted from the opening chapters of published graded readers. The teacher interface allows teachers to see the levels of their students. Teachers can create questions to accompany texts which have not yet been added to the pool of texts that the test uses. The test currently has 33 activated texts and the developers are hoping to add others. The more texts the test contains, the better its performance will become. This workshop will describe the process entailed in creating comprehension questions for the test.

### **The test**

The Extensive Reading Foundation Placement Test (ERFPT), first introduced in Lemmer, Brierley, Reynolds, and Waring (2012), and described in more technical detail in Adachi, Brierley, and Niimura (2012), has been developed to assess the reading level of learners of English. This adaptive and freely available test quickly identifies learners' levels and focuses assessment on the fluency of reading. Texts are drawn from a pool of excerpts from works of fiction published in the graded reader series produced by Cambridge University Press, Cengage Learning, Macmillan Language House, Oxford University Press and Pearson Longman. The test measures reading speed and uses comprehension questions in addition to impressionistic questions that gauge how difficult readers found the text. Each text is approximately 500 words long and is accompanied by around ten comprehension questions.

## **Student interface**

The test allows different levels of access for different users. Guests can take the test without logging in, but must first identify themselves by inputting their institution and student number or name, with the option of inputting teacher name and class code. Students can register as users on the site, which will allow them to see previous test attempts.

When taking the test, a student is first shown a sequence of paragraphs of progressive difficulty which make up a story. The student selects the paragraph at the most appropriate level, and the test uses this selection to make a preliminary estimate of the student's reading level. Next, the test chooses from the pool of available texts a story extract close to this initial level. After reading the extract, the student answers questions designed to test comprehension and then answers four questions which elicit a subjective impression of the relative difficulty of the reading experience. Test-takers cannot backtrack to remind themselves of what they have read, and once the question screen appears, the reading passage is no longer accessible. All questions, therefore, must be answered entirely from memory. This, it should be stressed, is a radical departure from the kind of reading comprehension test that most learners of English are accustomed to, and is a key feature of the test since it ensures that it does not become an exercise in the kind of intensive reading whereby the student reads the text selectively, focusing only on those sections which are pertinent to the questions. The test also takes into account the time taken to read the story extract, and prevents test-takers from progressing too rapidly to the questions. A warning is given if the reading speed drops below a predetermined level, and if the student is unable to read more quickly, the test times out.

The impressionistic questions are the same for each text. They ask how easy the student found the text, whether there were many unknown words, whether it was possible to read smoothly, and how much of the story was understood. The comprehension questions are structured as true/false statements. On the basis of the answers given to these questions and the time taken to read the extract, the initial estimation of the student's reading level is revised and another story is presented. Typically, the test employs three stories and takes around 30 minutes. At the end of the test, the student's estimated reading level is shown, along with a scale relating this level to the various published graded reader series.

## **Teacher interface**

When teachers register on the site, their names and institutions appear on the registration pages for students to select. Teachers may later see the performance of their students on the test. The test is not intended for formal assessment of students. Rather, the reading proficiency levels should be used by teachers to recommend suitable books for students, and identify weak or strong readers. Teachers can also contribute to the development of the test by adding comprehension questions for new texts. The process for this is outlined below.

## **Text selection**

Texts are selected from published graded readers, judged on the basis of vocabulary analysis to be exemplary of their level. Each publisher uses different criteria and word lists for determining level (Claridge, 2012), so rather than favour one publisher's model over those of the others, we opted to use the system of levels developed by ERF (see Waring, 2012; Schmidt, 2012). When adding texts to the test, the interface allows text meta-data to be input, including the title, publisher, level, word count and target reading speed. Questions can then be added, and the correct answer, true or false, selected. In addition, specific questions may be de-activated so that, although they will continue to appear in the test, the answers a student gives will not affect the test result. Similarly, the administrator can switch each text on or off to determine whether it will be presented to test-takers or not. Figure 1 shows part of the list of texts, and figure 2 shows the details for one text. The book titles have been obscured. The texts themselves are currently converted into images, which are then uploaded. This ensures that each student will see the text with the same font, line widths and page breaks, and also discourages test-takers from digitally analysing or copying the texts. Students do not see the titles or publishers of books, or any of the meta-data.

take test see previous test results all test results test items ERF scale users mark

create new item enter keyword

search 33 results (showing 1~33)

|    | text code | ↑ text name   | publisher | word count | level | target WPM | created  | edited   |         |
|----|-----------|---------------|-----------|------------|-------|------------|----------|----------|---------|
| on | C4        | Headline text | Cambridge | 514        | 7     | 120        | 12/10/12 | 12/11/20 | details |
| on | E5        | Headline      | Cengage   | 348        | 2     | 103        | 12/11/20 | 12/11/26 | details |
| on | P3        | Headline      | Penguin   | 344        | 9     | 127        | 12/11/21 | 12/11/26 | details |
| on | O7        | Headline      | Oxford    | 666        | 11    | 133        | 12/10/12 | 12/11/20 | details |
| on | M1        | Headline      | Macmillan | 504        | 11    | 133        | 12/10/12 | 12/11/20 | details |
| on | O8        | Headline      | Oxford    | 565        | 14    | 143        | 12/10/12 | 12/11/20 | details |

Figure 1. List of texts.

take test see previous test results all test results test items ERF scale users mark

Item details

basic data

|    | text code | text name | publisher | word count | level | target WPM | edited            | created           |
|----|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| on | E5        | Headline  | Cengage   | 496        | 5     | 113        | 13/03/15 14:39:37 | 12/10/12 00:00:00 |

text graphics

page 1 page 2

questions

|    |   |       |
|----|---|-------|
| on | The story takes place in the middle of the day.         | False |
| on | The man was very tired from running.                    | True  |
| on | Men with dogs are chasing him.                          | True  |
| on | The man thinks he can hide in the forest.               | True  |
| on | The dogs made the man run faster.                       | True  |
| on | The man stopped running when he reached the trees.      | False |
| on | The man heard the sound of a river when he was running. | True  |
| on | The man walked in the river for a few kilometres.       | True  |
| on | He found an empty house and slept there.                | False |

back

Figure 2. Information for one text.

## Question creation

Two people write true/false comprehension questions for each text, after which a third person edits and selects the question items for quality and consistency. Because the test prevents backtracking and the reading should be relatively quick and linear, the test has similarities with listening tests. We developed the following guidelines for question creation partly on the basis of the recommendations made in *Assessing Listening* (Buck, 2001):

- No difficult lexis. Vocabulary and structures in the true/false statements should be at, or below, the level of the text, and ideally should be drawn from the text itself.
- No trick questions.
- No double negatives.
- Explicitly stated or unequivocally implied information only. Especially at lower levels, questions should be limited to information that can be understood from a literal reading of the text.
- Story-based questions. Statements refer to non-trivial information relating to characters, places and events.
- In order. Questions follow the order of the information presented in the text. This is an established format for comprehension questions and students may be confused if it is not respected.
- One item per question.
- Discrete questions. Questions should not ask about the same information as other questions, or give away their answers. (Brierley, Lemmer, & Adachi, 2013, p. 24)

The true/false question format was adopted to make questions more predictable and easier to answer for students, and also easier to create for test creators, who are volunteering their time. The table below shows the relative number of items and choices with the comparable probabilities of students correctly guessing all the answers. While three five-option multiple-choice questions

perform as well as seven two-choice multiple-choice questions, the set of five-option multiple-choice questions requires almost three times more items to be written, including questions, correct answers and distractors. The answers to a true/false question have already been provided.

**Table 1. Comparison of Performance of Multiple-choice Question Formats (Brierley, Lemmer & Adachi, 2013)**

| Number of choices | Number of questions | Chance of correctly guessing all | Items to write |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 5                 | 3                   | 1/125                            | 20             |
| 4                 | 3                   | 1/64                             | 16             |
| 3                 | 4                   | 1/81                             | 15             |
| 2                 | 7                   | 1/128                            | 7              |

## Conclusion

Thus far, the test has only been available to Japanese learners of English. We look forward to learners from different teaching contexts taking the test and hope that many teachers will join the project. Please email [mark2@shinshu-u.ac.jp](mailto:mark2@shinshu-u.ac.jp) for more details.

*Mark Brierley is an Associate Professor of Foreign Languages at Shinshu University School of General Education. His interests include extensive reading and low-energy building.*

*Masaaki Niimura is an Associate Professor of the Information Technology Department of Shinshu University Faculty of Engineering.*

*Akito Sumi is a graduate student of the Shinshu University Faculty of Engineering.*

*David Ruzicka is an Associate Professor in the English Department at Shinshu University School of General Education.*

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## **Adaptation of a Topic for a Reading Test-Item Design**

**HAEDONG KIM**

*Hankuk University of Foreign Studies*

The aim of this presentation is to illustrate the way of adapting Korean adults' foreign language topic-preference on computer-based test for measuring English, Chinese, or Japanese language proficiency. On the basis of a literature review, it is stressed that the design of a foreign language proficiency test for adults should be assisted by conducting a needs analysis on test-takers' topic-preference. The results of a survey questionnaire involving 542 university students from South Korea revealed that topics related to culture, international trade, society, and language were considered to be important for designing a test-specification. The differences of opinions among the groups were found on the topics of art, food, health, science, and technology. Based on the findings, a way of adapting topic-preference to overcome difficulty in meeting the test specifications when writing an adult foreign language assessment is proposed. It is also suggested that greater emphasis be placed on adapting information on topic-preference in developing a foreign language assessment.

Among the variables that influence the difficulty of the reading test-item, unfamiliarity of a topic has been mentioned by many test-experts (e.g. Chang, 2004; Freedle & Kostin, 1991; 1993). Therefore, for the development of a foreign language proficiency test, it should be necessary to identify target learners' topic-preference or topic-familiarity, especially for designing a test-specification. This presentation aims to illustrate how a test writer can adapt adult foreign language learners' topic-preference on computer-based test. To do so, the results of a needs analysis on the topic-preference of Korean adults who are studying English, Chinese, or Japanese as a foreign language will be reported. The findings will be valuable data for adapting topic-preference to overcome difficulty in meeting the test specification when writing an adult foreign language assessment.

## Literature review

In the literature, when a “topic” is defined as non-operational, it is regarded as a “pre-theoretical notion of what is being talked about and written about” (Brown & Yule, 1983; White, 1988). So there are difficulties in dealing with the topic as a basis for scientific study. First, unlike grammatical categories, there are no objective formal characteristics which enable any particular topic to be defined unambiguously and to be categorized (White, 1988). Second, topics are defined by meaning, not by form, and meaning is a slippery concept to work with, so ultimately single topic-headings can mean many things to many different test-takers and test-writers. Third, a number of different ways of expressing the topic in text will effectively represent a different judgment of what is being written about in a text. From the point of view of an individual-difference study, the problems of non-formality (the first problem) and variety of meanings (the second problem) in a topic could be justified because it might allow us to investigate how and what individual learners interpret a single topic. Holec (1987) has already observed that foreign language learners usually express “like or dislike” of a topic or theme. And there have been studies collecting learners interests on topics (e.g. Tomlinson, 1995). The third problem led us to distinguish a topic's intrinsic interest (to learners) from learners' internal interest in the same topic. To enhance the authenticity of the foreign language test, the test-writers may utilize a topic's intrinsic interest. In this case, a test-writer's task is dealing with the same old topics with a different slant. All these aspects indicate there may be a creativeness by test-writers in displaying a topic in language testing items. To operationalize a topic as a variable, there are basically two ways of looking at topics: a topic as a unit of analysis and a topic as part of the discourse process (Van Lier, 1988). In the first sense, one test-item can be identified as one topic. When identifying a topic as a unit, learners' preferences or opinions can be collected. Categorization of topics (e.g. Harris & Murtagh, 1996) is not attempted and is beyond the scope of this paper.

In this paper, “importance” refers to learners' feelings of importance or usefulness of a topic for their English language learning and testing. Thus, it may be equated with Harp and Mayer's (1997) definition of “cognitive interest”. It can also be regarded as learners' “perceived value”. To avoid terminological confusion, let us stick to the term “importance”. Different synonyms of importance or usefulness are found in literature. Instead of using “usefulness”, Green (1993) uses the term “effectiveness”. In collecting learners' self-reporting response on a task, Murphy (1993) uses the term “usefulness”. According to his definition, “usefulness is glossed as 'good for you', to be explained as 'helps you to learn something, to understand something, to make something easier

for you', or 'not good to me', that is 'unhelpful, difficult, unclear'" (*Ibid.*). The referents of "importance" or "usefulness" in this presentation is collected via learner-questionnaire.

With regard to the notion of "needs", much of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) literature gives an operational definition. Let us adapt one from Hutchinson and Waters (1987). They sub-divide what the learners need to do in a target ESP situation into necessities, lacks, and wants. In their explanation, "necessities" are determined by the demands of the target situation, "lacks" refers to the gap between target proficiency and learners' existing proficiency, and "wants" means wishes or views perceived by learners themselves. In line with their definition, we collected "wants" (on a topic) on an evaluation of English proficiency.

For the development of a new proficiency test, test-designers should set up the background and objectives of the development project as well as the organization of the relevant parties (Downing, 2006). The following issues should also be addressed: the required evaluation elements for the test, the test formats, an analysis of the type of test questions and a model for such test items, and the construction of a system for optimal operation in future test administrations on a regular basis (Bachman & Palmer, 2000). Test item development research should be carried out in four stages: (i) test item development upon the revision of the test-formats, (ii) evaluation and review, (iii) test item selection and review, (iv) finalization of the test-items. The research should develop a test item development guidebook, and develop a test item submission program which enables the test writers to submit developed test items into the database (Hughes, 2003). As part of the basis for these test-development procedures, research requires an analysis of the survey questionnaire for identifying target test users' opinion about topics for the test (Weir, 2005).

### **Data collection**

A total of 542 subjects participated in a survey for test-development. The data were collected at language learning classrooms at H University in Korea during the first semester in 2012. Among them, 152 learners were studying English as a target foreign language, 120 learners were studying Chinese, and 101 learners were studying Japanese, totaling 362 learners.

These responses are utilized in the present analysis. The majority of the respondents were female ( $n = 258$ , 65%). 81 students (21%) were first grade students, 106 (27%) were second grade students, 117 (29%) were third grade students, and 92 (23%) were fourth grade students. Among the

152 English studying learners, 88 learners (58%) answered that they were studying English more than one hour per day. Among 120 Chinese studying learners, 69 learners (57%) answered that they were studying Chinese more than one hour per day. Among 101 Japanese studying learners, 78 learners (77%) answered that they were studying Japanese more than one hour per day. All three groups responded that they had more difficulty in the productive skills of speaking and writing than in the receptive skills of reading and listening.

The survey questions were obtained from a preliminary review of related research and co-test developers. The questionnaire includes the following questions: "How far do you agree with the following reasons for taking a foreign language test?", "Which language skills should be included in a foreign language test?", "What is an appropriate time for taking a test for each skill?", "What is a desirable number of test items for each skill?", "How far do you agree with taking the test via a computer?", "What is an ideal number of items between business and academic questions?", "How far do you agree with using sound and pictures for the test?", "What type of score reporting do you prefer?", "Which of the following is an appropriate time for score-reporting?", "How far do you agree with using the test results?", and "How far do you agree with the importance of using the topic for the test?"

A total of 24 topic-items were asked, scored on a 5 point Likert scale. The questionnaire consisted of twelve topic-items related to business and twelve topic-items related to academics. The reliability for the questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach's alpha. It was found that the Cronbach's Alpha for the business-related items was .91 and the Cronbach's Alpha for the academic-related items was .86, indicating high levels of reliability for the responses.

The data collected were analyzed using the SPSS statistical package. ANOVA analyses were used to evaluate the differences among the three groups. The responses on the questionnaire were regarded as the dependent variables and the groups were regarded as independent variables.

## **Results**

For this paper, responses from the learners were analyzed to find the learners' perspectives of the newly developed test for adults. These responses might provide valuable information contributing to improve the overall quality of the test, especially related to choosing topics for particular test items.

**Table 1. Topic Preference: Business**

| <u>Topic-item</u>     | <u>English</u> |           | <u>Chinese</u> |           | <u>Japanese</u> |           | <u>SS</u> | <u>df</u> | <u>MS</u> | <u>F</u> | <u>p</u> |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
|                       | <u>Mean</u>    | <u>SD</u> | <u>Mean</u>    | <u>SD</u> | <u>Mean</u>     | <u>SD</u> |           |           |           |          |          |
| Culture               | 4.14           | .735      | 4.24           | .841      | 4.18            | .829      | .626      | 2         | .313      | .493     | .611     |
| International Trading | 3.94           | .872      | 4.09           | .809      | 3.73            | .893      | 7.093     | 2         | 3.546     | 4.824    | .009*    |
| PR                    | 3.70           | .898      | 3.74           | .943      | 3.64            | .926      | .567      | 2         | .284      | .335     | .716     |
| IT                    | 3.71           | .931      | 3.62           | .948      | 3.49            | .940      | 2.876     | 2         | 1.438     | 1.630    | .197     |
| Economic Policy       | 3.59           | .831      | 3.52           | .882      | 3.52            | .925      | .379      | 2         | .189      | .248     | .781     |
| Business Management   | 3.59           | .854      | 3.48           | .895      | 3.42            | .934      | 1.698     | 2         | .849      | 1.072    | .343     |
| Marketing             | 3.47           | .938      | 3.53           | .927      | 3.42            | 1.002     | .744      | 2         | .372      | .410     | .664     |
| Personnel Management  | 3.45           | .874      | 3.40           | 1.007     | 3.34            | .999      | .654      | 2         | .327      | .360     | .698     |
| Autonomy              | 3.32           | .919      | 3.30           | .968      | 3.24            | 1.049     | .437      | 2         | .218      | .231     | .794     |
| R & D                 | 3.30           | 1.001     | 3.31           | .982      | 3.21            | .962      | .655      | 2         | .327      | .338     | .713     |
| Production Management | 3.14           | .875      | 3.12           | .956      | 3.08            | 1.002     | .160      | 2         | .080      | .091     | .913     |
| Accounting            | 3.01           | 1.000     | 2.93           | .953      | 2.92            | 1.043     | .589      | 2         | .295      | .297     | .744     |

As the results indicate, only one topic-item, “international trading” reveals a statistically different preference among the groups. Ad hoc tests show there is a significant difference between Chinese language learners and Japanese language learners. Chinese language learners showed a more positive response. There are overall high correlations in levels of agreements. The correlation of business topic-preferences between English and Chinese language learners on 12 business topics is  $r = .98$ , between Chinese and Japanese language learners is  $r = .97$ , and between English and Japanese language learners is  $r = .98$ .

In case of the preferences on academic topics, statistical differences were observed in the topics of “art”, “food”, “health and sports”, “science” and “technology”. In “art”, “science” and “technology”, there are significant differences between English language learners and Chinese language learners. English language learners showed more positive responses. In “food” and “health and sports”, there are significant differences between Chinese language learners and Japanese language learners. Chinese language learners showed more positive responses.

**Table 2. Topic Preference: Academic**

| <u>Topic-item</u> | <u>English</u> |       | <u>Chinese</u> |       | <u>Japanese</u> |       | <u>SS</u> | <u>df</u> | <u>MS</u> | <u>F</u> | <u>p</u> |
|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
|                   | Mean           | SD    | Mean           | SD    | Mean            | SD    |           |           |           |          |          |
| Society           | 4.10           | .740  | 4.12           | .779  | 4.10            | .729  | .029      | 2         | .014      | .025     | .975     |
| Language          | 4.03           | .792  | 4.09           | .802  | 4.22            | .753  | 2.042     | 2         | 1.021     | 1.657    | .192     |
| Literature        | 3.94           | .729  | 3.81           | .999  | 3.87            | .849  | 1.000     | 2         | .500      | .678     | .508     |
| Art               | 3.92           | .759  | 3.63           | .909  | 3.73            | .860  | 5.643     | 2         | 2.821     | 4.010    | .019*    |
| History           | 3.88           | .877  | 3.69           | .951  | 3.69            | .961  | 2.959     | 2         | 1.480     | 1.728    | .179     |
| Leisure           | 3.71           | .899  | 3.90           | .754  | 3.67            | .875  | 3.263     | 2         | 1.632     | 2.273    | .105     |
| Food              | 3.71           | .858  | 3.90           | .736  | 3.48            | .903  | 9.041     | 2         | 4.521     | 6.520    | .002*    |
| Health & Sports   | 3.70           | .890  | 3.76           | .820  | 3.41            | .887  | 7.123     | 2         | 3.562     | 4.743    | .009*    |
| Science           | 3.56           | 1.006 | 3.17           | .973  | 3.27            | .919  | 10.585    | 2         | 5.293     | 5.607    | .004*    |
| Technology        | 3.50           | .948  | 3.15           | 1.019 | 3.17            | .970  | 9.955     | 2         | 4.977     | 5.204    | .006*    |
| Philosophy        | 3.37           | 1.024 | 3.10           | 1.042 | 3.18            | 1.031 | 4.864     | 2         | 2.432     | 2.285    | .103     |
| Religion          | 2.96           | 1.079 | 2.86           | .999  | 2.97            | 1.035 | .800      | 2         | .400      | .369     | .692     |

Although several statistically significant differences were observed among the groups in terms of academic topic preferences, there are high correlations in levels of agreement. The correlation between English and Chinese language learners on 12 academic topics is  $r = .88$ , between Chinese and Japanese language learners is  $r = .89$ , and between English and Japanese language learners is  $r = .92$ .

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of the survey results, the following suggestions are provided. It is necessary to provide specific guidelines to item writers to develop more sufficient items reflecting the adult-learners' topic-preferences, especially in creating the reading text. When it comes to the issue of business or academic language proficiency on the test, most respondents want the balance between a business test and an academic one. Based on the findings, we need to use an appropriate text enhancing the academic aspects of the reading section and also promoting the business aspect of the reading section. Concerning the issue of computer based operations, careful consideration has to be given to improving the technical aspects of the newly developed test with regards to text fonts, graph styles, and illustrations of the reading text. The newly developed test is intended to assess the proficiency of the adult test-taker in real-life academic and business contexts, and therefore, the test results may have a direct bearing on the recruitment decisions of businesses or on the administrative decisions about promotions or graduation. This points to the importance of the validity of the tests, and calls for a scientific and systematic development and administration of the test.

Based on the findings and generalizations, the following suggestions are made for the future direction of the newly developed test. First, the test formats should be continuously modified for improvement based on the intensive and extensive analysis of the test-takers' needs. Based on the results from the needs analysis, test-item development, especially writing texts, is an ongoing process, and the efforts to improve the validity of the test format are continuously called for. Second, it is important to have a workforce of qualified skillful test item developers in order to ensure the quality of the test items. Therefore, it is imperative to train test-developers in referring to the results of the needs analysis. Thus, it is important to continue to develop training programs for test-writers. Third, it is necessary to construct a database system for text-data input, text-data selection, and text-data extraction. By doing this, we may avoid the danger of overlapping topics in a single set of the test. Fourth, in order to administer the tests it is essential that a stable server maintenance system, a practical test item design system, and a reliable computer programming system be developed. In

particular, the construction of a stable and certified test administration system is most urgently called for in developing a computer based test for adult-learners. It is also necessary to organize a workforce unit to execute the tasks in an effective manner.

**Haedong Kim** is a professor of English language teaching majors in the Graduate School of Education at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, South Korea. He received his MA and PhD in ELT from Essex University in UK. His current research interest includes ELT materials, testing, and curriculum.

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## **The Longer, the Better? Teaching Experience in ER**

**ATSUKO TAKASE**

*Kansai University*

**KYOKO UOZUMI**

*Kobe International University*

Needless to say, instructors' attitudes toward ER practice and tactics to motivate learners to keep them reading can be the key to success. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the length of teaching experience in ER class affects the teachers' attitudes toward ER practice and influences their ER classes. A total of 110 teachers from various institutions participated in the survey in 2012. Among them 74 respondents were ER practitioners: 37 have taught ER for less than three years and the other 37 have experienced three or over three years of ER practice. In this study the differences of these two groups in attitudes toward ER were analyzed. The results illustrated several differences. One example is that more experienced teachers found their students' improvement in English proficiency as well as their own than novice teachers.

Extensive Reading (ER, hereafter) has been gaining popularity for the last two decades, and it has been rapidly spreading across Japan for the last decade, in particular. To date, many empirical studies have been conducted, and effects of ER on various linguistic skills have been reported. Some examples are on reading fluency and rate (Beglar, Hunt, & Kite, 2011; Iwahori, 2008), reading ability (Cirocki, 2009; Elley & Mangubhai, 1981; Mason & Krashen, 1997), writing ability (Irvine, 2011), vocabulary acquisition (Kweon & Kim, 2008), improvement in general English proficiency (Takase, 2008; 2012; Takase & Otsuki, 2012; Yamashita, 2008) and gains in TOEIC scores (Nishizawa, Yoshioka, & Fukada, 2010). More importantly, ER is effective in improving

learners' motivation to read and positively affects English learning and gains in self-confidence (Nishizawa, Yoshioka, & Fukada, 2010; Takase, 2008).

In addition to the empirical studies on improvement in the various skills and positive effects mentioned above, Japanese learners and teachers have benefited from numerous ER materials which have become available during the last decade, as well as guidebooks (Furukawa et al., 2010) and ER teaching manuals (Sakai & Kanda, 2005; Takase, 2010). In this helpful environment, a number of teachers in various institutions in Japan have implemented ER in their English classes.

Despite the spread of ER and easy access to an abundance of ER materials during the last decade, however, major concerns of the teachers who are still hesitant or intimidated to implement ER in their class remain the same for these fifteen years. Macalister (2010) states that in spite of teachers' positive beliefs about the impact of ER on language learning, ER is not included in the classroom program. According to the Kyoto Reading Research Project Team (Hashimoto, et al., 1997), which conducted a survey on high school teachers, major reasons for not implementing ER in high school curriculums included 1) cost, 2) limited class time, 3) no support from colleagues, 4) the different role of the teacher, 5) time-consuming work including book management, 6) students' lack of reading proficiency, 7) not enough evidence of its effectiveness. Surprisingly, exactly the same top five reasons appeared in the responses of the surveys conducted 10 years later by Takase (2007), and fifteen years later by Uozumi and Takase (2011) as non-practitioners' concerns in implementing an ER program.

On the other hand, some of the practitioners' actual problems with running an ER program, which were some of the questionnaire items in the 2007 survey, have been greatly reduced over five years (e.g., the cost for purchasing books and time-consuming work including book management). Uozumi and Takase (2011) state that this "may be due to an increase of information about ER, which possibly caused administrators' interest in ER, ...materials and book guides that could make it easier for the practitioners to manage books and encourage students to read." However, problems which are directly related to teachers, such as "difficulty of the different roles of the teacher" or "no time for teachers' own ER" have seemed to become bigger, as teachers involved in ER increased in number.

For any teaching methodology, teachers play a prominent role in a success for learners' achieving the goal. ER is no exception. ER teachers' roles carry more appreciable weight by serving as a role model and as a facilitator. The importance of teachers being role models is often

emphasized by many scholars and researchers (e.g., Day & Bamford, 1998; Nutall, 1996). Day and Bamford state:

Teachers, native and nonnative alike, can read some of the books in the classroom library... Teachers can then introduce and genuinely recommend the best of the books to their students. By sharing their enjoyment with students... teachers are serving as powerful reader role models (p. 136).

They also state that “teachers who tell their students how important and useful and enjoyable reading is, and yet are never seen reading, may be undermining themselves” (p. 136).

Takase (2006) reported that anxiety concerning teachers’ roles will dissipate when teachers are exposed to ER. This is true to some extent. Unfortunately, however, in some circumstances teachers’ participation in ER with learners as a role model is not considered to be a teachers’ role. Many administrators and teachers themselves are likely to think that teachers should always be teaching something, or otherwise they are not doing the teachers’ job. Also Uozumi and Takase (2011) reported one of the responses to the open-ended questionnaire that the greater the success of the ER program gets, the stronger the colleagues’ pressure against ER became.

Recently, in addition to being role models, several practitioners reported other roles of ER teachers or tips for a successful ER program, which had been learned from their own ER teaching experiences or reading an abundance of ER books (e.g., Akao, 2013; Okura, 2013; Takase, 2010; Yoshizawa, Takase, & Otsuki, 2013). Akao (2013) reported that her students gained more on the post-test as her experience as an ER practitioner increased. We assumed that the length of ER practice of a teacher makes a difference in a successful ER program. The difference between the novice ER practitioners and experienced practitioners is the subject of investigation in this paper. Thus, the following research questions were posed:

1. How different are the positive effects of ER between novice ER practitioners and experienced practitioner?
2. How different are the problems within ER programs between novice ER practitioners and experienced practitioners?

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

A total of 110 teachers from various institutions participated in the survey at three different seminars and workshop in 2012. Among them 74 (M: 20, F: 54) respondents were ER practitioners and the rest 36(M: 12, F: 24) were non-practitioners of ER. The institutions where the practitioners work varied: elementary school and children's English classes (28%), secondary school (26%), colleges and universities (28%), and others (18%). Half of the practitioners ( $N = 37$ ), had less than three years' experience of ER practice in class (Novice Practitioners: NP). Out of 37 respondents, 16 (43.2%) of them had less than one year experience of ER practice in class. On the other hand, the other half of the respondents ( $N = 37$ ) had experienced three or over three years of ER practice (Experienced Practitioners: EP), and as many as 27 respondents from Group 2 (73.0%) had practiced ER for over 5 years. Concerning Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), 56.8% of the respondents from NP and 67.6 % of those from EP had in-class time for SSR.

### ***Procedure***

A questionnaire used in the former studies (Takase, 2007; Uozumi & Takase, 2012) concerning teachers' attitudes and motivation toward ER were revised and administered at three different seminars and workshops in 2012 held in Tokyo and Osaka (Appendix A). The responses were analyzed for comparison between novice practitioners (less than three years) and experienced practitioners (three or over three years).

## **Results and discussion**

### ***Positive effects in ER programs***

Comparing the positive effects reported by novice ER practitioners and more experienced practitioners, we have found that experienced practitioners have shown bigger effects on 8 items out of 10 than novice practitioners.

Table 1 shows the positive effects that the novice practitioners (NP) and experienced practitioners (EP) found in practice.

**Table 1. Differences in Positive Effects of ER Programs between Novice Practitioners (NP) and Experienced Practitioners (EP)**

| <u>Items</u>   | <u>NP</u> | <u>EP (%)</u> |
|--|-----------|---------------|
|  |           | <u>(%)</u>    |
| 1. Students enjoyed reading.                                     | 89.2      | 81.1          |
| 2. It has become easier to teach students of different levels.   | 54.1      | 48.6          |
| 3. Students have become confident in English.                    | 37.8      | 48.6          |
| 4. The teacher read a lot of books.                              | 32.4      | 35.1          |
| 5. Students' English proficiency has improved.                   | 27.0      | 62.2          |
| 6. Library books have been checked out in quantity..             | 24.3      | 35.1          |
| 7. Teacher's English proficiency has improved.                   | 16.2      | 32.4          |
| 8. Communication between Students and the teacher has increased. | 16.2      | 21.6          |
| 9. Positive effects on other skills of English have been found.  | 13.5      | 27.0          |
| 10. Students have started to read books in L1 (Japanese).        | 8.1       | 16.2          |

As Table 1 shows, for most items except Items 1 (“Students enjoyed reading”) and 2 (“It has become easier to teach students of different levels”) EP had higher percentage of responses than NP. The biggest difference is found in Item 5 (“Students’ English proficiency has improved”). It should be noted that as many as 62.2% of EP responded that students’ English proficiency improved, whereas only 27 % of the NP found improvement of their students’ English proficiency. Similarly, 48.6% of the EP responded affirmatively for improving students’ self-confidence (Item 4), whereas affirmative responses from NP were 37.8%. Moreover, 27% of the EP gave affirmative responses to

Item 9 (Positive effects on other skills of English have been found), whereas half of the NP (13.5%) responded affirmatively.

The results for Item 7, “Teacher’s English proficiency has improved” indicate only 16.2% of the NP responded affirmatively, while affirmative responses of the EP doubled (32.4%). It might be expected that the longer teachers practice ER in class, the more they read various materials which their students read. Thus, teachers’ own English proficiency will improve.

Considering these results, it can be assumed that experienced teachers are likely to have some tactics to motivate their students to read extensively and thus improve their self-confidence and English proficiency. Teachers may have learned these tactics from firsthand experiences in ER classes over years, as mentioned before (Akao, 2013).

### ***Problems in ER Programs***

As Table 2 illustrates, big differences between novice teachers and experienced teachers are found in Item 2, (“Difficulty of evaluating students), Item 4 (“Uncertainty of the effects of ER”), and Item 8 (“Difficulty of the new teachers’ roles”). As they are all directly related to teachers themselves, it is not surprising that the group of experienced practitioners have lower rates of anxiety than those of novice teachers’ group. In particular, concerning Item 4, none of the experienced teachers doubt the effectiveness of ER. Otherwise, they would not have continued practicing ER for so many years.

**Table 2. Differences of Problems in ER Programs between Novice Practitioner (NP) and Experienced Practitioners (EP)**

| <u>Items</u>   | <u>NP</u><br><u>(%)</u> | <u>EP</u><br><u>(%)</u> |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Little budget for ER materials                          | 56.8                    | 43.2                    |
| 2. Difficulty of evaluating students                       | 37.8                    | 10.8                    |
| 3. Time-consuming teachers' work including book management | 32.4                    | 37.8                    |
| 4. Uncertainty of the effects of ER                        | 29.7                    | 0.0                     |
| 5. Some reluctant students who do not read                 | 27.0                    | 29.7                    |
| 6. No time for teachers' own ER                            | 21.6                    | 27.0                    |
| 7. Few students to continue ER after the course            | 18.9                    | 32.4                    |
| 8. Difficulty of the different role of the teacher         | 18.9                    | 8.1                     |
| 9. No support from colleagues                              | 16.2                    | 13.5                    |
| 10. Limited class time in the curriculum                   | 8.1                     | 16.2                    |
| 11. Little progress in students' proficiency               | 8.1                     | 8.1                     |

On the other hand, Item 7 (“Few students to continue ER after the course”), and Item 10 (“Limited class time in the curriculum”) are problems that cannot be fully controlled by teachers themselves, since fewer high school and universities leave class management to the discretion of individual teachers. In the majority of classes in colleges and universities, teachers are not assigned to teach the same students for more than one course. This makes it difficult for contemporary young people to continue ER, unless high schools and universities reach a consensus on implementing ER in their curricula and encourage students to continue reading as a whole school.

## Conclusion and implications

This research investigated differences of attitudes toward extensive reading between novice ER practitioners (less than three years) and experienced ER practitioners (three years or over) from various institutions. Although non-practitioners' anxiety for not implementing ER in their class seem unchanged for over 15 years, the effects of ER that practitioners perceived and the problems that they are actually facing while practicing ER are likely to change depending on the length of ER practice. The biggest differences in effects of ER between novice practitioners and experienced practitioners were the learners' improvement in English proficiency and confidence, as well as teachers' proficiency improvement. On the other hand, the biggest differences in problems they have faced or are facing are concerns related to different roles of the teacher including the evaluation of students. Experienced practitioners do not think they are a big problem. They seem to have self-developed through long experience. However, problems related to curriculum or the school educational system cannot be solved by teachers' experience.

In conclusion, in order to persuade teachers to implement ER and continue practicing in their class three strategies should be considered: 1) raise awareness among administrators and education boards, 2) provide easier environments for extensive reading to be practiced in all of English education from the beginning, and 3) provide teacher in-service education. With this system, ER teachers' self-development through experience would work even better, and eventually learners' English proficiency would improve.

*Atsuko Takase, Ed. D., has been practicing extensive reading (ER), extensive listening (EL) at high school and several universities for almost 20 years. Her research interests include ER/EL, ER motivation, teachers' motivation, shadowing, effects of ER/EL on speaking, writing, and vocabulary acquisition,.*

*Kyoko Uozumi teaches at Kobe International University. Her research interests include Extensive Reading (ER), teachers' motivation, effects of ER on speaking proficiency, and reading materials. She has used ER with university students for seven and half years.*

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**Appendix**

(Original Questions in Japanese, Questionnaire Translated into English)

\* Questions to those who have not yet introduced ER in class

1) What positive effects do you expect in the implementation of an ER program?

1. Students will enjoy reading.
2. Students' English proficiency will improve.
3. Communication between students and the teachers will increase.
4. Students will become confident in English.
5. More library books will be checked out.
6. Teachers will read a lot of books.
7. Students will read more books in Japanese.
8. Teachers' English proficiency will improve.
9. Teachers will get used to reading, which will facilitate other English lessons.
10. Positive effects on other skills such as writing, listening, and speaking are expected.
11. It will become easier for teachers to deal with students with various levels.
12. Communication among students will increase.
13. Lessons will become more enjoyable.

2) What problems do you expect in the implementation of an ER program?

1. Limited class time in the curriculum.
2. Little budget for ER materials.

3. No support from colleagues.
4. Not sure of how to practice ER in class.
5. Students' low proficiency level for ER.
6. Time-consuming work.
7. No time for teachers to read books.
8. Few students to continue ER.
9. Some reluctant students.
10. Little progress in students' proficiency.
11. Not sure of how to evaluate students.

\* Questions to those who have already introduced ER in class

1) What were the positive effects of an ER program?

1. Students enjoyed reading.
2. Students' English proficiency has improved.
3. Communication between students and the teachers increased.
4. Students became confident in English.
5. More library books have been checked out.
6. Teachers have read a lot of books.
7. Students read more books in Japanese.
8. Teachers' English proficiency has improved.
9. Teachers got used to reading, which facilitated other English lessons.
10. Positive effects on other skills such as writing, listening, and speaking are expected.

11. It became easier for teachers to deal with students with various levels.
12. Communication among students increased.
13. Lessons became more enjoyable.

## **Blending Technologies in Extensive Reading: MoodleReader in a Japanese University EFL Program**

**DON HINKELMAN**

*Sapporo Gakuin University*

Electronic and paper-based technologies are not necessarily contentious and can co-exist in a blended learning environment. This paper takes a critical approach to analyzing technology in extensive reading programs, not from a tool perspective, but from the view of a classroom ecology that is configured by administrators, teachers, and students. Starting from a case study of an EFL university reading program using paper readers combined with an online ER management system (MoodleReader), I analyze how electronic processes, paper media, and face-to-face techniques are blended to create an optimal system for a local learning environment. By applying a framework of blended learning dimensions (Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012), curriculum planners can project the necessary conditions for the adoption or rejection of tablet-based readers. The collaborative authoring of quizzes in MoodleReader is a particularly interesting phenomena as it co-exists with the proprietary intellectual property of published readers.

Predictions that computer-assisted language learning may become paperless (Robb, 1997) and that EFL reading will move to tablet computers (Meurant, 2010; Huang, 2013) have yet to become mainstream practice. Learning environments for extensive reading have continued to emphasize paper books instead of e-books. Why has paper as a media for learning been so persistent, despite more than a decade of CALL experimentation? Is there a possibility that paper readers will continue as a standard for ER programs or will e-books replace them? This study examines these questions through a single case study of an ER program that utilizes library-loaned, commercially-published paper books combined with an open source, open content learning management system (LMS) that provided incentives and administration for an out-of-class blended learning environment. In this study, I will use ecological perspectives, actor network theory, and

critical theory to analyze the data and make implications for future development and design of technologies for extensive reading programs. The first section reviews past research on ER technology design and proposes a framework for inquiry. The second section outlines the research design and methodology. A third section provides a description of the case study environment and data from the teachers in that program. Finally the design of the technologies used in that program is analyzed from three post-modern frameworks.

### **Extensive reading technology design**

Extensive reading programs have been typically described in terms of teaching management and learning outcomes. However, there is little insight into the changing technologies used in ER and how those technologies affect the learning design of the ER program. By reviewing the literature in CALL, there are useful studies that provide clues to technology design in the general field of language learning (Bax, 2003; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Chambers & Bax, 2006). However the assumption in most CALL studies is that paper is a “traditional” or “analog” technology that deserves to be replaced by computer-based, online, or mobile media and tools. In a critique of research of computer-assisted language learning, Warschauer (1998) applies the critical theory of technology initially proposed by Feenberg (1991) and concludes that most CALL research operates on a bias of utilitarian view that technology is a neutral aid to learning. Using critical theory, he argues that technology is not neutral but alters the process of learning and indeed alters the nature of the media itself. New forms of media require new literacies and new skills for mastering the new media. This transformation of the learning landscape means technologies may not always have positive effects but often unpredictable outcomes and unintended consequences. For example, Cutrim Schmid (2006) found that technologies such as interactive whiteboards were used for learning purposes never intended by the manufacturers. Furthermore, in an earlier study, I provided evidence that paper texts used in EFL classrooms were not being directly replaced by electronic technologies, but rather the use of paper was repositioned as handouts, surveys, forms, and displays (Hinkelman, 2009).

At this point, it is important to define a meaning for technology, because electronic tools are not the only type of technology and indeed a perspective of “single devices” operating in isolation is not useful for studying educational environments. In this paper, I take the view that technologies are a complex network of online and face-to-face processes within a classroom learning ecology. Brown (2000) offers the view that classrooms and programs are “learning ecologies” that are

unique to institutions and van Lier (2004) applies the ecological framework to issues facing applied linguistics as a whole. Recently, Lam and Kramsch (2002), Lafford (2009), and Egbert et al. (2009) suggest that processes and ecologies must be the way CALL environments are viewed.

When a learning ecology view is applied to extensive reading programs, a brief review of several technology designs shows three very separate ecologies. First, there are designs that are completely paper-based. Books are checked out of a school or classroom library, read by students, and reports and activities made in notebooks or in class. Second, there are a few rare cases of internet-based designs. In this scenario, e-books are purchased by students and read on a notebook or tablet computer. A third option is what I call a “blended design.” Blended learning designs combine online and face-to-face learning into one package. In extensive reading, blended designs often include the use of paper books with an online management system. One popular open source management system is ‘Moodle’ where a free application called “MoodleReader” or “MReader” (Robb, 2012) has been developed to add open content (activities such as quizzes) in a protected e-learning environment. This study examines a case of MoodleReader integrated into the oral communication curriculum of a Japanese EFL program.

### **Research design and methodology**

The site of this study is a mid-level university in northern Japan, Sapporo Gakuin University (SGU), which includes an EFL program for 60 English majors. This site was chosen because the researchers directly teach in the EFL program, originally instituted the ER program three years ago, and provide an insider’s perspective to the question of the study. This university’s overall EFL program is divided between communication related courses taught by native English-speaking teachers and reading/listening English classes taught by native Japanese speaking teachers of English. The reading/listening classes used intensive reading approaches and even translation-based approaches to English education. Those teachers were reluctant to attempt an extensive reading approach so the communication teachers added an ER component to a first year program called “Oral Communication A/B.” The direct participants included three teachers who taught three separate sections of the communication class. Indirectly, sixty students were involved as their reading data was collated into the LMS reports.

Studies of learning ecologies often use an ethnographic methodology. An ethnographic methodology uses thick description of the learning environment and attempts to understand the

culture of learning among the students and teachers (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). The descriptions in this study were purposive, or in other words, focused on the research question of technology design. Therefore, learning outcomes are not the main concern and not examined in detail. A weakness of this design is that opinions of teachers outside of a rather enthusiastic teaching team were not included. Therefore, this should be considered a preliminary study with further research needed, such as interviews to include views of ER teachers who do not use MoodleReader and evaluations from students. Data for this study included online teacher journals, reports from the online management system, and teacher observations of the in-class activities.

### **Case study of the MoodleReader learning ecology**

The process of learning in the SGU ER program can be divided into out-of-class activities and in-class activities. I will use an ethnographic description based on a framework of five dimensions of blended technologies proposed by Gruba and Hinkelman (2012). In this framework, dimensions of technology are analyzed according to pedagogic: 1) actions, 2) timings, 3) groupings, 4) spaces, 5) texts, and 6) tools. Pedagogic action categories are defined according to Laurillard (2002) as narrative, interactive, adaptive, communicative, and productive.

#### ***Out-of-class ER activities***

Students were given a goal of 30,000 words read to receive an excellent “A” mark and 15,000 words as a passing grade for the reading component of the class. The reading component was set at 20% of the total grade. This semester goal is roughly equivalent to reading two short books per week (1000 words per book). Students started at a similar level (about 1200 headwords) and read at their own rate and chose books of their own interest from the university library. After reading a book, the students took a ten-question quiz in a class website that was accessible to enrolled students from any computer on or off campus. An individual’s book quiz was automatically produced from a question bank of forty questions randomly selected by the MoodleReader plugin. The MoodleReader plugin module was installed as a feature available to any course in the SGU Moodle LMS site, so a separate instance of MoodleReader can be added to each class website where the teacher chooses to do extensive reading. Students must search for the book title and the publisher on the site before being given the quiz. The quiz is an open-book but time-limited quiz which determines whether the book was read or not. A passing grade of 50% was required to receive points and only one attempt was given to pass the quiz. Upon passing, the students were

awarded a colored “stamp” of the book cover that was displayed as a collection of awards for each student. Another incentive was a colored bar indicating progress in word counts toward the semester goal. Students could take the quiz anywhere on campus, at home, or on a mobile device through a web browser. The results of the program were that all sixty students read an average of 28,500 words and ten students read over 50,000 words.

### ***In-class ER activities***

In addition to homework activities, teachers gave in-class activities to orient students to the program, encourage participation, and express what they learned. The initial orientation included taking students to the library to check out books and recommend levels of books to them. Although MoodleReader has an automatic setting to force students to periodically go up a level, this setting was turned off and students monitored their own levels. Occasionally, teachers would display whole class reports of reading points on the large overhead screen. Finally, in six of fifteen classes, students were given 15 minutes at the end of class to do book quizzes. This was possible because each room was equipped with wired computers along the periphery of the classroom - also called a “blended learning space” (Hanson-Smith, 2007). Three times during the semester, the teachers did individual consultations with students about their progress as they did book quizzes. On website screens, both students and teachers were shown personal data on the number/title/level of books read and the quantity of words read. Finally, in oral communication exercises, students gave oral book reports and joined small group discussions about the books they read.

The ecology of this graded reader program was based on paper books and LMS management and incentives. Yet the physical tools and media were not the only aspect of the technology. Teachers configured activities to include both asynchronous tasks outside of the classroom and synchronous tasks in the classroom. In addition, the texts displayed in the program were a mix of private, proprietary printed materials along with public domain materials used online. Table 1 summarizes the varying dimensions of technologies used the ER learning ecology at SGU.

**Table 1. Blended Technology Dimensions of an Extensive Reading Program, 2013**

| <u>Technology dimension</u> | <u>Out-of-class description</u>  | <u>In-class description</u>  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Actions                     | Student actions were primarily reading books, a narrative action, and taking quizzes, an interactive action (see Laurillard, 2002) | Teacher actions included giving instructions (a narrative action). Student actions involved discussion (a communicative action) and presentations (a productive action). |
| Timings                     | Asynchronous reading and quiz-taking at a pace of two books per week.  | Once-a-week synchronous discussions, instructions, and presentations.  |
| Groupings/Spaces            | Individual work. Spaces were primarily at the students' homes, in the campus library, and in open computer laboratories.           | Pair work, small group work and listening to whole class presentations. Located in small classrooms with 24 desks and chairs, and 24 computers along the walls           |
| Texts                       | Paper texts were used in graded reader format. Handouts and online reports provided management.                                    | Texts were primarily paragraph-style short stories with some illustrations. Online reports were numeric charts.  |
| Tools                       | Paper books and online LMS.  | Large screen with projector for showing LMS reports. Movable desks and chairs for small group discussions.   |

## **Critical assessment of technologies in extensive reading**

This description of the ER program at Sapporo Gakuin University shows that a blended language learning environment provided a stable and productive ecology for reading within an EFL communication class. What is not immediately clear is why the blending of paper books and online LMS was found to be optimal for this particular institution. Although notebook and tablet computers have been available for over a decade and recently at reasonable cost, there has been little movement to adopt them for use. In this section, I analyze this phenomenon from several perspectives: learning ecologies, actor-network theory, and critical theory.

From an ecological perspective, online and face-to-face technologies interact and affect each other. They cannot be examined in isolation and only the whole ecosystem can be evaluated, not the individual components. The weekly rhythm of individual out-of-class homework and face-to-face class work was facilitated by the LMS reports and the immediate feedback for individual students as they took quizzes and progressed to their goal. Motivation was encouraged by a shared group purpose and the private awarding of points and badges, and the public announcement of goals and display of the class list and students' word counts. Students embraced the ER program, and even less motivated students avoided the temptation to cheat. The MoodleReader plugin was also moderately secure, so that it was easier and more satisfying to do the work than to try to trick the system. Clearly, the online component brought social features to the program and made the face-to-face and individual book reading a more positive experience. Blending the automated and non-automated aspects of the program was the teacher's job, which deserves a more detailed examination of the "ecology" of what worked best for each teacher. Oliver and Trigwell (2005) suggest that "variance" in the ecology is a possible explanation for success of blended learning. That might mean that students of differing learning styles benefit from the multiple "styles" of learning provided in the SGU ecosystem. These variances include switching from asynchronous to synchronous communication on a weekly basis, and a mix of individual, pair, and group work.

The choice of technologies depended on the economics of open source internet software (Moodle), freely available content (MoodleReader quizzes), and previously purchased library books (graded readers). According to Latour (2005), this illustrates an "actor-network" that can be maintained as a stable system until a change is introduced that affects the politics and economics of this system. A key political factor in this system is setting of goals and the requirement of students to achieve the goal in order to attain certain grades in the class. The key economic factor was the ownership of the property rights of the individual books and the computer system. While the code

for the software LMS and the MoodleReader plugin was open source, the books themselves were published under proprietary copyright. Books were prohibited from being copied. However, through a library system, the books could be shared and thus an individual did not have to purchase the average of twenty books to achieve the program goal. If each student would have had to spend an average of USD10 or JY1000 per book, students would have found it impossible to afford. Yet that is what the current e-book system requires—each book be individually purchased and owned. Until a system of e-book sharing is possible, the economics and politics of book ownership will prevent any move to tablet-based reading. In the meantime, an online management is sufficient to provide social incentives and secure institutional management.

### **Implications and conclusions**

In this study, the learning ecosystem of commercially published graded readers combined with open source online management and open content quiz content proved to be an optimal system at Sapporo Gakuin University. Teachers were able to add an extensive reading program into a currently existing EFL communication course. Despite reluctance to adopt ER by the reading instructors in the university, other teachers who were committed to the educational benefits of ER were able to easily add the module to the institutional LMS and utilize a large existing library of graded readers. Ecological and critical theories indicate that the political and economic factors maintain a blended system of ownership of learning materials and technologies. E-books may provide promising features and these electronic technologies may grow, but only if the question of shared usage is solved and in-class activities are adapted to fit the new semiotics of holding a tablet compared to a paper book in the hand.

***Don Hinkelman** is an associate professor of foreign language education and intercultural communication at Sapporo Gakuin University, northern Japan. His research focuses on the design of blended language learning environments and particularly how face-to-face and online technologies evolve in the process of institutional innovation. He co-authored “Blending technologies in second language classrooms” and contributes to open source development of the Moodle LMS. E-mail: hinkel@sgu.ac.jp*

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## **The Five-Minute Drill for Big Reading**

**JOSEPH POULSHOCK**

*Tokyo Christian University*

In this study, four different groups of learners were required to read for at least 3 or 5 minutes per day and track this reading on a paper form. This tracking system was called the 3 or 5-minute drill. The purpose was to see if reading a small amount every day would kick-start reading behavior and increase reading word count totals, which were tracked on a separate online system. In spite of being correlational, the results seem to indicate that the drill may help increase reading amount, and after reflection and analysis, it seems that using the drill in short bursts at appropriate times may help learners read more extensively.

We know from research and experience that extensive reading (or big reading) can help language learners improve all language skills. However, the “big” part is a challenge for many learners. If things go well, they may enjoy reading, but to improve holistically, they need to read big but often do not, so the question is how can teachers help students read more?

One solution is to have students commit to reading for at least 3-5 minutes daily. This “five-minute drill” can act as a catalyst for students to read for more than 3-5 minutes daily, but the key is for them to start their reading engines and let them run for at least 3-5 minutes.

This study looks at four separate groups of Japanese university students who practiced variations of the five-minute drill. After looking at various ways of doing the drill, the basic conclusion is that the drill may help increase student reading behavior, and a limited use of the 3-5 minute drill may help kick-start and increase reading.

This data is correlational and observational. Other explanations exist for why students might read more while they are doing the drill (and they are discussed in the final section). However, this study supports the need for more research about how to improve this technique, which may increase student reading and therefore help improve their language skills.

## **Background and method**

This study looks at four different groups of university students in Japan. Group A consisted of 66 intermediate level students from three separate classes. Their reading word count data and 3-minute drill data were combined. During the spring term, they did not do the 3-minute drill, (- drill) and during the fall term, they did the drill (+ drill) only for the last 6 weeks of the school year, from December 6, 2012 to January 17, 2013.

Group B consisted of 64 intermediate students combined from three classes who were required to do a 5-minute drill daily for a whole semester from April 12, 2013 to July 11, 2013. For this group, reading word count totals were compared with time spent on the 5-minute drill

Group C consisted of 12 high intermediate to advanced students at a Japanese university. They were required to do the drill for 5 minutes per day between April 12, 2013 and July 7, 2013. Group D consisted of 12 lower intermediate students at a Japanese university. They also were required to do the drill for 5 minutes per day between April 12, 2013 and July 7, 2013.

For all groups, reading word count totals were counted as around 30% of the total grade for the course, and the 3 or 5-minute drills also counted for about 10% of the total grade. Students in every group kept track of their word counts on an online tracking system, and they kept track of their 3-5 minute drill activities on a paper form, which the teacher gave them at the beginning of the school year.

The teacher reminded students periodically about their requirement to do the 3-5 minute drills, and students were constantly encouraged to do as much reading as they could. The teacher also constantly spoke about the power of reading and gave examples of stories to read and enjoy. At the end of the terms, student word count data was taken and totaled from the online system, and the students turned in their 3-5 minute paper drill forms.

## **Results**

For Group A, the results superficially look positive. These students did the drill for 3 minutes per day during the last 6 weeks of the second semester, which is in the autumn in Japan. The grand word count total for all students in autumn when they did not do the drill was 3,587,182 words, and the grand word count total for all students during the drill period was 5,354,231 words.

Before the drill period, students averaged reading 54,351 words. During the drill period, students averaged reading 81,125 words. This appears like a significant increase.

However, the result becomes more complicated when we compare it with results from the spring semester (See Table 1 below). During the first part of the spring semester, all students only tracked 896,706 words, but they tracked 7,049,731 in the second half of the first term. For the first part of the spring term, students averaged reading 13,586 words per student, and in the second part of the spring term (equivalent to the drill period in the fall), they averaged reading 106,814 words per student. Apparently, students got off to a slow start with their reading or word count tracking. This helps make sense of the low word count for the beginning of the year.

Overall however, the drill may have had an effect, and even the word count totals for the fall when the drill was used (8,938,817) were higher than for the spring (7,946,437) when the drill was not used. Nevertheless, there are many potential explanations for why the word counts went up, and all these factors will be discussed in the last section of this paper.

**Table 1. Word Count Totals and Averages for Group A – Drill and + Drill**

| <u>Spring</u>            | <u>Word Counts</u> | <u>Fall</u>            | <u>Word Counts</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Spring Total             | 7,946,437          | Fall Total             | 8,938,817          |
| Spring Ave               | 120,401            | Fall Ave               | 136,478            |
| Spring A (- drill) Total | 896,706            | Fall A (- drill) Total | 3,587,182          |
| Spring B (- drill) Total | 7,049,731          | Fall B (+ drill) Total | 5,354,231          |
| Spring A (- drill) Ave   | 13,586             | Fall A (- drill) Ave   | 54,351             |
| Spring B (- drill) Ave   | 106,814            | Fall B (+ drill) Ave   | 81,125             |

Group B did a 5-minute drill daily for a whole semester from April 12, 2013 to July 11, 2013. We can see some general parallels between time spent doing the drill and word count totals. For example, 46 students claimed to do the drill for at least 70 days out of the 90 reading days in the term, and the average word count per student for this group was 243,005 words for the term.

The 11 Group B students who tracked 60 days of reading in the term averaged 233,168 words, and the 6 students who tracked 55 days or less of reading averaged 172,015 words for the term. For these students, there seems to be a general parallel between word count totals and time doing the 5-minute drill. Again, in the last section, we will look at the numerous problems with these parallels.

**Table 2. Drill Days and Totals for Groups B-D**

| <u>Group</u>    | <u>Drill Days &amp; Totals</u> | <u>Drill Days &amp; Totals</u> | <u>Drill Days &amp; Totals</u> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Group B         | 70 Drill Days                  | 60 Drill Days                  | 55 Drill Days                  |
| Ave Word Totals | 243,005                        | 233,168                        | 172,015                        |
| Group C         | 70 Drill Days                  | 60-65 Drill Days               | 55 Drill Days                  |
| Ave Word Totals | 321,193                        | 248,814                        | NA                             |
| Group D         | 70 Drill Days                  | 55-64 Drill Days               | 40-54 Drill Days               |
| Ave Word Totals | 104,180                        | 65,015                         | 51,424                         |

For Group C, which was the most advanced group, we see the following data. For an 83-day reading period in the spring of 2013, the average word count total for all students was 286,530 per student. These students were required to do the 5-minute drill for the whole term. For those who read at least 70 days during this period, the average total word count was 321,193 per student. For those who claimed to read between 60 and 65 days, the average word count total was 248,814 per student.

For Group D, which was the least advanced group, we see the following data. For an 83-day reading period in the spring of 2013, the average word count total for all students was 58,902 per student. These students were required to do the 5-minute drill for the whole term. Two students read for at least 70 days during this period, and their average total word count was 104,180 per student. Four students claimed to read between 55 and 64 days during the term, and their average was 65,015 words per student. Three students claimed to read between 40 and 54 days during the term, and their average word count was 51,424.

## **Discussion**

For each group, we see parallels between doing the drill and greater word counts, but obviously, the results are far from conclusive. Since the results are correlational, it is possible that the students simply improved on their own. They got better as they read more, and the drill had no effect.

Moreover, since the results are self-reported, it is entirely possible that students inflated both their word counts on the online tracking system and on the forms where they tracked the drills. It should be noted that the online word count tracking system did provide an accountability factor that has been shown to work in other forms of self-assessment (Ariely, 2008).

Ariely (2008) reported that before giving self-reports and tests, if subjects are asked to recall a “moral code” of sorts, this has been shown to significantly decrease cheating. Therefore, every time students tracked word counts, they were asked if the information was accurate and true, and therefore it is assumed that this helped to decrease word count inflation.

For the 3-5 minute drill tracking forms, this approach for decreasing cheating was not used, and perhaps in the future, on the top of the form in large print, students could sign a small contract that says they promise to report times accurately, and every time they use the form, they would likely see the “contract” and be reminded to report honestly.

Besides inflation and straightforward improvement, for Group A, it is possible that students read more at the end of the term when they were doing the drill not because of the drill but because they were cramming. Students tend to postpone homework and extensive reading as well. Therefore, as the end of the term approached, bringing pressure for their grade, they could have simply read more, and this not because of the influence of the drill.

## **Conclusion and ideas for future research and practice**

The 3-5 minute drill seems like a good idea. It is based on the proverbial thought that “getting started is half the job” and that if students start reading and get into the flow of it, then they will read more. The 3-5 minute drill could be an effective kick-starter for increasing reading amounts.

Having varied the length of the drill from 3-5 minutes, and having tried it with various levels of students and over different time periods, we can see some ways to improve the drill. For one, doing the drill over a whole term does not seem sustainable in that students may tire of it or simply forget to use the form.

On the other hand, teachers could do the drill at the beginning of the academic year in order to kick-start reading early and get students into the flow of reading sooner rather than later. If teachers become aware of lulls in student reading, then they can implement the drill for a short period of time, to try to increase reading during a lull or a slump.

Teachers can also use the drill for a short period of time (2-3 weeks) with individuals or groups of students who are not reading. The teacher can give these students extra credit (or not) for doing the drill in order to help them kick-start their reading.

In general, students who faithfully keep track of their reading times on the drill record sheet are probably already disciplined, and they can do the drill without the support of other students or the teacher. Less disciplined students may have trouble doing the drill simply because they are less disciplined, and they need to learn discipline first before they can benefit from the drill.

Teachers can help these students perhaps by “socializing” the drill. For example, the teacher can carefully monitor how well students are doing the drill. If some students are having trouble doing it, the teacher can provide support, suggesting good books to read and challenging the student to make progress on the drill and on reading.

Teachers can also have groups or pairs of students do the drill together, which would provide social support and opportunities for students to talk about what they are reading. This would require a form that would allow for peers to work on it together, but it serves as another way in which the 3-5 minute drill might help students.

Regarding researching the drill, there are many problems. Since the data will always be correlational, we can never know for sure if the drill actually helps increase reading amounts. However, we can add rigor to studies that use variations of the drill.

For example, teachers can crosscheck drill data with questionnaires and interviews with students. Simply asking students what they thought of the drill is an important point that is missing from this study. Teachers can also split the class into groups, with one group not doing the drill and the other group doing it. This would be especially interesting at the beginning of the term to see if the drill can kick-start reading sooner for students who do it.

It is also possible to correlate word count data with drill data to see if doing the drill more correlates with reading more. This is similar to what was done with Groups B-D in this study except that statistical correlations were not used. This is interesting, but reading speed is a factor that researchers will need to consider. If we can correlate reading speed, drill data, and word count data, this might also help us to increase the rigor of studies about the 3-5 minute drill.

In the end however, extensive reading is not about doing the drill. If we really promote extensive reading, then we care most that our students will read a lot. And if we really love reading and know its power, then we will not only want our students to read a lot because it is good for their language skills. We will want them to read a lot because it has the power to change their lives.

Too many language activities give students a page of reading and then 5 pages of comprehension, vocabulary, and discussion questions. Look at a typical reading textbook, and this is what you will see. Activities sadly become more important than reading. We can say the same thing about the 3-5 minute drill. We don't want it to become the focus. If we use it during a 2-3 week period for a few seconds each day (as long as it takes students to note reading times), then that may be enough for students to kick-start more reading and begin to enjoy more fully all the benefits of big reading.

*Joseph Poulshock is Professor of English Linguistics and Director of English Language Education at Tokyo Christian University. He specializes in extensive reading in the liberal arts and sciences for language learners and is the Editor of BeeOasis.com.*

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## **How a Japanese Junior College Added ER to its English Curriculum**

**TETSUSHI TAKEMORI**

*Miyagi University of Education*

**YOKO KODAMA**

*University of Shimane Junior College*

**KRISS LANGE**

*University of Shimane Junior College*

We started a new English curriculum including ER in 2012. We will report the history and results of our ER program. Starting as an extracurricular ER activity, we continued to develop ways to encourage students to read more by developing our program. We discuss how we made use of ER in our regular classes such as American and British Literature, English Writing, and Graduation Project. We also discuss our new courses such as Extensive Reading A and B, and Extensive Listening with the results of improvements in the students' English proficiency and in their attitudes toward reading. Our results are based on survey results, class observations, and proficiency test scores.

### **General background of English education at our two-year college**

In 2007, we restructured the department and built a new curriculum. The general trend was toward fewer English classes. Reading classes, including literature classes especially, were cut back. However, other practical skills courses such as speaking, listening, and writing courses were maintained. These curriculum changes were in response to the perceived needs of our students who seem to be more interested in practical English.

### **Changes we have found in students' English ability**

Our most reliable and consistent means of evaluating our students' reading proficiency is with the TOEIC test that we give twice a year. The results of the TOEIC test before restructuring our curriculum show that a larger part of the gains made were in the reading section. For example,

in 2006 our first and second year student total gains on the two tests were 11.1 points. Within these 9.4 points were on the reading section but only 1.7 points were on the listening section. The same thing can be said in 2007 where the total gains on the two tests were 19.4 points with 14.3 gained in the reading section and just 5.1 in the listening section. These proportions clearly favor gains in reading.

After restructuring, the proportion of TOEIC reading and listening score gains began to change. We began to notice lower gains in TOEIC reading scores. For example, in 2008, almost all of the gains made between the first and second TOEIC tests were from the listening section (32.8 points) and students only gained an average of 0.4 points on the reading section. Again in 2010, of the 21.5 points gained on the second TOEIC test, 24.7 points came from listening and there was a negative gain of 3.1 points on the reading section. We presumed that our students' reading proficiency was in decline possibly due to factors such as the restructuring of the curriculum with the decrease of English reading courses.

## **History of using ER**

### ***Starting ER with the graduation project group***

Lange started using ER in his graduation project seminar with a group of 6 students. The results were very promising. The average reading amount was 608,000 words a year, which means 304,000 words in one semester. One student read 1,291,000 words in one year. Another read 809,000 words. And both of their TOEIC reading scores increased by about 80 points during the year. In addition, the average gains on the TOEIC reading section of the 6 graduation project students were on average 41 points higher than the average gains of the rest of the second year English majors.

### ***Extracurricular Activities from the second semester of 2009 to the first semester of 2011***

Being encouraged by the results of graduation project, Takemori, Kodama, and Lange moved toward wider implementation of ER for our students. We received a special research subsidy from the University of Shimane in 2009 & 2010, with which we could provide our students with more graded readers and leveled readers for ER. From 2011 to 2013, we received a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the government. With this grant we increased the books for ER in our

library. Our first activity was to introduce ER to the students through an extracurricular activity. The following is the history of the extracurricular activities from 2009 to 2011.

### *ER Club 1*

In the second semester of 2009, we organized the ER club and advertised it in various English related courses. The activity of the club was simply to get together in a reading room in the college library and read graded readers and leveled readers using the SSS style ER method. SSS style means Start with Simple Stories and students were encouraged to read a lot of easy books without using dictionaries, skipping parts they didn't understand and switching to a different book at any time if they wanted.

The number of participants was 14 with 9 English majors and 5 Japanese majors. We gathered twice a week for 45 minutes, 28 times a semester. Two meetings were used for the pre- and post-tests. They generally liked reading in this way so they come to the library regularly and read. The average reading amount was 62,000 words with the highest of 85,000 and the lowest of 42,000. We figured out the reading speed as 76 words per minute (wpm), calculating the words read and the time spent. We gave the students the pre and post cloze tests to measure the increase in their reading proficiency. The students made average gains of 6 points on the post test. The 9 English majors who participated regularly made an average gain of 27.2 points on the reading section of the TOEIC test.

The average rate of attendance was 81%. Some students came regularly but others didn't. This may be because we met after classes and it may have been a little too late for some of them as one student commented in a questionnaire. We realized that it was important to consider the meeting times to maximize attendance.

### *ER Club 2*

The activity period for ER Club 2 was in the first semester of 2010. We gathered twice a week for 45 minutes, 26 times a semester. Two meetings were used for the pre- and post-tests as in Club 1. The number of participants was 8 first year students with 7 English majors and 1 Japanese major. One second year Japanese major continued from Club 1. She was the only one to continue even though many students from Club 1 indicated that they would like to continue doing ER in the questionnaire. The average reading amount was 57,000 words with the highest of 87,000 and the lowest of 30,000. Using the same calculation as in Club 1, we figured out their reading speed as 86

wpm. One of the students who continued from Club 1 read at 100 wpm. This gain from the average 76 wpm in Club 1 indicates the importance of continuing Extensive Reading.

On the same cloze test we used in Club 1, students made an average gain of 15 points. The one second year continuing student from Club 1 made the highest gain of 27 points on the post-test. This student read over 150,000 words in Club 1 and 2. Since she was a Japanese major who took very few English courses, we may be able to attribute these gains to ER.

The average rate of attendance was 61%. The meeting times were the same as that of Club 1. Due to scheduling constraints we had to set the club meeting times after classes again. It was especially difficult to adjust the meeting times to the needs of all students of different majors and years.

#### *ER Club 3 and ER Club 4*

ER Club 3 was in the second semester of 2010. We tried to make several improvements in Club 3 to increase attendance and the reading amount. After seeing the result of a rather low attendance rate for Club 2, we set the meeting session as 4 times a week to give choices for the students to fit it within their own class schedules. But having so many options for meetings was actually detrimental to attendance. The easier they could come, the fewer times they came. We also tried a new test to measure the effectiveness of ER. The cloze test that we had been using took about 60 minutes and students felt this was too long. So, we used a new comprehension test from the publisher Penguin Readers. Although we gave the comprehension pre-test to the students, we could not give them the post-test due to the scarce attendance of the students.

For the activities of Club 3, we made an original ER recording booklet called “The First Stage” which already includes the Yomiyasusa Level (YL - a readability score for Japanese students), number of words, and the titles of the ER books we have in our library. The students could save time recording, especially with the lower level books, by using this booklet. They also used ready-made, blank recording books after they finished “The First Stage” booklet.

Club 4 was in the first semester of 2011. We gathered twice a week for 45 minutes, 29 times a semester. We tried to find the best possible times for students to meet between classes. The attendance rate was only 36%. We think this illustrates just how difficult it can be to maintain attendance in a club activity.

## *In-class Reading in Writing Classes and Making Use of Graded Readers in Literature Classes*

### *Writing classes*

In order to share the beneficial effects of ER with more students Lange added in-class ER to his writing courses for first and second year students in the first semester of the 2010 academic year. Writing 1 for first year students had 14 students. Writing 3 for second year students had 8 students. Students were given 20 minutes for reading in class. The first year students' average reading amount was about 46,000 words for the semester while the second year students read about 31,000 words on average. If we roughly figure that students read 80 wpm (based on the ER Club's calculations of 76 and 86 wpm) during the 20 minute in-class ER time, students would have read about 21,000 words, so both groups must have also spent time reading outside of class. Some of the students taking the course were also regular ER Club members.

Similar implementation of ER was also carried out in Lange's 2011 writing courses. Students were given over twice as much time, 45 minutes, in the first year writing classes for in-class ER. This increase in time for reading, however, did not lead to a proportional increase in words read. The average reading amount was 60,000 words. If students read at 80 wpm using the same calculation above to find how many of those words were read in class, we see that about 47,000 words could have been read in class. This figure is only 1000 words more than the first year students' average of 46,000 words in 2010 Writing Class, even though they had half as much time to read in class. The first year writing course students in 2011 did in-class ER for 45 minutes but spent less time reading outside of class compared with those of 2010 who did in-class ER for 20 minutes.

This in-class ER was a good chance for more of our students to experience ER. The average word totals were not that large but some students developed the habit of reading extensively with one student reaching over 180,000 words.

### *Literature classes*

In 2010 and 2011, Reading British and American Literature B was offered to second year students in the second semester. About 35 students took the courses. *The Christmas Carol* (Oxford Bookworms Stage 3, 10,385 words) was assigned as homework over the winter vacation in both years. After the vacation students took a comprehension test on the book. The average score was 80%.

In 2011, Reading British and American Literature C was offered to second year students in the first semester. 15 students took the course. *Moby Dick* (Macmillan Readers Level 6, 34,000 words) was used as the textbook for the course. In class students focused on understanding the plot, characters and general content of the novel. In the questionnaires given during the last class period, 60% of the students felt that they could understand more than 80% of the story. About 70% of them enjoyed reading the story.

In 2012, Reading British and American Literature C was offered to the first year students in the second semester. About 35 students took the course. *Pocahontas* (Oxford Bookworms Stage 1, 5,300 words) was assigned as homework over the winter vacation. After the vacation students took a comprehension test on the book.

In these literature courses we expected that they could enjoy the story while improving their reading proficiency by reading famous works of literature.

### ***Findings through activities from 2009 to 2011***

Through ER Club activities since 2009, we could obtain the basic information about reading rate and average amount of words students could read. For example, based on the club data, the average number of words they can read if meeting twice a week for 45 minutes, 25 times in a semester is 60,000 words. Student reading speed is about 80 wpm.

We gave a questionnaire to determine student attitudes towards ER and any effects they might have noticed. Some of their responses were consistently high. For example, many students felt that their resistance to reading English lessened, reading books was fun and they'd like to continue to do ER. Nevertheless, student rates of attendance to the ER Clubs were rather low after Club 1. Also, we should take note that only one student continued from Club 1 to Club 2. This might have been partly because of the difficulty in arranging an ER club meeting time when students could consistently attend. Another reason we can think of is that second year students at a two year college must focus on job-hunting or transferring to a four year university so their time is limited and continuing extra-curricular activities is difficult.

It is said that if students read more than 100,000 words they will notice that their reading comprehension will improve. And, reading over 150,000 words, their reading speed will increase. One student who read over 150,000 words in ER Club 1 and 2 showed higher reading speeds and

better reading comprehension. So, an important first step to continue ER is to help students read over 100,000 words.

## **New courses for ER and extensive listening**

### ***Establishing the New Courses***

Starting in 2012 we put ER Course A in the first semester for first year students, and ER Course B and Extensive Listening (EL) in the second semester for first year students into our curriculum. Through ER club activities since 2009, we could gather the basic information on what we can expect students to do. For example, the average number of words they can read over a semester, average gains we can expect on proficiency tests, how much students can maintain interest in ER and continue with ER. This information was valuable when designing these new courses.

By creating courses for ER we could concentrate more directly on motivating students to read and ensure enough time in class for reading the minimum amount of words. By setting ER courses in the first and second semesters, students have a chance to continue reading throughout the year. This creates the continuity needed to reach word totals as high as 100,000.

### ***Implementing the Courses***

We started “Extensive Reading A”, “Extensive Reading B” and “Extensive Listening” classes for the 2012 entering students. Almost all of our students majoring in English took these courses but there was a wide range in the number of total words read in each course. The total reading/listening goal for each course was roughly 100,000 words. There were a few students who were able to achieve this goal.

Extensive Reading courses A and B both give students about 45 minutes of in-class reading time. Based on the average reading speed of the students, we figured out the minimum number of words they can read just by attending classes. From this number we set the minimum word total requirement for Extensive Reading A at 35,000 words, Extensive Reading B at 40,000 words and Extensive Listening at 20,000 words. These totals, plus the words read from literature courses for first year students should bring the minimum total number of words to 100,000.

In ER Course A there were 25 students who read an average of 49,000 words. In ER Course B and Extensive Listening which are offered in the second semester the combined average word total was 89,000 words. 28 students attended ER Course B and 31 students took EL.

Out of the 22 students who took all three courses, 15 achieved the minimum word goal of 100,000 words. There were two who read over 300,000 and 6 who read over 200,000. On the other hand, 7 students couldn't achieve the minimum goal. One of our challenges from now is how to help students who couldn't reach 100,000 words achieve the minimum word goal.

We examined the TOEIC scores for the first year students according to the average number of words they read. We found that those who read more than 200,000 words made average gains of 43 points in the reading section and 78 points in their total score from the first test in July to the second test in December in 2012. Then on the third TOEIC test they gained an average of 63 points on the reading section and 120 for the total score from their first test scores. Students who read between 190,000 and 100,000 words made average gains of 20 points in the reading section and 5 points in their total score from the first test in July to the second test in December in 2012. Then on the third TOEIC test they gained an average of 27.5 points on the reading section and 35 for the total score from their first test scores. These TOEIC scores seem to clearly reflect the amount of reading the students completed.

## **Conclusion**

Returning to the topic of gains on the TOEIC tests, our students continued to show a lower percentage of gains on the reading section since the restructuring of the curriculum as discussed previously. However, the gains for the 2012 entering students, who began attending our college after Extensive Reading A, B and EL were added to the curriculum, are encouraging. Their reading score went up an average of 26.5 points from July 2012 to July 2013. Listening scores also increased by 19 points resulting in a total gain of 45.5 points on the TOEIC in one year. After one year, we could see the expected results of using ER. Our present challenge is to help more students reach the minimum word goal.

*Tetsushi Takemori is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education,, Miyagi University of Education.*

*Yoko Kodama is Professor in the Department of Arts and Sciences, University of Shimane Junior College.*

*Kriss Lange, is a Lecturer in the Department of Arts and Sciences,, University of Shimane Junior College.*

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## Improved Reading Measurement Utilizing the Standard Word Unit

**BRANDON KRAMER**

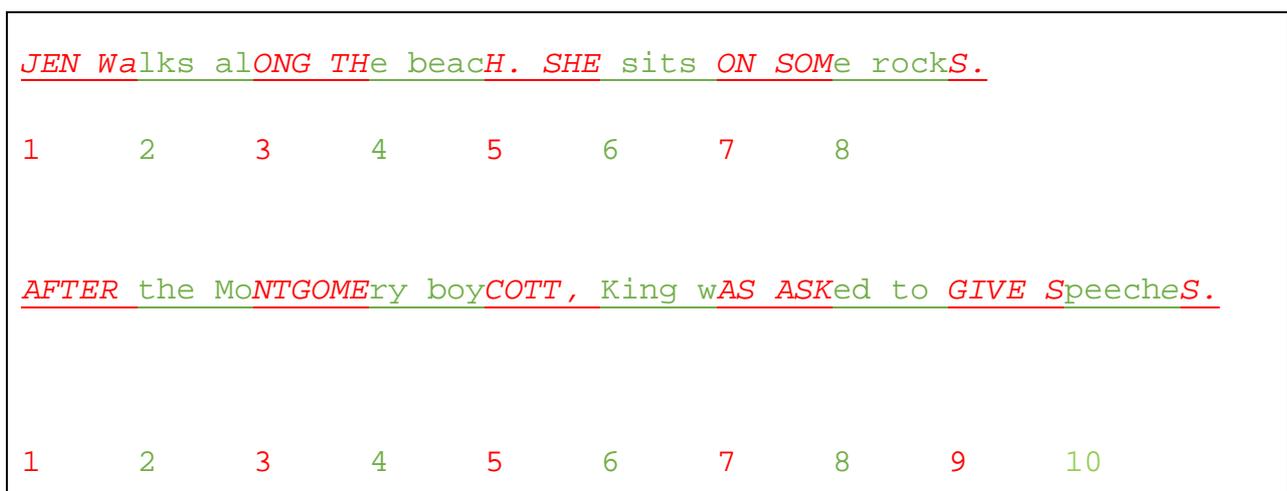
**STUART MCLEAN**

*Temple University Japan*

This paper introduces the standard word unit, which consists of six letter spaces including punctuation and spacing (Carver, 1990), and provides preliminary evidence of the importance of the standard word unit to accurate reading measurement. This paper will illustrate the degree to which measuring the amount students have read using standard words is more precise than using the number of books, pages, or words, all of which vary widely depending on the book level, publisher, or type. The precision provided by standard words increases the measurement consistency of reading amount, allowing for a more accurate analysis of results within and across studies. Along with discussing the evidence from past research, this study aims to demonstrate the degree to which texts from various sample sets can vary according to the standard word unit compared with a simple word count.

Throughout the history of extensive reading (ER) research, there has been a steady evolution with regards to the units of measurement used to measure reading amount. Research measuring with the units of whole books and pages has been published as recently as nine years ago (i.e., Hitosugi & Day, 2004; Yamashita, 2004). With some graded reader books containing as few as 2 words and others extending beyond 20,000, the use of books as a unit of measurement is obviously problematic. Glancing quickly through graded readers of various difficulty levels similarly demonstrates the inaccuracy in measuring with pages, implying that reading a page in a higher level graded reader with over 300 words (e.g., Degnan-Veness, 2008) is equivalent to finishing a page in a starter level book which contains only an illustration (e.g., Axten, 2008). Current published material investigating ER utilizes the unit of words. For similar reasons to the previous granularization of measurement units, this paper argues that ER and all reading research will greatly benefit from the utilization of the standard word unit when measuring reading.

The unit of measurement that we argue as a reliable alternative to the current word counts is the standard word. First introduced by R. P. Carver (1972), a standard word is defined as the total number of character spaces within a text divided by 6, including all letters and grammatical markers. Adoption of standard words as a unit of measurement minimizes measurement error when the amount read and the reading rates are investigated. Furthermore, use of the standard word unit allows for more reliable intra-study and inter-study comparisons of reading amount and rate to be made. Figure 1 illustrates what a standard word is and how the number of standard words making up the same number of words may differ between texts of different levels, in this case sampled from popular ER materials. The first ten words from *Blue Fins* (Axten, 2008), a MacMillan Readers starter level book, is 8.3 standard words long. The second ten words from *Martin Luther King* (Degnan-Veness, 2008), a Penguin Readers level 3 book, is 10.3 standard words long. While the difference between the two ten-word long extracts might be only 12 characters, including spaces and grammatical markers, this represents a 21.4% difference in the length of the sentences. When investigating the efficacy of ER or looking for correlations between the amount of ER and various constructs such as L2 reading self-efficacy, for example, a 21.4% difference in the amount read could significantly impact the results. This paper argues that widespread acceptance of the standard word unit of measurement would provide many benefits: more accurate reading measurement, more accurate comparison of participants within studies, improved construct and internal validity of ER research, and more accurate inter-study comparison of reading conducted. We will discuss each of these benefits below.



**Figure 1. Difference in the number of standard words within 10 words from sentences taken from two different books from the same ER library within a university.**

Accurate measurement of reading amounts, and thus the use of the standard word unit, within an ER treatment or as a part of reading rate research is central to construct validity. Construct validity refers to the degree with which the instrument measures the latent construct which the researchers claim to be measuring. The strength of this relationship is directly dependent on the accuracy and precision of the measurement itself. Therefore, the more accurately the amount of reading completed by research participants can be measured, the stronger an argument researchers can put forward regarding the construct validity of their research. Furthermore, internal validity refers to the evidence that the intended treatment is the cause of measured results. It is therefore necessary to isolate the treatment from other confounding factors that might affect results and reduce the validity of the research claim. Eliminating as much inaccuracy in measurement as possible is absolutely necessary to ensure that this is accounted for. One can thus easily see that a consistent measurement such as the standard word unit is of importance to ER research when arguing that different amounts of reading lead to varying degrees of gains, for example.

Adoption of the standard word unit will also allow for comparisons of studies to be made more accurately. At present comparing ER amounts which are stated to be efficacious to improving various aspects of language development is problematic, as one word in one study might not equate to one word of another study. This becomes more of an issue when the difficulty level of texts varies between studies, as will increasingly be the case as ER research is conducted with a variety of learners including children and more able readers. Using the standard word unit would increase the accuracy and consistency of measurement, and this in turn would assist in addressing recurring questions such as how much ER is necessary for proficiency gains. Below are two imagined examples which further illustrate the importance of accurate reading measurement in ER research as stated above.

First, as previously illustrated in Figure 1, two passages with the same word count may vary greatly in the number of characters, and therefore in the number of standard words. If researchers use different texts of the same number of words without utilizing the standard word unit to measure reading speed, meaningful comparison of the results becomes difficult. Carver (1972) showed significant drops in reading speed as the difficulty of the text being read increased, but as Miller and Coleman (1972) mention, this is simply due to more difficult words tending to be longer as we showed above. When the measurements were recalculated using a more consistent unit of measurement based on the number of characters, reading speeds were found to be constant. Therefore, if texts show a 21.4% difference in standard word length similar to the two example sentences above, it also implies a 21.4% difference in the time spent reading the two passages.

Controlling for the number of standard words would allow us to measure if true gains in reading speed have been achieved or whether the results are simply due to a difference in the amount of material read.

As a second example, imagine research investigating the efficacy of in-class reading using Start with Simple Stories (SSS) relative to out-of-class independent reading. Suppose that throughout one semester participants in the SSS treatment group read, on average, 100,000 words each, while the out-of-class treatment group reads an average of 85,000 words each. It has been demonstrated with L1 reading materials that as books become more difficult the number of characters per word, on average, increases (Carver, 1976). It might otherwise be concluded, according to current research standards, that the use of limited in-class time for reading is more efficacious because the SSS group has read more words. However, if the above claim about the characters per word (cpw) increasing with difficulty is also true with L2 reading materials such as graded readers, a different conclusion may be reached. Compared with the relatively simple stories read by the SSS group, the out-of-class ER group may have read material at an appropriate, but more difficult, “i - 1” level, meaning that the amount of character spaces read, and therefore standard words, may be at least equal to those of the SSS group participants. This is important because as stated by Grabe and Stoller (2011), it is through reading large amounts of running text, not specifically many words, that readers develop reading skills. While development of sight vocabulary is dependent on exposure to large amounts of complete words, the development of phonological, orthographic, and morphological processes occurs through exposure to text and not just complete words. Reading presently being measured in words is simply the result of our present inability to use more accurate methods, such as the standard word unit, to measure reading amount.

The use of the standard word unit, while common in L1 reading research, has only recently begun to spread to L2 reading research. Originally suggested by Carver (1976) as a necessary unit of measurement in order to consistently measure L1 reading rate, in L2 reading research the standard word has seen only limited usage in publications such as Beglar, Hunt, and Kite (2012), the only ER publication based on primary data published in *Language Learning*, as well as a few other recent ER publications (i.e., Burrows, 2013).

### **Research question**

This paper aims to demonstrate the need for the standard word unit by first showing the difference in the mean characters per word (cpw) between books read by the same student, books read by students within the same class, and books within the same extensive reading library. A large

variation in texts from these different contexts would strengthen our argument for a more consistent unit of measurement.

## Methods

The students in a series of oral communication classes at a particular private university completed a term with an extensive reading component. The data from this implementation was collected and used for this research. Initially the books read by the students participating in this program were identified and collected. These books, as well as all others in the school's extensive reading library were carefully scanned and prepared for digital optical character recognition (OCR) to be recorded in Microsoft Word. Using the tools native to Word, the number of words and character spaces for each text were recorded. The number of character spaces was simply divided by 6 for each book to calculate the number of standard words and then a standardized representation of word length (cpw) was found by dividing the number of characters in a text by the number of words. Consistently calculating the word count ourselves using the text on hand is an important factor in our analysis, as the word counting methods for books varies by company. Only the primary text and picture captions were included in this analysis, not including any text found within the pictures, onomatopoeia, titles, or page numbers.

As measures of reading difficulty for each book, the Extensive Reading Foundation Graded Level (ERF level) and Yomiyasusa Level (YL) values for each book were found and utilized during analysis. ERF levels and YL are the primary measurement scales currently used in Japan for ER difficulty. The ERF Graded Reader Scale is produced by the Extensive Reading Foundation, and graded readers and children's books are positioned based primarily on the number of headwords, and in the absence of such, readability factors and best guesses were utilized (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2013). YL are determined based on the vocabulary, grammar, length of sentences, size of fonts, length of books, and the illustrations. Importantly, YL levels, and their equivalent TOEIC and Japan Extensive Reading Association levels, are designed with Japanese readers in mind while publishers' levels are designed with global readers in mind (Furukawa, 2011).

## Results

Table 1 demonstrates the degree to which the average length of words, measured in characters per word (cpw), can differ between books read by an individual, books read by different individuals in the same class, and books within a single university's ER library. Characters per word refers to the number of characters (including spaces and punctuation) per word on average. The

mean cpw difference between graded readers read by same individual was found to be 9.70%. This difference was found to be even more pronounced with books read by individuals in the same class at 12.77%. At the extreme, books of varying difficulty chosen from within the same ER library showed a difference in cpw of up to 18.35%.

**Table 1. The Degree to Which the Characters Per Word Can Vary within Books Read by a Single Individual, by Classmates, and from the Same ER Library.**

|            | <u>Title</u>                          | <u>ERF Level</u> | <u>YL</u> | <u>CPW</u> | <u>Difference in mean CPW</u> |
|------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Individual | <i>Blood Diamonds</i>                 | 5                | 1.5       | 5.41       | 9.7%                          |
|            | <i>Goodbye, Hello</i>                 | 2                | .6        | 4.91       |                               |
| Class      | <i>Gulliver's Travels in Lilliput</i> | 4                | .8        | 5.50       | 12.77%                        |
|            | <i>Rain, Rain, Rain</i>               | 2                | .6        | 4.84       |                               |
| Library    | <i>Martin Luther King</i>             | 9                | 3.3       | 5.77       | 18.35%                        |
|            | <i>Lost at sea</i>                    | 3                | .9        | 4.8        |                               |

## Discussion

These results demonstrate the importance of using a consistent unit of measurement such as the standard word when measuring L2 reading and, even more so when conducting reading rate research. Table 1 shows the variance in the mean the average cpw between graded readers read by the same individual (9.70%), individuals in the same class (12.77%) and books within the same ER library (18.35%). This illustrates the possible reading measurement error that might be present in ER research treatments and other measurements of reading. Even minor differences in the average

cpw present in reading measurements, even if much smaller than those in Table 1, will damage the validity of inferences made by researchers. For more accurate measurements standard word units should be used as any other gains could instead be influenced by such confounding factors as the difficulty and the length of words. As stated by Carver, “any investigation of reading rate which purports to be precise should control for word length, especially when the material is at different grade difficulties” (Carver, 1976, p. 197).

### **Limitations**

While attempts were made to correct errors when found, each text should be examined more closely to minimize errors from the text extraction process. However, when limited text was lost during the text extraction process it was done so randomly and so would be expected to have a very limited impact upon data collected.

The graded reader difficulty scales, ERF levels and YL levels, are still in their infancy and often clump complete publisher levels into a single ERF or YL level and as a result books may be misplaced, and so any analysis utilizing the rating scales will be limited.

Meaningful analysis was limited to ERF levels 2-8 as books from levels above this were of limited availability to the researchers.

### **Conclusion**

Extensive Reading (ER) is no longer measured in the number of books and pages read by participants of research and students in the classroom, and the adoption of measuring reading in words was a major step in standardizing reading rate measurement. However, adopting the standard word unit in ER research when measuring reading amounts will greatly improve the construct and internal validity of the claims. In addition, the ability to compare results both within and between studies makes this a worthwhile consideration. The added consistency and validity in measurements will allow the research community to make a stronger argument for the efficacy of ER for language instruction, assisting its expansion into more institutions around the world.

***Brandon Kramer** is a teacher at a private high school in Kobe, Japan. Recently graduated from the Master’s program at Temple University Japan, he is currently researching topics in extensive*

reading, CALL, and student autonomy. When he's not teaching or researching he enjoys travelling, running, or climbing the nearest mountain.

**Stuart McLean** gained his Master's in TESOL from Temple University Japan. He writes on improving ER research methodology in the hope of providing stronger evidence of not just the effectiveness of ER but also the greater efficiency of ER in developing various aspects of language proficiency. His other interests include the role of CALL in maximizing learning time and the role of pushed output in speaking development.

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## **ER as a Virtual ESL Environment for EFL Learners**

**HITOSHI NISHIZAWA and TAKAYOSHI YOSHIOKA**

*Toyota National College of Technology*

We would like to propose extensive reading (ER) as an ESL environment for EFL beginners and intermediate learners. ER keeps learners' minds in a virtual ESL environment, letting them think, feel, and have experiences in English through the readings. It has vital importance in Japan where the grammar-translation approach dominates English lessons, and learners always translate English texts word-to-word into Japanese sentences for comprehension. One million words is a practical amount of experience necessary to convert their behaviors. The assertion is based on a long-term ER program that has been conducted in a Japanese technical college. The teenage students have weekly fifty-minute sustained silent reading (SSR) sessions for six consecutive years. The students are typical EFL learners and don't use English outside the lessons. Their fluency is measured by TOEIC improvements over the long term. ER was also effective as preparation for, and/or for following-up after ten-months of studying abroad.

Although ER was considered a worthwhile approach in ESL/EFL programs (Day & Bamford, 1998), its influence on English education in Japan was/is still limited. It does not appeal to the majority of Japanese English learners, and is unable to affect a change in their learning styles from traditional grammar translation. One of the severe disturbances was the lack of data. Teachers and learners do not know which books they should read or how much they should read to improve their language skills. The difference between recommended readability levels in ESL settings and Japanese EFL setting (Nishizawa & Yoshioka, 2011) also misguided Japanese EFL learners toward translations, but not to readings.

The situation has been improving gradually since Sakai (2002) proposed one million words as a milestone for ER, with Sakai and Kanda (2005) and Takase (2010) proposing detailed methodologies for conducting SSR programs, and Furukawa et al (2005,2007,2010,2013)

publishing a complete book-guide and readability scale called *Yomiyasusa level* (YL) for Japanese EFL learners. Some schools and colleges along with private learning groups have started ER programs. In some areas, public libraries have set up special bookshelves of easy-to-read English books for lifelong learning of adult EFL learners.

However, there were still few ER programs where the average students actually read this amount. Furukawa (2011) reported the average reading amount of 12th graders was 1.18 million words in 6 years of his ER program. Another ER program at a college of technology took 4 years for the median reading amount of the students to reach 0.69 million words (Nishizawa, Yoshioka, & Fukada, 2010). Both programs had durations over several consecutive years and the students' outcomes were measured by standard tests.

Another practical aspect was the combination of ER with studying abroad. Because ER improves students' fluency in reading and listening, it may become an effective preparation or follow-up for studying abroad. This paper will report the effect of such combination using TOEIC tests as the measure of English fluency.

### **Research questions**

We would like to answer the following questions in this paper. The first question is 'Is one million words a practical threshold for Japanese EFL students to feel the improvement of their English fluency?' We used TOEIC to measure the English fluency of the students, and assumed their initial scores were lower than 320 because the average TOEIC score of 3rd year students were 319 (N = 470, 2007 - 2009) before introducing the ER program. TOEIC 600 will be the practical target TOEIC scores of Japanese EFL beginners and some intermediate learners.

The second question is 'Is ER a practical approach for the preparation and follow-up for studying abroad? How much reading is necessary for them?' We tracked the students' reading histories and TOEIC scores before and after their studying abroad for years.

### **Details of the ER program**

A 6-year ER program was conducted at a college of technology where the majority of students were average EFL learners. The program used a 5-year foundation course that had a cohort

of 40 students aged from 16 to 20, accompanied by an additional 6th and 7th year advanced course that had 5-10 students per cohort. The program started ER lessons on April 2004 in 6 years starting from the 2nd year of the foundation course simultaneously, and it added an ER lesson to the 1st year of the foundation course in 2006.

16 students completed the 6-year ER program in 2011 and 2012, and six students completed the 5-year ER program in 2009 as shown in Table 1. Former students also participated in ER programs of shorter duration from 2004 to 2008. During the program, the students attended compulsory English lessons taught traditionally, and additionally attended weekly ER lessons for 30 weeks each year. Each of the lessons was a 45-minute SSR. The lessons were conducted in the college library, which had a large collection of easy-to-read English books including GR for ESL/EFL learners and picture books and leveled readers designed for English-speaking children in the U. S. The students were strongly recommended to borrow books from the library for their out-of-class readings. The students read at their own paces, without referring to dictionaries, and recorded their reading histories in logbooks. The logbooks were collected regularly before the lessons, and then returned at the beginning of the next lessons with advice from the teachers added to them. The student and teachers could always refer to the student's reading history because the logbook was inherited to the next years.

**Table 1. Duration of the ER program and Total Words Read by 6th-year Students**

| Academic year  | 2004               | 2005              | 2006                  | 2007                  | 2008              | 2009             | 2010                  | 2011              | 2012              |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Duration   | 2 years            |                   | 3 years               | 4 years               | 5 years           |                  |                       | 6 years           |                   |
| Number of 6th-year students                            | 7                  | 5                 | 8 (+1 <sup>*1</sup> ) | 7 (+3 <sup>*1</sup> ) | 6                 | 8                | 6 (+4 <sup>*1</sup> ) | 6                 | 10                |
| Total words read <sup>*2</sup><br>(Med.) Min.-<br>Max. | (0.26)<br>0.09-1.3 | (0.45)<br>0.3-0.6 | (0.45)<br>0.1-6.0     | (0.66)<br>0.4-1.2     | (0.60)<br>0.4-3.1 | (0.75)<br>0.6-10 | (1.26)<br>0.4-15      | (1.35)<br>1.0-2.1 | (1.20)<br>0.9-1.6 |
| YL <sup>*3</sup> and text length of the reading test   | 1.6<br>4,600       | 1.4<br>3,700      | 2.6<br>7,200          | 2.6<br>9,100          | 2.6<br>8,000      | 2.6<br>6,300     | 2.8<br>7,500          | 3.2<br>8,300      | 3.2<br>8,000      |

\*1 Number of students who had stayed in English-speaking countries. Their data were excluded from the study.

\*2 Million words.

\*3 YL is a readability scale optimized for Japanese EFL learners (Furukawa et.al., 2005, 2007, 2010, 2013). Typical YL is 1.0 for Penguin Readers Level 1 (PGR1), 1.4 for Cambridge English Readers Level 1 (CER1), 2.0 for Oxford Bookworms Stage 1 (OBW1), and 2.8 for Macmillan Readers Elementary (MMR3).

The ER program had the duration of two years in 2004 and 2005, and increased the duration year by year. The median total words read by the students was less than 0.5 million words until 2006, increased to more than 0.6 million from 2007 to 2008, and exceeded a million in 2010 and after. Reading more than a million words of English texts is becoming quite an ordinary thing to do for the students of the ER program, now.

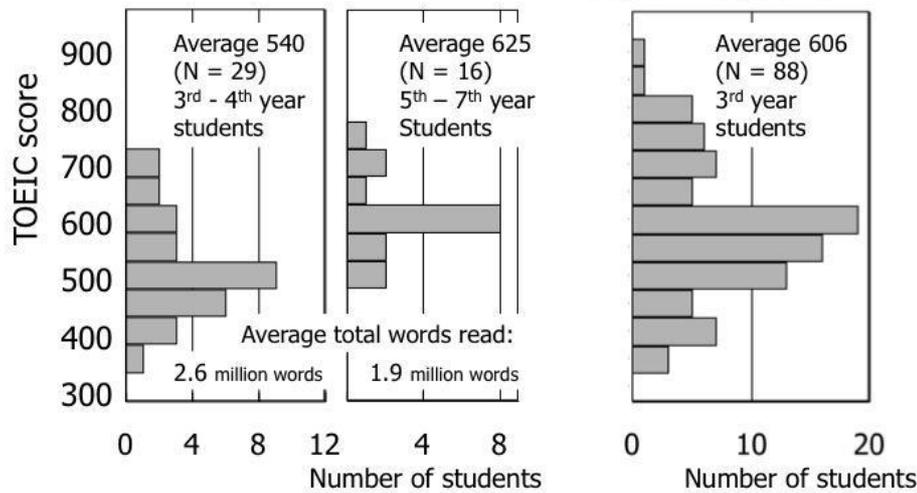
Twenty-two 6th-year students, excluding four students who had studied in English-speaking countries for 10 months, completed the 5 or 6-year ER program in 2010, 2011 and 2012, and their median total words read was 1.2 million. Most of them passed the reading tests at the end of the program, which required them to read a new English text of 7,700 words or longer at a reading speed of 100 words/min. or faster. After reading the text, they had to answer ten questions related to the story with 60% or more of the answers being correct. They aren't allowed to take memos when they read, and aren't allowed to re-read the text when they answer. The readability levels of the texts for the reading tests are the same as Macmillan Readers Elementary (MMR3: YL2.8) or Oxford Bookworms Stage 3 (OBW3: YL3.2).

### **Improved TOEIC scores of fast readers**

Some enthusiastic students read far more than the average students in the ER program. They mainly read out-of-class on their own. 45 students of various ages read more than 1.5 million total words of easy-to-read English texts over the 2005 – 2012 academic years and took TOEIC tests (Figure 1). We could estimate the amount of ER experience, which is comparable to studying abroad in TOEIC scores. We selected 1.5 million words for this comparison because TOEIC scores tend to increase abruptly at students' total words around a million, and after that, they increase linearly at the rate of 40 – 50 points per a million words until they reach 800 (Itoh & Nagaoka, 2008).

TOEIC scores of the students who have read more than 1.5 million words of English texts extensively during the ER program in 2005 - 2012. No one stayed in English speaking countries for or more than three months in this group.

TOEIC scores of the students who stayed in English speaking countries for ten months. The test was taken just after their returns in 2005 -2010. No one has prior ER experience.



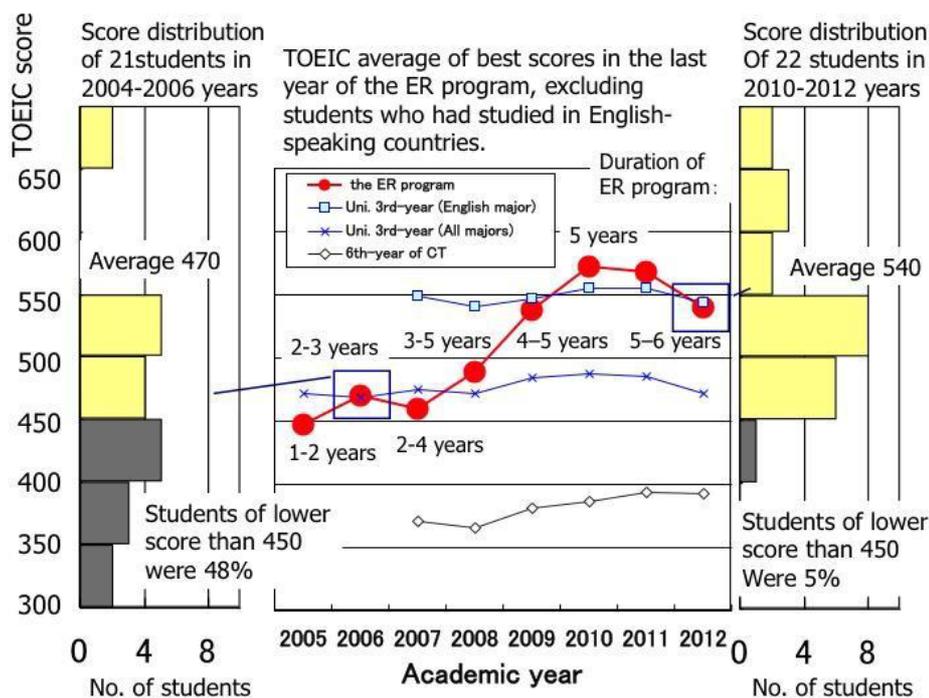
**Figure 1. Comparison of TOEIC scores of the students who read extensively more than 1.5 million words with the scores of the students who studied abroad for ten months**

We also separated the ER students into two groups because their TOEIC scores were apparently different to each other. The younger students (the left graph of Figure 1) had read 2.6 million words on average in two to four years, but their TOEIC scores were 85 points lower than the elder students, who had read 1.9 million words on average during two to six years (the middle graph of Figure 1). The elder students' average TOEIC score was even higher than the one of the students who stayed in English speaking countries for ten months (the right graph of Figure 1). It was mainly because there was no student who scored lower than 500 in this group.

There were 10 students whose TOEIC score exceeded 700. Their average TOEIC score was 739, the average total words read was 3.8 million words in two to seven years. Their reading logs tell us that it is hard to read this amount required and it is only achievable when reading itself becomes enjoyable. At this stage, literature for English speaking children often helps EFL learners to enjoy reading.

## Improved TOEIC scores of average students

Improved English proficiencies of average students were also measured by TOEIC tests. The center graph of Figure 2 shows the moving-average TOEIC scores of the students who completed the ER program in the year and in the previous two years. For example, the data of 2012 along the horizontal axis shows the average of 22 students who completed the program in the years 2010, 2011, and 2012. The data was compared with the national averages of Japanese university students of all majors, university students who majored in English, and students of colleges of technology.



**Figure 2. TOEIC scores of the 5 or 6-year ER program**

The average TOEIC score of the students in the ER program increased as the duration of the program elongated, and the change exceeds the yearly fluctuations of national averages. The students who completed the ER program of 2-3 years' duration in 2004, 2005, and 2006, had an average TOEIC score of 470, which is higher than the national average of 6th-year students of colleges of technology (371: ETS, 2008) and is as high as the national average of 3rd-year university students of all majors (469: ETS, 2007). The students who completed the 5 or 6-year ER program in 2010, 2011, and 2012, showed a higher average score of 540, which is as high as the national average of 3rd-year university students majoring in English (544: ETS, 2012), who were supposed to have more English lessons. We would like to stress that the difference of the 2004-2006

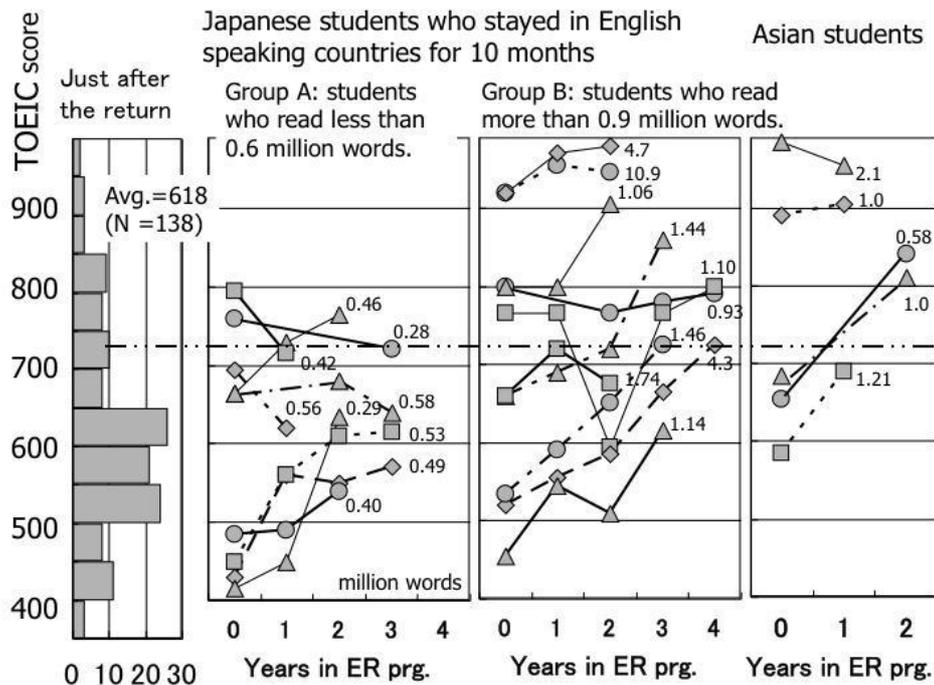
students and the 2010-2012 students are only three credits of SSR lessons and accompanying ER experience of reading 0.7 million more words of easy-to-read English books.

The left graph and the right graph of Figure 2 shows the score distributions of 2004-2006 students and 2010-2012 students respectively. The comparison tells that the 5 or 6-year program not only improved the proficiency of average and higher performers, but also of the lowest performers as in the case of fast readers.

### **ER as preparations and/or follow-up for studying abroad**

As we expected, students improved their TOEIC scores by reading one million-words of ER before and/or after their studying abroad (Nishizawa, Yoshioka & Itoh, 2013). We updated the data and collected TOEIC scores of 138 Japanese students who had stayed in English speaking countries for 10 months and returned during the 2005 to 2012 academic years. The students were divided into three groups; 88 students who went abroad without prior experience of ER, 39 students who had ER experience but read less than 0.5 million words before going abroad, and 11 students who had ER experience of more than 0.6 million words before going abroad. Their average TOEIC scores just after their returns were 606, 613, and 727 respectively, and the average of the third group differed significantly ( $t = 0.004$ ) from the one of the first group even with its small sample size. It suggests the potential advantage of one million-words of ER as preparation for studying abroad. We currently suggest that enthusiastic students read 3 million words before their studying abroad so they have enough fluency to start their everyday life there and they can have more meaningful language experiences during their limited stay. The suggestion is based on the 2.6 million words of Figure 1 and one of the students' examples, who had actually read 3.4 million words extensively before his studying abroad and scored 920 just after his return.

We also measured the influence of ER as follow-up (Figure 3). 19 students had resumed ER after their studying abroad, and their annual TOEIC scores were compared with the TOEIC scores of all 138 students (The left-most graph of Figure 3) measured just after their return from English-speaking countries.



**Figure 3. Students' TOEIC scores in the ER program after their studying abroad**

When their TOEIC scores had been lower than the average (618) upon return, all the students increased their TOEIC scores during the ER program. The final scores of the students, who read less than 0.6 million words, stayed lower than the average, though.

On the other hand, the score increases of the students whose TOEIC scores had been higher than the average upon return seemed to depend on how much they read during the ER program after their returns. Nine students of group A (The second to the left graph of Figure 3) read less than 0.6 million words during their one to three years in the ER program. There were five students whose scores had been higher than the average upon return, but four of them got lower TOEIC scores during the program. At the end of the ER program, only one out of nine student scored 730 or higher.

Ten students from group B (The second to the right graph of Figure 3) read more than 0.9 million words during their two to four years in the ER program. Five students had scored from 618 to 860 just after their returns, three of them kept their scores unchanged during the program, and two increased their scores more during the program. At the end of the program, eight out of ten student scored 730 or higher. There were also two students whose TOEIC scores had been higher

than 900 upon return. They read more than four million words in their two years of the program to keep or increase their scores.

Three Asian students whose initial TOEIC scores had been lower than 730 also increased their scores by reading one million-words in ER in their one or two years of the program.

This data suggests that there are thresholds of reading amount necessary to keep or improve students' English fluency in EFL settings. Less than 0.6 million words of ER might be enough to keep or improve lower fluency level of TOEIC 600 or under if the students have 10-months experience of staying in English speaking countries, and thus they are free from translation habit. A million words of ER is necessary to keep or improve intermediate fluency level of TOEIC 600 – 860, and several million words or more reading may be necessary if the students hope to improve their fluency higher than TOEIC 860 only through ER in EFL settings. Literature for English-speaking young adults and popular casual novels often help EFL learners continue their reading with pleasure.

## **Conclusion**

Extensive reading helps EFL learners of a wide range of fluency levels. Starters are surprised to recognize that it is really possible to read English texts without translating them into their mother language if the texts are easy enough. Total words read of a million words becomes the first target for beginners to obtain the fluency for short conversations of casual travellers with the TOEIC score of 470, and our practice showed it is achievable by adding a three-year ER program with weekly 45-minutes SSR lessons. If we extend the duration of the ER program to six years, a fair amount of students will read 2 million words total of easy-to-read English texts with the help of children's literature and reach the fluency for everyday life with the TOEIC score of 600, which can be obtained with a 10-month stay in English speaking countries. Extensive reading of this amount also becomes a valuable preparation for more meaningful studying abroad. Enthusiastic students may read 4 million words of English texts, which may include literature for young adult and popular casual novels, and gains in fluency to an intermediate level with a TOEIC score of 730. Studying in English speaking countries may enhance the improvements, but the gained fluency is not easy to keep after coming back to Japanese EFL settings. ER as a virtual ESL environment in learners' minds is one of the successful and practical approaches of improving learners' English fluency in EFL settings.

**Hitoshi Nishizawa** is a Professor of the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Toyota National College of Technology. His research interests include computer-assisted learning in mathematics and extensive reading/listening in English. He has been assisting the college library and some local public libraries to set up special shelves of easy-to-read English books for ER.  
Email: [nisizawa@toyota-ct.ac.jp](mailto:nisizawa@toyota-ct.ac.jp)

**Takayoshi Yoshioka** is a Professor of the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Toyota National College of Technology. His research interests include computer-aided educational technology and extensive reading/listening in English. He started the ER program in 2002 at the college, and has been developing *tadoku navi*: a web-based assistant system for remote EFL learners to search and find optimum books for ER. Email [yoshioka@toyota-ct.ac.jp](mailto:yoshioka@toyota-ct.ac.jp)

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## **Will Extensive Reading Help L2 Learners' Use of Context while Processing Text?**

**KIYOMI YOSHIZAWA**

*Kansai University*

**ATSUKO TAKASE**

*Kansai University*

**KYOKO OTSUKI**

*Hiroshima Shudo University*

It is hypothesized that extensive reading (ER) helps learners to learn grammar in context and to expand the scope of text to process when they read. This study examines whether EFL learners expand the scope of text to process as they engage themselves in reading. Data was collected over three academic years. 341 Japanese EFL learners participated in all the data collection sessions, and they took a cloze test developed to place learners and monitor their progress. Each deletion of the cloze test was classified into four types, depending on the amount of information required for a successful task completion (Bachman, 1985). In order to examine how the learners' responses to the items in each of the four categories changed over time, a linear growth model is applied. The results indicate that the participants' rate of change was rather similar to each other across different types of items.

Extensive reading (ER, hereafter) has been widely recognized as an effective way to learn languages for the last two decades. In Japan, more institutional organizations, including secondary schools, colleges and universities, have implemented ER to improve their students' English ability. This trend is backed by an abundance of research, which demonstrates that ER contributes to improvement in various aspects of learners' language learning: reading proficiency (e.g. Elley & Mangubhai, 1981; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Yamashita, 2008), vocabulary acquisition (Cirocki, 2009; Horst, 2005), reading rate and fluency (Beglar, Hunt & Kite, 2011; Iwahori, 2008), writing ability (Irvine, 2011; Janopoulos, 1986;), gains on TOEIC scores (Nishizawa, Yoshioka & Fukada,

2010), and improvement of general English proficiency (Takase, 2008, 2012; Takase & Otsuki, 2012).

In addition to these various effects of ER on linguistic improvement, ER has great impact on learners' positive attitudes towards learning English and self-confidence (Mason & Krashen, 1997; Takase, 2004, 2007, 2009).

Among these reports on effectiveness of ER on development of various language aspects, research on grammar is scarce. To our knowledge, Maruhashi's research (2011) is the only one, in which she reported 137 university students' improvement on some grammatical aspects after three months of ER. Meanwhile, Takase (2008) reported that after three months of ER, over 40% of the unmotivated reluctant repeaters in university perceived improvement in their grammar knowledge, such as the structure of English sentences or role of adjectives, with which they had been acquainted but had not completely understood since their early stage of studying English at secondary school. The students in the study actually showed a significant improvement on the post-Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading Placement/Progress Test (EPER PPT, hereafter). EPER PPT is a cloze test developed by the Institute for Applied Language Studies in the University of Edinburgh in 1992 in order to measure general English proficiency including grammar in context, to place learners into appropriate reading levels, and to monitor their progress. The cloze test, by its nature, requires learners to process text at various levels, ranging from clauses to multiple sentences. On the other hand, research reports that poor L2 readers focus on a limited range of text when they read for comprehension. Thus, obtaining high marks in the EPER PPT could indicate that learners are capable of processing a wider range of context required for giving answers. Considering these observations and the report from Takase (2008), it might be assumed that while learners are engaged in extensive reading, processing units in context will be expanding, which is reflected in the improvement of their performance on different types of items deleted in the EPER PPT. The present study aims to examine how learners' rates of change grow across different types of cloze items over time. Thus, we posed the following research questions:

- 1) Will extensive reading help learners expand the scope of text to process?
- 2) What type of closure in the EPER PPC Test would improve most?

## Method

### *Participants*

A total of 526 second-year Japanese EFL university students participated in the study. Out of 526 participants, 341 participated in all of the data collection sessions. Their majors were commerce, economics, law, and literature. Their English proficiency varied from false beginner to advanced, which can be converted to approximately CEFR A1 to B2. Each student was engaged in ER in a reading class for one academic year, choosing books appropriate to their English proficiency levels and their interest.

### *Materials*

The participants took the EPER Placement/Progress Test (Form A) three times during the course. The EPER PPT, mentioned above, is a cloze test which comprises 12 short passages (approximately 80 words on average) taken from different levels of graded readers and arranged in an ascending order of difficulty. There are 141 deleted items at the rate of 4 to 12 words ( $M = 6.30$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ).

Among language testing researchers, the type of language ability measured by cloze tests is controversial. According to Bachman (1985), cloze tests can measure both lower level (e.g. within clause) and higher level (e.g. across sentences) reading abilities. Also, empirical research demonstrated that cloze tests can measure learners' proficiency level (Chihara et al., 1994; Sasaki 2000; Yamashita 2008) including micro-level linguistic competence such as vocabulary, spelling and morphosyntax, as scoring criterion is limited to the list of given answers. As 12 short passages in the EPER PPT were all taken from obsolete graded readers, the EPER PPT is considered an appropriate test to measure general English proficiency and improvement of the learners who use various graded readers for ER.

Each deletion in the EPER (A) test was classified into four types based on Bachman's classification (1985), reflecting four different levels of context required for closure:

Type 1 requires context within the same clause where the closure is located;

Type 2 requires context across clauses, within a sentence;

Type 3 requires context across sentences, within a text;

Type 4 requires extra-textual knowledge.

Type 1 items require grammatical knowledge and respondents need to use context within the same clause where a particular blank is located. From Type 2 to Type 4, the context required for answering items expands from sentence level to text level and ultimately world knowledge. The following are examples of deletion of each type.

Simon looks at the people in the station. (1) can see students in jeans, and men (2) suits. He can see families and children. He cannot see any spies. Simon's train goes (3) 11.00, and it is 10.57 now. Simon (4) to the train. There is an old woman with an umbrella near Simon. She is walking very fast. Simon does not see her. He does not see her bag. (*Simon and the Spy*, Penguin Readers)

In order to answer item 1, learners should read the previous sentence and know that Simon is a name for men (world knowledge), which leads to the answer, the third person singular masculine pronoun *he*. Thus, answering item 1 requires the context across sentences (Type 3) and world knowledge (Type 4) as well as grammatical knowledge. In order to answer item 2, learners need to look at the sentence in which item 2 is included. Since two types of clothes, jeans and suits, are juxtaposed, the preposition *in* will come here. Because the information called for closure is from two clauses within the sentence, this is a Type 2 deletion. Item 3 serves as an example of Type 1 items: only grammatical knowledge is required to reach the correct answer for item 3. The word which comes before the time expression (i.e., *11:00*) will be *at*. To fill in (4), learners need to know how Simon is engaged in the train in this context. Based on the previous sentence, learners know that the train is going to leave soon, which leads them to consider that Simon is in a rush. Therefore, item 4 is categorized into Type 3.

According to the scheme explained above, deleted items were classified by two of the authors and another person from outside, resulting in the high degree of consistency. The distribution of deletion types in EPER (A) is: Type 1 counts for 27.0%; Type 2, 19.9%; Type 3, 47.5%; and Type 4, 5.7%.

### **Procedure**

At the onset of the course, the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) Placement/Progress Test (PPT) (Form A) was administered as the pre-test in order to investigate the participants' general English proficiency. The same EPER Test was administered as the mid-test at

the end of the first semester (14 weeks after the pre-test), and as the post-test at the end of the academic year (9 months after the beginning of the course, including summer vacation) in order to examine the learners' improvement in their general English proficiency.

The class met once a week for 15 sessions each semester. During the 90-minute session, participants were provided with 40-45 minutes for in-class reading, including time to keep their reading log and to exchange books delivered to class by the instructor, meaning that participants were engaged in Sustained Silent Reading (SSR, hereafter) for approximately 30-35 minutes in each session. They were also encouraged to read as many books as possible outside class and required to keep a reading log each time they finished a book.

Concerning the reading materials, the participants used two types of materials; graded readers that are created for EFL and ESL learners, and leveled readers and young readers that are written for L1 children of English. Major graded reader participants read Cambridge English Readers, Foundations Reading Library, Macmillan Readers, Oxford Bookworms, Penguin Readers, and Scholastic ELT Readers. Leveled readers include Oxford Reading Tree, Longman Literacy Land Story Street, Rookie Readers, Scholastic Reading, Step Into Reading, Capstone Series, Nate the Great, A to Z Mysteries, Magic Tree House, etc.

### *Data analysis*

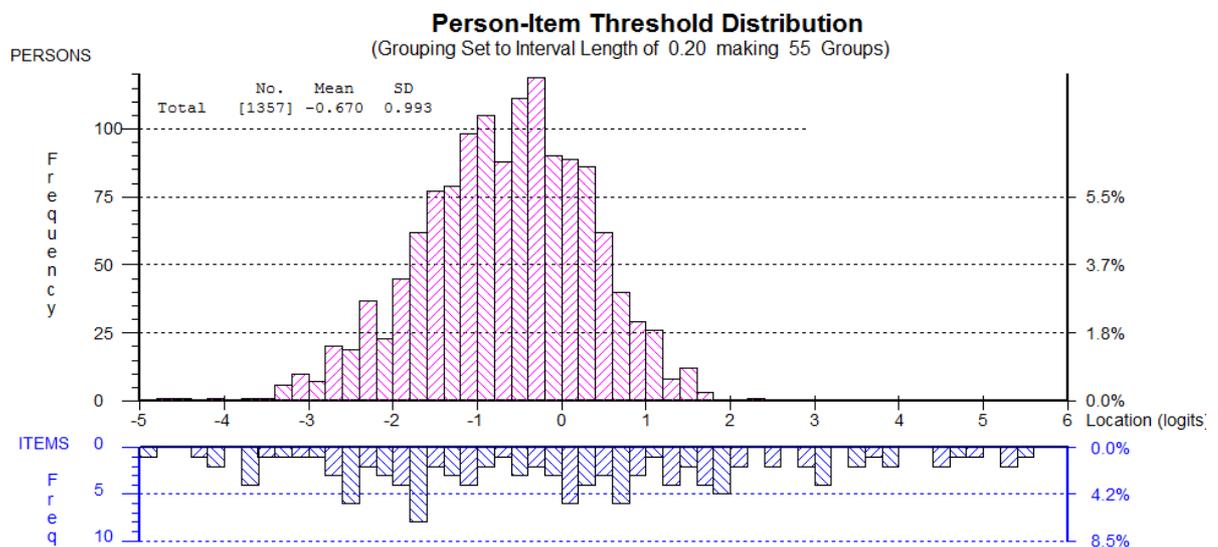
The EPER PPT data was analyzed using Rasch Unidimensional Measurement Model software (RUMM Laboratory). The main purpose of conducting Rasch analysis was to convert the data into an interval scale. The dichotomous model was used. In order to confirm that the data fit the dichotomous model, the following aspects were examined prior to obtaining the participants' ability scores (i.e., pre-, mid- and post-test scores) in logits: the item-total statistics, fit of items and persons to the model, the assumption of the local item independence, unidimensionality, targeting of the scale, and reliability.

By the end of the Rasch analyses, 23 items were deleted as misfitting items. Table 1 shows the result of the final analysis. When the data fits the model, the mean of the fit residuals becomes close to zero and the standard deviation becomes close to one. The results show a fairly good fit to the model. However, the means of the items and persons indicate that item difficulty has a higher logit than the person logit, meaning that items were rather difficult for the participants. Also, the person separation index and Cronbach alpha was .930.

**Table 1. The Summary Statistics of the Rasch Analysis**

|      | Items    |               | Persons  |               |
|------|----------|---------------|----------|---------------|
|      | Location | Fit residuals | location | Fit residuals |
| Mean | 0.000    | -0.167        | -0.670   | -0.233        |
| SD   | 2.405    | 1.644         | 0.993    | 0.769         |

Figure 1 below shows the person-item threshold distribution. The upper graph shows the distribution of the persons (i.e., participants); the lower graph shows the distribution of items. Although the distribution of the items is greater than that of the persons, indicating that there are easier and more difficult items than the abilities of the participants, the items are well targeted.

**Figure 1. The distribution of the persons and items**

In the second part of data analysis, we applied the linear growth curve modeling to examine whether ER would help learners expand the scope of text to process and what type of closure would improve most. We examined whether individuals differ in their estimated rate of change across different types of EPER items.

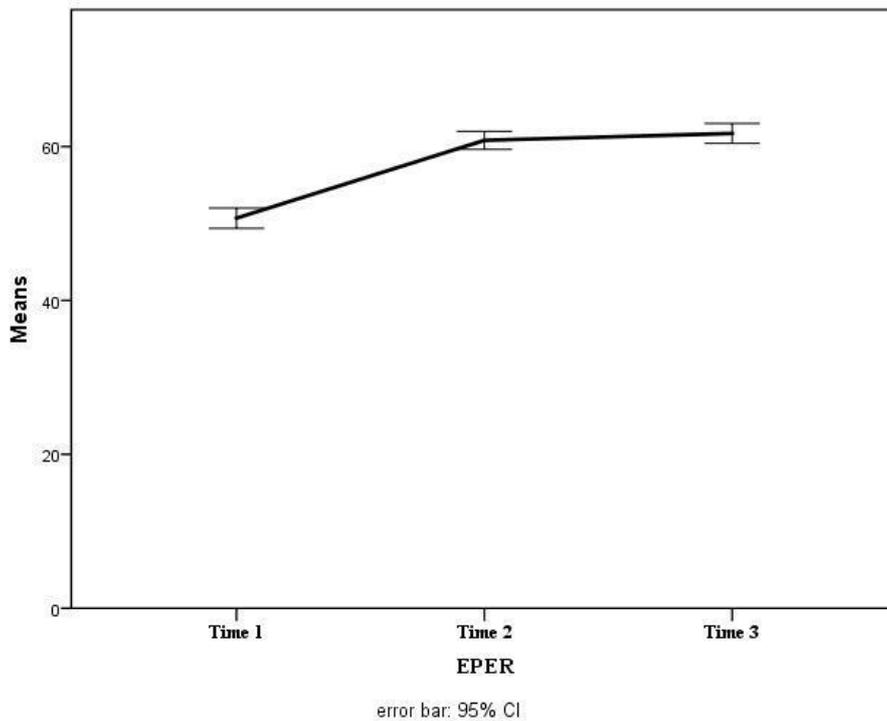
## Results

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the standard scores of the EPER administered at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the extensive reading course. The mean score of the EPER at the beginning of the course was 50.69 ( $SD = 13.86$ ), 60.81 ( $SD = 13.31$ ) in the middle of the course, and 61.70 ( $SD = 13.66$ ) at the end of the course, respectively. Figure 2 shows the mean scores of the EPER PPT at three administrations. Those results show that the participants scored about 10 points higher at the end of the first semester (Time 2) than they did at the beginning of the ER course (Time 1). On the other hand, they scored only about one point higher at the end of the course (Time 3) than they did at the end of the first semester (Time 2).

Based on the last Rasch analysis where 23 test items were deleted, a separate analysis was conducted for each of the four types of items. For each type of item, it was confirmed that the data fit the Rasch model. Then, person measures were created based on the items of the same type. Similar to the person measures based on all the items, person measures were converted to standard scores. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of four types of items. The results show patterns similar to those described about the person measures based on all the items.

**Table 2. The Descriptive Statistics for the EPER at Three Administrations**

|        | ALL   | TYPE 1 | TYPE 2 | TYPE 3 | TYPE 4 |
|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Time 1 |       |        |        |        |        |
| MEAN   | 50.69 | 41.98  | 51.54  | 50.48  | 52.26  |
| SD     | 13.88 | 12.57  | 15.65  | 14.08  | 14.75  |
| MIN    | 0     | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| MAX    | 92    | 76.21  | 93.58  | 89.9   | 91.1   |
| Time 2 |       |        |        |        |        |
| MEAN   | 60.81 | 51.12  | 58.60  | 60.65  | 60.82  |
| SD     | 13.31 | 12.66  | 15.21  | 13.17  | 14.41  |
| MIN    | 3     | 13.88  | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| MAX    | 90    | 100    | 100    | 94.78  | 100    |
| Time 3 |       |        |        |        |        |
| MEAN   | 61.7  | 51.91  | 59.30  | 61.39  | 61.98  |
| SD     | 13.66 | 12.28  | 15.74  | 13.77  | 14.39  |
| MIN    | 14    | 13.88  | 9.77   | 18.88  | 18.43  |
| MAX    | 100   | 85.67  | 100    | 100    | 100    |



**Figure 2. The mean scores of the EPER at three administrations**

In order to answer our research question, we applied linear individual growth models to examine the change of the learners' reading performance over time. Linear growth models include two components: level-1 and level-2 submodels. The former describes how individuals change over time, i.e., within-person change; the latter describes how these changes differ across individuals, i.e., between-person differences in change. In this study, we focus only on the level-1 submodel. We write the level-1 submodel as:

$$Y_{ij} = \pi_{0i} + \pi_{1i}(\text{Time})_{ij} + e_{ij} \quad (\text{Equation 1}).$$

In the study, we applied linear growth models to estimate (a) an intercept (i.e., an initial status at the onset of the ER course); (b) a mean growth curve and the extent of individual variation around it; (c) the correlation between an initial status and rate of change. Four types of items were analyzed separately, using HLM version 6 software (Scientific Software International, Inc.). Table 4 shows the results of fitting a linear growth model for change to the EPER data. The estimated average initial status and rate of growth were 43.43 and 5.01 for Type 1 items, 47.96 and 4.31 for Type 2 items, 45.85 and 5.98 for Type 3 items, and 47.49 and 5.43 for Type 4 items, respectively. In other words, the average score of Type 1 items at the pre-test time was estimated to be 43.43 and the participants were gaining 5.01 points per year, for example. Also, both the intercept and the

slope were significant and both parameters were necessary to explain the mean growth trajectory across four types of items.

Next, we examined the individual variation in growth trajectories from the mean curve. The variance components in Table 3 indicate the amount of variability left after fitting the model. The estimates for the variances of individual growth parameters (i.e., the initial status and the rate of change) were 99.11 and 0.50 for Type 1 items, 209.73 and 12.42 for Type 2 items, 142.16 and 0.79 for Type 3 items, and 135.68 and 0.82 for Type 4 items, respectively. The variance of the intercept was significant for all four types. This indicates that the participants varied significantly in their abilities to endorse each type of items at the onset of the ER course. On the other hand, the variance of the growth rate indicates different patterns. The variance of the growth rate was significant for Type 2 items, but insignificant for other types of items. This means a lot of individual differences were involved in the growth rate of Type 2 items.

Further, we examined the correlations between the initial state and the growth rate. In general, negative correlations ranging from -0.07 to -0.49 were observed between the initial status and the growth rate.

**Table 3. Results of Fitting a Liner Growth Model**

|   | Fixed effect |      |          | Variance components |          |           |          |
|---|--------------|------|----------|---------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
|   | Estimate     | s.e. | <i>p</i> | Estimate            | $\chi^2$ | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Type 1  |              |      |          |                     |          |           |          |
| initial status  | 43.43        | 0.67 | ***      | 99.11               | 813.23   | 467       | ***      |
| rate of change  | 5.01         | 0.24 | ***      | 0.5                 | 470.4    | 467       | 0.45     |
| Level 1 error   |              |      |          | 42.53               |          |           |          |
| Correlation   | -0.27        |      |          |                     |          |           |          |
| Type 2  |              |      |          |                     |          |           |          |
| initial status  | 47.96        | 0.94 | ***      | 209.73              | 941.11   | 467       | ***      |
| rate of change  | 4.31         | 0.36 | ***      | 12.42               | 604.67   | 467       | ***      |
| Level 1 error   |              |      |          | 73.58               |          |           |          |
| Correlation   | -0.49        |      |          |                     |          |           |          |
| Type 3  |              |      |          |                     |          |           |          |
| initial status  | 45.85        | 0.76 | ***      | 142.16              | 941.33   | 467       | ***      |
| rate of change  | 5.98         | 0.26 | ***      | 0.79                | 479.61   | 467       | 0.33     |
| Level 1 error   |              |      |          | 49.11               |          |           |          |
| Correlation   | -0.07        |      |          |                     |          |           |          |
| Type 4  |              |      |          |                     |          |           |          |
| initial status  | 47.49        | 0.89 | ***      | 135.68              | 700.55   | 467       | ***      |
| rate of change  | 5.43         | 0.34 | ***      | 0.82                | 446.64   | 467       | 0.5      |
| Level 1 error   |              |      |          | 87.51               |          |           |          |
| Correlation   | -0.26        |      |          |                     |          |           |          |
| * <i>p</i> < .05; ** <i>p</i> < .01; *** <i>p</i> < .001. |              |      |          |                     |          |           |          |

## Discussion

It is hypothesized that extensive reading (ER) helps learners to learn grammar in context and to expand the scope of text to process (across sentences or entire paragraphs) when they read. Our

research question is as follows: Do learners differ in their estimated rate of change across different types of EPER items? Two points can be concluded, based on the results of the linear growth modeling. The first point is that the learners' growth rates were quite similar across four types of items. The growth rates range from 4.31 (Type 2) to 5.98 (Type 3). Although the slope of Type 3 items seems to be slightly higher than the rest, the difference is quite small. We hypothesized that learners would show greater growth rates in Type 2 and Type 3 items than Type 1 items. Learners have to use context across clauses within a sentence to answer Type 2 items correctly and context across sentences within text to answer Type 3 items correctly. However, the data analyses show a different picture. This may indicate that the participants improved their implicit knowledge of grammar through ER. Table 4 shows that the growth rate of Type 1 items is similar to those of the other types of items. This result may provide additional support for what is reported in Takase (2008, 2012). She reports that over 40% of the repeaters in her ER class perceived their improvement in grammar. The participants in the current study might have improved their knowledge of grammar through ER and this is shown in the growth rate of Type 1 items.

Further, the results of the data analysis direct us to a future direction of our research. Even though learners' growth rates were very similar to each other, Type 2 items show rather large variability. This indicates that learners show individual differences in their growth rate. In the current study, we focused on only the level-1 submodel and examined the within-person changes over time. Other time-varying predictors should be able to give a clearer picture about learners' growth trajectories. The second point we can conclude from the current study is that there is a weak negative correlation between the learners' initial status and their growth rate especially for Type 2 items. This indicates that the learners who had limited language proficiency at the beginning of the ER course, measured by Type 2 items, tended to gain at rather a faster rate than those who had higher language proficiency.

### **Educational implications**

As the results of this research illustrate, even one year of engagement in extensive reading help learners, from low- to high-level university students, improve their general English proficiency by processing texts using grammar in context, context within and across sentences, or extra-textual knowledge. With implementation of extensive reading into school curriculum at an early stage of formal English education in elementary school or secondary school, these skills could be developed faster and better than translation practice and explicit knowledge of grammar rules.

*Kiyomi Yoshizawa, Ed.D., is a professor at Kansai University. Her current research interests include learners' development in reading in a foreign language, reading difficulties, and measurement development.*

*Atsuko Takase, Ed.D., has been practicing extensive reading (ER) for about 20 years in high school and university reading classes. Her research interests include ER motivation, vocabulary acquisition, fluency development in reading, writing, and speaking through ER.*

*Kyoko Otsuki, Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics, is an associate professor at Hiroshima Shudo University. Her research interests include extensive reading, comparative grammar and pragmatics, along with pedagogical grammar.*

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## **Making Use of English Subtitled K-Pop Music Videos in Exploring Students' Extensive Reading Comprehension**

**YUNINGSIH**

*Telkom University, Indonesia*

Studies on captions and subtitles in EFL learning gave positive effects on comprehension and vocabulary acquisition (Chung, 1996; Neuman & Koskinen, 1992; Price, 1983; Vanderplank, 1988, 1993). Using songs in ELT was highly impressive and motivating (Murphey, 1992; Lied, 2000). This study was designed to investigate the use of English-subtitled Korean pop (K-Pop) music videos (MV) in exploring students' extensive reading ability. In this case study, five students (four girls and one boy) were selected. To collect the data, document analysis and an in-depth interview were conducted. The findings showed in comprehending the song, the students' interpretations were still shallow and relied heavily on summary of narrative with very low-level inference. Meanwhile in vocabulary acquisition, it helped them to better understand a wider range of vocabulary, either in English or Korean. In addition, using K-Pop for learning English was more interesting and enjoyable; it is also motivating. Overall, using English-subtitles for K-Pop can be used as an alternative way to enliven extensive reading.

The Korean wave—"hallyu" in Korean—refers to a surge in the international visibility of Korean culture, beginning in East Asia in the 1990s and continuing more recently in the United States, Latin America, the Middle East, and parts of Europe (Ravina, 2008, p. 1). One important aspect of the *hallyu* phenomenon is Korean pop (K-Pop) music. This type of music includes dance, electronic music, electro pop, hip-hop and R&B. Within South Korea the term K-Pop refers to a broad spectrum of music.

Though K-Pop songs are popular in Indonesia, TV stations and music programs seldom play K-Pop songs. Therefore, those who love K-Pop will go to websites to download and watch the MVs. One of the most famous websites is [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). There, they can get the MVs of their idols.

Studies on captions and subtitles in EFL learning gave positive effects on comprehension and vocabulary acquisition (Chung, 1996; Garza, 1991; Goldman, 1996; Neurnan & Koskinen, 1992; Price, 1983; Vanderplank, 1988, 1993). Subtitles also help listeners enjoy what they watch.

On YouTube, there are two choices of MVs that they can get, MVs with subtitles and no subtitles. While most MVs are provided with English subtitles, Vietnamese and Spanish are sometimes available as well. However, it is almost impossible to find subtitles in Bahasa Indonesia. In this case, there will be no other choice but to download MVs with English subtitles.

Using English song in ELT has been around for many years. It is highly motivating (Murphey, 1992; Lied, 2000). Songs can be used for teaching listening and reading. In teaching listening, students can listen to some songs, and then guess what the songs are about. Meanwhile, in teaching reading, students are given some song lyrics, which they then interpret what the songs are about. Reading song lyrics can be interesting and fun.

Song lyrics can be categorized as literature, which has characteristics of poetry and prose alike. Therefore, when teaching using song lyrics as extensive reading, the same analyzing interpretation level can be implemented. According to Marshall (1991), there are some criteria in determining students' interpretation levels toward literature. The description is as follows:

1. Answers are brief and shallow. Little effort to interpret the story.
2. Relies heavily on summary of narrative. Very low-level inference.
3. Makes one or more inferences, but provides little specific support.
4. Makes one or more inferences, providing some specific support.
5. Reports detail and 'tags' them with an inference without showing directly how the inference is connected to the details.
6. Makes one or more inferences, elaborating upon them using specific evidence from the text.

Extensive reading is defined as reading a large amount of text for general comprehension. There are many positive effects of extensive reading. This activity will help learners with vocabulary acquisition, content knowledge, familiarity with syntactic structure, knowledge of genres and improve rates of reading (Lems, et al., 2010: 183). The facilitation of the growth of learners' attitudes toward reading and an increase in motivation to read have also been reported (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Hayashi, 1999; Hedge, 1985; Constantino, 1994; Day & Bamford, 1998). With specific reference to reading fluency development, extensive reading

has shown to be effective in increasing reading speed and comprehension (Bell, 2001; Elly & Mangubhai, 1983; Robb & Susser, 1989). Therefore, it is believed that extensive reading is an effective method to help all learners consolidate their reading comprehension.

Reading English subtitles in K-Pop MVs can be categorized as extensive reading, since the readers get enjoyment while reading and listening to the song that they love. They also make other gains, such as knowledge of vocabulary of other foreign languages; in this case, Korean.

Based on the explanation above, therefore, this study aimed to explore students' extensive reading using English subtitles in K-Pop MVs and to investigate students' perceptions on the use of K-Pop MVs in learning English.

### **Research methodology**

This exploratory case study was conducted in a university in Bandung, Indonesia. As explained the purpose of this study is to explore students' extensive reading using English subtitles in K-Pop MVs and to investigate students' perceptions on the use of K-Pop MVs in learning English. Therefore, this study focused on two research questions:

1. How did students interpret the K-Pop songs through English subtitles?
2. What were students' perceptions on making use of K-Pop MVs in learning English?

Purposive samplings were conducted in selecting the participants. There were five students (four girls and one boy) involved in this study. Each participant will be described as follows:

- 1 Sari, 21 years old. She has loved Korea since she was in Junior High School. First, she loved the TV dramas, then since 2009 she has loved K-Pop. Every day she listens to K-Pop songs, and all the playlists she has are K-Pop songs. Her favorite idols are SUJU and Infinite
- 2 Nabella, 19 years old. She has loved K-Pop since 2008. She is learning Korean now. She can read Hangul, but is not yet able to make sentences. All her playlists are K-Pop songs, and she seldom listens to English songs. She listens to K-Pop every day. Her favorite idols are BAP, Beast, BTOB, Apink, SUJU and EXO.

- 3 Widya, 20 years old. She is a newbie K-Pop Lover, having just started in December 2012. First, she loved the dramas, but now she prefers songs. She rarely listens to English songs. She loves SUJU and always goes to SUJU concerts.
- 4 Ryan, 21 years old. He has loved K-Pop since 2009. He does not have a specific idol that he loves. He just listens to K-Pop song when he finds the song is good and interesting. He also loves listening to English songs.
- 5 Tara, 20 years old. She has loved K-Pop since 2010. She loves Korean dramas, but she prefers the songs. She listens to K-Pop songs every day. She loves Miss A and Lee SeungGi.

Considering the extra activity outside the class, this study was only conducted for a month. The students listened to the songs at their homes. The songs were selected based on students' preferences. The songs' MVs were downloaded from [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). The MV selected had to display Hangul, romanized lyrics, and English subtitles. The songs used in this study were as follows:

**Table 1. The Students' Choice Songs**

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Sari    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MBLAQ – Beautiful(#s1)</li> <li>● Infinite - Still I Miss You (#s2)</li> <li>● Infinite – Beautiful (#s3)</li> <li>● Infinite – Paradise (#s4)</li> </ul> |
| Nabella | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Beast – On the rainy days (#s1)</li> <li>● BTOB – Lover Boys (#s2)</li> <li>● BAP – Rain Sound (#s3)</li> <li>● Teen Top – Miss Right (#s4)</li> </ul>    |
| Widya   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teen Top – Miss Right (#s1)</li> <li>● SUJU – Someday (#s2)</li> <li>● SUJU – She's gone (#s3)</li> <li>● SUJU – Let's not (#s4)</li> </ul>               |
| Ryan    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● BTOB – Lover Boys (#s1)</li> <li>● Infinite – Still I Miss You (#s2)</li> <li>● Infinite – Beautiful (#s3)</li> <li>● SUJU – Someday (#s4)</li> </ul>     |
| Tara    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suzy Miss A – Don't forget me (#s1)</li> <li>● Teen Top – To You (#s2)</li> <li>● Ailee – Heaven (#s3)</li> </ul>   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lee SeungGi – The Last Words (#s4)</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

In answering the research questions, two instruments, document analysis and interviews, were used in this study. Document analysis was used to find out how students interpret the songs in exploring their comprehension. In analyzing the documents, the level of interpretation was based on criteria proposed by Marshall (1991). The descriptions of interpretation levels are as follows:

Level 1: Answer is brief and shallow. Little effort to interpret the story

Level 2: Relies heavily on summary of narrative. Very low-level inference.

Level 3: Makes one or more inferences, but provides little specific support.

Level 4: Makes one or more inferences, providing some specific support.

Level 5: Reports detail and ‘tags’ them with an inference without showing directly how the inference is connected to the details.

Level 6: Makes one or more inferences, elaborating upon them using specific evidence from the text.

In-depth interviews were conducted to investigate students’ perceptions on the use of K-Pop MVs in learning English.

## **Results and discussion**

### *1) Students’ Interpretation Level toward songs*

As explained above, the criteria developed by Marshall (1991) was used to analyze the notes students made when watching the MVs. Based on the notes, students’ interpretation levels toward songs are explained as follows:

**Table 2 Students' Interpretation Levels**

|         | #s1     | #s2     | #s3     | #s4     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Sari    | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 2 | Level 2 |
| Nabella | Level 2 | Level 2 | Level 2 | Level 2 |
| Widya   | Level 2 | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 2 |
| Ryan    | Level 2 | Level 2 | Level 2 | Level 2 |
| Tara    | Level 2 | Level 2 | Level 2 | Level 2 |

As shown in Table 2, there are only two songs included at level 1, which indicates brief and shallow interpretation. Meanwhile, the rest of the levels of interpretation the students achieved are mostly in level 2, which indicated the interpretations are relying heavily on summary of narrative and have very low-level inference. Some examples are below:

#### Level 1

#s1 – Infinite – Still I Miss You (Sari)

*Someone who fall in love. That someone is the source of his happiness. He feels happiness if he with that someone.*

Sari just gave a short answer to interpret this song. She did not give any inferences to support her interpretation.

## #s2 – SUJU – Someday (Widya)

*This song is tell about seorang laki-laki yang merindukan perempuan di masalaludenganmengingat kembalimemori yang telahmerekalaluidahulu. Laki-lakitersebut, berharapbahwasuatuhatin antimerekaakankembalibertemudengankeadaanapapun.*

## Translation

*This song tells about a man that missed a woman from his past by recalling the memories they had in the past. The man hopes someday they will meet again.*

Widya also wrote all her interpretations in Bahasa Indonesia. In interpreting this song, she only gave brief and shallow interpretations. She did not give any inferences.

**Level 2**

## # s1 - Beast – On the Rainy Days (Nabella)

*This song is about a boy who escape from the thoughts of his ex-girlfriend on rainy days because the rain brings the memories of their relationship. But their relationship was ended up sadly. The boy couldn't hold the girl anymore and then he let go the girl so she could smile happily.*

In interpreting this song, Nabella just made a narrative summary from the lyrics. She used some words from the lyric to be her main points, such as *escape, on rainy days, and smile happily*. She used *his ex-girlfriend* to infer *you*.

## # s2 – Infinite – Still I Miss You (Ryan)

*This song tells us about a cute story of a boy who falling love again with a girl in his first sign. It makes he become a new person with a cheerful love feeling and doesn't want any other girl except her. This song tells us how his world change and seeing a new kind of life while he in love with her.*

In interpreting this song, Ryan stated that the song's story was cute and funny. He fully summarized based on his interpretation and made a narrative story, but he still used *falling love again* to infer *shaken again*.

# s3 – Lee SeungGi – The Last Words (Tara)

*Lagu ini berceritakan, bagaimana sang pria ingin mengatakan banyak hal pada sang gadis namun pada akhirnya kata-kata itu lenyap, tak pernah tersampaikan. Ia hanya bis berkat dalam hatinya. Keberaniannya rasa percaya dirinya seakan hilang terbawa angin, semua kata-kata yang ia persiapkan seakan hanya berputar di pikirannya.*

*Translation:*

*This song tells about how the man wanted to tell many things to the woman, but finally those words disappeared, never having been told. The man could only keep for himself. His courage and confidence seemed gone with the wind, all the words he prepared seemed to come back to himself.*

Tara wrote all her four song interpretations in Bahasa Indonesia. In interpreting Lee SeungGi's song, she made a short narrative story. She explained how hard the man tried to express his feeling. From this written interpretation it can be seen that she used the words in the lyrics, though she translated them into Bahasa Indonesia.

# s4 – Infinite – Paradise (Sari)

*This song tells us about someone's feeling. He feels this world is like a paradise if he is together with someone he loved. He never let her go, but even if she must go, he will survive without her and he believes that they can be together in heaven someday.*

In interpreting this song, Sari wrote a narrative story. She used *someone he loved* to infer *you* in the lyric. She did not use other word inferences; all the words she used to write the summary were exactly as stated in the lyric, such as *paradise* and *survive*.

## 2) *Students' Perceptions on Using English Subtitled K-Pop MVs in Learning English*

Based on data from interview, the students' perceptions are explained as follows:

### 1. *Interesting and Enjoyable*

The students stated using K-Pop MVs in learning English because they were interesting and more enjoyable.

“Because I love K-Pop, I think using K-Pop MVs is more interesting and enjoyable. I don't have to only listen English songs. It's boring only English.”- Widya

Another statement was also given, how watching K-Pop is as part of her hobby.

“When listen K-Pop, I feel more happy and enjoy watching the MV. I just do my hobby, not force by my teacher”- Nabella

“I'm not Korean freak, but I love listening K-Pop in my leisure time, moreover when I get interesting and good songs” - Ryan

### 1. *Motivating*

Using K-Pop MVs motivates them to learn English.

“I don't like English. But K-Pop I like very much. In MVs, there is only English subtitle, so I must understand English to understand the songs “- Sari

“ Actually I hate English because it's very difficult. But when I watch K-Pop MV, the translation is English, so must understand English too.”- Widya

“ I can’t find Indonesian translation in MV, all English. So, when I want to understand the songs. I must understand English”- Tara

“ I like English songs, but I like Korean more. Studying Korean must understand English too.”Nabella

From this statement, the students are more motivated to learn English because all the subtitles in MV are in English. They seem to be encouraged to learn English.

*1. Helpful in improving English and Korean Vocabulary*

All the students stated that watching K-Pop MV helped them to understand a wider range of vocabulary in either English or Korean.

“ When I watch the MV, I can get new vocabulary. From example, when I listen to BTOB song, Lover boys, I can know bakke means only, ideora means like this, sun eobseo means I can’t. I also get English vocabulary, It’s so blue means I’m sad.”- Ryan

“ When I watch SUJU song, let’s not, I get new vocabulary cowardly and bid. I also get many Korean vocabulary from another songs I listen, geurae, mollaseo, nugunde, mannari and chakan. For English vocabulary I find new vocabulary, like reminiscing and fragrance.”- Widya

From both statements above, it is shown that using K-Pop songs can be advantageous for English and Korean learning. Watching K-Pop MVs can help them improve their English and Korean Vocabulary.

## Conclusion

Extensive reading is defined as reading a large amount of text for general comprehension. Using songs from other foreign languages to learn English is an interesting and powerful way to teach reading. Encouraging students to use other foreign language they are interested in can also be motivating for them to learn English.

The influence of Hallyu wave is undoubted. English-subtitles in K-Pop MVs can be used as an alternative way to attract students in practicing extensive reading. It helps the students' comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, either in English or Korean. In addition, using K-Pop for learning English can be interesting and enjoyable.

***Yuningsih** is a lecturer at Telkom University and a third-year students in Post Graduate Program at Indonesia University of Education. Currently, she is finishing her thesis. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from School of Foreign ABA-Bandung. She is interested in teaching speaking and reading, SLA, and Educational Physiology. Email: [yuningsihlegiman@gmail.com](mailto:yuningsihlegiman@gmail.com)*

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## **English Subtitled K-Drama: A Way of Narrow Reading in Vocabulary Advancement**

**ISTIQOMAH NUR RAHMAWATI**

*Indonesia University of Education*

**LAILY AMIN FAJARIYAH**

*University of Yogyakarta*

The *Halyu* (Korean wave) has reached South East Asia including Indonesia for the latest decades. K-drama becomes the most popular for teenagers and even adults. Through watching online from the Internet, viewers can enjoy the voices of the stars doing real conversation in Korean. For viewers who do not understand Korean, the websites provide them language support, i.e. subtitles in some languages, and one of them is English. The English subtitles read by viewers are the real example of communication in which viewers can do reading activity while enjoying the story of K-drama that they like. There are some methods or activities in reading. It is believed that narrow reading is the best global method to help all learners consolidate learners' reading comprehension. This study then tried to find out the viewers' belief on the use of reading K-drama's English subtitled as a way of narrow reading which is useful in their vocabulary advancement. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research through interview and observation. This research involved five graduate students who are K-drama lovers. It has been found that while they watched the K-drama with English subtitle, they advance their English vocabulary. The actions, the facial expressions, as well as the storyline might facilitate the understanding of the new vocabulary when accompanied with English subtitle.

The *Halyu* (Korean wave) has reached South East Asia including Indonesia over the past decade and spreads Korean cultural products such as dramas, popular music, and movies. Among those cultural products, dramas have become popular for teenagers and even adults.

A certain private TV station broadcasts some K-dramas to attract more viewers but usually the voices are already dubbed with *Bahasa Indonesia*. It does not present the authentic Korean language so viewers cannot listen to their idol stars' voice. Besides, the aired dramas are not updated as often as those aired in Korea. It causes some fanatic viewers to prefer watching the dramas through cable TV or off the Internet. There are some websites where fanatic K-drama viewers like to visit, such as [www.koreandrama.org](http://www.koreandrama.org) and [www.dramacrazy.net](http://www.dramacrazy.net) to watch the dramas online.

Through watching online from the Internet, viewers can enjoy the voices of the stars doing real conversation in Korean. Even though some viewers do not understand Korean, the websites provide them language support, i.e. subtitles in some languages, and one of them is English. English subtitled movies attract viewers to watch more dramas since they can understand what the actors/actresses say or talk about in Korean. Through this way, Korean drama offers two packages of foreign languages for Indonesian viewers: Korean and English. The English subtitles read by Indonesian viewers are a real example of communication in which viewers can do a reading activity while enjoying the story of K-drama that they like.

Watching K-dramas is a reading activity that is a source of learning and enjoyment. As a learning source, reading will review previously learned vocabulary and grammatical forms, and it will also help learners acquire new vocabulary and forms.. When learners increase their skill and fluency in reading, they will get more enjoyment through reading (Nation, 2009: 49).

*Extensive reading* is defined as reading a large amount of text for general comprehension. It is believed that narrow reading is also an effective method to help all learners consolidate learners' reading comprehension, based on the idea that the acquisition of both structure and vocabulary comes from much exposure in a comprehensible context (Krashen, 2004). Therefore both extensive and narrow readings have a similar approach. This activity will help learners with vocabulary acquisition, content knowledge, familiarity with syntactic structures, knowledge of genres, and improvement in rates of reading (Lems, et al., 2010: 183).

Additionally, learning through narrow reading is largely incidental learning, that is, the learners' attention is focused on the story and not on items to learn. As a result, learners need adequate input with substantial opportunities for vocabulary repetition. Since Narrow Reading (NR) is meaning-focused input, learners must be interested in what they are reading and pay attention on the meaning of the text rather than the form or language features of the text (Nation, 2009: 50). NR thus facilitates reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary development (Bell, 2001 in Pazkah

& Soltani, 2010). and can also enhance learners' overall language proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and writing (Day & Bamford, 2004, in Pazkah & Soltani, 2010).

The subtitles of K-drama reading then can be categorized as a way of narrow reading since viewers focus on reading for enjoyment and the content or story of the drama. This study tried to find out the viewers' beliefs on the use of reading K-drama's English subtitle as a way of narrow reading which is useful in their vocabulary advancement.

### **Method and participants**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research through interview and observation. This research involved five graduate students who are K-drama lovers. To study the viewers' belief on the use of reading K-drama's English subtitle as a way of narrow reading which is useful in their vocabulary advancement, we chose to work with post-graduate students of English Education.. They all attend a postgraduate school in a state university in Indonesia. They are in the fourth semester and doing their thesis research. Their ages are between 25 until 30 years old.

The reason why they were chosen was their level of proficiency in English and their general interest for watching K-dramas frequently. These students already have a high level of oral and written competence in English. The interviews were one-on-one interviews. It aimed to explore how the participants successfully acquired vocabulary. The researchers adapted and modified the scale of vocabulary knowledge by Wesche and Paribakhts (1996) into some questions to check the vocabulary advancement of the participants, as it allows specifying the stages of vocabulary acquisition from first exposure to production and enables the researchers to determine how well the participants develop vocabulary.. To keep the study confidential, the participants were not informed about the purpose of the study until they finished with the interview.

The participants often watch K-drama in their free time. They usually watch it using a laptop through free software such as *Gom Player* or *Windows Media Player Classic*. The media players that have the facility to incorporate subtitles into the moving picture were utilized to play the K-dramas. The K-drama that they watched and enjoyed together was *Shinui*, starring Lee Min Ho and Kim Hee Seon. *Shinui* is also known as *Faith* or *The Great Doctor* in Indonesia. The broadcast period began from August 13 to October 30, 2012.

The genre of this drama was historical, romance, time travel, and fantasy. It had a total of 24 episodes. This drama shows the romance between a warrior from the ancient times and a female doctor from the modern times, their love transcending time and space. It also tells the story about the process of making a true king.

## Findings and discussion

As mentioned in the introduction, this research study tried to find out the viewers' beliefs on the use of reading K-drama's English subtitles as a way of reading which is useful for their vocabulary advancement. The results of the research are presented below.

### Viewers' background and frequency of watching K-dramas

The respondents of this research study are categorized into adults whose experience in watching K-dramas vary from two years to eleven years as presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Viewer's Experience in Watching K-drama**

| No | Respondents | Age (y.o) | Start watching (Year) | Frequency           |
|----|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1  | R1          | 25        | 2010                  | every night         |
| 2  | R2          | 25        | 2011                  | once a week         |
| 3  | R3          | 27        | 2003                  | three days per week |
| 4  | R4          | 29        | 2004                  | twice a week        |
| 5  | R5          | 30        | 2002                  | every weekend       |

Looking at the year they started watching K-dramas shows that they have watched many dramas. Table 1 shows that they watch K-dramas at least once in a week. It can be concluded that

they enjoy watching K-dramas and this activity is interesting for them. Through K-dramas they also admitted that they had vocabulary advancement while watching K-dramas.

### **Reading K-drama's English subtitled for extensive reading activity**

Some respondents give different responses to researchers' questions during the interview. Their responses will be discussed below.

A respondent stated that he enjoys K-dramas almost every night and he believed that watching K-dramas can be an interesting activity.

*"It's good of course...for entertainment and time killer..."*

From his statement, he watches K-dramas for entertainment and spending his spare time. When later he was asked by the researchers the advantage of K-drama he responded more seriously:

*"...because I watch the dramas with English subtitle on, it allows me to enjoy it and helped me advance my knowledge of the language at the same time."*

His answer implies that he does not only get enjoyment from watching K-dramas, but also the activity helps him in advancing his knowledge of the language. It can be concluded that he believes that K-dramas with English subtitles is a good narrow reading activity in which he gathers knowledge of English language through an enjoyable activity.

Similarly, Respondent 3 also believes that watching K-dramas with English subtitles will help her in vocabulary advancement.

*"Watching K-dramas with English as the subtitle helps me a lot in advancing my vocabulary ....."*

Her statement shows that she has a good attitude or belief on the activity of narrow reading through K-dramas with English subtitles which will later help her in her vocabulary advancement.

### **Vocabulary advancement in NR of K-drama's English subtitled**

After getting various responses about reading English subtitled K-dramas as a narrow reading activity, researchers asked about their general belief of NR for vocabulary development. .

A respondent admitted that for him watching K-dramas with English subtitled has many advantages, and one of them is giving him a chance to recall some words as stated below:

*"... for example, hmm.. I don't remember I have some words in my mind, but when I watch the drama...and read the subtitle, I think..yeah that word means this...."*

From his statement it shows that for him, NR in K-drama's English subtitled helps him recall some words that he already has in the past. It will help viewers to recall the word and use their previous knowledge to understand the story. Recalling previously learned vocabulary is necessary for vocabulary development.

The next respondent gave a different response toward her belief about narrow reading through English subtitles of K-dramas. She thinks that through the activity she finds some new words from the English subtitles that she has never found before. Here is her response:

*"...Well, sometimes many new words in the subtitle..like "bread winner", "concubine"...I didn't see the words before...and many more.."*

Her statement shows that the English subtitled let her read new words. To find out her understanding of the word, the researchers asked her what are the equivalent words in Bahasa Indonesia. Below is her answer:

*“Ha ha...I don’t know. It’s strange right? I didn’t know what its mean but in many scenes I read that...then I think “bread winner” is “tulang punggung” in Bahasa Indonesia, right?”*

Her answer shows that she saw or read the words for the first time in the English subtitles. She has not heard or read it before but the words were repeated so it made her guess the meaning of the words.

a similar answer was given by Respondent 5 (R5), he stated that he got the meaning of certain words from seeing the action. Here is his statement:

*“...Ya..Even though I didn’t know the meaning of some words but I can see the actions, like...signals of hands and arms, facial expression and the story line, so I think I can guess it...”*

This statement shows that vocabulary advancement can be done through guessing. One of their efforts to deal with new language in context is by paying attention to the hands and arms, and facial expressions and also the context (story line) which will help them comprehend or understand the meaning of the words.

Besides vocabulary recall and guessing, some other respondents stated that NR through K-dramas give them chance to get new words and use them in their practice.

*“...Ya ya...many new words from a drama, then I use the words so I remember the meaning, but I also skipped many words...but I still enjoy the story..haha”*

From that statement, practice using new words was done to make the words stay longer in her memory. However, viewers also tend to ignore some words that they do not know. They ignore them because without knowing the meaning of the words they still enjoy the story of the dramas as also stated by Respondent 4 (R4) below:

*“If you asked me what words that I learn from those dramas, I would say I did not remember. My intention to watch K-drama is to have fun so I don’t pay attention to the words that I don’t know. Usually I just skipped it. But because the words are repeated in the drama ...so...I start think and guessed it based on my guts.”*

R4’s statement shows that the appearance of new words is not the priority in NR. The focus is still on enjoyment. She started to think of the new words only when they repeatedly appeared in the subtitles. To overcome the problem, she used guessing techniques to deal with the new words.

After being interviewed on their belief on narrow reading activity through watching K-dramas with English subtitles and their beliefs about vocabulary learning from the activity, some respondents gave suggestions in taking advantage of K-drama as delivered by R3 below:

*“.....While watching drama with words that you may not understand, while using a notebook and pen, write the word down and find out what the word means.”*

R3 recommended other viewers to write down some difficult or new words and find them while watching K-dramas. This is an effort to help viewers with vocabulary advancement. Similarly, R2 suggested non-native English viewers to notice some expressions or words and learn from them:

*“Sometimes, I find it easier to learn so many English vocabulary and expressions and usage by watching K-drama. If you’re a non-native English speaker, you probably noticed some of them that help you learn.”*

The statement above shows that watching K-dramas with English subtitles will provide viewers with a valuable source of words and expressions that can be learned.

## **Conclusion**

This study tried to find out the viewers’ beliefs on the use of reading K-drama’s English subtitles as a way of narrow reading for their vocabulary learning. Watching K-dramas with English subtitles has many advantages for the viewers: reading new words that they never encountered

before and finding out the meaning through context, recalling some words they previously learned to understand the story, and giving them a chance to get new words and use them in their practice. The advantages above show that watching K-dramas with English subtitles will provide viewers with a valuable source of words and expressions that can be learned.

*Istiqomah Nur Rahmawati* was born in Yogyakarta on December 21 1985. She studied at English Education Department, State University of Yogyakarta from 2004 to 2008 with concentration on English for Children. After her graduation in February 2009, she continued to work as English teacher in Global Surya Primary School in Bandar Lampung. In 2011, she started to dedicate her knowledge as an English lecturer in IAIN Raden Intan Bandar Lampung until now. In June 2011, she continued her study in School of Postgraduate Studies, Indonesia University of Education, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. She takes English Language Education as her major. She likes to share knowledge and experience in teaching English, so she can be reached at her email: [ishitapotter@gmail.com](mailto:ishitapotter@gmail.com).

*Laily Amin Fajariyah* was born in Bantul, Yogyakarta on October 21 1986. She studied at English Education Department, State University of Yogyakarta from 2004 to 2009 with concentration on TEFL. After her graduation in August 2009, she continued to work as English instructor in Wisma Bahasa and SMAN 1 Sewon, Yogyakarta. In 2010, she started to dedicate her knowledge as an English teacher in Gunungkidul regency at SMPN 5 Panggang. In June 2012, she was granted the scholarship from P2TK Dikdas. Now she is on her study duty in State University of Yogyakarta with Applied Linguistic majority. She likes to share knowledge and experience in teaching English, so she can be reached at Facebook: Laily Amin Fajariyah. Email: [lailyaminf@yahoo.co.id](mailto:lailyaminf@yahoo.co.id)

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**A Sociocultural Approach to Extensive Reading Classes:  
Engaging Students in a Reciprocal Community of Readers  
on the Internet**

**KUNITARO MIZUNO**

*Fukuoka Prefectural University*

The Interactive Reading Community (IRC) website is designed to create a reciprocal community of readers across universities the world and is underpinned by the sociocultural approach. Utilizing the IRC can help students' act of reading become active, collaborative, and reflective.

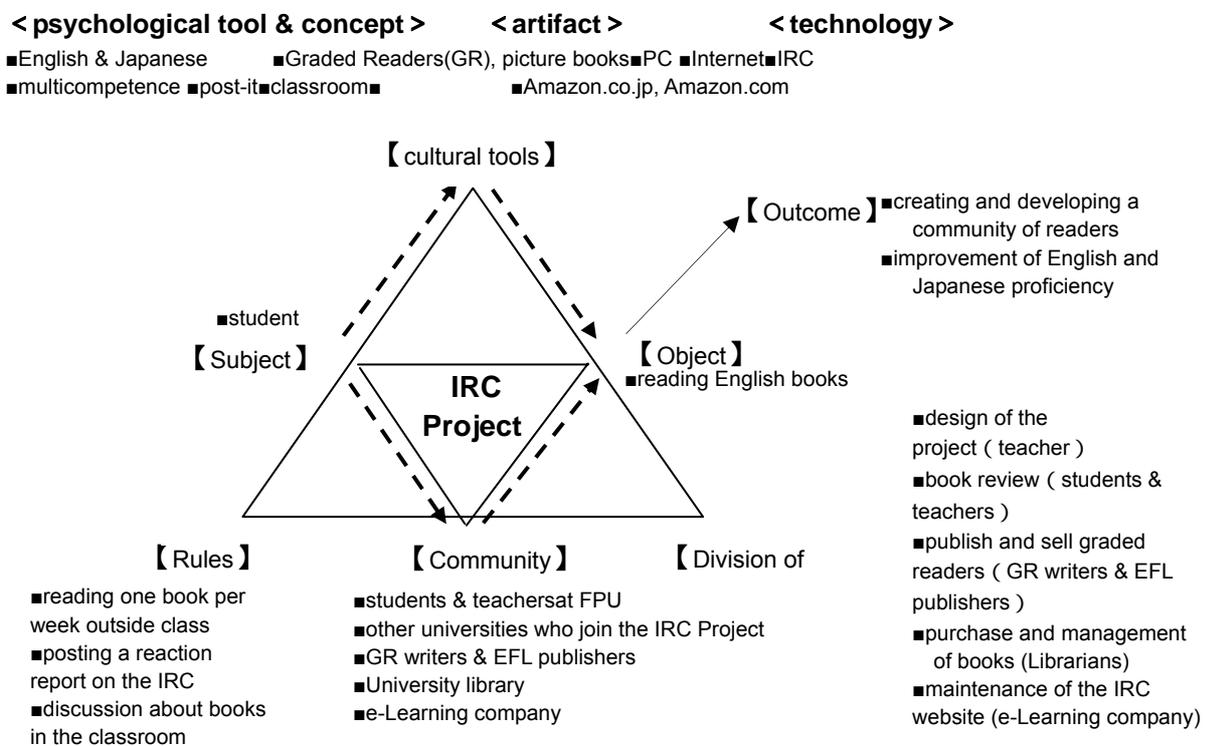
Conventionally learning has been considered an internalized cognitive process bound inside individual heads which comes from the information processing model in computer science —input and output—from the 1970's (Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977; McLaughlin, 1987). Following this idea, teachers in extensive reading class exclusively focus on having students read as much as possible during the class, so the words and grammar will develop as cognitive skills and can be retrieved from memory when necessary.

On the other hand, from the late 1980's , sociocultural aspects of learning were reassessed in the light of Vygotsky (1978). Werch (1993) and Engestrome (1987) developed Vygotsky's ideas of "mediation" and "tools" and proposed theoretical frameworks of sociocultural approaches. The characteristics of the sociocultural approach are explained in VanPatten and Benati (2010).

The major or central feature governing Sociocultural Theory is mediation. Mediation refers to the idea that humans possess certain cultural tools, such as language, literacy, numeracy, and others, that they purposefully use to control and interact with their environment. In other words, these tools mediate between individuals and the situations in which they find themselves.

Another major construct within Sociocultural Theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD refers to the distance between a learner's current ability to use tools to mediate his or her environment and the level of potential development. In short, the ZPD is a metaphor to describe development within the social plane (Vygotsky, 1978 )

The IRC project can be fully illustrated below within the framework of "activity theory" where Engeström (1987) developed Vygotsky's ideas of "mediation" and "tools". The components of 1 to 6 of the IRC project and their relationships are clearly explained. Especially the triangle (1→2→3) and the inverted triangle (1→4→3) are focused to show how the IRC project uses a sociocultural approach.



**Figure 1**

Following their ideas, teachers should design a learning environment where students interact with others utilizing cultural tools, so their learning becomes active, collaborative, and reflective.

The Interactive Reading Community (IRC) Project, which was set up in 1999, is an application of the sociocultural approach through integration of technology to enrich students' reading experiences.

The IRC ver.5 website creates a reciprocal reading environment on the Internet where students across classes and universities share their reading experiences through reaction reports that binds the readers together and reflect on their perspectives on the stories. The quantity of reading is also facilitated in the social context of the IRC where 400 words/km is visualized as a bar graph on the “Reading Marathon” page.

The following features of the IRC and how to use them are explained in this presentation:

- Search function in terms of genres and EPER levels,
- Reaction Reports Library for about 3500 books
- Popular Reaction Reports
- Popular Books
- IRC Dictionary of Quotations
- Reading Fan Club
- Reading Marathon
- Reading Stars
- Comment Olympics
- POP Gallery
- My page.

These features will make your students’ act of reading active, collaborative, and reflective.

The IRC project can be fully illustrated below within the framework of “activity theory” where Engestrome (1987) developed Vygotsky’s ideas of “mediation” and “tools”.

## Research questions:

1. How did a reading environment where students interact with others through talking about books in the classroom and on the IRC website affect their quality of reading and motivation for joining in the IRC project?
2. What effects were produced by having students utilize the IRC website which differentiates from those who do not utilize the cultural tool?

In order to answer those two questions, a survey in the form of 92 questions was conducted with 434 students in 2011. The results relevant to the two research questions were this (水野・東矢・川北・西納, 2013):

98% of the students answered that since they needed to introduce books they had read every week in the classroom and on the IRC website, their act of reading became active, collaborative, and reflective.

Also, the IRC website enabled them to read an abundance of reaction reports posted by other university students throughout Japan in the last 4 years, which extensive reading classes without utilizing the IRC cannot provide for their students. Reading other reports on the IRC, they could realize that the interpretations of books were varied and perspectives on the same book were different. It is the IRC website that enabled reaction reports to be shared with each other “across time and place.”

You and your students are invited to utilize the IRC website and have exciting reading experiences that cognitive and individual approaches to reading cannot provide.

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# Principles & Practice of Extensive Reading

**BJORN FUISTING**

*Ritsumeikan University, Japan*

Starting or revamping an Extensive Reading (ER) program can be a daunting task. There are several factors to consider, including reading materials, objectives, grades, and the role of the teacher among others. Richard Day and Julian Bamford (2002) have outlined ten fundamental principles of ER but how can they be used to implement an ER program from the ground up? This article discusses these ten principles of ER and suggests how they can be practically applied when planning an ER program, as well as provides tips for avoiding pitfalls encountered when planning/implementing an ER course.

Extensive Reading (ER) comes in many shapes and forms. A single definition is hard to come by but in 1990 Susser and Robb summarized various research into their working definition of “reading (a) of large quantities of material or long texts; (b) for global or general understanding; (c) with the intention of obtaining pleasure from the text” (Susser & Robb, 1990, p.165). The definition has since been expanded and explained in more details and Richard Day and Julian Bamford (2002) have listed ten fundamental principles of ER. The Day and Bamford principles were inspired by Williams (1986) and have been developed over the considerable time they have been involved in researching and promoting ER. This article will discuss these ten principles and suggest how they can be practically applied when planning an ER program, as well as provide tips for avoiding pitfalls encountered when planning/implementing an ER course.

## **Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading**

- 1) The reading material is easy
- 2) A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available

- 3) Learners choose what they want to read
- 4) Learners read as much as possible
- 5) The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding
- 6) Reading is its own reward
- 7) Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower
- 8) Reading is individual and silent
- 9) Teachers orient and guide their students
- 10) The teacher is a role model of a reader

(Bamford & Day, 2002)

When the list was published in 2002, two responses were published in the same issue of *Reading in a Foreign Language* (Prowse, 2002, and Robb, 2002). Whilst Prowse mainly concurs with Day and Bamford, he also advocates the use of recordings, Robb disagrees with the 6<sup>th</sup> principle 'Reading is its own reward'. He claims that there need to be some kind of control function and that reading "to satisfy a course requirement" might be necessary in order to motivate students to continue to read (Robb, 2002, p. 146).

### **Issues and advice**

The ten ER principles are a good starting point but when putting them into practice some issues arise, especially when it comes the reading material, covered by principle 1 and 2, and the purpose, principle 5 and 6.

### **Reading material**

In addition to Day and Bamford's principles of easy and varied material, Williams claims that "*In the absence of interesting texts, very little is possible*" (1986, p. 42) and Prowse (2002) stresses that texts should be easy and engaging. This makes selecting books one of the most

crucial aspects of any ER program. In the author's experience, the largest difficulties have been in securing enough funds and convincing faculty and staff to supply material that is easy enough for the students. It is recommended that there should be few or no unfamiliar items of vocabulary. Hu and Nation (2002) state it is necessary for readers to have a 98% coverage rate of the vocabulary. However, this may mean that some college students should be reading very simple texts, such as *Reading Foundation Library* or even *Building Blocks Library*. Both these series are excellent for lower level students but were rejected to be purchased by a mid-level private university in Japan due to being deemed beneath university level. As a result, the author had to use his private funds as well as donated samples to secure enough books at an appropriate level for the ER program. Once students are able to read at the 200-250 headword level the choice of material greatly increases, but it can still be a challenge to have your institution purchase enough books. Having students buy and donate books, using library or material budgets are other ways of securing funds (see more suggestions in Waring, 2000). For a successful program you need to have a minimum of three books per student in the program, preferably more (Extensive Reading Foundation [ERF], 2011). There is also a lot of free material available that can inspire and improve your ER program (Fuisting, 2010).

Following the principles of having a variety of topics and engaging material is getting easier with more and more material being published for the EFL market. The Language Learner Literature (LLL) awards, administered by the Extensive Reading Foundation, can serve as a good guide to high quality books written for learners of English. An excellent example of a low level but extremely engaging, and sadly always current topic, is Phil Prowse's *Why?* (2008). It deals with the subject of war but is written at a beginner level of 250 headwords. In terms of variety, it is recommended to include several publishers' series, and both fiction and non-fiction, original stories and adaptations, as well as a variety of genres (ERF, 2011).

### **Purpose**

Day and Bamford (2002) state 'Reading is its own reward' and other ER advocates (Prowse, 2002; Williams, 1986) strongly discourage the use of the quizzes and other forms of tests to check if students have read the books they claim to have completed. Book talks, reviews and discussions could instead be used to measure if the students have engaged with the book (Bamford & Day, 2004). Depending on the nature of the class this approach might be suitable. However, most educational institutions require some kind of control function and it can be argued

that passing a quiz and thereby increasing the number of words read can be motivational (Robb, 2002). In the author's experience the Moodle Reader, developed by Tom Robb at Kyoto Sangyo University, Japan, is one of the best and easiest to use ER monitoring system. It can be used for individual classes or institutional wide ER programs. It covers and impressive 3000+ graded readers and books for young readers and is based on the amount of words read (see [www.moodlereader.org](http://www.moodlereader.org)).

## **Conclusion**

The principles stated by Day and Bamford are a very good guide and inspiration for how to do ER but each educator should look to his or her situation and adapt them as necessary. The students' and the institution's needs and capabilities should be taken into account when deciding how to adjust the principles. The author has broken down the original ten ER principles into five areas and added some brief advice for each one that has proven to be successful in the 9 years he has been teaching ER at junior high, senior high and university in Japan.

## **Reading material**

- 1) The reading material is easy
- 2) A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available
  - Choose material below students' normal reading level
  - Few or no unfamiliar items of vocabulary or grammar
  - Sets of books can be good but have a variety of series
  - You need a minimum of 3 books per student
  - Include a variety of genres including non-fiction

## **Learner's choice & goals**

- 3) Learners choose what they want to read

4) Learners read as much as possible

- Allow students to choose both which level and which books to read
- One book per week or a set amount of words per semester/course

### **Purpose**

5) The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding

6) Reading is its own reward

- Use follow-up activities such as book talks, recommendations & discussions
- There are no or minimal tests and/or book reports
- If quizzes must be used, the Moodle Reader is highly recommended

### **Reading style**

7) Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower

8) Reading is individual and silent

- Start by having sustained silent reading (SSR) during class time
- Gradually move to set the reading as homework
- Consider adding a Speed Reading course to your class

### **Teacher's role**

9) Teachers orient and guide their students

10) The teacher is a role model of a reader

- Help students select books

- Read yourself during SSR to show your love of reading

There are a lot of resources and advice available for starting an ER program. The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) ER Special Interest Group has collected some of the major ones on their website ([www.ersig.org/drupal-ersig/links](http://www.ersig.org/drupal-ersig/links)) and in 2010 Oxford published an excellent book written by ten different researcher and practitioners on different aspects of ER (Day et al, 2010). Good luck with your ER program!

***Bjorn Fuisting** has been living and teaching in Japan for over 10 years. He has been involved with Japanese Association of Language Teaching (JALT) and the JALT ER SIG in various capacities and currently writes a column for the Extensive Reading in Japan journal. He is a full-time lecturer at Ritsumeikan University's Biwako-Kusatsu Campus. In addition to Extensive Reading, his research interests include speed reading and peer review in writing activities. He can be contacted at: [bjornfuisting@gmail.com](mailto:bjornfuisting@gmail.com)*

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## Hidden Aspects of Extensive Reading—a Diary Study

SAE MATSUDA

*Setsunan University*

This study explores ER diaries that learners kept for one term and attempts to identify what Japanese university students are actually experiencing. Despite its drawbacks, a diary study is thought to elicit hidden aspects of language learning. On the first day of class, students were assigned a weekly diary to record their ER activities. They also received a short lecture on ER—how and why they are going to participate—and signed up for an ER marathon. A close look at learners' ER diaries suggested that their individual differences influenced their use of reading strategies. The diary entries also uncovered their motivational change over time. How to keep them interested in ER throughout the term still remains a big challenge. Yet, by encouraging students to read in and outside of class, the students began to read for pleasure, and they highly evaluated their ER experiences at the end of the term.

Many agree that extensive reading is an effective approach to enhance learner literacy. Research has shown that ER increases learner vocabulary, reading fluency and comprehension (Krashen, 1993; Day & Bamford, 1998; Nation, 2001). While a great volume of quantitative research has been conducted and shown the positive effects of ER, some researchers have shifted their attention to how learners are actually reading. This study explores extensive reading diaries that learners kept throughout the term and attempted to identify what learners are experiencing. A close look at diary entries revealed various types of individual differences—learning styles, reading strategies, motivation, orientation, and anxiety—which changed over time.

## **Review of literature**

### ***Diary Studies***

Although it has some limitations, a diary study is thought to be an effective means to explore learners' perceptions (Matsumoto, 1987; Bailey, 1990; Nunan, 1992; Usuki, 2001). Matsumoto (1987) argues that it is a natural way of collecting classroom data; moreover, it enables the researcher to discover hidden aspects of language learning that indicate what is important for learners. While some studies reported psychological aspects of language learning, such as anxiety and competitiveness (Bailey, 1983; Hilleson, 1996), cultural sensitivity (Peck, 1996) and learners' sense of achievement (Matsuda, 2003), many reported the types and effects of language learning strategies found in diaries (Fedderholdt, 1998; Halbach, 2000; Carson & Longhini, 2002).

### ***Reading Strategies***

Carrell (1998) claims that effective comprehension involves both top-down strategies (e.g. using background knowledge and predicting what will happen next) and bottom-up strategies (e.g. recognizing words and decoding sounds). Poor readers, however, are not good at applying various strategies and pay too much attention to details. Hayashi (1999) observed that ESL learners shift their use of reading strategies from "L1 translation" and "dictionary use" to top-down processing such as "contextual guessing." Arimoto (2012), on the other hand, argues that the way good readers and poor readers engage themselves in reading is not consistent and that task difficulty and learners' learning styles should also be taken into consideration. By examining two learners' diaries, Matsuda (2012b) found that the learners' individual differences—for example, personality and learning styles—greatly influenced their use of reading strategies.

### ***Individual differences***

Individual differences include both static types (e.g. gender, nationality, and first language background) and dynamic types (e.g. motivation, anxiety, self-esteem, and language proficiency) of variables (Robinson, 2002). Matsuda & Gobel (2004) explored possible relationships between general foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA), foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA), gender, extended overseas experience, and classroom performance. It was demonstrated that self-confidence in speaking English, gender, and proficiency played an important role in classroom performance of first-year students. In order to explore dynamic types of variables, Matsuda (2004) conducted a longitudinal study and looked at diary entries recorded by twenty-nine Japanese

university students in one academic year. They explored types and ranges of orientations and ultimately identified 10 types of distinctive orientations. By examining the orientations each student recorded, they also found that while some learners maintained the same orientations consistently throughout the year, others revised their orientations as time went on.

## **The study**

### ***Research questions***

- 1) Is it possible to elicit reading strategies from students' extensive reading diaries?
- 2) Can any individual differences be observed? How do they influence the way the students read?
- 3) Can students keep reading throughout the term? If not, what can cause problems?
- 4) Do the students find the ER experience meaningful?

### ***Participants***

A total of 31 second-year Japanese university students majoring in English participated in the research. The participants consisted of 19 female and 12 male students, taking the same so-called "Topic Studies IIb" class. While 15 students were new to extensive reading, 16 students had participated in an extensive reading marathon (to be explained later) in the previous year, thus had some knowledge about and experience in extensive reading. Their TOEIC scores ranged from 275 to 650 (average 410).

### ***Class***

The class met once a week for 90 minutes during a 15-week term. On the first day of class, the instructor (the author of this article) gave a 10-minute lecture on extensive reading—how and why they are doing it. The students were given two choices: either to aim for 100+ books or 100,000+ words by the end of the term. Also on the first day, all the students signed up for an extensive reading marathon.

In Weeks 7 and 8, the instructor held mid-term conferences with the students and checked their progress. For the rest of the weeks the students followed routines: they did some class activities first (listening to an audio book, reading a book together in class/in pairs, summarizing a story of a book, responding to a story, etc.) for 40 minutes, moved to the library, and engaged in sustained silent reading (SSR) for 40 minutes. The students also worked on “pop” making. A pop is a “point of purchase” display, often placed near a product it is advertising. Japanese bookstores often display small card stands in front of the books they want to promote. A pop (card) contains a book review. The students in this class were assigned two pops, one in Week 6 and the other is in Week 13, as homework. The students received colored sheets of paper and cardboard paper in advance so that they could cut and paste to make their original pops. Their products were shared in class, and beautiful works were laminated and donated to the library.

### ***The extensive reading marathon***

The extensive reading marathon (see Matsuda, 2012) is an extracurricular activity organized every term by the author of this article. It started in 2007 to foster autonomous readers. Anyone in the Faculty of Foreign Studies can participate. At the beginning of the term, students sign up by filling out an entry sheet. Once registered, they receive a reading record sheet (printed on a colored sheet of paper). Through the term the students keep records (date, series name, title, author, word count, and short comments). The comments are written either in English or Japanese. In the final week of the term they are asked to submit the reading record to finish the marathon. In the second or third week of the new term, an award ceremony is held. Students who read more than 100,000 words are awarded a prize. Each student receives a certificate and a prize of their choice prepared by the author (books, stationery, sweets, etc.)

### ***Data collection***

#### *1) Extensive reading diaries*

Students were asked to keep extensive reading diaries and submit them at the beginning of each class. A modified version of the language learning diary (Matsuda, 2003; 2004) was used. An A4 size sheet contained the following:

New things learned

My biggest success this week

What I found difficult this week

What I want to try harder on next week

Outside activities using English other than extensive reading

Comments

## 2) *End-of-the-term survey*

On the final day, however, different items were used in order to elicit the students' reflections and reactions about ER itself and the ER class. The following questions were asked:

### *Regarding extensive reading*

Look back on your activities this term. Did you make an effort? If you have some reflection, write it down.

What did you find interesting?

What did you find uninteresting (difficult)?

### *Regarding Topic Studies IIb*

Was there anything you enjoyed doing in this class?

Was there anything that should be improved?

Do you think it's a good idea to offer an ER class next year as well? If not, can you suggest a topic you would like instead?

Other comments?

## 3) *Reading records*

Before they submitted the forms, the words were totaled and record sheets were put together and stapled. The number of pages ranged from 3 to 14.

## ***Procedure***

When the term ended, all of the diaries and reading records were collected. Although the diaries were specifically entitled ‘A Weekly Extensive Reading Diary,’ some students mistakenly recorded items unrelated to ER. Thus, in the first process, the data irrelevant to ER were excluded from the study by marking them x. Data related to ER were picked up weekly and typed into a computer database.

The researcher went through each diary entry and attempted to identify the important reading strategies recorded. In order to see whether individual differences make a difference, the following distinctions were made. The letters in the parentheses are the codes used for classification.

Gender: female students (F), male students (M)

Previous experience: those who participated in a reading marathon before (E)

those who are new to ER (N)

Although the “experienced” students participated in the extensive reading marathon before, their experiences varied. Yet, they were familiar with the record keeping procedures.

## **Results and discussion**

Although there were some ups and downs, most students handed in their diaries throughout the term. Diary data covered 14 weeks per term, and the number of diary entries submitted by the students averaged 10.4. Table 1 shows descriptive data from the ER diaries and reading records.

**Table 1: ER Diary Submission and Reading Records**

|         | ER Diary | Word Count | No. of Books |
|---------|----------|------------|--------------|
| Average | 10.4     | 66,078     | 103          |
| Max     | 14       | 387,325    | 199          |
| Min     | 4        | 31,440     | 38           |

1) *Is it possible to elicit reading strategies from students' extensive reading diaries?*

In order to facilitate their own understanding, the students used various reading strategies. Table 2 shows types of reading strategies that appeared in ER diaries. The types of strategies fell into 4 categories: how to read, what to read, when to read, and other. The numbers in the table indicate the weeks the strategies appeared.

**Table 2. Types of Reading Strategies**

|  | Male          |             | Female           |                               |
|--|---------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
|  | New           | Experienced | New              | Experienced                   |
| <b>How to read</b>                           |               |             |                  |                               |
| Translate into Japanese                      | 1, 2, 7, 9, 9 | 7, 8, 14    | 4                |                               |
| Not translate                                |               |             | 6                |                               |
| Use appendix (word list)                     |               |             |                  | 2, 12, 13, 14                 |
| Divide a long sentence into sections         |               |             | 4, 9             |                               |
| Use a dictionary                             | 6, 10         |             | 4                |                               |
| Not use a dictionary                         |               |             | 9                | 1, 4, 11                      |
| Read more than one time                      |               |             |                  | 6                             |
| Pay attention to onomatopoeia                |               |             | 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 | 8, 9,                         |
| Understand polysemous words from the context |               |             | 2, 3, 8, 9, 13   | 1, 1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 14 |
| Guess the word meaning                       | 7             | 4           | 2, 3, 8, 9, 10,  | 1, 1, 3, 5, 6, 6,             |

|                                 |                     |   |                            |                |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------|
| from the context                |                     |   | 13                         | 10, 11, 12, 14 |
| Pay attention to illustrations  |                     |   | 3, 7                       | 3, 5           |
| Not depend on illustrations     |                     |   | 5                          |                |
| Empathize with the character(s) | 11                  |   |                            |                |
| Visualize the story             |                     |   | 9                          |                |
| Read along with an audio CD     |                     |   | 5                          |                |
| Read aloud                      |                     |   | 6                          |                |
| Increase the reading speed      | 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, | 2 | 1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 12 | 1              |
| Concentrate while reading       | 9, 10, 11, 12       |   | 14                         |                |

### What to read

|                               |        |                |                                    |                                  |
|-------------------------------|--------|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Read a story you already know |        | 8              |                                    | 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14 |
| Read a cinematized story      |        | 6, 12          |                                    | 7                                |
| Read a lot of easy books      |        |                | 1, 1, 3, 3, 5, 5, 7, 7, 10, 11, 11 | 2, 2, 7, 8, 8, 9, 10             |
| Read longer books             | 4, 5   | 1, 3, 4, 8, 13 | 1, 5, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14      | 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 13, 14    |
| Find a favorite series        | 12     | 7, 10, 11      | 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11                 | 2, 5, 10, 13, 13                 |
| Change the series             | 11, 13 | 7              | 8, 9, 9, 14                        | 12, 13, 13, 14                   |

### When to read

|                          |   |                              |  |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------|--|
| Read outside of class    | 10  | 5, 6, 8, 8, 9,<br>13, 13, 14 | 4, 5, 5, 6, 8,<br>11, 14   |
| <b>Other</b>             |   |                              |  |
| Build a habit of reading | 11, 12, 14  | 6, 7, 8, 11,13,<br>14, 14    | 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 7,<br>8, 9, 14, 14,<br>14, 14   |
| Set concrete goals       | 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6,<br>7, 8, 8, 9, 9,<br>10,<br>10, 10, 11, 11,<br>12, 13 | 7, 7, 8, 11                  | 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 6,<br>6, 8, 8, 8, 9, 11,<br>12, 12, 12, 13,<br>13, 14   |
|                          |   |                              | 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 3,<br>3, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5,<br>6, 6, 7, 7, 8, 8,<br>9, 9, 9, 10, 10,<br>11, 11, 12, 12,<br>13, 13, 14 |

The 'How to read' category yielded mixed results, showing both bottom-up strategies (e.g. translating into Japanese and dividing a long sentence to sections) and top-down strategies (e.g. guessing the meaning from the context and visualizing a story). It was apparent that while some students held on to the same strategy, others tried out different strategies. For example, one female student used illustrations to understand the story in Week 3, but she decided not to depend on illustrations in Week 5, and then she guessed the meaning of unknown words from the illustrations in Week 7.

2) *Can any individual differences be observed? How do they influence the way the students read?*

Since 61% of the students were female, a fair comparison cannot be made; however, there were some interesting gender differences. In general, female students seemed to be more aware of their own strategy use; therefore, they recorded a wider variety of strategy types. While female students often tried to guess the meaning of unknown words from context, male students had a tendency to favor translating into Japanese. Female students also found their favorite series such as Oxford Reading Tree (ORT), Yohan Ladder (YHL), Oxford bookworms (OBW), and Foundation Reading Library (FRL); however, only a few male students mentioned their favorites.

Regarding previous experience, some novice readers reported unfamiliarity to the system. "I didn't have a habit to read, and I'm stumbling"(FN2). "I can't get used to reading" (FN3). At first those new female readers were testing different books to see what was appropriate for them, but

they soon came to realize that it was better to “read a lot of easy books.” As time went on; however, some of them started to aim for longer books. Some experienced students started with longer materials. One male student specifically declared, “I don’t want to read too simple books like what others are reading to achieve 100+ books. I want to read what I find interesting. So, I’m going to aim for 100,000+ words.” His homestay experience in high school made him somewhat confident in reading, and he read 105,212 words after all.

Students’ learning style and their interests also influenced their reading. Those who worry a lot about vocabulary and usage got stuck whenever they encountered unknown words and idioms, and their diary entries were also limited to vocabulary and usage. Some female students, in contrast, often made content-related comments. They were impressed by what they learned from the books. The topic included the history of racial discrimination in the U.S., cultural events such as Halloween and Hanukka, and the founder of *Facebook*.

3) *Can students keep reading throughout the term? If not, what can cause problems?*

Although many students aimed for 100,000+ words at the beginning of the term, by the middle of the term they realized that it was no easy feat. Thus, they adjusted their goal to 100+ books. Out of 31 students, 24 students read 100+ books while only 4 students reached 100,000+ words (two of which also read more than 100 books). 4 students achieved neither goals. One of them was a female reader who reflected at the end of the term, “I couldn’t decide if I should aim for 100,000+ words or 100+ books, so I took a halfway measure and couldn’t make either goal.” Nevertheless, she read more than most novice readers (69,931 words, 88 books). A novice student reported, “I started with longer books and later changed to shorter and simple books. I should have done the other way around.”

Many students displayed their willingness to read, and some of them set specific goals such as “I want to read 5 books every week,” or “I want to reach 15,000 words.” However, during the 15-week period, students’ motivation wavered. Problems started to emerge in the ‘what I found difficult this week’ section in Week 2. An experienced female student often lost concentration during class because she was busy with her extracurricular activity: hip-hop dance. She reported, “I have trouble getting up in the morning because I practice dancing at night.” Some students were also involved in a school festival event and declared that, “I didn’t have time to read because of the school festival” in Week 3. They found it difficult to read later as well saying, “I didn’t have time to go to the library” in Week 8, “I feel tired to read books” in Week 9, and “I was busier than expected, so I couldn’t read during winter holidays” in Week 13. While some students tried hard to read

constantly, others seemed less motivated about keeping a steady pace. Many of them read only in class. Yet, most students grew serious after the mid-term conferences. They realized they have to work harder to achieve either goal. At this time, some students shifted their goal from 100,000+ words to 100+ books because they learned that at their pace achieving 100,000+ words is not realistic. Especially male students who spent too much time enjoying *I Spy* or *Can You See What I See* series at an early stage finally started reading. Those students who read a lot outside of class were more relaxed in class and were sometimes dozing off.

Other than their physical constraints, unfamiliar vocabulary and idioms gave the students trouble. Some students had difficulty understanding science terms in *Magic School Bus* series or polysemous words in *Amellia Bedelia* series. Foreign names and proper nouns were difficult to retain and too many characters appeared in a story. Sometimes, a text was written in all capital letters, which also gave the students trouble. Moreover, flower and animal names confused them.

#### 4) *Did the students find the ER experience meaningful?*

The end-of-the-term survey revealed that all the students found their ER experience meaningful. In the self-reflection section, most of the students evaluated their efforts in the class satisfactory; however, some students felt, “I could have done better if I had been more consistent,” or “I should have read outside of class as well.” In terms of outside reading, results showed a disparity. Those students who found the time between classes or at home were more motivated throughout the term and didn’t stop reading even after they reached 100 books. One female student reported that, “Now that I reached 100, I would like to aim for 150 and become No. 1 in class” (FN12). It was apparent that those students felt a great sense of achievement at the end of the term.

### **Conclusion**

Although the variety was not as wide as expected, ER diaries revealed quite a few types of reading strategies. Female students in general appeared to be more aware of what they were experiencing and recorded different types of reading strategies. The most diligent record keepers were the two female students who read more than both 100,000+ words and 100+ books.

Male participants seemed more unenthusiastic toward keeping diaries. One of them even complained at the end of the term that, “We needed more variety in terms of the diary format.” It was interesting that male students tended to translate word by word and thus didn’t report

“contextual guessing” strategy. Many of them tried to increase their reading speed maybe because they knew that they were taking too much time translating.

The class was conducted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> period (13:20-14:50), which students claim as “the sleepest time of the day.” So, some students “couldn’t concentrate” and felt reading in English was tiring. Nevertheless, almost all the students felt that encountering and reading various English books was inspiring and that taking the ER class was worthwhile. They had done nothing like this before. After all, they read so many English books and actually enjoyed it.

*Sae Matsuda is an associate professor at Setsunan University. Her research interests include learners' individual differences, diary study, and extensive reading. She is also interested in employing literature and films in the classroom.*

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## **Incorporating ER into an ELF program: Lessons Learned in a Japanese university**

**PAUL MCBRIDE**

**MITSUKO IMAI**

**TRAVIS COTE**

**BRETT MILLINER**

**ETHEL OGANE**

*Tamagawa University*

Extensive Reading (ER) was made a part of a new English language program at Tamagawa University in 2012. Questionnaire data from this first year revealed positive student responses in regard to reading for pleasure. Data from a teacher survey showed that the teachers understood the roles of ER in providing wider exposure to the language and encouraging some degree of reading outside of class. In 2013, to deal with an expanded program, the authors devised new teacher and student questionnaires to more fully understand the ER component and to determine whether the goals of ER were being achieved. This paper reports on the student and teacher feedback from 2013 and analyzes the questionnaire results in order to identify any similarities and differences between student and teacher perceptions of ER. It further considers how the results inform future ER implementation in the language curriculum.

Colleges and universities across Japan are pursuing educational reform and curricular improvement to help foster strong language and communication skills. Tamagawa University in Tokyo began a language program in 2012 to service the English language needs of its students. An Extensive Reading (ER) component was incorporated into the program's curriculum. This paper expands upon an earlier report on the 2012 ER component. We begin with a description of the Tamagawa English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Program.

## **ELF program overview**

The Tamagawa ELF program began in 2012 and was designed as an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. The program has two main goals: 1) teach English in a way that stresses the use of the language, and 2) raise student English language competency reflected in higher TOEIC scores.

All first-year students are placed in classes according to their proficiency as measured by the TOEIC Bridge test. Each class is worth 4 credits and meets two or three times a week with lessons 100 or 50 minutes in duration. The lessons equal 50 hours of in-class time for the 15-week semester plus two hours per week of out-of-class preview and review work required for each credit.

The 2012 Program was comprised of 436 first-year students in three departments. In 2013, the program expanded to approximately 1029 first and second year students in five departments. In 2012, the program was run with four full-time and four part-time instructors. Numbers increased to seven full-time and 19 part-time teachers in 2013. According to the results of a TOEIC Institutional Program Reading and Listening Test administered at the end of the 2012 spring semester, the average score for all students was 335 (range: 165-705). At the end of the 2012 fall semester, the average score was 326 (range: 150-740). The average score for 2013 spring was 353 (range: 170-785).

The Tamagawa ELF program has been designed to help students develop and use their abilities and skills in English as a tool for communication. However, in Japan where exposure to English in daily life is limited, students need much more language input than the 100 hours of in-class time offered in the program. As Waring (2006) points out, concentrating on intensive reading and textbooks does not give students broad enough experience in English to make sense of the language, and it is through wide reading that they consolidate what they have studied intensively. It is for this reason that an ER component was built into the program. In the following sections, we discuss the implementation of this component in 2013, and report on teacher and student feedback elicited from questionnaires administered in 2012 and 2013. We conclude with a discussion on what was learned from our analysis of the questionnaire data and what needs to be considered to help make ER a more effective component in our program.

## **Implementation of ER in the ELF program**

As in 2012, all ELF teachers in 2013 were required to introduce and facilitate ER in their classes, but were given a more comprehensive overview of ER. An orientation meeting was held at the start of the spring semester to introduce the teachers to the ELF program, and to inform them about the ER component. A theoretical background of ER was outlined, and a brief overview was given of ER resources we had prepared online. These resources included documents on the principles and goals of ER; an outline of how to introduce ER to students; appropriate activities and practical advice; a diagnostic tool to help students find their appropriate reading level; a graded reader level comparison chart; examples of graded book reports; a list of listening and speaking questions for graded readers with example answers; information on library access to graded readers; and a list of graded readers in our ELF library. The teachers were informed that there are about 1,650 graded readers available to the students in the libraries.

The teachers were also advised not to test students in ER, but rather to treat students' extensive reading as a part of homework and class participation. Practical advice on how to evaluate ER was given in conjunction with an example of how to schedule all the other course components in the semester. We recommended teachers consider asking students to read one book and write a book report every three weeks in order to comfortably cover all curriculum requirements. However, teachers were given freedom to plan their own ER and semester schedule. In the next section, we look at how the 2013 teachers viewed ER.

## **Teacher feedback**

An online questionnaire with three closed and three open-ended questions was administered to the 26 instructors at the end of the 2013 spring semester with an overall response rate of 81%(21/26). The first closed response question addressed whether ER is a worthwhile part of the ELF curriculum. Most of the teachers, 91%, agreed (6) or strongly agreed (13). No one thought the ER component was not of value.

For the second closed question, which asked teachers for the number of graded readers their students read during the semester, 76% (16) reported an average of four to six graded readers over the 15 weeks and 14% (3) reported one to three books. One teacher reported that his students read ten or more books. An analysis showed no relationship between the number of graded readers completed and the class level. In fact, the class that read an average of ten or more books over the semester was an elementary level class.

The third closed question asked teachers about ER activities, and multiple answers were allowed. A written book report, used by 95% (20) of teachers was the most utilized activity. The second most popular activity employed by 38% (8) of the teachers was an oral book report in the form of a short presentation. The third most popular activity, chosen by 29% (6), was an oral book report involving discussion in small groups. About 24% (5) used graded reader content in their listening and speaking assessments and 14% (3) created book report blogs. Another 24% (5) chose either to use silent reading at the beginning of class, journals or poster presentations.

In the open response section of the questionnaire, teachers were asked about the difficulties they encountered with ER. The areas of concern most often mentioned involved book reports and accountability. One teacher noted a comment made by a student about book reports being written without the books having been read. Several teachers were not confident that some book reports had not been copied from other students, and other teachers noticed passages in book reports which had been copied from the books. Teachers could not be certain about how thoroughly the books had been read, although they wanted to be fair in their evaluation of student performance in ER. Another related issue was the question of what constitutes a reasonable expectation for the number of books to be read in a semester. A final issue concerned graded readers based on movies. Although one teacher advocated them for their motivating influence, another teacher was concerned that students could write book reports based upon knowledge of the movie rather than actual reading.

Teachers were also concerned about students not being used to reading in English, students reading material which seemed more appropriate for younger age-groups, students reading at levels either too high or too low, and students lacking motivation to read. One teacher noted the problem of temporary suspension of student borrowing privileges by libraries for overdue books. In 2013, however, students could continue to borrow books from the new ELF library. Two teachers reported not having any difficulties.

The second open response question elicited comments about the benefits of ER. The most commonly occurring theme was that extensive reading is an effective way to increase vocabulary. In particular, teachers appreciated the fact that new words are encountered as they occur in context, providing “English input at the discourse level.” This kind of input was referred to by another teacher as “helpful for getting a sense of English which does not come through textbooks and classes alone.”

The second most frequently occurring comment about the benefits of ER was that it fosters enjoyment in reading. One teacher wrote, “I think that it really helps the students to enjoy the reading process, as they do seem to like the books that they are reading, and they are enthusiastic on the whole about reading more.” Teachers also believed that ER could have positive effects in the areas of grammar development, reading speed, learner confidence, and motivation.

However, there seemed to be a perception underlying the teachers’ sense of the benefits of ER that unless students really wanted to read, the benefits to them would be limited. One teacher’s comment seemed to imply that the benefits were limited among unmotivated lower level students. Further qualified support for ER was shown in the statement, “I am in favor of the general concept, but believe students must be intrinsically motivated to do extensive reading properly.”

When asked for questions, comments and suggestions in the final open-ended question, the most prominent response is reflected in the comment, “It would be interesting and useful to learn how other teachers are implementing ER.” There is evidently a need for the sharing of ideas about which activities are appropriate and how ER can be optimally involving and interesting. Some teachers linked ER to their listening and speaking assessments and one teacher expressed the desire to know more about how other teachers did ER-related listening and speaking assessments.

Other suggestions included inter-class story telling activities; producing a list of popular graded readers; reading books on smartphones; and promoting further reading, discussion and writing about graded readers by watching relevant DVDs with Japanese subtitles.

Although there appeared to be a concern among teachers that it can be difficult to know whether students are willingly engaged or simply going through the motions, the teachers seemed to be very positive in their thoughts about the ER component in the ELF program.

### **Student feedback**

In this section, we review the student feedback from end-of-semester questionnaires administered in spring and fall of 2012, and present a discussion of the student feedback from a revised survey in spring 2013. The online questionnaires were used to evaluate the ELF program and included both closed and open-ended items. Teachers were encouraged to dedicate class time

for students to complete the questionnaire and students were allowed to complete the survey in Japanese or English using either their personal computer or smartphone.

The overall response rates for the 2012 questionnaires were 82% (357/436) in the spring and 79% (315/409) in the fall. Two closed item questions specific to ER were added to the fall questionnaire. Asked if reading graded readers helped to improve their English, about half of the students (52%) agreed or strongly agreed. Slightly more than half (54%) agreed or strongly agreed that the books were useful and relevant to their learning.

An open-ended question was included in the 2012 spring and fall surveys. Students were asked what questions, comments, and suggestions they had on the graded readers. In spring, the response rate was 60% (262/436), and when replies such as “nothing” or “no comments” are excluded, the rate dropped to about 50% (214/436). In fall, the rate was lower at 38% (154/409) and with “no comment” replies subtracted, the rate decreased to 32% (129/406). A content analysis of all responses categorized 246 as positive and 97 as negative.

In the positive replies, students commented that reading graded readers was interesting, a good chance to read English books, suitable to their reading level, and useful in improving reading skill and vocabulary knowledge. In the negative responses, students wrote that reading was difficult and troublesome. Some students complained about strict weekly assignments. Negative comments also included requests for new and different levels of books, and regret for not reading more books, which may be interpreted as neutral comments. The 2012 data appear to point toward a generally positive attitude among students regarding ER.

In order to capture a fuller picture of student reaction to ER, five closed questions were added to the 2013 spring questionnaire. The response rate for the 2013 survey was 90% (921/1029). Students' responses to three of the five closed items revealed students still have a very positive impression of the ER component. When students were asked whether they believed ER helped them improve their English ability, 55% (507/917) either agreed or strongly agreed. This corresponds to the 2012 results. A much smaller percentage, 13%, either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked whether graded readers were relevant to their language learning, 58% (533/917) either agreed or strongly agreed, which is again similar to the 2012 results. Some students had a different opinion with 8% (75) disagreeing that the books were relevant to their learning, and a smaller percentage, 2% (17), strongly disagreeing.

When students were asked whether reading graded readers enabled them to enjoy reading in English more, 46% (416/907) responded favorably (317 agreed and 99 strongly agreed) and 16% disagreed (112) or strongly disagreed (35). Although more than half of the students appear to have recognized the value and relevance of ER to their learning, less than half of them reported that they enjoyed reading more. It may be as Hill (2013, p. 88) notes, most students find reading in a foreign language challenging and lacking in enjoyment, and furthermore most students do not identify school work with pleasure.

The results from the three items described above suggest that the 2013 students generally have a positive attitude towards the ER component, as did the 2012 students. However, responses to the question on how much time students spent reading graded readers each week revealed a disconnect between having a positive outlook and actually dedicating time to reading. A large majority, 71% (651/917) of the students, indicated that they spent under one hour every week reading (See Table 1). Although the amount of time each teacher dedicated to ER differed, these results suggest that most students are yet to devote much time to reading.

**Table 1. Time Students Spent Reading their Graded Readers Each Week**

| <u>Time</u>       | <u>Students</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 0~30 min          | 244             | 27%               |
| 30~60 min         | 407             | 44%               |
| 60~90 min         | 173             | 19%               |
| 90~120 min        | 57              | 6%                |
| More than 120 min | 36              | 4%                |

In order to learn more from these results, responses from the 93 students who indicated that they read 90 minutes or more per week were evaluated further. This analysis revealed that these “regular” readers did not come from a specific class or level. In addition, teachers did not appear to influence reading duration as regular readers were distributed evenly among the program’s 26 teachers, with only one teacher instructing more than 10 regular readers.

As with the 2012 questionnaires, students were asked to share their questions, comments, and suggestions on the ER component. The overall response rate to this item was 75% (691/921). After filtering out the “no comment” replies, 49% (458/921) were considered in our content analysis.

In this analysis of 458 replies, some warranted multiple tags, hence the total number of coded responses does not equal the total number of replies (see Table 2). The coding process revealed 347 positive responses, using the codes *Easy*, *Fun*, *Improved*, *Interesting* and *Good*. Positive comments were made about enjoying the opportunity to read a book in English, being able to access English books which were at the student’s reading level, being able to read interesting books and feeling improvement in reading skills after gradually choosing more difficult books.

There were 75 negative replies coded as *Bad* or *Dislike*, the majority of which included comments on the limited number and variety of books available or requests for the school to expand its collection of graded readers. A small number, 28, were not book related, but rather were comments which indicated students’ reluctance to engage in reading. Some of these students thought there was no purpose in reading the books. Negative comments concerning *Difficulty* reading graded readers were made by 46 students. The difficulties included understanding the nuances of an English story, reading regularly and choosing interesting books.

**Table 2. Analysis of Responses to the Open-ended Question in 2013 Student Questionnaires**

| <u>Positive Responses</u> |     | <u>Negative Responses</u> |     |
|---------------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|
| Easy                      | 37  | Bad/Dislike               | 75  |
| Fun                       | 33  | Difficulty                | 46  |
| Improved                  | 81  |                           |     |
| Good                      | 155 |                           |     |
| Interesting               | 41  |                           |     |
| Totals                    | 347 |                           | 121 |

Our analysis of the students' perceptions of the ER component in the ELF curriculum has revealed that many generally seem to appreciate its inclusion. Many also appear to believe that they improved or can improve their English language skills by reading graded readers. Responses to the 2013 open-ended question appear to support this interpretation. The analysis found 80 students who noted they became accustomed to reading in English or observed improvements in their reading speeds, reading comprehension or lexical knowledge after a semester, or in some cases, semesters of ER experience.

The analysis also highlighted areas that may be of concern and in need of intervention. The biggest concern raised from the 2013 questionnaire was that even though students appeared to appreciate the inclusion of reading graded readers in their ELF classes, 71% of the students were devoting less than 60 minutes per week to reading. A second concern was that although more than half said they found value in ER, less than half said they were finding enjoyment in reading English. Therefore, we need to find ways to lead students to more interesting books and to simplify the process of finding engaging and suitable books. As discussed in the teacher feedback section, we should solicit from and share popular ER related activities with teachers, opening up a discussion among teachers regarding more effective ways to implement and moderate ER participation in the classroom. According to Croker and Yamanaka (2012), how teachers present ER can affect the amount of ER students do. Opportunities need to be provided for the reluctant readers noted above to become more aware of and experience the benefits of extensive reading.

### **Concluding remarks**

We have reported on the expansion of an ER component in our ELF Program. The questionnaire results from the teachers showed that they continue to approve of ER and to be concerned that students should read extensively for interest and enjoyment. The teachers appear to believe ER can provide many benefits for students on many levels. Extensive reading, as Waring (2006, p.44) points out, "is a completely indispensable part of any language program."

Our teachers again expressed the wish to learn more about what their colleagues were doing in implementing ER. Our analysis of the teacher and student questionnaire data points toward the importance of collaboration among teachers to create a better ER component. Uozumi and Takase (2012) advise that "teacher training is essential for a successful ER program, even after its implementation" (p. 64). We will plan workshops on ER for the teachers to report and share their

ideas and observations in the coming semesters. By investigating what kinds of ER teacher practices lead to students committing to regular reading practice, we may be able to foster a more successful ER component.

The 2013 teachers appear to be concerned with accountability issues in ER. They expressed concern over whether their students were thoroughly reading their books, and if they were, whether they were reading at appropriate levels, reading at a good pace, and reading for pleasure. These issues are difficult to resolve, but one step being taken is to trial an online extensive reading program which provides quizzes to check students' comprehension of books they have read. Another step being considered is asking students to complete an online questionnaire in lieu of a book report through which we will be able to keep a record of books read, and identify popular books and prolific student readers.

The data from the student questionnaires appear to show that most students are also continuing to approve of ER and see it as a rewarding activity. Students wrote that they felt improvement in reading and vocabulary skills. Ideas from the students on how to improve the component centered around expanding the library collections to include more books of different levels and genres. To address this recommendation, we plan to continually add new books and new publishers to our ELF collection and campus libraries.

Day and Bamford (1998, p. 6) note "an extensive reading approach aims to get students reading in the second language and liking it." A portion of our students indicated that they are not especially enjoying the reading of graded readers. We will work toward better teacher facilitation of ER, but we may also have to look deeper into the reasons for less than satisfactory student appreciation of extensive reading. This may involve the use of qualitative methods including student interviews and focus groups.

This report reviewed feedback from students and teachers concerning the ER component in Tamagawa University's ELF curriculum. This process has informed us, the course coordinators, on how we can help bring students' and teachers' goals concerning ER closer to fruition. Most importantly, it is hoped that our decisions will enable our students to enjoy reading in English more and move them to read more regularly and with enjoyment.

**Paul McBride**, M. Ed. (TESOL), is an assistant professor in the College of Humanities. His research interests include extensive reading, learner autonomy and critical thinking. Email: [paulmcb64@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp](mailto:paulmcb64@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp)

**Mitsuko Imai**, MATESOL, is an assistant professor in the College of Humanities. Her research interests include motivation and extensive reading. Email: [mimai@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp](mailto:mimai@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp)

**Travis Cote**, MATESOL, is an assistant professor in the College of Tourism and Hospitality Management. His research interests include teacher induction practices, CALL, and curriculum development. Email: [travis@bus.tamagawa.ac.jp](mailto:travis@bus.tamagawa.ac.jp)

**Brett Milliner**, MA Applied Linguistics, is an assistant professor in the College of Humanities. His research interests include CALL, learning strategies and motivation. [milliner@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp](mailto:milliner@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp)

**Ethel Ogane**, EdD, is a professor in the College of Tourism and Hospitality. Her research interests include teacher education, motivation and autonomy in language learning, and language curriculum development. Email: [ethel@bus.tamagawa.ac.jp](mailto:ethel@bus.tamagawa.ac.jp)

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## **Breaking the Slump: Remotivating L2 Learners with Extensive Reading**

**PAUL DICKINSON**

*Niigata University of International and Information Studies*

This study explored the implementation of extensive reading (ER) with 132 learners on a compulsory, one-year communicative English course at a Japanese university. Implemented in response to the second semester motivational slump observed in previous years, the ER program had two aims: to provide a motivating change from the normal routine of a course book-centered syllabus and to introduce the benefits of L2 reading. First, a 3-week period was dedicated exclusively to ER activities using graded readers. This was followed by an optional ER program, which offered learners the incentive of an additional grade. Thirty learners started this optional program, with 19 learners reading enough to receive the bonus grade. As most of these learners had initially stated that they did not enjoy reading in English this result, together with other qualitative data, indicated that this first-time ER program was beneficial.

The second semester motivational slump is a challenge faced by educators in many first-year university language courses in Japan. Once initial feelings of freedom generated by the comparatively less regulated university learning environment have been replaced by an awareness of the realities of self-regulated learning, even the most enthusiastic learners find it hard to maintain their motivation (Kondo, Ishikawa, Smith, Sakamoto, Shimomura, & Wada, 2012). For learners with low motivation and negative attitudes towards L2 learning to begin with the challenge is even greater. The ER program described in this study was implemented in response to this challenge on a compulsory, semi-intensive communicative English course at a Japanese university.

## Objectives

The ER program in this study was implemented with two main objectives:

1. To provide a motivating change from the usual routine of a course book-centered syllabus;
2. To introduce the benefits of reading in a second language.

If successful, it was hoped that not only would learners be more motivated for the remainder of the course, but they would also develop an appreciation of L2 reading for both enjoyment and learning.

## Background

### *Research setting*

This study took place at a small, private university in a rural region of Japan. In this location opportunities for face-to-face interaction in English are very limited. As the university caters for Japanese learners drawn almost entirely from the surrounding area probably the only time students interact in English on campus is in the classroom.

### *Participants*

The 132 participants in this study were all first-year students on a compulsory, one-year communicative English course. All were Japanese and aged between 18-19 years of age. Proficiency levels varied from beginner to upper-intermediate.

### *Pre-study learner attitudes to reading*

Data collected from a questionnaire completed by 119 participants prior to commencing the ER program revealed that although 84% of students enjoyed reading in Japanese, only 35% enjoyed reading in English. Reasons given for this dislike of L2 reading mostly pointed to its perceived difficulty:

*No, because books written in English are so difficult.*

*Grammar and words are very difficult for me.*

*No, because I can't understand all.*

*Because I can't understand, so I'm sad.*

*It takes a lot of time.*

Learners who stated that they enjoyed reading in English gave a variety of reasons, as seen here:

*I can learn new words.*

*Only Japanese is boring.*

*Because when I understand a sentence I feel glad.*

*Because translating is interesting.*

*Because it is useful to improve my English skills.*

Day and Bamford (1998) pointed out the strong influence of prior L2 reading experiences on attitudes toward new reading experiences. In this study, it was apparent that learners' attitudes had been shaped by their L2 reading experiences being limited to intensive reading. Even the learners who enjoyed reading in English mostly appraised it in terms of its language learning potential, rather than as something done for pleasure. It was hoped that by doing ER, where learners would be reading books within their linguistic abilities that they had chosen themselves, even those with negative attitudes to L2 reading would come to see that it could be both enjoyable and helpful for learning.

### **The communicative English course**

The communicative English course consists of one 90-minute and four 45-minute classes a week over 30 weeks. The class timetable appears in Figure 1. Following a placement test students are placed according to level in one of six classes. Each class contains approximately 20 students. The syllabus is based on the course book, a multi-level, global ELT textbook. As the aim of the course is to develop oral communicative proficiency there is a strong focus on speaking and listening. The only focused reading done in class consists of the intensive reading of a short text in the course book once a week.

| <b>Communicative English Class Timetable</b> |        |         |   |           |   |          |        |   |   |
|--|--------|---------|---|-----------|---|----------|--------|---|---|
| Day  | Monday | Tuesday |   | Wednesday |   | Thursday | Friday |   |   |
| Teacher                                      | P      | M       | P | M         | P | M        | P      |   |   |
| 9:00 – 9:45                                  | ABC    | E       | F |           |   | D        | E      | A | B |
| 9:50 – 10:35                                 |        | D       |   |           |   | F        |        | C |   |
| 10:40 – 11:25                                | DEF    |         | A |           |   |          | C      |   | D |
| 11:30 – 12:15                                |        | C       | B |           |   | B        | A      | E | F |
| LUNCH BREAK                                  |        |         |   |           |   |          |        |   |   |
| 13:10 – 13:55                                |        |         |   | B         | C |          |        |   |   |
| 14:00 – 14:45                                |        |         |   | A         |   |          |        |   |   |
| 14:50 – 15:35                                |        |         |   |           | E |          |        |   |   |
| 15:40 – 16:25                                |        |         |   | F         | D |          |        |   |   |
| Class symbol: A, B, C, D, E, F               |        |         |   |           |   |          |        |   |   |

**Figure 1. Communicative English course timetable**

### Implementing the ER program

As the course is divided into four 3-week teaching cycles per 15-week semester, there are three spare weeks available. In the second semester, these weeks were usually added to three of the teaching cycles for extra practice and review. However, it was noticeable that doing “more of the same” was not interesting for learners. Consequently, after discussing the second semester slump in a curriculum planning meeting, we decided to use these weeks as a mid-semester “slump breaker.” We chose to implement three weeks of ER-based activities, followed by an optional, independent ER program. The stages of the ER program (Figure 2) will now be described.



Figure

## 2. The stages of the ER program

### Introduction to ER

Acknowledging the importance of introducing extensive reading gradually (Waring, 2011), a step-by-step approach was taken in implementing the ER program. First, the learners did a questionnaire activity on reading. Based on Schmidt's (2004) *Reading and You Questionnaire*, this activity aims to help learners consider their general reading habits and attitudes, as well as their attitudes to reading in English. It also provides teachers insights into the reading habits, preferences and experiences of learners, as well as their attitudes toward reading in English for pleasure and learning. Learners completed the questionnaires in class before discussing their answers in small groups. Over the next few classes the teachers introduced ER, including how it differed from intensive reading. Information written in Japanese was also provided, including a description of ER, as well as the specific details of the program. During this time, learners were given some easy graded readers to look at in class. The learners appeared very interested in the readers and spoke enthusiastically about reading them.

### The intensive ER activities cycle

Once the learners were sufficiently familiar with the concept, practice and potential benefits of L2 extensive reading, the three weeks of ER-based activities began. An outline of the ER activities cycle is presented in Figure 3.

| ER Cycle                | Monday  | Tuesday  | Wednesday   | Thursday  | Friday  |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| Week 1<br>November 12th | No homework   | No homework  | Homework: Reading   | Homework: Reading   | Homework: Reading   |
|                         | Orientation<br><br>Reading, Watching and Activity:<br><br><i>A Christmas Carol</i> Part 1 | Orientation and Book Selection   | Classwork:<br><br>Sustained Silent Reading Speaking Activity        | Classwork:<br><br>Sustained Silent Reading<br><br>Speaking Activity | Classwork:<br><br>Sustained Silent Reading<br><br>Speaking Activity |
| Week 2<br>November 19th | No homework   | Homework: Book Report 1  | Homework: Reading   | Homework: Reading   |   |
|                         | Classwork:<br><br>Reading, Watching and Activity:<br><br><i>A Christmas Carol</i> Part 2  | Classwork:<br><br>Book Report 1 activity<br><br>Sustained Silent Reading | Classwork:<br><br>Sustained Silent Reading<br><br>Speaking Activity | Classwork:<br><br>Sustained Silent Reading<br><br>Speaking Activity | No Class  |
| Week 3<br>November 26th | No homework   | Homework: Book Report 2  | Homework: Reading   | No homework   | No homework   |
|                         | Classwork:<br><br>Reading, Watching and Activity:<br><br><i>A Christmas Carol</i> Part 3  | Classwork:<br><br>Book Report 2 activity<br><br>Sustained Silent Reading | Speaking Test Practice  | Speaking Test   | Speaking Test   |

Fig

Figure 3. The ER activities cycle

### Monday classes

To successfully launch an ER program it is essential that the first book that learners read together is one that can be read easily by everyone (Waring, 2011). Therefore, on the first day of the ER activities cycle a graded reader easy enough for everyone to read was used as a class reader in conjunction with a film version of the story. Over the next three 90-minute Monday classes the learners read and watched the story and completed pre- and post-reading activities.

These activities included specific questions, as well as more open-ended questions intended to elicit discussion of learners' feelings and opinions about the story and characters.

### **Book selection**

On the first Tuesday of the ER activities cycle we took each of the classes to the library to select their first graded readers. Prior to this we made arrangements to ensure that the process ran as smoothly as possible. We reserved a large room in the library and gained permission from the librarian to remove the graded readers we wanted from the shelves. We used the Extensive Reading Foundation Graded Reader Level Scale to guide our decisions on the appropriate reading levels for each group. We spread a selection of appropriate-level readers on tables around the room just before each class entered. The learners looked through the readers and chose one or two. As the goal was to read at least one book a week, learners were told that if a book was too difficult (for example, if they could not understand more than a few words a page) or not interesting that they should exchange it immediately. Learners were also shown the section of the library where the graded readers were usually located.

### **Tuesday to Friday classes**

Once the learners had chosen their first books the activities in the four 45-minute lessons held Tuesday to Friday began. Typically, about ten minutes of a lesson was spent doing sustained silent reading. During this time the teachers also read in the role of active participant and model reader (Day & Bamford, 1998), demonstrating their own interest in and recognition of the importance of reading, as well as their role as a fellow participant in the ER program.

The remaining lesson time was used for interactive activities based on the books that the learners were reading. One activity was *Book Talk*, in which students used a set of question prompts to talk to each other about their books. Another activity was *Book Report*, which involved learners first writing a summary of a book they had read. On the designated day, learners brought their reports and in small groups read them out loud and discussed their books. A further activity was *Shared Dictation* (Iwano, 2004). This pair work activity involved one learner dictating a short passage from their book to their partner who wrote it down. After completing the dictation the pair checked the transcribed text for accuracy and discussed the book before changing roles.

The learners were very engaged doing these and other activities. The learner-centred, interactive nature of the activities ensured that participation levels were high, something not always possible using the regular course book. Being able to talk about stories that learners had chosen themselves in a relaxed environment also seemed to have contributed to the enthusiasm and high participation levels.

### Monitoring reading

Monitoring reading is an important aspect of an ER program. Kanda (2012) discusses several ways to monitor the quantity of reading, including counting the number of words read (Furukawa et al., 2010), pages read (Waring, 2000; Robb & Susser, 1989), or books read (Nation, 2009) and monitoring the amount of time spent reading (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Kanda's study concluded that the total of words read and average word count per title provided more precise evidence of how much students were reading.

In the ER program described here, the aim of monitoring was not to gather precise data as such, but mainly to help keep students on task. A reading diary based on that of Day and Bamford (1998, p. 87) was one way reading was monitored. Students were instructed to complete the diary every night, indicating how many minutes and pages they read that day. A sample reading diary entry is presented in Figure 4.

| Weekly Reading Diary                     |                         |                               |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Name: <u>Yuko Suzuki</u> Class: <u>B</u> |                         |                               |
| Date                                     | Book Title              |                               |
| <hr/>                                    |                         |                               |
| Tuesday                                  |                         | I read for <u>30</u> minutes. |
| 11/13                                    | Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde | I read <u>14</u> pages.       |

Figure 4. Sample reading diary entry

However, as Kanda (2012) points out, systems reliant on students' self-reporting are unreliable. This was the case with the reading diary. Some students had problems calculating the number of pages they had read. Others simply did not update their diaries daily. Therefore, teachers also monitored reading by regularly asking learners about what they were reading. Also, due to the communicative nature of the in-class activities it would soon become obvious if a student had not been reading.

### **Assessing reading**

It is strongly recommended that any ER program be integrated into a school's curriculum, fitting within its goals, aims and objectives (Waring, 2011). As discussed, the course in this study focuses on developing oral communicative proficiency. Therefore, regular oral assessment tasks play a central role in assessing learners' use of the language they have learned. To remain consistent with the course aims, all learners completed an oral assessment task at the end of the ER activities cycle. In groups of three, learners discussed their favourite graded readers for five minutes. In contrast to the regular speaking assessment tests, where learners tend to try to use the vocabulary and grammatical structures they had studied as accurately as possible rather than genuinely communicate, on this occasion the conversations seemed considerably more authentic and meaningful.

### **The independent ER program**

At the completion of the ER activities cycle, the course reverted back to its usual course book-centred syllabus. As there was no longer time to do ER in class, an independent reading program was implemented. Learners were offered an extra incentive to continue reading independently in the form of an additional 5% grade. Learners had to read at least one book a week and submit six book reports to receive the additional grade. Thirty learners started the independent ER program, with 19 of these reading enough to receive the bonus grade. This can be considered a satisfactory outcome for a first-time, voluntary reading program, especially when 13 of these 19 learners stated in the pre-study survey that they did not enjoy reading in English. An especially pleasing example of the program's success was provided by one student who was on the verge of failing the course due to poor attendance and grades, but once the ER activities began improved both his attendance and application, becoming one of the 13 learners who successfully completed the independent ER program.

## Learners' voices

Further evaluative data on the ER program was collected from a focus group of six learners. These learners were asked open-ended questions about the ER program and L2 reading. The most significant aspects of their responses are summarized here. The motivational benefits of ER were apparent in the learners' feedback. The autonomy provided by being able to choose learning materials was a significant factor in this, as the following comments illustrate:

*I think extensive reading is a good use of class time. Because students can choose books which they are interested in. The motivation of students is raised by use of books which they are interested in.*

*I liked this activity. I could enjoy reading with my book. I think the good point is we could choose our favorite books.*

*Reading the graded readers was interesting for me. I could continue to read it every day because I chose the book by myself (the book seems interesting).*

All focus group members also responded affirmatively when asked whether doing ER improved their English proficiency, with most pointing to gains in reading fluency and comprehension:

*Yes. I got to read long sentences more fast. Also, I got higher score of questions with long sentences.*

*Yes. I could improve my reading comprehension by reading graded readers every day.*

*Yes. Reading graded readers helps me to reading an English text quickly and correctly.*

The learners were also asked why they did or did not do the optional, independent ER program. Those who did continue reading independently indicated that enjoyment was their prime motivation, although one student was also motivated by the bonus grade on offer:

*Because I felt reading books in English is fun and I wanted to continue the extensive reading activities. Also, it was a reason for me to be able to get extra score by continue extensive reading activities.*

Students who opted not to do the independent ER program cited a lack of time as the reason. However, one student regretted her decision not to continue with the independent ER program:

*Because I thought I hadn't enough time to read. But now I should have continued to read English books.*

When asked if they would change anything about the ER program some learners said that they would not. However, while everyone stated that they enjoyed the graders readers that they had read, two learners expressed a desire to have access to a greater variety of readers. Another learner thought that the sustained silent reading time was not necessary and should be replaced by increased speaking time. While such suggestions indicate that some learners would prefer to do some in-class activities differently, all of the focus group members agreed that ER was a good use of class time.

## **Discussion**

Implementing an ER program in the second semester of our communicative English course was very beneficial. Both during and after the 3-week intensive ER activities cycle the learners appeared more motivated and engaged than those at the same time in previous years. This cannot be attributed unequivocally to the ER program itself as it is impossible to know whether using alternative activities would have had a similar effect. However, there was a noticeable increase in enthusiasm and participation during the ER activities cycle. Learner feedback also confirmed that

doing ER had been motivating, especially as learners could read, talk and write about books that were interesting to them—something that is not possible when textbooks and other materials are imposed upon them.

Attitudes to L2 reading were positively affected by the ER activities as well. By reading self-selected graded readers many learners realised that reading books in an L2 need not be difficult and could also be both enjoyable and beneficial for learning, with one student noting that she had thought that books written in English were too difficult, but through doing ER she discovered that she could enjoy reading them.

Despite the successes of this ER program, there is room for improvement. As discussed, some learners did not maintain accurate reading diaries, making it difficult to get reliable data on reading quantity. More adequate learner training or an alternative monitoring system need to be implemented in future. In addition, a few learners, while enjoying reading the graded readers in our collection, expressed a desire for a greater variety of books. Doing something about this may be more difficult than the first problem, as it is subject to budgetary constraints. And while having 19 learners successfully complete the optional ER program can be considered a success for a first attempt, it is hoped that more learners will be motivated to do so in the future. Now that some learners have successfully completed such a program and enjoyed doing so, they could perhaps be employed as near peer role models to help “sell” the benefits of ER to their slightly younger peers.

## **Conclusion**

This study has described the implementation of a two-stage ER program in a communicative English course at a Japanese university. The program had two objectives: to provide learners with a hopefully motivating change from the usual routine of the course book-centred syllabus and to introduce the benefits of reading in a second language. These objectives appear to have been met. The three weeks dedicated exclusively to ER activities enabled a more personal and motivating relationship between learner and learning materials and provided many opportunities for meaningful L2 communication. The optional, independent stage of the ER program was shown to have inspired several learners, most of whom who had previously disliked reading in English, to read autonomously for an extended period of time. Learner feedback on the ER program was also overwhelmingly positive, with learners praising both its motivational and language learning benefits. That learners felt that they gained such benefits from the program is a further illustration

of how integrating ER into a communicative English course is not only possible, but highly beneficial.

*Paul Dickinson teaches at Niigata University of International and Information Studies, Japan. He has an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Birmingham, UK and a BA (Hons) in English from the University of Newcastle, Australia. He has taught for 15 years in Japan and Australia. In addition to extensive reading, his current interests include exploring the language teaching and learning applications of multimodality, discourse analysis, and action research. Email: paul.dickinson01@gmail.com*

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## **The Design and Implementation of an Extensive Reading Thread in an Undergraduate Foundational Literacies Course**

**PETER HARROLD**

*Kanda University of International Studies*

Extensive reading can help students to develop their reading fluency, speed and vocabulary. It can positively impact on the motivation and enjoyment students take from reading, and assist in their repeated exposure to familiar language in a natural context. This paper will describe the design and implementation stages of introducing an Extensive Reading thread into a Freshman English 'Foundational Literacies' course at Kanda University of International Studies, in Chiba, Japan. It will outline the theories that influenced the design of the program, practical tasks used in and outside of class, and logistical matters related to choosing and sharing materials.

Freshman English students at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba, Japan, previously were required to complete a course entitled Basic Reading that met for one 90-minute class per week. This course was centred around reading a single story, written by a teacher, over the course of 15 weeks with supporting tasks and comprehension questions. However, the story only had approximately 4,000 words. As a result, tasks and activities greatly outweighed the actual time the students spent reading. Furthermore, Extensive Reading (ER) was treated as a standalone activity students had the option of engaging with outside of class. Therefore, only motivated students who took advantage of this opportunity for outside independent learning would show real improvements in reading speed and fluency. In 2013 it was decided that the course was no longer sufficiently challenging for improving students reading proficiency and encouraging a desire for students to read more. It was decided to merge the Basic Reading course with the Basic Writing program to become 'Foundational Literacies', meeting for two 90 minute

classes per week. The writing element would take a genre based approach with specific units planned in blocks for different genres. The reading component was designed to balance intensive reading in class, with integrated extensive reading and speed reading threads throughout the full 15 weeks of the semester. This paper will focus on the development of the Extensive Reading thread in this course. It will consider how theory influenced the set up and logistics of the program, and attempt to justify and explain the decisions taken in the set up and implementation of the program. It will finish with a brief evaluation of the success of the ER thread so far, and the implications for the future.

### **Principles of extensive reading**

Extensive Reading has a number of purposes. It can help students improve their reading fluency, reading speed, vocabulary, confidence, motivation, enjoyment, and establish a love of reading. Furthermore, it allows students to meet language and get a sense of grammatical patterns in a natural context (ERF, 2011). ER hopefully motivates students to read more and bridges the gap towards reading native-level texts.

In principle, Extensive Reading should be meaning focused and students should be able to self-select titles based on interest and enjoyment (Day & Bamford, 2002). The books students read should have few unknown words and grammar, with the focus of input on meaning and fluency development, through the repetition and familiarization of language (Nation, 2009). Therefore, students need existing familiarity with 95-98% of the text (Nation, 2008). This is made possible by learners having a variety of choice to self-select books that are of interest to them and are also of a suitable level. The learners' judgment of books should take precedent over the teacher's considerations. Furthermore, the reading should ultimately be a rewarding act in itself, so little time should be spent on comprehension tests or tasks (Day & Bamford, 2002). Finally, it is suggested ER should form part of a balanced program that includes intensive reading and may also be complemented by speed reading (Nation, 2009). Based on these principles the desired learning outcomes of the ER thread were formulated. It was hoped that the ER thread would impact positively on students reading proficiency, attitude and motivation to increase the volume of their reading in English.

### **Setting up a program**

Fortunately, the university already owned a wide range of graded readers available for students to borrow from the Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC). However, students lacked

direction or instruction in how best to use these materials. Therefore, the ER thread hoped to encourage students to utilize the materials already available, so was based on the support of the existing system for loaning readers. In addition to this, the Foundational Literacies committee had a budget available for purchasing class sets of graded readers. Therefore, it was necessary to decide which readers would be of greatest interest to the students.

Ideally, it would have been preferable to involve students in the set up and selection of materials, but due to time constraints in preparing the course over the semester break, it was not possible to consult students. However, as the library is added to in future students opinions will be consulted. For the class sets, it was decided to follow the advice to select popular books identified by others, such as by using the Extensive Reading Foundations annual Language Learner Literature Awards (Macalister, 2008). The titles chosen were selected to cover a range of levels in order to be appropriate for the range of abilities of freshman students, and allow for progression over the course of the program. It was also important to cover a range of genres to allow for variations in student interest. Finally, some of the readers were selected as they also have movie versions allowing the possibility of students accessing and comparing the language and content through a different medium.

The number of books required was calculated using the Extensive Reading Foundations formula: number of ER classes  $\times$  number of students per class  $\times$  number of books per student = total number of books needed (ERF, 2011). Fortunately, the university's SALC already stocked a sufficient quantity of extensive readers. However, it was decided that there would need to be sufficient class sets for each class to have a set over a two week period, as although classes would rotate between class sets and self-selection, there needed to be enough for all classes to have a set. This required the creation of an online Google Docs form for teachers to book class sets in advanced. Teachers could plan progression between levels and decide which weeks may be self-selection based on whether the preferred readers were available. Although, this situation was less than ideal, fortunately the Foundational Literacies committee receives an annual budget and has the possibility of adding class sets to the ER program in future years to offer more choice for teachers.

It was also necessary to consider how much students should read. Nation (2009) suggests students should read at least 5 books per level before moving on to the next level, and at least one book every 1-2 weeks. In order to ensure the benefits of ER the quantity of reading is important, as it requires reading over a sustained period, in order to expose students to the repetition of

language. This will hopefully also result in students developing regular reading habits, and potentially becoming self-empowered to pursue sustainable independent learning after the course's completion.

Despite a key principle of ER being to offer students choice in what they read (Day & Bamford, 2002), it was decided to use class sets of readers frequently in the first semester, in order to help students develop the habit of reading and overcome any initial resistance to changing their routines. It was hoped the books chosen might help influence them to discover new genres they wouldn't usually read, and prevent initial poor selections turning them off reading more. It would also help ensure students do not attempt to read above their level, or select too challenging books based on interest that may have a negative impact on the goals of the ER thread.

It was considered important to have an effective introduction to the Extensive Reading element of the course. The students were orientated to the course by introducing the purpose and benefits of Extensive Reading, and given guidance on how to choose and read graded readers. It was also necessary to establish expectations regarding how much they would be expected to read over the 15 week semester, but at the same time emphasis that there is no test (Day & Bamford, 2004). However, one consideration of setting reading targets is whether it leads to intrinsic or extrinsic motivation and also whether it can be counter-productive with students claiming to read more or act to reduce their overall reading enjoyment. During orientation the teacher could also assess students' reading backgrounds. Finding out information such as whether they had read in English before, whether they often read in their first language and what type of books they are interested to read. This could influence what class sets the teacher chooses for their class.

The students completed the Vocabulary Levels Test in order to attempt to predict their reading ability. It may also be possible to give students a level placement test, by taking a page from each level, and timing students to see what level they can comfortably read at a speed of around 80-100 words per minute with a maximum of 2-3 unknown words per page (Waring, 2000). The ER foundation suggests only students know their comfort zone when it comes to reading and what level they can cope with (ERF, 2011). Therefore, they should be responsible for selecting appropriate texts. However, if the purpose and benefits of ER are not clearly outlined many students will select books based on how interesting they look rather than language level, or may wish to challenge themselves with more complex grammatical structures and vocabulary.

Finally, the orientation could also include an introduction to different reading skills and strategies such as guessing words from context or using a dictionary.

The teachers also required orientation to the ER thread, to establish and share understanding of its purpose and importance, and to suggest how the course may be run and share any possible activities. As the teachers' commitment to the principles of ER can have an enormous impact on establishing a course and its continual success, the thread was considered integral to the course and should not be reliant on the interests of individual teachers and too dependable on variations in teaching style and preferences. The Foundational Literacies course has a coordinator who is in charge of ordering new books, maintaining and lending class sets, as well as offering teachers guidance and support on materials. However, the teachers were given a great deal of freedom to decide how they used and exploited the readers. Therefore, how much time they spent on them during class was based on the teacher's own discretion. However, the importance of clearly orientating the students to the purpose and benefits of ER was stressed. It was also suggested that the first class set should be read together as sustained silent reading (SSR), as this would hopefully promote enthusiasm and motivation for the course by ensuring students got off to a positive start and read the first reader. Furthermore, it was suggested the teacher should model reading for the students (Day & Bamford, 2002). As if teachers read graded readers at their students level it allows them to have meaningful discussions with the students regarding the content, and enables them to show enthusiasm and interest in giving feedback on any post-reading tasks students complete.

### **Tasks and activities**

It was also necessary to consider to what extent pre-reading or post-reading activities would be required of the students. As post-reading tasks potentially have many possible benefits. They ensure the students do the reading, provide opportunity for deeper reflection and discussion, and allow students to share opinions with their peers (Day & Bamford, 2004). Furthermore, they allow students to practice other language skills and tap into their preferred learning styles (Jacobs & Farrell, 2012). However, post-reading tasks can take away valuable reading time and reduce the students' enjoyment of reading. In addition, attempting to assess students post-reading activities places an additional burden on the teacher and the students (Jacobs & Farrell, 2012). It was left to the teachers discretion what activities if any they used, but they were encouraged to share and suggest many possibilities for post-reading tasks, for inside or outside of the classroom, such as a book review, oral report, reading record, partner interview, story map, quiz, alternative

ending, letter to a character, movie poster, cartoon strip or using materials from the publishers. It was also encouraged that the teachers share book specific tasks they develop when using the class sets.

### **Program evaluation**

At the end of the first semester, students' opinions of the books they had read were collected based on an enjoyment scale of 1-10. It was interesting to note on average the books they self-selected scored much higher than the class sets. Also, the class sets showed a wide range of enjoyment levels across students, showing the difficulty of choosing suitable books for an entire group. These findings reinforced the importance of placing student self-selection above using class sets to ensure students sustain enjoyment of reading.

Another consideration after the first semester regards the maintenance of materials, as any lost readers need to be replaced in the class sets. Furthermore, students also need to be reminded not to fill in the activities in the book, but do them on separate paper if they desire. In addition, when adding books to the library it is necessary to consider the students' attitudes, ability, interests and goals. Therefore, students should be consulted before the ER library is further expanded. Finally, in the next semester it may be necessary to monitor any lessening of enthusiasm from the students, or possible reading fatigue from reading too many similar readers, and find ways of sustaining the students' motivation and enjoyment. At the end of the year students opinions could also be surveyed regarding how beneficial they found the ER thread.

### **Conclusion**

The ER program is still in its infancy, and requires a sustained effort from teachers and students to allow it to grow and improve. Fortunately, the university's SALC had the materials available to begin a program on a large scale across all classes. However, the ER thread is a single component in a course that covers many types of reading and writing. Therefore, it remains the responsibility of the class teacher to communicate the benefits of ER and help motivate students to sustain the level of reading required to reap the rewards.

***Peter Harrold** is an English Lecturer at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba, Japan. His research interests included English for Academic Purposes, Technology and*

*Education, and Extensive Reading. He holds a PGCE from the University of Exeter, a PGC TEAP from Sheffield Hallam University and is currently completing an MA TEAP with the University of Nottingham.*

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## What Mieko Has Taught Us—A Japanese Hairdresser’s ER Practice

JUNKO YAMANAKA

*Aichi Gakuin University*

This is a study of a 64- year-old Japanese hairdresser with only junior high education, who has developed a liking for graded readers, read significantly and shown improvement in language skills and motivation. During the three years of Mieko’s ER practice, extensive reading material was almost the only source of language input for her, and her reading, speaking, listening, writing and spelling improved. Interestingly, after receiving a large amount of input for about a year, Mieko suddenly started engaging in output activities such as online chatting and story writing. ER also contributed in raising her awareness both in language learning and the extensive reading approach. Finally, ER was an intra-personal activity for her at first, but she made it inter-personal as well.

### **The background of this case study**

Mieko, age 64, who has been the presenter’s hairdresser for over 15 years, received her formal English education only from her junior high school. Being a motivated learner, however, she studied English by herself and would tell the presenter about her unsatisfactory progress especially in reading. After five years of the presenter’s frequent advice to start extensive reading, which she kept ignoring, one day she read an LLL-Award-winning easy graded reader upon the presenter’s recommendation. This little book completely changed her attitude. She was “hook[ed]” on graded readers since then and “[went] up the ladder” (Harris & Sipay, 1990, p. 674, in Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 97).

When Mieko started reading extensively in English, the presenter felt that observing and studying her ER practice was going to be academically useful, because Mieko was receiving her language input almost solely from extensive reading, unlike students in school settings where they can be naturally exposed to other types of input. Mieko's case therefore seemed valuable, even though it was a case of only one person. Also, she was much older than the students the presenter taught at school, and that was an interesting factor too.

### **Data collection**

Data was collected between April 2010 and February 2013 (two years and 11 months), from her reading log, interviews, emails, a reflection essay, her old diaries and their re-writes, E.P.E.R tests (Placement Test E), and standard test (STEP Test) results. Her reading log included each book's title, publisher, level, number of words, her rating (scales of four) and her comments.

### **Mieko's English learning history**

After graduating from junior high school in Mie-ken in 1963, Mieko worked at a barber's. Sometime foreigners came to the shop and so she wanted to learn to speak English, but did not have a chance. In her early 30s, she sometimes listened to tapes (Drippy). At age 37, she took private lessons from a native speaker for five months because she needed to communicate with a Nepali girl who she instructed in cutting hair. At age 42, she started her own beauty parlor. A beautiful American opera singer, who was her client, motivated her to communicate in English. She started listening to radio programs and tapes. She also took private or group lessons on and off. In her fifties, however, she was not active because of family problems. She only sometimes watched TV English programs and listened to radio or CDs, and read easy sections of *The Student Times*.

### **How she got hooked on graded readers**

About 15 years ago I became her client, and often she would tell me about her English learning. She told me that she liked speaking but was not fluent or accurate; she did not read well; she tried Eiken (STEP Test) 2<sup>nd</sup> grade but did not pass. Obviously she needed more language input, and I kept recommending ER, which she ignored for more than five years. One day I recommended her to read *Plane Spotting* (Hueber Lektüren Level 1), 2009 LLL Award Beginner level Finalist. She read it and that completely changed her attitude. Krashen (2004) notes, "Trelease (2001) has suggested that a single very positive reading experience, one 'home

run book’ can create a reader (p. 82 ).” It did happen in this case. Mieko looks back and describes her feeling at that time: “For the first time in my life, I felt reading English enjoyable. As I read on, I was not conscious that I was reading English. I was excited, asking myself, what’s going to happen next? (From her interview on May 15, 2012, translated by the presenter)” She also described the situation like this: “This is sound like, ‘step out from dark house’ (From her email on March 2012, unedited)” Her reflection essay on May 15, 2011 says, “I want to read more and more because these books are easy to read. Before this experience, reading any English text, even a fashion magazine or a passage that explains a gardening photo was ‘study’ for me. What is this pleasant feeling of freedom?” (translated by the presenter)

### **How much and what she read**

From April 2010 to February 2013, she read 106 books—92 graded readers, 11 non-ELT young readers books, and 3 e-books (one is ELT, two are non-ELT)—and with a total of 1,063,253 words.

**Table 1. Books Read**

|          | Books | Words     |
|----------|-------|-----------|
| 1st year | 32    | 368,760   |
| 2nd year | 39    | 270,115   |
| 3rd year | 35    | 424,378   |
| Total    | 106   | 1,063,252 |

At an early stage she found her favorite publisher, or graded reader series, and stuck to it. She was autonomous in the sense that she would go online, search for popular books of that publisher and order some, and read them. During the first year, except for the first ‘home run’ book, 28 readers out of 31 were from that publisher. In the second and third year, she read other publishers’ too. Sometimes she borrowed books from the presenter.

## Test results

E.P.E.R. Test (Placement Test E)

April, 2011      30 (Level D)

May, 2013      40 (Level C)

In June, 2012 she passed Eiken (STEP Test ) 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

## Enhancement and awareness that Mieko reports

Her reflection essay on May 15, 2011, written about one year after she started ER, reports her findings as follows: When she had read about 200,000 words, she found herself purely enjoying the stories, without being conscious that she was reading English. She realized it was good to read without a dictionary, because often the unknown word re-appeared on the next page and she understood the meaning then. She also realized that because she had been exposed to a lot of English, her spelling had improved before she knew it. She realized it when she was writing on her computer. She was very happy about these changes and wanted to share her joy with other people.

In an interview on May 15, 2012, about two years after she started ER, she refers to improvements in her language skills and language learning attitudes. Here is a list that tells about them.

- *By reading books, I can speak better. I can construct sentences. Because of this, I can hear better. I have realized that the (four) skills are connected like sweet potato vine. I used to think they were separate, but they are not.*
- *Because speaking has become more smooth, I have made more foreign friends.*
- *It is just like reading Japanese. No difference. That's why I was hooked.*
- *How nice that you enjoy books and your English improves before you know it!*
- *I can learn new words. I can have both enjoyment and discoveries.*
- *I am getting better finding good books. It is a virtuous cycle.*

- *I am happy I've met ER.*
- *I want to tell many people how good ER is.*

### **Her output activities**

Interestingly, around the time when Mieko had read more than five hundred thousand words, she began to engage in output activities. Firstly, in May, 2011, she started online chatting. She started communicating with people in other countries online.

Secondly, a month later, she suddenly thought of writing stories. She realized that level 1 and 2 graded readers were written using only easy, familiar words, and she thought maybe she was able to write a story herself. She wrote two short novels in June and July. The first one was based on her real life, and the second story, a fiction of about 2,000 words, was written in three days. According to her, it was fun to write stories, and English sentences came out flowing. She had to write them (on computer) very quickly before they drifted away. This shows that she did not translate Japanese into English as she wrote. She did not use a dictionary, either. Even though there were grammatical errors, the story was well written, having a graded reader atmosphere. The presenter was amazed by some excellent descriptions of some scenes in the story.

### **Promoting ER locally**

In September 2011, she started offering her shop space as a free ER saloon every Thursday evening, when anybody could come to her shop and read the books on the shelf freely. Any of her clients were able to borrow books when they came to the shop. It is still going on. When she talks with her clients, she mentions how enjoyable and effective ER is, and some people are interested, and borrow books from her. She hopes to promote ER locally, as she fully recognizes the effect of ER and wants to share the joy it has brought to her. ER was an intra-personal activity for Mieko at first, but now it is an inter-personal activity as well.

### **What we can learn from Mieko's case**

As this is a study of just one person, there are limitations. However, the presenter believes it has taught us many things.

1. “[A] single very positive reading experience” (Trelease, 2001, in Krashen, 2004) can create readers among older learners too.
2. Older learners may have more potential than we expect for improving their L2 skills with massive input.
3. ER can probably be understood and practiced by more people outside school settings
4. Graded readers can have great effect and power on adult learners
5. ER is for life-long learning and enjoyment.

We might be able to help those who are in the dark house, wanting to step out into the bright light—regardless of age.

*Junko Yamanaka received her BA in Education from Mie University, Japan. She did her post-graduate studies at State University of New York on a Rotary Scholarship and earned her MA in Linguistics from Nagoya Gakuin University, Japan. Currently she teaches at Aichi Gakuin University and Chukyo University in central Japan. She is on the board of Directors of Extensive Reading Foundation. Her publications include: Impact Issues 1,2,3 (Pearson Education) with Richard Day and Joseph Shaules, and Cover to Cover 1 ( Oxford University Press) with Richard Day.*

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## **Setting up an Extensive Reading Program at a Taiwan Secondary School: The Implementation and Modifications**

**CHIA-YIN LIN and YU-TING KU**

*Sacred Heart High School, Taiwan*

With resources provided by EPER (The Edinburgh Project in Extensive Reading) and the guidance of its director David R. Hill, an Extensive Reading (ER) program has been established in a Taiwan secondary school. Since introduced to the school in 2007, the program has inevitably encountered various challenges, especially in an exam-oriented environment in East Asia. Nevertheless, starting with three pilot classes, this approach has been gradually applied to all seventh and eighth graders with the school administration's support. To persuade all participants to put forth more effort, the program is also incorporated into the English curriculum. This paper will look at the process and tools required in setting up this ER program and its effects on students' level progress. The modifications made to deal with the problems will then be discussed, followed by the program's future development. The authors aim to gain deeper insight into the Taiwanese context and encourage further investigations.

Over the past few decades, a comprehensive body of research conducted in diverse contexts has confirmed the positive effects of extensive reading on foreign language acquisition. The evidence has suggested its contribution to different language skills, learners' confidence and attitude improvement, and even the nurturing of students' lifelong reading habits (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002; Powell, 2005). The ER approach, focused on encouraging students to read large quantities and varieties of self-selected materials, to read for general meaning rather than specific details, and to read fluently and enjoyably in their free time (Hill, 1992), has also been applied by many practitioners to various teaching environments. Despite its valuable impact, extensive reading has not yet received widespread practice in Taiwanese high schools, which is similar to the situation of EFL classrooms in Japan (Powell, 2005; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007) and Korea (Miles, 2005).

Although the examinations in Taiwan secondary education put great emphasis on reading abilities, English teachers still tend to teach lessons intensively, i.e. focusing more on vocabulary knowledge and grammatical structures. Alderson and Urquhart (1984, in Susser and Robb, 1990) indicate that such a class "may be justified as a language lesson but .... is actually not reading at all." Enthusiastic teachers might want to promote extensive reading, but are often hampered by pressure from "the administration to cover the predetermined materials specified in the syllabus" (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002: 31) and the reality that ER is not directly tested on entrance exams and thus less significant in the current curriculum. Ironically, the results of English instruction are a general dampening of enthusiasm, and students even lose interest partly due to lack of large exposure to enjoyable learning materials. The school has been lucky to gain practical, financial and administrative support from various related parties to implement the ER program among more than 2,700 participants for six consecutive years. Starting with the teaching context, the paper will then explain how to establish the ER program from small to big, the reasons for the main modifications made, and finally end with the program's future development.

### **Teaching context**

The school in central Taiwan is composed of approximately 3,000 students from Grade 7 to 12, with 14 classes each in Grade 7-9. Compared with their counterparts in large cities, the students here have less exposure to English resources. The school itself is under enormous pressure from fierce performance competition with other nearby schools in such aspects as university admission rates and contest rankings. Despite the competitive atmosphere, each teacher's professional expertise is generally respected by the school.

The subjects start the ER program in Grade 7 (aged 12-13) through Grade 8, including eight boys' and six girls' classes. Most of them have received informal English education in cram school since childhood and thus the formal English courses provided at school appear too simple and boring to them. Thus, mixed-level students and large language proficiency gaps in one class are common challenges language teachers are faced with.

The English course books are CLT-based at beginner level with communicative activities. Most teachers, though, would skip those activities and give explicit instruction on discrete lexical and grammatical items in textbooks via translations into Chinese, to ensure higher scores in exams. Three monthly exams are held each semester to prepare students for the public entrance

examination and hence, teachers must cover the predetermined materials within a certain period of time. The entrance examination consists mainly of reading short passages, which require reading strategies and a reasonable reading speed, but most teachers still seldom spend time developing students' reading skills. Therefore, as Powell (2005) and Tanaka and Stapleton (2007) described the situation in Korea and Japan, many Taiwanese students have also developed the habit of word-by-word decoding after teachers' detailed, systematic analysis of relatively short, difficult passages. Students then become slow readers who gradually lose interests in reading longer texts.

In fact, studies have shown that both types of reading instruction-intensive and extensive reading-are indispensable to students' overall language development and positive attitude formation (Ellis & McRae, 1991; Renandya & Jacobs, 2002; Powell, 2005). A balanced reading program including both is then required to ensure success in students' language learning and examination performances (Waring & Takahashi, 2000).

### **How everything started: The early stage**

For the first three years, the first author applied the approach to her own three classes in Grades 7 and 8 with the materials provided by EPER, which was established in 1981 and has offered assistance in setting up ER programs in different countries for years. The program was expected to be gradually expanded to a larger student body after more teachers' participation.

Several factors were taken into account to determine the starting point and duration of the ER program. Students in Grade 7, the first year of secondary school, were chosen based on the belief that "the nearer students come to public examinations, the less time they feel able to spend on extensive reading" (Hill, 1992: 63). The reason for the delay in program implementation till the second semester was to let students first settle down into their new learning environment. The program's duration, one academic year, or two semesters, was designed to prevent any boredom from setting in, and was also long enough to show any impressive results after its implementation (Miles, 2005).

### EPER placement/progress test

The *EPER Placement/Progress Test* was used to assess the students' initial reading levels after the initial introduction of the program. The test, composed of 13 passages of increasing difficulty with nearly 150 blank-filling cloze items, has been found to accurately assess learners' general English competence across different cultures (Hill, 1992). It has been matched with reading levels from the highest Level X, to A, B, C, D, E, F, to the lowest level G, plus those above Level X who can read unsimplified materials, and those below level G who are not yet ready for graded readers and can only read *Starter/Reading Cards* specially written for them. The test can also assess progress of the same group in English proficiency or make comparison with other classes in the same year or in different years. The distribution of the starting and finishing EPER reading levels of the pilot classes is as follows:

**Table 1. The Student Number of the EPER Reading Levels of the Three Pilot Classes**

|                | Level  | X | A | B | C  | D  | E  | F  | G  | Starter/<br>Reading<br>Cards | Total |
|----------------|--------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|------------------------------|-------|
| Class<br>A(53) | 2007/2 |   |   |   | 1  | 2  | 13 | 6  | 13 | 18                           | 53    |
|                | 2008/2 |   |   | 2 | 4  | 15 | 13 | 12 | 4  | 3                            | 51    |
| Class<br>B(24) | 2007/2 |   |   |   |    | 2  | 8  | 1  | 4  | 9                            | 24    |
|                | 2008/2 |   |   | 2 | 1  | 3  | 11 | 1  | 5  | 1                            | 22    |
| Class<br>C(53) | 2007/2 |   |   |   | 2  | 14 | 22 | 7  | 6  | 2                            | 53    |
|                | 2008/2 |   |   | 2 | 19 | 18 | 9  | 2  | 1  | 2                            | 51    |

*Note.* Class A and B were in Grade 7 while Class C in Grade 8 when the program was started. The total number of the students in each class decreased because some had transferred to other schools.

Table 1 has shown the improvement of most of the students and how the ER program could cater to each individual student's needs by helping them move up to higher levels. Among all the 130 students, 112 students (86%) were found to move up at least one level after one year.

### **Creating the class library**

After the determination of each student's starting reading level, a class library of nearly 70 copies of graded readers was established for each pilot class. The grading and selection were mainly based on the *EPER's Standard Booklist*, the EPER database of English graded readers carefully selected from different series and publishers, and divided into nine levels of difficulty. Each of the readers was color-coded by level and given a book number indicating its level and uniqueness. To increase the varieties of book selection, the book boxes were exchanged among the three classes after one semester. *Reading Cards*, developed by EPER, were provided for those not ready to read books at Level G. A stock management system of the library readers, including plastic cover protection, lending records and rules, was implemented and maintained by the student librarian in each class.

### **EPER workcards**

Considering that post-reading tasks varied greatly in type and amount from series to series and most students could not yet write book reports given their general English proficiency, the *EPER Workcards* were used to monitor students' comprehension and personal comments. These workcards, with a uniform format across different series but increasing complexity within different levels, were pasted inside the back cover of each book. Students were required to complete the workcard after finishing its accompanied title. Their reading enjoyment should not be spoiled because the cards could be finished quickly and with confidence. Researchers have stated that post-reading tasks, if carefully designed, are beneficial to learners' language development (Ellis & McRae, 1991; Hill, 1992; Day & Bamford, 1998; Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). Thus, besides assessing students' understanding, such production tasks can facilitate the active use of passively-learned language, extend their current linguistic repertoire and then improve overall language acquisition.

## Reading notebooks and assessment

Students were asked to write their answers to the workcards and personal comments in their own reading notebooks, which varied in size and style. A personal Reading Progress Chart, containing information such as the books they read, the rating of each title on a 5-star scale, any difficult vocabulary they encountered and brief comments, was pasted inside the front cover of each notebook to help monitor the reading progress. Reluctant students might even be willing to read more if they could see their own reading records.

Each student had to read at least 10 books at their levels, and this predetermined lowest requirement was based on the suggestion from Hill (1992: 75) that "students seem to need to read 10 to 15 titles at one level before they are ready to move up to the next." Of a total of 19 weeks per semester, the first week, one or two weeks before monthly exams, and the weeks for monthly exams and were considered days for students to concentrate on their school studies, which led to the lowest number of books to be completed. The arranged weekly schedule is as follows:

**Table 2. Example of the Weekly Schedule Provided for Students' Reference**

|             |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |           |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Week</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>10</b> |
| Book        |          | One      | two      |          |          | three    | four     |          | five     | six       |

|             |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Week</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>19</b> |
| Book        |           |           | seven     | eight     | nine      | ten       |           |           |           |

*Note.* Monthly Exams were in Week 5, Week 12, and Week 19; Spring holidays were in Week 8.

For each title, apart from the workcard answers, students also had to write vocabulary journals, which referred to notes on unfamiliar words encountered while reading. Laminated answer cards for each workcard were kept by librarians for students to do self-checks.

It is noteworthy that in exam-oriented cultures, reading extensively merely *for pleasure* with no link to test scores seems unable to persuade students to willingly undertake the program and spend their spare time. Students hope that the time and efforts spent can be rewarded and reflected on their term grade average (Hill, 1992). Thus, to make reading *for language learning* more visible and encouraging, the number of books read, the attitudes and the quality of students' reading notebooks were all considered in the assessment of the English course. Over 80% of the students could meet this requirement.

### **EPER extensive reading test**

At the start of the second semester, *the EPER Extensive Reading Test* was employed to evaluate the progress of students at different levels, including moving upwards, staying the same, or moving downwards. The test contains eight comprehension passages printed as booklets accompanied with three pages of questions sheets. The texts cover a broad range of eight EPER reading levels and each student has to answer questions on two passages, of which the combined score will determine the student's new reading level. Surprisingly, though, it was found that those who failed to read the required number of books could still move up to higher levels while those who exceeded the number ended at the same levels. Reasons might be that students were meanwhile learning English in other ways, or some required much more time to make impressive progress. The correlation between the amount of reading and the progress across levels requires further investigations.

### **Expanding the program to all Grade 7 and 8 students**

The key to a successful ER program, according to Hill (1997), is the integration of ER into formal curriculum. After two years of pilot practices, the school's reading program was finally supported in late 2009 by the school administration and expanded to all the Grade 7 students (around 630 in total) the next year, who would undertake the program for one year till the end of the first semester of Grade 8. So is the case with all the Grade 7 students the following years. Not only is the EPER

Placement/Progress Test scheduled on the school's academic calendar each semester, individual teachers can decide how much weight their students' ER work shall bear in the assessment. Also, thanks to the financial support from the chairperson of the PTA, a self-access library of foreign language materials was set up in October 2007, with all English books separated from Chinese ones. A lot more graded readers at different levels were purchased based on the *EPER's Standard Booklist*, while those newly published ones, though not on the list, were also included and assigned EPER levels given their headwords, levels of difficulty and numbers of pages. Besides, the cost of purchasing books each term is included in the school's budget expenditure. The following are the stock of the current library graded readers:

**Table 3. The Total Number of the School Library of Graded Readers (by July, 2013)**

| <b>Level</b> | <b>X</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>C</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>E</b> | <b>F</b> | <b>G</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|
| Copies       | 77       | 95       | 145      | 243      | 238      | 239      | 240      | 302      | <b>1579</b>  |
| Titles       | 65       | 86       | 128      | 212      | 197      | 141      | 114      | 84       | <b>1027</b>  |

Since all the graded readers are stocked in the school library, they are more easily managed. The best advantages of this arrangement are that "security and checkout become the responsibility of the library" (Day & Bamford, 1998: 113). Teachers are allowed more time to check on students' progress and give feedback instead of being irritated by the administrative procedures. All the graded readers are protected by plastic covers, color-coded and stocked by levels.

Workcards for new titles have been written by our English teachers based on the standard format predetermined for each EPER level. All workcards are with their accompanying titles, and students can check answers by consulting the binders of laminated answer cards placed on the library bookshelves.

Students are even awarded beautifully-designed certificates if they reach the required amount of reading at their levels and successfully move up one level. The following are tables showing the one-year program schedule, the numbers of students who have moved up and the certificates given out.

**Table 4. The One-year Schedule of the ER Program**

| <b>Grade</b>   | <b>Month</b>       | <b>Time</b>                                    | <b>What Students Do</b>  | <b>Purpose</b>                                 |
|----------------|--------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Grade 7</b> | Early Jan.         | before the end of the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | take the EPER Placement/Progress Test                                | to determine initial reading levels            |
|                | <b>Feb. ~ Jun.</b> | <b>the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester</b>             | <b>read books at their levels</b><br><b>finish reading notebooks</b> | <b>to enjoy reading and learning</b>           |
| <b>Grade 8</b> | Early Aug.         | at the start of the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester   | take the EPER Extensive Reading Test (Version One)                   | to monitor progress and determine new levels   |
|                | <b>Sep. ~ Jan.</b> | <b>the 1<sup>st</sup> semester</b>             | <b>read books at their levels</b><br><b>finish reading notebooks</b> | <b>to enjoy reading and learning</b>           |
|                | Late Feb.          | at the start of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester   | take the EPER Extensive Reading Test (Version Two)                   | to monitor progress and determine final levels |

**Table 5. Students Successfully Moving upwards and Certificates Awarded**

|  | <b>Grade 7-8 (2010-2011)</b> |               | <b>Grade 7-8 (2011-2012)</b> |               | <b>Grade 7-8 (2012-2013)</b> |                |
|--|------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Time</b>                            | Aug.,<br>2010                | Feb.,<br>2011 | Aug.,<br>2011                | Feb.,<br>2012 | Aug.,<br>2012                | Apr.,<br>2013* |
| <b>Students whose levels moving up</b> | 68%                          | 60%           | 79%                          | 58%           | 69%                          | 65%            |
| <b>Average percentage</b>              | 67%                          |               |                              |               |                              |                |
| <b>Certificates Awarded</b>            | 167 sheets                   | 183 sheets    | 178 sheets                   | 115 sheets    | 238 sheets                   | 150 sheets     |
| <b>Average number</b>                  | 172 sheets                   |               |                              |               |                              |                |

\* The schedule for the 2012-2013 students to take the EPER Extensive Reading Test was delayed till April because the school library had been closed for weeks in October, 2011 for the national school evaluation.

### **Modifications of the ERP: Challenges and solutions**

Since the program started, a number of challenges have been encountered and overcome with great effort. Compared with the initial ER program, the current one contains three major modifications:

### **Required amounts of reading: from the number of books to the number of pages**

During the first few years, one of the requirements for students to receive the certificates was to finish reading at least a set number of books. It is noteworthy that students at higher levels were required to complete fewer books while those at beginning levels should finish more since books at lower levels tend to be thinner. The amount of reading required for different levels was decided rather arbitrarily considering students' available time spared for extensive reading. However, it was found that students at higher levels would deliberately choose thinner books in order to reach the target number, which was apparently against the spirit of ER and unfair to those who read more pages. Thus, to achieve more equality, the requirement was changed to the number of pages read last year.

**Table 6. The Required Amount of Reading Per Semester by Levels**

(from copies to pages)

| Period    | Level  | X    | A    | B    | C    | D    | E    | F    | G    | R        |
|-----------|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----------|
| 2007~2012 | Copies | ≥7   | ≥7   | ≥7   | ≥8   | ≥10  | ≥10  | ≥12  | ≥12  | ≥15units |
| 2012~now  | Pages  | ≥900 | ≥800 | ≥700 | ≥600 | ≥500 | ≥450 | ≥350 | ≥250 | ≥15units |

*Note.* Level R refers to students who read Reading/Starter Cards, which are especially printed into a booklet with permission from EPER.

To help the participants clearly know how much amount of reading should be completed before each monthly exam per semester, the following table is provided:

**Table 7. The Pages of Books Required to be Completed Before Each Monthly Exam**

| <b>Exam</b>           | <b>X</b>   | <b>A</b>   | <b>B</b>   | <b>C</b>   | <b>D</b>   | <b>E</b>   | <b>F</b>   | <b>G</b>   | <b>R</b>        |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| <b>1<sup>st</sup></b> | 225        | 200        | 175        | 150        | 125        | 113        | 88         | 63         | 5 units         |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> | 300        | 267        | 233        | 200        | 167        | 150        | 117        | 83         | 5 units         |
| <b>Final</b>          | 375        | 333        | 292        | 250        | 208        | 188        | 146        | 104        | 5 units         |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>900</b> | <b>800</b> | <b>700</b> | <b>600</b> | <b>500</b> | <b>450</b> | <b>350</b> | <b>250</b> | <b>15 units</b> |

### **Reading notebooks: From self-selected to school-designed**

Students have been asked to use school-designed reading notebooks since 2012, rather than self-selected ones, for the following reasons: First, students seemed not to have a clear idea of what to write in their notebooks, especially with the comments and vocabulary journal missing, no matter how many times the teachers had reminded them. Second, they often forgot to paste the separate sheet of Personal Reading Progress Chart inside the front cover of their notebook. Some even claimed that their notebooks were lost and they had not time to buy a new one. To deal with all these problems, the school-designed reading notebook was created with special thanks to the University of Shimane for its enlightenment. With the specially-designed black cover, the steps on how to use the notebook, the reading record and the columns for the vocabulary journal printed inside, it offers practical uses and a feeling of unity among all students. They can also buy a new one easily whenever theirs are missing.

**Orientation: From classroom introduction to PowerPoint auditorium presentation**

Initially each individual teacher had to take the responsibility of introducing the ERP to their own classes before the implementation of the program. Even though both the teachers and students were given paper sheets of detailed introduction, most of them just quickly glanced over it. To reduce the burden on teachers and ensure each student's understanding, a 143-slide PowerPoint presentation has been given in the auditorium as an orientation for each Grade 7 student since last year, which includes the introduction to the balanced program of both extensive and intensive approaches, the school library of graded readers, the lending rules, the reading notebook and so on.

**Conclusion**

Since the ER program was first conducted in the school, a large number of students have benefited from extensive reading and perhaps developed a life-long reading habit for themselves. Also, it has been the fourth year since the expansion of the program, which results in its stable development and increasing amounts of data recorded. However, due to the tedious, repetitious administrative procedures, little time is spared for further examination and evaluation of the program. Despite this, the following are the challenges still required to be dealt with. To develop reading strategies and improve the quality of appreciation, class readers, which refer to the whole class reading the same title, are planned to be incorporated into the program. More efforts are required to find materials suitable for low-motivated students at beginning levels, for they can only read Reading/Starter cards while the others are offered a wider selection of graded readers. Most of all, the program's effects on students' performance and attitudes require further investigations. It is hoped that the ER approach can be widely accepted and practiced in more language classrooms in Taiwan and elsewhere worldwide.

*Chia-yin Lin and Yu-ting Ku are English teachers at Sacred Heart High School in central Taiwan. Both have been devoted to the promotion of extensive reading among teenage students.*

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## The Introduction of Extensive Reading at Tokuyama College of Technology and Its Effect

AI TAKAHASHI and TORU KUNISHIGE

*Tokuyama College of Technology*

Many of our students dislike studying English. For years we'd struggled against their low motivation for studying English and their deteriorating English ability. Questionnaire results told us that their interest in English would improve their English proficiency as well as their motivation toward studying English. As a method to enhance their interest in English, we decided to introduce extensive reading lessons, which had found great success in other institutions. We introduced the method partly in 2010. We started to give the lessons to all the students in the lower grades in 2011. The application of the method has changed the dispirited mood. The method has brought about some desirable effects such as the students' enhanced motivation and the improvement of their English proficiency, although we still have several problems to be solved.

It is often said that students at a *kousen*, or a college of technology, where students aged from 16 to 20 learn to be engineers, are inferior to university students in English proficiency in spite of their superiority in other fields, such as specialized knowledge. *Kousen* students' inferiority in English can be seen from their average TOEIC test scores (IIBC 2013). The same tendency was observed among our students at Tokuyama College of Technology (hereafter TCT). Our students were unwilling to study English, so their English proficiency deteriorated after entering our school. We had been working hard in order to improve their English ability, but we had been defeated by their open hatred against studying English.

Between 2008 and 2010, we conducted questionnaire surveys of the students in the lower grades, who are equivalent to senior high school students aged between 16 and 18, with a view to

finding out how our students really felt about studying English and how we could get over our difficulty in teaching them English (Takahashi, Kunishige & Harada 2009; Harada, Takahashi & Kunishige 2010; Kunishige, Takahashi & Harada 2011; Takahashi, Kunishige & Harada 2012). The results tell us the following. First, not a few students in the second grade experienced a slump: they were the least willing to study English. Second, they found it more necessary to study English as their school year advanced, even though they became less willing to study English. Finally, their interest in English and English-speaking countries motivated them to study English. From these findings, we presumed that it was imperative to introduce a new approach which could boost our students' interest in English and English-speaking countries. We adopted extensive reading, which had been successful at Toyota College of Technology in Aichi, Japan. We expected that the method would be effective for our students as our school had similarities to Toyota College of Technology, such as our education system.

In this article, we show how we introduced the extensive reading method, how we give extensive reading lessons, and how our students have changed.

## **Method**

### ***How we introduced ER***

It is strongly recommended that before giving extensive reading lessons, teachers should familiarize themselves with books written in simple English (Takase, 2010). Thus, we first devoted ourselves to reading the books used in extensive reading lessons, such as the Oxford Reading Tree series (Oxford University Press), Foundations Reading Library series (Cengage Learning), Macmillan Readers Starter series (Macmillan ELT), Penguin Readers Easystarts series (Pearson Education Ltd.), Oxford Bookworms Library Starters series (Oxford University Press) and Cambridge English Readers Starter series (Cambridge University Press). Practicing extensive reading for learners, we started an extensive reading class for local citizens in 2009. The number of the participants was no more than 10, and this small class was a good rehearsal for us. Then, we introduced the extensive reading approach to some of the students in the lower grades in 2010. Kunishige gave lessons to the third graders twice a week and Takahashi started lessons with the first graders once a week in the second semester. As for the method, we mainly followed the example of Toyota College of Technology (Toyota College of Technology 2011). In 2011, after observing

favorable changes in the students' attitudes during a class, we started giving extensive reading lessons to all the students in the lower grades twice a week.

### **How we give extensive reading lessons**

We give each lesson to about 40 students, and a lesson is 50 minutes long. After giving some advice and instructions, we let our students choose and read books by themselves (Fig.1). As instructions, we always tell our students the following principles: (1) Read books you can understand without consulting a dictionary, (2) Skip unfamiliar words or put what you can understand together, and (3) Choose a book which seems easy to understand, and stop reading it when you find it boring or difficult. The principles were proposed by Sakai and others (Sakai 2002), and they are generally adopted by many teachers giving extensive reading lessons in Japan. The students are told to choose a book by checking the stickers on it. We put two stickers on a book: one sticker shows its word count and the other shows its readability. Regarding readability, we classify books into eight groups according to their YL (*Yomiyasusa* Level), an indicator by which learners can understand how easy a book is. The groups are white (below YL0.4; the easiest level), pink (YL0.5-0.9), red (YL1.0-1.9), orange (YL2.0-2.9), yellow (YL3.0-3.9), green (YL4.0-4.9), blue (YL5.0-5.9) and no color (above YL6.0). Students are required to take reading records consisting of date, sticker color, book title, time, and comment (Fig.2).



**Figure1. Students choosing books**

| 学号       | 姓名 | 班级     | 阅读日期       | 阅读时长 | 阅读页数 | 阅读内容         |
|----------|----|--------|------------|------|------|--------------|
| 10010101 | 张萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.10 | 30   | 10   | 新概念英语第二册第1课  |
| 10010102 | 王萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.11 | 45   | 15   | 新概念英语第二册第2课  |
| 10010103 | 李萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.12 | 20   | 5    | 新概念英语第二册第3课  |
| 10010104 | 刘萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.13 | 35   | 12   | 新概念英语第二册第4课  |
| 10010105 | 陈萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.14 | 40   | 14   | 新概念英语第二册第5课  |
| 10010106 | 周萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.15 | 25   | 8    | 新概念英语第二册第6课  |
| 10010107 | 吴萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.16 | 30   | 10   | 新概念英语第二册第7课  |
| 10010108 | 郑萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.17 | 35   | 12   | 新概念英语第二册第8课  |
| 10010109 | 孙萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.18 | 40   | 14   | 新概念英语第二册第9课  |
| 10010110 | 赵萌 | 100101 | 2008.10.19 | 25   | 8    | 新概念英语第二册第10课 |

**Figure 2. A reading record**

We evaluate our students' performance from trimester tests (52.5%), an English proficiency test called ACE (17.5%), and their attitudes (30%). The trimester test consists of two parts: cloze test and reading comprehension test, in which students read a story within a provided time and then answer questions following their memory and notes. ACE (Assessment of Communicative English) is an English proficiency test consisting of 3 sections: listening, grammar and vocabulary, and reading. The questions vary from junior high school level to college entrance examination level. As for attitudes, we evaluate their performance on the basis of how many books and how many words they read.

## Effects

After starting extensive reading lessons, we observed considerable changes in our students' attitudes during class: every student welcomed our new approach and devoted themselves to reading. Then, we confirmed the effects of extensive reading on their attitudes toward studying English with the results of the above-mentioned questionnaires, which we conducted between 2008 and 2010. We also analyzed their ACE scores to see the impact of extensive reading on their English ability.

Examining the results of the questionnaires, we observed interesting changes among the students who were enrolled in 2008. The students took extensive reading lessons in 2010, when they were in the third grade, and two teachers gave lessons separately. As Fig.3 and Fig.4 show, the IE students (computer science and electronic engineering majors) and the CA students (civil engineering and architecture majors) changed their attitudes favorably when they were taking

extensive reading lessons, whereas the ME students (mechanical and electrical engineering majors) responded less favorably.

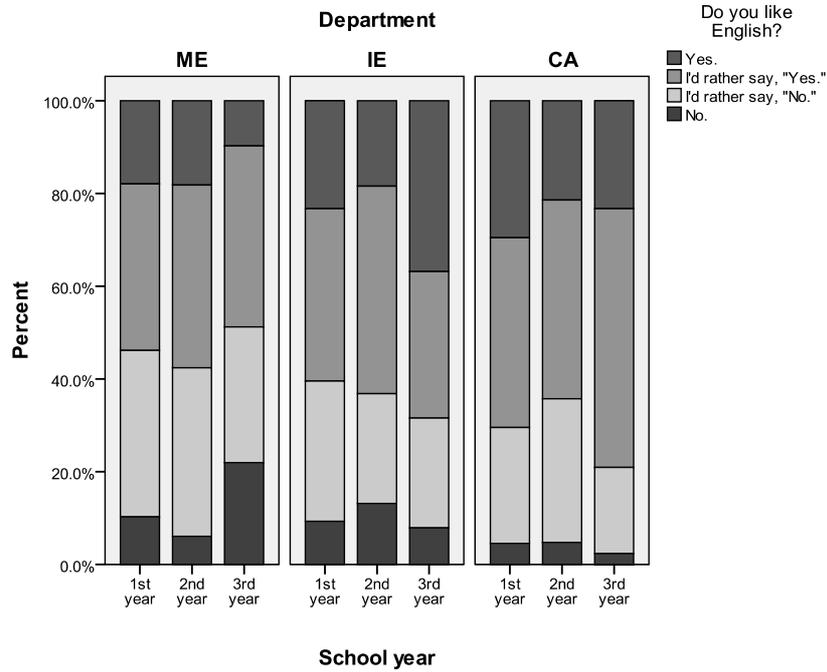


Figure 3. Answers to the question “Do you like English?” by department

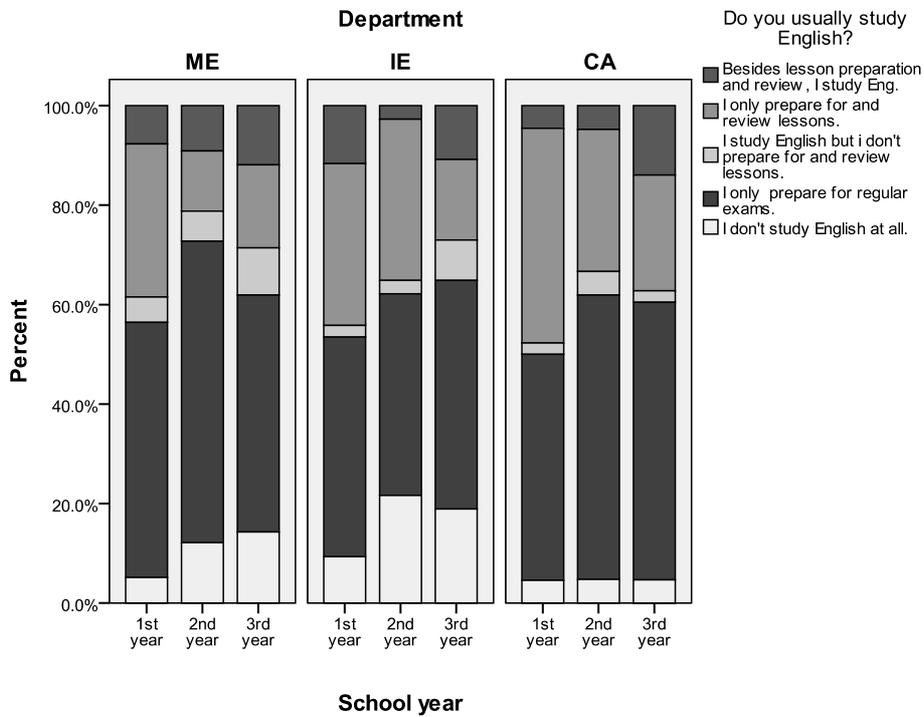


Figure 4. Answers to a question “Do you usually study English?” by department

As the students' answers to the question "Do you like English?" show (Fig.3), the IE students showed the most favorable attitudes toward English in the third grade. The percentage of respondents choosing the most positive option increased considerably, and the choice of the most negative option decreased in the third grade, although the previous year had shown an increase in negative responses. The CA students changed their attitudes similarly. Among the ME students, however, the selection of the most favorable option dropped, and the choice of the least favorable option increased in the third grade. As Fig. 4 shows, the IE and CA students also changed their attitudes toward home study favorably in the third grade. The percentage of respondents choosing the most favorable option recovered among the IE students, and it improved over the previous years among the CA students. In addition, the percentage of respondents selecting the least favorable option decreased among the IE students and didn't change among the CA students. As for the ME students, on the other hand, the percentage of the least favorable option as well as that of the most favorable one increased. These results mean that extensive reading lessons can have a positive impact on the students' preference for English and their motivation for studying English if the lessons are given properly.

Regarding the students' English proficiency, we observed their outstanding improvement from the results of the ACE test. Table 1 below shows the yearly shifts in our students' average ACE test scores.

**Table 1. Shifts in the Average Score of ACE****(bold for the students with ER lessons)**

| enrollment year  | 1st grade  | 2nd grade  | 3rd grade  |
|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| (standard score) | 430        | 450        | 470        |
| 2006             | 408        | 421        | 434        |
| 2007             | 425        | 422        | 461        |
| 2008             | 410        | 442        | <b>447</b> |
| 2009             | 429        | 426        | <b>478</b> |
| 2010             | <b>425</b> | <b>470</b> | <b>500</b> |
| 2011             | <b>436</b> | <b>461</b> |            |
| 2012             | <b>448</b> |            |            |

Before the introduction of extensive reading, their average score was always lower than the standard score for senior high school students. In addition, they experienced a slump when they were in the second or the third grade. In 2011, two years after we started to give extensive reading lessons, the average score finally rose above the standard score for senior high school students, though our students didn't make any special preparations for the test: the first graders, the second graders, and the third graders achieved 436, 470, and 478 respectively. Moreover, the students enrolled in 2010 (current fourth-year students) improved the average score without experiencing a slump in 2011 and 2012. These results show that extensive reading is also helpful for improving students' English ability, as we haven't changed anything except for introducing extensive reading.

## Discussion

ER lessons at TCT are helpful in boosting the students' attitudes toward studying English and their English ability. There are two reasons why we are successful. First, we English teachers

have become avid *tadokists*, those Japanese who ardently read books written in simple English. That is what we learned from our failure in 2010, in which another teacher gave extensive reading lessons to the ME students with little knowledge of the method. We learned that students, considering this teacher to be less reliable, would not follow a teacher who could not share their reading experience. Thus, the fact that a teacher is an avid reader is essential in inviting students to read, and advising them about what to read. Second, we started extensive reading lessons as a team. By doing so, it is easy to give lessons continuously for years. As continuous and long-term practice is important to boost students' English proficiency through extensive reading (Nishizawa et al., 2011), team teaching is a key to successful extensive reading lessons.

Extensive reading has brought about desirable effects for us, but we still have some problems to solve. First, we have to find out what and how students should read so that they can upgrade their English ability. Analyzing TCT students' reading records, Kunishige observes that it is more effective in boosting English proficiency to keep on reading books with word counts around 1000. We haven't found out why reading 1000-word books is effective, and we should analyze our students' reading records further so that we can propose the most effective way to improve English proficiency. Second, we have to assemble collections of books which Japanese learners find readable and attractive, as it is essential that learners read understandable and enjoyable books extensively. As for readability, short and easy books for EFL learners such as the 1000-word books mentioned above are seldom published. It is true that a lot of books for EFL learners are published in other countries. We have those books in our library, but they are too long and difficult for quite a few students who are in the starter level. The number of books which Japanese learners find readable is very small. Concerning attractiveness, we have only a few series that our students enjoy reading. Among the series for EFL learners, we have difficulty in finding books which teenagers find easy and attractive. Our students are eager to read books with a familiar setting, though. The shortage of books is a great problem for us to make our extensive reading lessons better, so we should produce easy books for Japanese learners by ourselves, aside from asking publishers to issue more starter-level books. Finally, we have to develop our lessons in order to fulfill the requirement from our society that we should train students to be fluent in English. With a view to making our students use English, we introduced reading a short book aloud to another student and writing a story in our lesson. In addition, we offered our students opportunities to talk with others in English outside a classroom. As we've just begun these activities, we should develop them further so that the students can be willing to communicate in English.

We are convinced that extensive reading is effective in raising our students' motivation toward studying English and their English ability, although we still have some problems to solve. From our successful experience, we hope we will apply our approach to our students in the higher grades as well as those in the lower grades while tackling the problems.

***Ai Takahashi** is an associate professor of the department of General Education at Tokuyama College of Technology in Yamaguchi, Japan.*

***Toru Kunishige** is a professor of the department of General Education at Tokuyama College of Technology in Yamaguchi, Japan.*

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『「多読・多聴による英語教育改善の全学展開」苦手意識を早期に克服し，自立学習を継続させ，英語運用能力を顕著に向上させる新しい英語教育の展開・伸張報告書』.

## **Approaches to Using Short Stories in the EFL classroom**

**MICHAEL RABBIDGE**

*Chonnam National University*

The use of short stories in class is still seen as a novelty in most English teaching contexts in Korea. Issues ranging from appropriate methodology to story selection mean using this valuable resource in class is rare. This paper explores how graded short stories can be used to teach and practice a range of integrated language skills. By presenting a series of sample activities and examples of how various short stories were used during an in-service regional teacher training program at Chonnam National University in South Korea, the writer will discuss how task-based, extensive reading and more traditional teaching approaches can be used to teach short stories in the classroom.

This article overviews several approaches used to incorporate extensive reading (ER) ideas and materials in the classroom. The aim of these ideas is to bridge the gap between the theoretical notions of how extensive reading should be conducted and the realities of classroom and teaching environments, especially those learning environments in which extensive reading has struggled to make an impact.

One of the main premises of extensive reading is the idea that learners should be reading as much as possible out of the classroom (Day & Bamford, 1998). In order for this to happen, learners need to be exposed to extensive reading and need to be made aware of how it can assist in the learner's language development. One way this can be achieved is to have learners "simply read" extensively in the classroom. The benefits of class readers in initial stages of extensive reading include allowing the teacher to control more of the reading process, allowing the teacher to check on the learner's reading progress, setting the homework, as well as having a single test for the learners once the reader is finished (Parminter & Bowler, 2011).

However, the “simply read” idea is often viewed unflatteringly as an invalid use of learning time in certain EFL learning contexts.

Other issues of concern with the “simply read” mode are materials. More often than not, learners equate reading with the introduction of a large number of new vocabulary items, which is reminiscent of a more intensive, traditional approach to reading.

The use of graded materials is also seen as an inefficient manner in which to improve a student’s reading ability, despite the growing evidence to the contrary (Maley, 2005; Brown et al., 2008).

The following introduces ER ideas and materials that have been used successfully in a teacher training program in South Korea.

### **Graded novels**

The following ideas are all based on graded short story reading and listening materials. This material was chosen as it allows learners to focus more on the narrative than on the language, due to the fact that at least 95% of the language in the materials is already known to the learners. Short stories can be covered in a relatively short period of time, usually two or three class periods, and therefore certain aspects of the short story can also be explored during class to allow learners to develop a greater appreciation for the short story they are experiencing.

The ultimate aim is for learners to enjoy the story, and hopefully, develop an appreciation both for using graded reading materials, as well as reading and listening to stories in English. That being said, the ideas can be applied to more authentic materials if said materials are more appropriate to the level of the learners involved.

### **Short stories through reading**

The following will outline how to use short stories over two 50 minute reading classes via examples taken from the graded reader *Taste and other Tales*, a Level 5 Penguin Readers collection of short stories by Roald Dahl.

## Day one

### Pre-reading stage

Each class starts with a pre-reading stage that introduces key themes, vocabulary as well as characters.

With the story “Taste,” the class is opened with a small discussion that focuses on placing bets, including the status of betting in the learners’ home culture, what people make bets about and what people would or wouldn’t be willing to risk in a bet.

Next the characters are introduced, with pictures if possible. The introduction of characters is important as one of the more difficult elements of reading a story in a foreign language is coming to grips with the different characters. Once introduced, the idea of betting and the characters are connected via a general description of the story’s plot. In this case the learners are told that the father makes a bet about the origins of a bottle of wine, and learners are asked what they think the stakes will be, considering that the other person involved in the bet is risking two houses. During this description of the plot any new vocabulary that may pose problems for the learners is introduced. In the case of “Taste,” *claret* and *epicure* are explained.

The final part of the pre-reading stage focuses on giving the learners an immediate reason to read. This is achieved via a gist question. The question (“What is the bet?”) will be answered during the while-reading stage.

### While-reading stage

The while-reading stage is a sustained silent reading period that takes 15 – 20 minutes, depending on the learners. The reading is the first part of the story, which is about seven pages in length. During this stage learners are encouraged to use the story context instead of dictionaries to assist in understanding any new vocabulary that hasn’t been covered by the instructor. To accommodate this approach, stories are chosen with vocabulary that falls well within the linguistic range of the learners. The reason for this is to allow for learners to concentrate on the story rather than new language, which reflects the tenets of ER.

### After-reading stage

After the reading has been completed, the learners are provided with the opportunity to reflect on and respond personally to the story so far. The question types given here are not traditional after-reading comprehension questions (multiple choice, true/false questions, etc.) but rather questions that ask the learners to discuss with their partners different elements of the story. The questions at this stage are trying to reinforce the idea of story over language, something that traditional intensive reading (IR) classes often overlook. At this stage the instructor needs to monitor to ensure that the learners have indeed understood the story, and be ready to assist any learners who might like to clarify what they have just read. In the case of “Taste,” questions that confirm what the bet was, what the stakes were, what they think of the father’s decision and what they would do if they were the mother are discussed in groups, and then later in whole class discussions.

### Day 2

#### Linking lessons

Between lessons usually a full 24 hours pass; therefore, a vital part of Day 2 is to review what has happened. In the story of “Taste,” the short story’s movie equivalent was used. Learners watch up until the point that they had read. However, there is no sound, and instead learners are asked to track the mood changes of the character and then complete the following:

**Mike: Happy-** \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**Richard: Preoccupied -** \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**Wife: Worried -** \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**Louise: Bored-** \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

This activity usually takes five minutes.

### **Pre-reading stage**

The second class's warm-up starts with the learners having more knowledge of the story than the first lesson, and this fact can be used to create prediction activities. One example, based on a task based approach that can help stimulate learners' interest, has the learners use a series of pictures to predict the remainder of the story. There are many possible variations to this activity, with groups receiving different pictures or all the pictures, depending on the story. If pictures are not available then the use of spoken language can also be used to create a prediction. These predictions provide the learners with the immediate reason to read in the second class.

### **While-reading stage**

This again is a sustained silent reading period that mirrors the first class. The only difference here is that the prediction activity needs to be checked.

### **After-reading stage**

After learners have finished, in groups they discuss which group's prediction came the closest to the story's actual outcome. Again, activities and discussions that allow the learners to reflect on and respond to the story are used. For the story "Taste," a role play was used to further explore how the story may develop.

### **Short stories through listening**

The use of graded short stories for listening follows a similar pattern to that discussed for the reading section. In fact, the stages of the reading and listening classes are similar enough that the activities can be done in a comparable fashion.

However, there are some vital differences that need to be taken into account when listening to short stories in the classroom.

The timing of the lesson and deciding how much material to cover in a class are the first important steps. Whereas the reading speed is determined by the reader, with listening, the speed is determined by the teacher. Therefore consideration needs to be given to how many times a listening piece will be heard. It is this writer's experience that comprehension through listening takes longer,

and therefore three 50 minute lessons are often required to listen to a short story that has a total listening time of 23 minutes. To assist in successful listening, activities need to be structured to ensure that more detail is covered within the activities, as there is no script to fall back on when listening to the story.

Different approaches can be taken to how to actually listen to the story depending on the learner. For lower level learners, it is helpful for the learner to preview the gist question prior to listening, and then after listening, to check their answers with a partner. After this the teacher can confirm the answer. Then, for the same listening text, students preview the detail questions, listen (twice if needed), confirm with a partner and then listen as the teacher confirms the answers. This method provides more assistance for the learners.

For more advanced listeners the gist listening task is conducted in the same way. In this case, no preview of the detail questions is undertaken and learners are asked to answer the questions based on what they remember, akin to radio listening. After answering, based on what they remember, they can then listen one more time to check what they heard.

The following will outline how *The Waxworks*, a Level 2 graded reader, was conducted in class. Included will be activities that highlight the type of detail referred to above.

### **Lesson format**

For this example the material was taught over three days, and the classes all followed the same format.

### **Pre-listening stage**

This was similar to the pre-reading stages previously described for “Taste”: the introduction of key themes and vocabulary as well as characters in the story.

For *The Waxworks* questions that hint at the genre, suspense, are used to begin the class. Then a series of pictures that introduce waxwork figures are shown; learners have to guess whether they are real or fake. An overview of the plot is given, characters and setting are established and then a short video clip of the opening scene of the story is shown to help add to the atmosphere of the story.

Each listening class has two separate listening parts, which are three to four minutes in length. Each listening part has a gist question and then a detailed question.

**Gist listening stage**

The gist question is given. Students are then asked to listen to the first listening part once, which is three to four minutes in length, in order to answer the gist question. The gist questions were simple wh-type questions.

**Detail listening stage**

Next some more detailed questions are given; students then listen and answer the questions. Detail questions can be any of the following question types:

- True/false questions
- Writing descriptions
- Gap fills
- Chart completion
- wh-type questions

**After-listening stage**

After the listening stages are complete, learners are given time to respond to the listening text and make predictions about the next lesson's story contents.

**Linking lessons**

This is done in the same manner as the reading classes.

**In summary**

My experiences as a teacher trainer have led me to believe that the use of graded stories in the classroom can inspire learners to use this valuable resource more frequently outside of the classroom. The learners who have participated in the programs state that they feel they do indeed read and listen more to these texts in their own free time.

I feel that ideas presented here can assist other teachers in bridging the gap between theoretical concepts on how ER should be conducted and the practical restraints of classroom settings.

*Michael Rabbidge has taught and trained teachers in South Korea for the past 13 years. He is the head of the Intensive Teacher Training Program at Chonnam National University and is currently a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics/TESOL at Macquarie University. His main research interests are the use of extensive reading materials in the EFL context and Teacher Cognition. Email: mikemind@hotmail.com*

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# **Iranian EFL Learners' Reading and Writing Fluency: Investigating the Effects of Timed Activities in an Integrated Reading and Writing Program**

**SEPIDEH ALAVI**

*Shiraz University, Iran*

**ELHAM ALEMOHAMMAD**

*Shiraz University, Iran*

Due to the lack of solid research on reading and writing fluency, especially in an integrated reading-writing program in an Iranian context, in this study, timed-activities including timed reading and free writing were integrated. The researchers investigated the effect of their integrated instruction on the reading and writing fluency of a group of 42 male students from a private language school in Fasa, Iran (experimental group=21, control group=21). Attempt was also made to shed light on the relationships between reading and writing fluency and between reading accuracy and writing fluency for the experimental group. The results showed significant improvement in reading fluency and accuracy and also in writing fluency and accuracy. Regarding the relationships between writing fluency and reading fluency, and between writing fluency and reading accuracy, strong positive correlations were found between the variables.

Researchers such as Nation (2007) believe that any language course should consist of four strands: meaning focused input, meaning focused output, language focused learning, and fluency. These concepts involve learning the language through using it receptively, productively, and through focusing on forms of the language respectively. In the fluency development strand of a language course, however, language learners should be “helped to make the best use of what they

already know” (Nation, 2007, p.6). Despite the importance of fluency instruction, it has been somehow ignored in second/foreign language classes, especially, with respect to reading and writing, and more research is called for on the effects of different activities on fluency development (Bateman, Binder, & Haughton, 2002; Liao & Wong, 2010; Robinson, 2009).

### **Reading fluency**

Many definitions have been suggested for reading fluency emphasizing the concepts of speed, comprehension, and automaticity. Meyer and Felton (1999) defined reading fluency as “the ability to read connected text rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little conscious attention to the mechanics of reading such as decoding” (p. 284). Pikulski and Chard (2005) refer to reading fluency as “efficient, effective word recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of text” (p. 510).

### **Writing fluency**

Fewer definitions have been suggested for writing fluency than reading fluency. However, in all these definitions temporal measures such as quantity/length and time are common. Casanave (2004) defines writing fluency as the ability to produce a bulk of written language with little hesitation (as cited in Hwang, 2010). Vandermolén (2011) and Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim (1998) offer a more quantifiable description of writing fluency, emphasizing the number of words or structures produced in any given time.

### **Importance of reading and writing fluency**

Reading fluency frees up attention for activities like remembering, comprehending, and enjoying a text (Bateman et al., 2002). It is also claimed to improve the complexity and accuracy of the tasks language learners do (Nation, 2005) and to save time (Browning, 2003). It is believed that the development of reading itself will be hampered if one lacks reading fluency (Bateman, 2002).

As for writing fluency, researchers believe that it is accompanied by improvements in writing accuracy and complexity (Nation, 2009), helps students to take risks in their writing, and to

convey their ideas easily (Liao & Wong, 2010), accelerates improvements in learning the language (Robinson, 2009), and enables students to manage writing tasks in proficiency tests (Liao & Wong, 2010).

### **Fluency building activities**

Fluency building activities have been designed and supported by several ESL/EFL researchers some of which being extensive reading of graded readers (Grabe, 2010; Nation, 2005), silent repeated reading (Chang, 2010), and timed reading (Chung & Nation, 2006). The effects of these three methods on reading fluency development have been investigated in many studies, the results of which confirm their effectiveness in the development of not only reading fluency but also reading comprehension (Chang, 2010; Chung & Nation, 2006; Robb & Susser, 1989; Sheu, 2003; Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, & Gorsuch, 2004).

Among writing fluency building activities, free writing (Hwang, 2010) is the most important, with different variations such as timed repeated thinking and writing, and timed repeated skimming and writing (Day, 2004). Studies conducted on the efficacy of writing fluency activities show the efficacy of free writing on writing fluency improvement (Hwang, 2010).

### **The interaction between reading and writing**

Traditionally, reading and writing were viewed as separate skills, but recent studies of second language acquisition and use insist that these two skills are inseparable and should be integrated in language learning tasks to represent real-life situations. Max and Gayle Brand (2006) claim that not only reading and writing have a reciprocal relationship, but reading and writing fluency, as component skills of reading and writing, are intertwined.

### **The present study**

As a result of the emphasis put on fluency on the one hand and the integrated instruction of language skills on the other, the present study focused on the effects of timed reading and free writing on reading and writing fluency development in an integrated reading and writing program. Marginally, the effect of the program on reading and writing accuracy was investigated as well as the relationships between writing fluency and reading comprehension/accuracy, and writing fluency

and reading fluency. The researchers aimed more specifically at seeking answers to the following research questions:

1. Does a learner's reading fluency, measured by words per minute (henceforth wpm), change during the timed reading program?
2. Does a learner's writing fluency (measured by wpm) change during the free writing program?
3. Does the speed reading program affect reading accuracy/comprehension?
4. Does the free writing program affect writing accuracy?
5. Is there a correlation between reading fluency and writing fluency?
6. Is there a correlation between reading accuracy/comprehension and writing fluency?

### **The participants**

The participants were 42 male students, from 19 to 26 years of age, of two classes at Kish Language Institute, in Fasa. The students had a good receptive knowledge of the first most frequent 2,000 words of English. Both classes were at the upper-intermediate level, studying Total English: Students book: Upper-Intermediate by Acklam and Crace (2006), and met three days a week during a seven week period. One of the classes at this level was randomly chosen as the experimental group (n=21) and another as the control group (n=21). In order to control extraneous factors for both experimental and control groups, the same teacher taught both classes.

### **Materials**

During the pre-test phase of the study, the Quick Placement Test developed by Oxford University Press and Cambridge ESOL, was used to obtain a measure of students' level of English and to check the homogeneity of the intended groups. Also the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), developed by Nation (early 1980s), was given to the students to make sure that they had the knowledge of the first most frequent 2000 words of English, which was a pre-requisite for starting the specific timed reading program used in the present study. A TOEFL reading test, taken from *NTC's Preparation for the TOEFL*, by Broukal and Nolan-Woods (1990), was given to the students as well to provide measures of reading accuracy. Also the students took a pre-test timed-reading test, taken from *Asian and Pacific Speed Readings for ESL Learners*, by Quinn, Nation, and Millett (2007), to provide measures of reading accuracy and fluency. After taking the timed reading test, the

participants were asked to write in five minutes whatever much of the timed reading passage they remembered, without stopping to think or revising or worrying about accuracy. This activity, which is considered a type of guided free writing, was intended to provide measures of both writing fluency and writing accuracy.

The results of the statistical analyses carried out to compare the two groups showed that there was no significant difference in the reading fluency, reading accuracy, writing fluency, and writing accuracy scores for the control and the experimental groups.

### **The treatment**

During the treatment phase of the study, while the control group only completed the activities of the textbook, *Total English: Students book: Upper-intermediate* (Acklam & Crace, 2006), the experimental group, besides doing similar activities as the control group, was given \ three timed-reading passages a week, one passage per session, and had timed free writing practice every session. (For details concerning the methodology of the timed reading and writing activities see Quinn et al., 2007, pages 5-7.)

### **The post-test phase of the study**

In the post-test phase of the study, the same TOEFL reading test as the pre-test was given to the participants in both groups to obtain measures of their writing accuracy. The students were also given a post-test timed reading test and a post-test guided free writing, which were intended to provide measures of reading fluency and writing fluency and accuracy, respectively.

### **Results**

After the treatment, independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare reading fluency, writing fluency, reading accuracy, and writing accuracy scores of the control and the experimental groups. A summary of the results is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples t-test Results for Reading Fluency (1), Writing Fluency (2), Reading Accuracy (3), and Writing Accuracy (4) Post Test Scores of the Control and the Experimental Groups**

| Variable         | Group        | N  | Mean    | SD       | t      | df | Sig.(two-tailed) |
|------------------|--------------|----|---------|----------|--------|----|------------------|
| Reading fluency  | Control      | 21 | 166.48  | 29.00624 | -6.637 | 40 | .000             |
|                  | Experimental | 21 | 230.43  | 33.29050 |        |    |                  |
| Writing fluency  | Control      | 21 | 33.9238 | 2.61264  | -4.124 | 40 | .000             |
|                  | Experimental | 21 | 36.9143 | 2.05385  |        |    |                  |
| Reading accuracy | Control      | 21 | 54.2833 | 3.96346  | -5.716 | 40 | .000             |
|                  | Experimental | 21 | 60.3148 | 2.77036  |        |    |                  |
| Writing accuracy | Control      | 21 | 65.4762 | 7.89062  | -5.315 | 40 | .000             |
|                  | Experimental | 21 | 77.1429 | 6.23928  |        |    |                  |

Also Spearman's Rank Order Correlations Coefficients were computed to assess the relationships between reading fluency and writing fluency (Table 2), and between reading accuracy and writing fluency (Table 3), in both pre-test and post-tests.

**Table 2. Spearman Correlation Coefficients between Reading Fluency and Writing Fluency Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Experimental and the Control Groups**

|                    |           | Control group   |                 |                 |                 | Experimental group |                 |                 |                 |                 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                    |           | Pre-test        |                 | Post-test       |                 | Pre-test           |                 | Post-test       |                 |                 |
|                    |           | variables       | reading fluency | writing fluency | reading fluency | writing fluency    | reading fluency | writing fluency | reading fluency | writing fluency |
| Control group      | Pre-test  | reading fluency | 1.000           | .677**          | .919**          | -.631**            | .985**          | .601**          | .713**          | .778**          |
|                    |           | writing fluency |                 | 1.000           | -.575**         | .921**             | -.634**         | -.475*          | -.654**         | -.684**         |
|                    | Post-test | reading fluency |                 |                 | 1.000           | .594**             | .927**          | .622**          | .809**          | .862**          |
|                    |           | writing fluency |                 |                 |                 | 1.000              | -.603**         | -.520*          | -.643**         | -.674**         |
| Experimental group | Pre-test  | reading fluency |                 |                 |                 |                    | 1.000           | .556**          | .694**          | .767**          |
|                    |           | writing fluency |                 |                 |                 |                    |                 | 1.000           | .643**          | .688**          |
|                    | Post-test | reading fluency |                 |                 |                 |                    |                 |                 | 1.000           | .978**          |
|                    |           | writing fluency |                 |                 |                 |                    |                 |                 |                 | 1.000           |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral).

**Table 3. Spearman Coefficients between Reading Accuracy and Writing Fluency Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Experimental and the Control Groups**

|                    |           | Control group    |                 |                  |                 | Experimental group |                 |                  |                 |         |
|--------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|---------|
|                    |           | Pre-test         |                 | Post-test        |                 | Pre-test           |                 | Post-test        |                 |         |
| variables          |           | Reading accuracy | Writing fluency | Reading accuracy | Writing fluency | Reading accuracy   | Writing fluency | Reading accuracy | Writing fluency |         |
| Control group      | Pre-test  | Reading accuracy | 1.000           | .481*            | 1.000**         | .475*              | -.282           | -.144            | -.440*          | -.377   |
|                    |           | Writing fluency  |                 | 1.000            | .481*           | .921**             | -.207           | -.475*           | -.392           | -.684** |
|                    | Post-test | Reading accuracy |                 |                  | 1.000           | .475*              | -.282           | -.144            | -.440*          | -.377   |
|                    |           | Writing fluency  |                 |                  |                 | 1.000              | -.307           | -.520*           | -.236           | -.674** |
| Experimental group | Pre-test  | Reading accuracy |                 |                  |                 | 1.000              | .634**          | .242             | .407            |         |
|                    |           | Writing fluency  |                 |                  |                 |                    | 1.000           | .079             | .688**          |         |
|                    | Post-test | Reading accuracy |                 |                  |                 |                    |                 | 1.000            | .122            |         |
|                    |           | Writing fluency  |                 |                  |                 |                    |                 |                  | 1.000           |         |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral).

## Discussion

The results (Table 1) show a significant difference between the scores of the control and the experimental groups on reading fluency ( $t(40) = -6.637, p = .000$ ). Previous research has shown that individual abilities, cultural background and schema, literacy background, cognitive and metacognitive strategies are some factors which might affect students' performances on timed reading passages (Nation, 2005; Taguchi et al., 2004). In the present study, the experimental group's

reading fluency development throughout the timed-reading program can partially be attributed to the fact that the practice of timed-readings, consisting of the first 1000 most frequent words of English, which were known by the experimental group, provided the opportunity for promoting higher quality lexical representations. Another factor contributing to reading fluency improvement might be observing progress on progress graphs, which according to Quinn et al. (2007), motivates readers to read faster. However, there still exists a seemingly more important factor, i.e., the amount of time spent on timed reading practice, which might have played an important role in promoting language learners' reading fluency.

Another finding of the present study is the statistically significant difference between the scores of the control and experimental groups on writing fluency ( $t(40) = -4.124, p = .000$ ). These results make it clear that practicing guided free writing, in an integrative fluency building program, causes significant improvement in the experimental group's English writing fluency. Writing fluency development through guided free writing might be attributed to reducing writing anxiety and increasing students' confidence by eliminating pressure from factors such as feedback or grading, thus creating a non-threatening but challenging environment for foreign/second language users (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991). Encouragement received from recording progress on writing fluency progress graphs might be another contributing factor to writing fluency development.

The results of the independent-samples t-test also showed significant differences between the comprehension scores of the control and the experimental groups on reading accuracy ( $t(40) = -5.716, p = .000$ ). These results indicate that timed-reading practice helps readers improve their reading rates without affecting reading accuracy/comprehension negatively, reinforcing the idea that timed-reading programs cause real progress in reading fluency, and reading rate improvements do not cause comprehension loss. Another fact revealed by the results is that timed-reading practice not only helps readers maintain their comprehension while reading faster, but also improves their overall reading comprehension while reading texts other than timed-reading ones. This fact can be explained by the idea that while reading timed-reading passages, readers employ strategies to make reading more efficient and effective, like reading phrase by phrase, skipping unimportant words, guessing from context, making predictions, and continuing to read the text even when encountering what they do not know (Wallace, 1992). As a result, while reading texts other than timed ones, students might use some of these strategies, which improves their confidence and reading comprehension while reading texts like those found in the TOEFL, which definitely include unfamiliar words and grammatical structures for upper-intermediate level learners of English.

Moreover, the results of the independent-samples t-test (Table 1) showed significant differences between the writing accuracy scores of the control and the experimental groups on writing accuracy ( $t(40) = -5.315, p = .000$ ). This can be accounted for by the fact that when the participants were told that their writings would not be corrected for accuracy, the task was made less cognitively and linguistically demanding. According to researchers such as Foster and Skehan (1997, as cited in Rezazadeh et al., 2011, p. 173) “low cognitive [sic] and linguistically demanding tasks are more effective than high cognitive [sic] and linguistically demanding tasks in promoting accuracy”.

The results of the correlational analysis showed strong positive correlations between reading fluency and writing fluency in the control group’s pre-test [ $r = .677, n = 21, p = .001$ ] and post-test performances [ $r = .594, n = 21, p = .004$ ]. Strong positive correlations were also found between the two variables in the experimental group’s pre-test [ $r = .556, n = 21, p = .009$ ] and post-test performances [ $r = .978, n = 21, p = .000$ ]. Accordingly, it can be concluded that due to the importance of integrated instruction of language skills, these two component skills could be integrated in the language, which might help create a balance between fluency development of receptive and productive language skills.

Finally, moderate positive correlations between reading accuracy and writing fluency were shown in the control group’s pre-test [ $r = .481, n = 21, p = .027$ ] and post-test performances [ $r = .475, n = 21, p = .030$ ] (Table 3). For the experimental group, however, a strong positive correlation was found between the two variables in the pre-test phase [ $r = .634, n = 21, p = .002$ ] and a weak positive correlation in the post-test phase [ $r = .122, n = 21, p = .597$ ]. It can hence be concluded that there is moderate to strong positive relationship between reading comprehension/accuracy and writing fluency; in other words, the better one understands a text, the more fluently they can write about it. This can be explained by assuming that in guided free writing, which provides language learners with a topic, knowledge of the specific topic helps improve the fluidity of writing, leading to automatic flow of ideas. So, when language learners are asked to write about what they have read, their comprehension of the text plays an important role in their writing fluency.

### **Implications of the study**

Evidence that comprehension and reading fluency are not mutually exclusive may help instructors and learners overcome their low confidence regarding comprehension level, and feel

more confident to use techniques and devices to promote reading fluency. In the same line, informing language learners of the benefits of free writing, and telling them that free writing not only improves writing fluency, but also writing accuracy will help them feel more confident in using this technique too.

The results of the present study also showed that guided free writing can cause substantial improvement in writing fluency. It can, therefore, be concluded that teachers and curricula designers could incorporate free writing as a fluency building activity in language courses. Not only free writing itself can be used as an in- or out-of-class activity, but its different variations such as journal writing and blogging can also be used as fluency building activities.

Guided free writing was also shown to bring about writing accuracy development. A pedagogical implication of this finding is that syllabus designers should take advantage of the writing fluency component of language to facilitate writing accuracy development.

Finally, the strong positive correlation between reading accuracy/comprehension and writing fluency could potentially change the way teachers deal with fluency building activities, especially in an integrated reading-writing environment. In an integrative language learning context where language learners are required to do reading-to-write activities, emphasis on reading comprehension techniques and strategies will probably help improve learners' writing fluency at the same time.

### **Limitations of the study**

Like any other experimental study, the current work had some potential limitations. The first limitation is related to the number of participants. With a larger group, it would be possible to generalize the findings to the whole population of the study with more confidence.

A second major limitation is related to the duration of the treatment. More ambitious results and gains in fluency and accuracy might have been achieved over a longer period of time.

The third limitation is related to the fact that although this study showed that practicing guided free writing helped increase students' writing fluency, it cannot be claimed for certain that free writing was the only reason for their writing fluency development. As the correlational analyses of the study revealed, strong positive correlations were found between reading accuracy and writing

fluency. Therefore, developments in writing fluency might have been due to reading accuracy improvements.

The last limitation of the study was lack of interviews or questionnaires which could have shed some light on potential contributions of increases in confidence to reading and writing fluency and accuracy development. As such, contributions of fluency and accuracy development to increased confidence and reduced anxiety could have provided a more meaningful analysis.

*Sepideh Alavi is an assistant professor at Shiraz University, Iran. She has been teaching English at various levels for about 21 years. She is interested in doing research on practical issues of foreign language reading and extensive reading, computer assisted language learning, and foreign language learning motivation and attitudes.*

*Elham Alemohammad is an English teacher and researcher in Iran. She holds an MA in TEFL. Her main research interests are reading and writing instruction and practice, and contrastive analysis of English and Persian. Currently, she is doing research on the contrastive analysis of English and Persian body languages.*

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# **The Impact of Computerized and Paper-based “Whodunits” as Extensive Reading Materials on Iranian EFL Learners’ Incidental Vocabulary Learning**

**ELAHEH RAFATBAKHSH**

*Shiraz University, Iran*

**SEPIDEH ALAVI**

*Shiraz University, Iran*

Given the importance of vocabulary in oral and written language comprehension and production, many studies have investigated different approaches and methods of teaching vocabulary; reading and extensive reading in particular, have been identified as great sources of incidental vocabulary learning. Research also supports the fact that different genres can serve as extensive reading material. The present study investigates the effects of paper-based and computerized detective fiction as extensive reading material on 38 Iranian EFL university students’ incidental vocabulary acquisition. The results indicate that both versions of “whodunit” stories had positive impacts on immediate and delayed vocabulary retention. No significant difference was found between the paper and computer mediums for learning vocabulary incidentally.

Foreign language learners will find themselves spending most of their time trying to memorize and learn its vocabulary. Carter and Nunan (2001) believe that an important issue in vocabulary learning is the question of how new words are learned. There are different ways for second language vocabulary to be acquired as it is a complex phenomenon which involves various processes. Among these, the distinction between incidental and intentional learning is given the most attention (Hulstijn, 2003; Schmitt, 2008). Contradictory views exist among researchers about

the supremacy of these two learning methods. Some researchers advocate the intentional approach and the decontextualized practice of vocabulary (e.g. Paribakht & Wesche, 1997; Laufer, 2006; Llach, 2009) generally characterized by consciousness involved in the learning process. They believe that explicit focus on the relationship between form and meaning of the lexical item contributes positively to the acquisition of that item.

Ahmad (2011), on the contrary, maintains that intentional vocabulary learning is usually based on decontextualized vocabulary through synonyms, antonyms, word substitution, and the like. He believes that with these activities comes the problem of rote learning without undergoing any cognitive process. For this reason, many researchers (e.g. Ku & Anderson, 2001; Krashen, 2004; Webb, 2007; Chen & Truscott, 2010; Daskalovska, 2011) favor the incidental approach, defined by Wesche and Paribakht (1999) as an activity during which learners pay attention to comprehending meaning rather than the explicit goal of learning new words.

Many researchers support the combination of both approaches (Tekmen & Daloglu, 2006; Schmitt 2008; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Rashidi & Ganbari Adivi, 2010). Nation (2001) believes in a well-balanced learning program that includes both message-focused activities and direct study of language items. Accordingly, vocabulary learning can occur either by the direct study of language items or incidentally from communicative activities and guessing from context. Schmitt (2008) and Nation (2001) both suggest that establishing an extensive reading program is the most obvious way to enhance exposure and therefore incidental learning.

### **Extensive Reading and vocabulary learning**

Several scholars have identified reading and extensive reading as the main source of vocabulary learning (Krashen, 1989; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Ellis, 1995; Nation, 2001; Mason & Krashen, 1997). Day and Bamford (1998) describe the benefits of ER for both second and foreign language settings: "Students can improve their second language reading ability, and develop positive attitudes toward reading and increased motivation to read. Moreover, reading extensively can result in gains in vocabulary and other aspects of second language learning" (p.33).

The most appropriate reading materials for beginning and intermediate adult and adolescent learners of English are books, magazines and newspapers especially written for EFL learners. A wide variety of genres could be used for this purpose such as horror, romance, science fiction, or

detective fiction. Reyes-Torres (2011) believes that detective fiction can function as a pedagogical tool that makes literature attractive for the readers.

### **Whodunit**

A "Whodunit" is a detective story aiming at solving a mystery. The reader is provided with clues from which the doer of the crime may be deduced at the end of the story. The mystery story provides the reader with characters and suspects, clues and details. The readers try to recognize the clues as they become engaged with the story plot and the characters become real to the readers gradually (Pollock, 2003).

When used in an educational EFL setting, encouraging students to make and test their hypotheses as they read can help extend their capacity for making meaning in English. Lazar (1990) believes that in order to reach the final disclosure of the whodunit, the reader is forced to pay more than usual attention to the language, especially words which create a set of interlocking meanings, and clues.

Mystery stories can be a one minute mystery story, or a full length Sherlock Holmes novel and can therefore suit any number or type of class objectives whether it be a focus on pronunciation, grammar, listening, reading, or speaking (Green, 1989). These stories can be found in either paper-based or computerized media.

Due to the lack of sufficient practical research on using either paper based or computerized whodunit stories in the language classrooms and how they could be used as ER materials to help enhance EFL students' incidental vocabulary acquisition, the present study aimed at finding out:

- a) the extent to which incidental vocabulary acquisition is affected by a paper-based whodunit,
- b) the extent to which incidental vocabulary acquisition is affected by a computerized whodunit, and
- c) Which type of whodunit (digital/paper based) has a stronger effect on (possible) incidental vocabulary acquisition?

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The participants of the study were initially 36 (18 males and 18 females) English language and literature freshmen at Shiraz University, Iran, age 18-20. They were equally divided into experimental and control groups according to the results obtained from a proficiency test. The experimental group read digitalized whodunits, and the control group was given a paper-based one. They took part in the study while attending a reading comprehension course in 2012. Classes were held for two 90 minute sessions a week for 16 weeks.

### ***Materials***

The following tests were used to collect the data:

1. Oxford Quick Placement Test (QPT) version II (2001).
2. Laufer and Nation's Levels Test (1999).
3. Pre- and immediate and delayed post-tests, designed to find out whether students knew the target vocabulary items used in each story before and after being exposed to them at least five times.

### ***Classroom Materials***

1. The first part of *Fiction in Action: Whodunit?* (Gray & Benevides, 2010), designed to act as ER material for English language teaching, used as the printed whodunit for the control group.
2. Six computerized whodunit stories were selected from <http://www.5minutemystery.com>. The stories were fully text-based and each story had a mystery to solve with several suspects.

### ***Data collection procedure***

Before the experiment, the QPT was given to all the participants to ensure level equality of the two groups.

The students then took the recognition Vocabulary Levels Test to ensure they were all at the 2000 word level (or higher) and therefore eligible to participate in the extensive reading program. Then, the pre-test was administered to identify and select the unknown words for the study.

The students of the experimental group were asked to log into a Moodle course, read the uploaded crime story each week and imagine being the detective. They were then asked to incriminate or exonerate each suspect according to the textual clues in the story, and give a short explanation about their choices. The students were also asked to write a summary of the story as their homework. Based on each week's story, a two-part quiz was given with vocabulary reading comprehension questions. The vocabulary section of this quiz was taken as the immediate vocabulary post-test, and was designed to be the same as the delayed vocabulary post-test.

The control group read one chapter of the paper-based whodunit every week, were asked to write a short summary and took a quiz including vocabulary and reading comprehension questions. The vocabulary section of this quiz was taken as the immediate vocabulary post-test, and was designed to be the same as the delayed vocabulary post-test.

At the end of the term the delayed vocabulary post-test was given to all the participants to find out how well the target vocabulary were recalled by the students. Participants who were absent for more than one session were omitted from the analysis, thus the study was completed with 33 participants, 15 in the experimental and 18 in the control group.

### **Results**

To answer the first research question, regarding the extent to which vocabulary was affected by paper-based whodunits, the control group's recognition vocabulary gains in the pretest and immediate post-test were compared using a paired samples t-test, the results of which are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Paired Samples t-test for the Control Group's Pretest and Immediate Post-test Vocabulary Gains**

|                     | Mean  | N  | SD   | t      | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------|-------|----|------|--------|----|-----------------|
| Pretest             | 15.83 | 18 | 6.20 |        |    |                 |
| Immediate post-test | 24.66 | 18 | 2.63 | -6.747 | 17 | *.000           |

As Table 1 shows, the means for vocabulary recognition in the pretest and immediate post-test of the paper-based group are different and statistically significant ( $p=.000$ ,  $p<.05$ ) showing that the experiment affected recognition vocabulary gains significantly.

In order to check the retention of the learned words in the long run, the results of the pretest and the delayed post-test were also compared by running a paired samples t-test. Table 2 presents the results.

**Table 2. Paired Sample t-test Comparing the Control Group's Pretest and Delayed Post-test Vocabulary Gains**

|                   | Mean  | N  | SD   | t      | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|-------------------|-------|----|------|--------|----|-----------------|
| Pretest           | 15.83 | 18 | 6.20 |        |    |                 |
| Delayed post-test | 22.77 | 18 | 3.49 | -6.618 | 17 | *.000           |

As Table 2 shows, the mean for vocabulary recognition in the delayed post-test is significantly higher than that of the pretest ( $p=.000$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

In order to compare the results of the two immediate and delayed post-tests, and to find out the effect of time on the students' retention of the new vocabulary items, a paired samples t-test was run. The results of this comparison are summarized in Tables 3.

**Table 3. Paired Samples t-test for the Control Group's Immediate and Delayed Post-test for Vocabulary Retention**

|                     | Mean  | N  | SD   | t     | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------|-------|----|------|-------|----|-----------------|
| Immediate post-test | 24.66 | 18 | 2.63 | 2.451 | 17 | *.025           |
| Delayed post-test   | 22.77 | 18 | 3.49 |       |    |                 |

As the table shows, the mean score of the immediate post-test is significantly larger than the delayed post-test ( $p=.025$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

### ***The experimental group's vocabulary recognition***

To address the second research question regarding the extent to which vocabulary recognition was affected by a computerized whodunit, the means of the pretest and immediate post-test of the experimental group were compared using a paired samples t-test, the result of which is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Paired Samples t-test for the Experimental Group's Pretest and Immediate Post-test for Vocabulary Retention**

|                     | Mean  | N  | SD   | t       | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------|-------|----|------|---------|----|-----------------|
| Pretest             | 17.53 | 15 | 1.76 |         |    |                 |
| Immediate post-test | 25.60 | 15 | .63  | -17.840 | 14 | *.000           |

According to the results, the mean score of the pretest is significantly different from the mean score of the immediate post-test ( $p=.000$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

To find out whether the pretest and the delayed post-test mean scores were significantly different, a paired samples t-test was run. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Paired Samples t-test for the Experimental Group's Pretest and Delayed Post-test for Vocabulary Retention**

|                   | Mean  | N  | SD   | t      | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|-------------------|-------|----|------|--------|----|-----------------|
| Pretest           | 17.53 | 15 | 1.76 |        |    |                 |
| Delayed post-test | 22.40 | 15 | 1.88 | -8.834 | 14 | *.000           |

As can be seen the mean scores of the pretest and the delayed post-test are significantly different ( $p=0.000$ ,  $p<.05$ )

Another paired samples t-test was run to find out the extent to which students recalled the word meanings in the delayed post-test (Table 6).

**Table 6. Paired Samples t-test for the Experimental Group's Immediate and Delayed Post-test Vocabulary Gains**

|                     | Mean  | N  | SD   | t     | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------|-------|----|------|-------|----|-----------------|
| Immediate post-test | 25.60 | 15 | .63  |       |    |                 |
| Delayed post-test   | 22.40 | 15 | 1.88 | 6.175 | 14 | *.000           |

The results show that the mean score of the immediate post-test is significantly higher than the delayed post-test ( $p=.000$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

### Comparing the control and experimental groups

To address the third research question regarding the type of whodunit which has a stronger effect on (possible) incidental vocabulary acquisition an independent samples t-test was run to compare the two groups' vocabulary gains at the end of the semester (Table 7).

**Table 7. Independent Samples t-test Comparing the Vocabulary Retention of the Two Groups at the End of the Term**

| Groups         | N  | Mean  | SD   | t     | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|----------------|----|-------|------|-------|----|-----------------|
| Computer-based | 15 | 22.40 | 1.88 | -.376 | 31 | .710            |

|             |    |       |      |
|-------------|----|-------|------|
| Paper-based | 18 | 22.77 | 3.49 |
|-------------|----|-------|------|

As can be seen from the table above, the difference between the mean scores of the paper-based and the computer-based groups are not statistically significant ( $P=0.710$ ,  $P>.05$ ).

## Discussion

### The impact of paper-based whodunits on learner's vocabulary recognition

The results presented in Tables 1-3 show that the use of paper-based whodunits in the adult classroom significantly and positively affected the learners' incidental vocabulary learning. It might be concluded that reading detective text-based stories as ER material enhanced their vocabulary retention. These findings seem to be consistent with Day, Omura, and Hiramatsu (1991), who found that foreign language learners' pleasure reading lead to learning the target vocabulary. Although no mention of the genre of the short stories used in their experiment was made, the results of their study, as well as ours, showed that incidental vocabulary acquisition had occurred.

The findings of the present study are also similar to those of Xu (2010), who investigated the effects of four reading tasks on incidental vocabulary acquisition and found that they positively impacted the learners' vocabulary learning.

In addition, Daskalovska (2011) carried out a study on the effect of reading an authentic novel on the acquisition of word meaning, spelling and collocation. Although the materials used in that study and the present work are different, the results showed that word meaning was acquired after reading an authentic text.

Our findings are also in line with Javanbakht's (2011) study which showed a significant impact of reading tasks on vocabulary learning and keeping the words in the learners' short-term and long-term memory. However, students of the present study seem to have forgotten some of the words by the time of the delayed post-test, since the mean difference of the immediate and delayed post-test was significant (Table 3). The decline in the delayed post-test results may have been due to the time interval between the immediate and delayed post-tests, and the lack of further practice regarding the target words. A possible explanation for this might be that the students needed more

exposure and practice to retain all the words in their long-term memory. According to Webb (2007), more than ten repetitions may be needed to develop full knowledge of a word. The five time repetition in the current study might have caused short-term incidental learning, however, more repetition may have been needed for the words to be learned more effectively for a longer period of time.

### **The effect of computerized whodunits on learner's vocabulary retention**

The second research question aimed at finding the effectiveness of computerized whodunit stories on the students' incidental vocabulary learning. As shown in Tables 4, 5 and 6, the results indicate that text-based, computerized whodunit stories also helped students acquire unknown words incidentally. These findings suggest that although the knowledge of new words significantly increased during the experiment, they were more likely to be remembered in the immediate as compared to the delayed post-test. It can, therefore, be assumed that the treatment itself can be considered as a good tool for enhancing incidental vocabulary learning; however, it cannot guarantee the retention of all the learned words for a long time and complementary practice or tasks are needed to send the vocabulary to the long-term memory. This is in line with Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt (2010) who demonstrated that to help learners acquire the mid-frequency vocabulary they need, it may well be necessary to add explicit teaching tasks to supplement the reading, or choose texts that have a higher percentage of mid-frequency vocabulary than normal.

The present findings also seem to be consistent with other works by Palmberg (1988), Neville, Shelton, and McInni (2009), Lin (2010), Aghlara and Hadidi Tamjid (2011) who found that using computerized stories and games can positively affect the learners' vocabulary learning in the ESL and EFL classrooms.

This study is also in line with Palmberg (1988), who showed that text-based adventure computer games promote the learners' incidental vocabulary learning. Accordingly, such games can be used as motivating materials for teaching target language vocabulary if appropriately selected for the learners.

The results of the present study are also similar to those of Neville, Shelton, and McInni (2009) and Ranalli (2008), who showed that digital games are effective in teaching second language vocabulary. The study revealed that text-based interactive fiction (IF) leads to the incidental acquisition of target vocabulary.

### **The comparison between the paper-based and computerized whodunit**

To answer the third research question regarding the type of whodunit with a stronger effect on (possible) incidental vocabulary acquisition, the findings suggest no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups' delayed post-tests (Table 7). These results differ from Neville, Shelton, and McInni (2009) who compared the use of digital games with traditional paper-based learning methods. In their study, the experimental group received computerized text-based interactive fiction games whereas the control group had print-based stories. The computerized group seemed to have done better on the vocabulary tests as compared to the control group.

Following the same line, Aghlara and Hadidi Tamjid (2011) also showed a significant difference between the use of digital games and the traditional paper-based forms in students' vocabulary recognition, revealing the effectiveness of digital material over traditional methods of teaching English vocabulary.

One possible explanation for the difference between the findings of the above mentioned studies and those of the present work might be that although the control group's treatment was print-based, the genre of both groups' stories was the same. Both experimental and control groups had detective fiction stories as their treatment. Detective fiction might involve the students to the same extent. In other words, the only difference between the two groups was the medium of presentation of the stories, which seems to have been insignificant in the extent to which they acquired the target vocabulary.

### **Conclusions**

The results show that paper-based whodunits positively and significantly affected incidental vocabulary acquisition in immediate and delayed posttests. However, the result of the delayed posttest showed that some of the words were forgotten in the long run. It was also found that computerized whodunits improved the students' vocabulary retention in both immediate and delayed posttests. Nevertheless, the students using the computerized text also seemed to forget some of the learned words in the delayed posttests. Finally, no significant difference was found between the incidental vocabulary acquisition of students using paper-based or computerized stories, although the effect size of the treatment was larger for the experimental group.

To summarize, both types of whodunit stories seemed to improve Iranian EFL university students' short-term incidental vocabulary acquisition.

### **Limitations**

As in any investigation, there are some limitations that may have influenced the results, for example, the number of the participants, limited age range of the participants, and the number of target vocabulary's repetition in the stories.

***Elaheh Rafatbakhsh** (MA TEFL) has been teaching English to students for about 7 years in different language institutes and universities. Her research interests include Computer Assisted Language Learning, Digital Game-based Language learning, Incidental Vocabulary Learning, Extensive Reading, and Second/Foreign Language Motivation.*

***Sepideh Alavi** (PhD TEFL) is an assistant professor at Shiraz University, Iran. She has been teaching English at various levels for about 21 years. She is interested in doing research on practical issues of foreign language reading and extensive reading, computer assisted language learning, and foreign language learning motivation and attitudes.*

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## **The Effect of Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading on Vocabulary Learning and Retention**

ANNA C.-S. CHANG

*Hsing-Wu University, Taipei, Taiwan*

This study compares audio-assisted extensive reading (AR) versus unassisted extensive reading (UR) on students' vocabulary learning rates. Sixty-four college students from two classes received two different interventions over a period of 13 weeks. Ten level one graded readers were used as class texts. One hundred target words were evenly chosen from the 10 graded readers and were tested on three occasions: pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test. The results demonstrated that the AR group gained about 32 words, and the UR group 20 words. The relative gains from the pre-test to the post-test were 79% and 54%, and 75% and 50% from pre-test to the delayed post-test for the AR and UR groups respectively. It is evident that the AR group gained much more than the UR group. However, in terms of attrition rates, both groups decreased 4%. Overall, audio-assisted reading is of greater benefit to students' vocabulary learning.

### **Learning vocabulary from extensive reading**

A substantial quantity of extensive reading studies have been carried out in the L2 context in the past two decades. However, how much vocabulary knowledge is actually gained from reading abundantly is still unclear because the majority of the extensive reading studies measure learners' gains through varying methods, such as essay writing (Hafiz & Tudor, 1990), standard tests (Sheu, 2003), the integrated tests (Renandya, Rajan, & Jacobs, 1999) or standardized vocabulary tests (Lee, 2007; Chang, 2011). This line of research measures learners' overall linguistic gains from extensive reading rather than measuring what the learners gained from the specific content. This lack of accurate measurement of what learners actually acquire has raised some researchers' concerns

regarding the effectiveness of learning vocabulary from extensive reading as compared to specific vocabulary instruction (Laufer, 2001, 2003).

To determine to what extent learners actually gain from reading, another line of extensive reading research focused on assessing specific vocabulary gain, meaning measuring some target words which actually appeared in the reading texts (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Horst, 2005; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). This line of research has provided more precise information regarding how much learners could possibly gain from reading extensively. Up to the present, more robust learning rates have been demonstrated in the three studies. An average of 62% was found with the form-meaning test in Cho & Krashen's study of our participants who read 8-23 children's books during a four month period. Different word frequency levels also affect the learning rates as Horst (2005) found with her 17 ESL students who read 10.52 books during a six-week period. The learning rate was 76% for high frequency words and 62% for lower frequency words. Learning rates also vary by the different aspects of word knowledge being measured. Pigada and Schmitt's in-depth study of a single participant reading four books over a month showed varying rates of learning spelling, meaning and grammatical characteristics. Approximately 50% of the target words increased one type of knowledge, 10% two types, and 8% three types, and most of the gains came from the recognition of word forms. The results imply that vocabulary learning is incremental. The learning rates of these studies also suggest that the reported learning rates may vary depending on what type of word knowledge is being measured. However, the form-meaning linkage seems to be the most basic lexical knowledge that is required to comprehend a text (Schmitt, 2010).

While robust learning rates have been demonstrated in the three studies reviewed above, the reported effects were determined by immediate post-tests, not delayed post-tests. According to Schmitt (2010), the outcome of an immediate post-test is not a good indication of learning because learning is liable to attrition overtime. The results of delayed post-tests are more likely to measure learning. Therefore, the present study will include a three-month delayed post-test to measure how many words are retained.

### **Audio-assisted reading in L2 learning**

L1 learners' listening skills are normally developed earlier than their literacy skills (Stephens, 2010), so audio recording of texts has long been used in L1 contexts to assist reading comprehension and is found particularly useful for learners who have reading difficulties (Beers,

1998; McMahon, 1983). However, for L2 learners reading and listening skills are introduced at the same time (Stephens, 2010), but this does not mean that L2 learners' reading and listening skills are acquired at the same pace because some words are easier to acquire in their spoken than their written forms and some vice versa (Schmitt, 2010). Therefore, it is a quite common phenomenon that many L2 learners cannot match the spoken and written forms (Chang & Read, 2006). Audio-assisted reading thus provides L2 learners with opportunities to learn both written and spoken forms of a word. Recently a few L2 studies have integrated aural input while reading in order to facilitate learning (Chang, 2009, 2011; Brown, Waring & Donkaewhwa, 2008; Webb & Chang, 2012). For example, Chang (2009) compared the effects of reading while listening and listening only on L2 learners' language gains and listening comprehension. Two groups of students experienced two types of input through listening to two approximately 1500-word stories. The results showed that the reading while listening mode greatly enhanced students' comprehension as well as their willingness to finish the listening tasks. In another study, Chang (2011) worked with seven EFL Taiwanese students who simultaneously read and listened to 28 to 39 graded readers during a 26-week period. The students showed a significant gain on their general vocabulary knowledge measured through vocabulary levels tests when compared to those who did not receive the treatment.

Another two studies that focused on specific vocabulary learning through audio-assisted reading have shown very positive and significant results. Brown, Waring and Donkaewhwa (2008) compared three modes of input on vocabulary learning: reading only, reading while listening, and listening only, with 35 Japanese university students who read three level 1 graded readers during a six-week period. The students were tested with 28 nonsense words in multiple-choice and translation methods. The learning rates of the reading while listening group were significantly higher compared to the other two groups, with a rate of 48% and 16% for each of the other test methods. More recently, Webb and Chang (2012) compared with and without audio-assisted repeated reading on 82 secondary students' vocabulary learning using Vocabulary Knowledge Scales. The results show that both types of repeated reading contribute to vocabulary learning but significantly greater gains were with the group with audio-assisted reading. Some advantages of reading while listening were reported by Chang's (2009) students who perceived reading while listening led to a higher level of comprehension and concentration and hence made the input more interesting. Other advantages can be that audio-assisted reading improves reading comprehension because text segmentation has been done by the speaker (Brown et al., 2008). Finally, reading while

listening can prevent students from using a dictionary while reading, which encourages students to guess meaning from the context (Horst et al., 1998).

While audio-assisted reading has been found to have many advantages, its effects have not been tested on extensive reading programs, in particular for vocabulary learning. Given this, it is worthwhile to explore the degree of improvement audio-assisted reading has on vocabulary learning; therefore, this study attempted to compare two groups of students' on vocabulary learning. One group adopted audio-assisted reading and the other unassisted reading (silent reading without listening to audio recording of the texts). Based on previous research, our hypothesis is that the audio-assisted group will score higher than the unassisted group in the post-test; however, it is unclear whether the effect of the audio-assisted reading will also enhance retention. Two research questions (RQ) are addressed:

RQ 1: To what extent did audio-assisted reading facilitate vocabulary learning compared to unassisted reading?

RQ 2: Did the audio-assisted reading group retain more words than the unassisted reading group?

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

The participants were 64 secondary students (Year 10) who had just completed their junior high school three months before the extensive reading program started. A bilingual version of a vocabulary levels test (Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham, 2001) containing 1000<sup>1</sup>, 2000, and 3000 levels was given to all the participants at the first meeting. The audio-assisted-reading group scored 52/90, and 49/90 for the unassisted-reading group. The preliminary test on vocabulary knowledge indicated that the participants might know approximately 1632 to 1732 individual words. That implied that they should be able to read 400 head-word stories without difficulties. Apart from the two-hour extensive reading course, the participants had another three-hour intensive reading course, which focused on reading short texts, approximately 200 words per text.

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<sup>1</sup>The 1st 1000 word level was developed by Professor Paul Nation of Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand and the Chinese translation was done by Karen Wang, a former student of Nation.

### ***The study materials***

Ten level-one graded readers from the Oxford bookworm series were chosen to be used in this study. The 10 graded readers contained a total of 56,188 words, around 5600 words per title. The first 2000 words plus proper nouns made up a total 95.42% of all words. The study materials were provided by the researcher. Each title had 50 copies, which enabled the instructor to use the graded readers as class texts. This is an extremely important and useful approach to initiate extensive reading, particularly for beginners who have no experience in reading independently. Class texts can be used for class discussion or for comprehension checks after reading because everyone reads the same title book, which also provides them with opportunities to clarify their understanding and share feelings. The titles were: *The Elephant Man*; *The Monkey's Paw*; *Love or Money*, *The Little Princess*; *Goodbye Mr. Hollywood*; *The Witches of Pendle*; *Remember Miranda*; *The Phantom of the Opera*; *The Coldest Place on Earth*; *The Withered Arm*.

### ***Target words***

One hundred target words appearing in the texts were chosen to be tested. The selection of the target words was based on three criteria: proper nouns were excluded; the words were likely to be unknown to the majority of the students, and the words must be real (not nonsense) words. The first criterion was easy to meet, but not quite so for the second because students' vocabulary knowledge varied to some extent. It was likely that some words might be known to more advanced students but not for the less advanced ones. However, to encourage students' willingness to complete the test, it is always better to include some known words. As to the third criterion, like previous studies (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Horst, 2005; Chang et al., 2011; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006), real words were used instead of nonsense words because this was a long-term study and students aimed to improve their English competence. It would be unethical to expose them to nonsense words (Nation & Webb, 2011; Schmitt, 2010).

### ***Dependent measures***

Each set of the target words was divided into 10 blocks. Each block had approximately 10 target words and one distractor. The test formats were matching multiple-choice and students had to

choose one correct Chinese translation for each target word. An example is shown below. The same test was used three times: pre-test, post-test, delayed post-test, but word orders were rearranged after each test. All the test papers were collected to ensure that the students did not take away the test papers to study the words. Students were unaware that the same test would be repeated.

\_\_\_ shiver      a. 面紗

\_\_\_ innocent    b. 單純的天真的

\_\_\_ cow          c. 發現

\_\_\_ hangman    d. 審判

\_\_\_ pale         e. 顫抖

\_\_\_ married    f. 乳牛

\_\_\_ veil         g. 縱火

\_\_\_ uncover    h. 已婚的

\_\_\_ trial        i. 蒼白的

\_\_\_ arson        j. 絞刑者

k. 水桶

### ***Treatment procedure***

The two-hour extensive reading course was devoted entirely to reading graded readers. No formal instruction was given. Most of the time students were able to finish a book per week unless the class was interrupted by unpredictable factors. Reading the book during the weekend was strongly encouraged but not required because they had sufficient time to finish it in the classroom. While reading the first or second chapters of a book, the instructor usually wrote the names of the characters or places on the board and made sure they understood the relationship between the characters and where the story took place. The audio-assisted group read while listening to the audio recording of the books, whereas the unassisted reading group read silently without listening to the audio recording of the texts. After reading activities involved discussions of the scenarios, characters and personal opinions. At times the instructor pinpointed a few words or cultural things to raise students' awareness. Keeping a learning journal and writing book reports after reading a book were also strongly encouraged but also not required. According to the researcher's observations, most students in both groups kept a learning journal, noting down unknown words, favourite sentences, and even drawing pictures of main characters in their learning journal.

### ***Data analysis***

Only those who attended the class regularly and had never missed any tests were included in the present study and SPSS version 20 for Windows was used to analyze the data. The pre-test scores were first analyzed using a t-test to examine and it was found that the two groups did not differ significantly. Students' immediate relative learning gains were calculated by the formula:  $[(\text{correct raw scores in Time 2} - \text{Time 1}) / (\text{total words tested} - \text{correct raw scores in Time 1})] * 100$ , and a similar formula was used to calculate the delayed relative gain (retention rates):  $[(\text{correct raw scores in Time 3} - \text{Time 1}) / (\text{total words tested} - \text{correct raw scores in Time 1})] * 100$ . *t*-tests were performed to compare the degree the two groups differed in their immediate relative gains and delayed relative gains. These results provided the information necessary to answer the two research questions. The effect sizes for all the *t*-tests were also calculated to examine the magnitudes of the differences

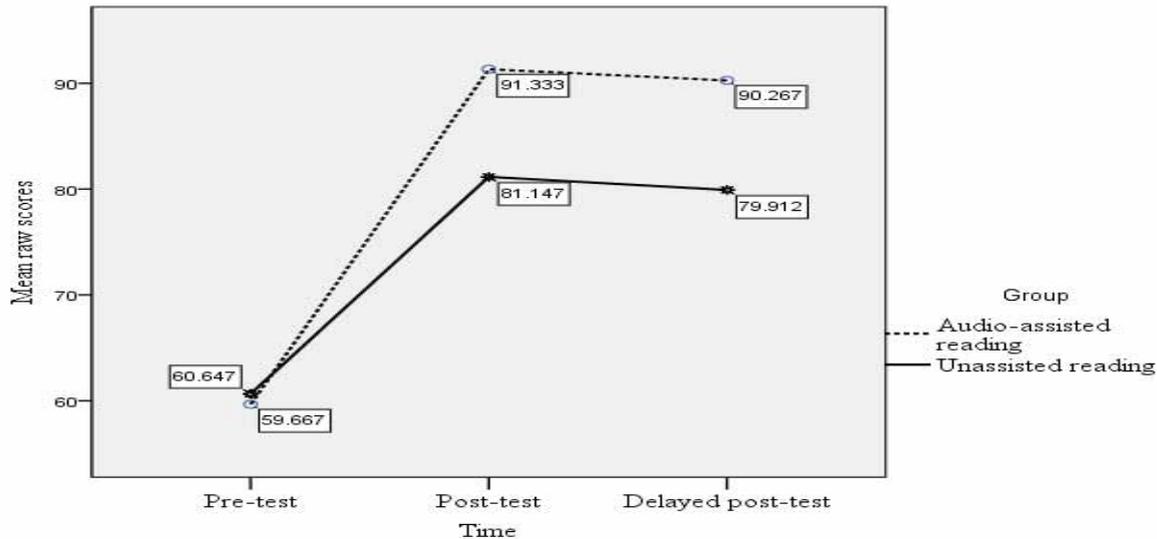
## Results

The descriptive statistics of the results for the two groups' vocabulary gains at the three occasions are presented in Table 1. At the pre-test, the UR (unassisted reading) group scored slightly higher than the AR (assisted reading) group; 59 and 61 out of 100. An average of 41 and 39 words was unknown to the AR and UR groups. After the treatment, the AR group scored 91/100, gained 32/41 words, and the relative gain rate was 79%. While the UR group scored 81/100, gained 20/39, and the relative gain was 54%. It is evident that the AR gained 25% more words than the UR group from pre-test to post-test. The actual delayed post-test scores showed that both groups performed similarly to their post-test; the relative gain indicated that both groups decreased approximately 4% after a three-month period. (See Figure 1.)

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Vocabulary Scores (max = 100) of AR and UR Groups at Pre-, Post-, and Delayed Post-tests.**

|      | Pre-test |    | Post-test |    | Delayed post-test |     | Relative gain<br>Pre/post |       | Relative gain<br>Pre - delayed |       |
|------|----------|----|-----------|----|-------------------|-----|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|-------|
|      | AR       | UR | AR        | UR | AR                | UR  | AR                        | UR    | AR                             | UR    |
| Mean | 59       | 61 | 91        | 81 | 90                | 80  | 79.42                     | 54.47 | 74.74                          | 50.12 |
| SD   | 15       | 9  | 7         | 13 | 9                 | 12  | 14                        | 26    | 23                             | 23    |
| Min  | 32       | 43 | 67        | 55 | 64                | 52  | 41                        | 0     | -5                             | 5     |
| Max  | 88       | 79 | 100       | 98 | 100               | 100 | 100                       | 96    | 100                            | 100   |

Note: All numbers were rounded up to whole numbers. AR, n = 30, UR, n = 34.



**Figure 1: Relative gains of the audio-assisted reading group and unassisted reading group**

*t*-tests were performed to examine whether the relative gains at the post-test and the delayed post-test differed significantly. The relative gain from the pre-test to the post-test showed a significant difference between the two groups,  $t(62) = 4.71, p < .001$  (alpha level set at .01), and the effect size was large (eta squared = .26). A significant difference was also demonstrated in the relative gain from the pre-test to the delayed post-test,  $t(62) = 5.59, p < .001$ , and the magnitude of the difference was large (eta squared = .23).

When the relative gains are compared within groups, it is shown that the relative gain from pre-test to post-test decreased 4% in the delayed post-test for the AR group; the decrease was not statistically significant,  $t(29) = 1.05, p = .30$ . The same can be said to the UR group,  $t(33) = 1.66, p = .11$ .

## Discussion

To answer the first research question on the extent the audio-assisted reading (AR) group versus the unassisted-reading (UR) group gained from reading 10 graded readers. The results show that the relative gains from the pre-test to the post-test were 79% and 54% for the AR and UR groups respectively. Therefore, the AR group gained 25% more than the UR group. The second research question concerning whether audio-assisted reading facilitated students' vocabulary retention better than unassisted reading received a negative answer. Although the AR group still scored significantly higher than the UR group, the comparisons within group showed that both

groups retained most words learned up to three months. The AR group decreased as much as the UR group, namely 4%.

That the relative gains of the AR group were higher than those of the UR group was expected because several short-term studies had already demonstrated that audio-assisted reading facilitates vocabulary learning (Brown et al., 2008; Horst, 2005). Compared to the learning rates of previous studies, the learning rate of the AR group was similar to those in previous studies (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Horst, 2005; Webb & Chang, under review). The learning rates in Cho and Krashen's study ranged from 43% to 80%. Horst found her students' learning rate for high frequency words was 76% and 52% for lower frequency words. However, one-third of the words in the present study were from the off-list word list. Given this, the learning rate of the AR group could be considered rather high. As to the retention rate, the relative gain from pre-test to delayed post was 74% for the AR group and 50% for the UR group, both decreasing 4%. However, in Webb and Chang's study, the attrition rate was 7%. One possible reason for this could be due to the fact that the participants in the present study had other English courses, which might more or less increase their exposure, while the students' in Webb and Chang's study did not.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the present study have further demonstrated that audio-assisted reading is beneficial to students' vocabulary learning. However, a few limitations of this study should be noted. First, the acquisition rates reported in this study were limited to full knowledge of word meaning. This only captured what students partially learned and so a variety of sensitive measures are needed (e.g., Nation, 2001; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Waring & Takaki, 2003; Webb, 2007; Nation & Webb, 2011). Having said this, caution about the learning effect of taking many tests with the same or similar content leading to overestimating results is necessary. Second, all the target words were tested in a decontextualized manner, which may have affected student recall of the meaning of those target words. Third, word repetition and distribution of occurrences in relation to learning gains in each word level was not explored. Despite this limitation, unlike some texts written particularly for pedagogical purposes, the texts read in the extensive reading program are more natural, as Zahar, Cobb, and Spada (2001) noted: "natural text seems to be remarkably well designed for learning purposes, which is not surprising since most native speakers of a language are able to expand their vocabularies through reading" (p. 557). This study sheds additional light on learning vocabulary through extensive reading. It not only supports previous research findings that L2 learners can

acquire sizable vocabulary knowledge from reading extensively but also reveals audio-assisted reading can lead to higher learning rates than unassisted-reading.

**Anna C-S Chang** has a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and is a professor of the Applied English Department at Hsing-Wu University, Taipei, Taiwan. Her main research interests focus on listening and reading fluency development, and vocabulary learning. Email: [annachang@livemail.tw](mailto:annachang@livemail.tw)mailto:annachang@livemail.tw

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## **An Evaluation of ESL Reading Efficiency and Motivation Using E-book vs. Printed Book**

**GERMAIN MESUREUR**

*Keisen University, Tokyo, Japan*

Recent years have seen a widening market share of e-books, and the increasing availability among students of devices to read these e-books. In the present study, students from 2 Japanese universities purchased and read two specified graded reader titles, one in paper format, and the other in electronic format. Students then answered comprehension and vocabulary quizzes for each book, and completed a survey about their impressions for each format. Results of the vocabulary and comprehension quizzes were analyzed to determine whether one format presents an advantage over the other, in the context of extensive reading. Marginal differences were found, but further study is needed to improve data integrity, and perhaps include measurements of reading speed variations.

Recent trends show a dramatic increase in availability and consumption of e-books. The market is expected to continue growing, and recent assessments project that the number of e-books will surpass the number of paper books sold per year as early as 2017. Graded readers, too, are becoming increasingly available as e-books, with the majority of publishers offering at least part of their catalogue in digital formats. In addition to this, the number of devices that these e-books can be read on is also increasing, as prices are dropping, and screen technology is improving. An informal poll of 100 first year Japanese university students revealed that approximately 70% of them own a smart phone or a tablet, and are thus able to read e-books without having to purchase an additional dedicated device.

## **Design of the study**

The participants in this study were 1st and 2nd year (18 to 20 year old) students from two Japanese universities at two different levels: beginner (40 students) and intermediate (20 students) for a total sample of 60 students. All these were taking part in Extensive Reading programs as part of their required English classes, managed via Moodle Reader. The study focused on two graded readers, one an e-book and the other a paper book, which the students read together with the rest of the class. Students had the choice to start with either format for the first book, and switched to the other format for their second book. One visually impaired student read books in Braille, and used audio recordings as a replacement for the e-books.

The titles used in this study were selected in order to be as comparable as possible within each study groups: same publisher, same level and same author. Students were given a window of one week to read each book, to ensure that all would be ready in time for the quizzes taken in class.

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### Titles used in the beginners-level group:

- Title: Why?
- Author: Philip Prowse
- Cambridge English Readers
- ISBN: 9780521732956
  
- Title: Arman's Journey
- Author: Philip Prowse
- Cambridge English Readers
- ISBN: 9780521184939

Titles used in the intermediate-level group:

- Title: Not Above the Law
- Author: Richard MacAndrew
- Cambridge English Readers
- ISBN: 9780521140966
  
- Title: Strong Medicine
- Author: Richard MacAndrew
- Cambridge English Readers
- ISBN: 9780521693936

Immediately following the reading, students were asked to complete a comprehension quiz online, containing 10 questions of a format and composition following those found on Moodle Reader. Each quiz had 4 true/false questions, 1 reordering question where steps of the story are presented out of sequence and need to be reordered, and 5 “Who says this?” questions. This last type is of particular relevance to the difference observed between e-books and paper books and will be dealt with in the result section of this paper.

During the class following the reading, students answered a vocabulary quiz of a format similar to the regular weekly vocabulary quizzes they take as part of their English class. The students were not told that they would be tested on words contained in the graded readers they had just read. The vocabulary quizzes consisted of ten cloze and ten multiple-choice questions.

Finally, students were asked to complete a questionnaire about their impressions of and motivation towards each of the two reading formats. The results of this questionnaire were not always expressed in a quantifiable manner, but rather in free sentences or as straight answers to basic yes/no questions.

The devices used to read the books in the study were the Amazon KindlePaperWhite, various tablets and smart phones. Actual numbers of each device are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Devices Used in the Study**

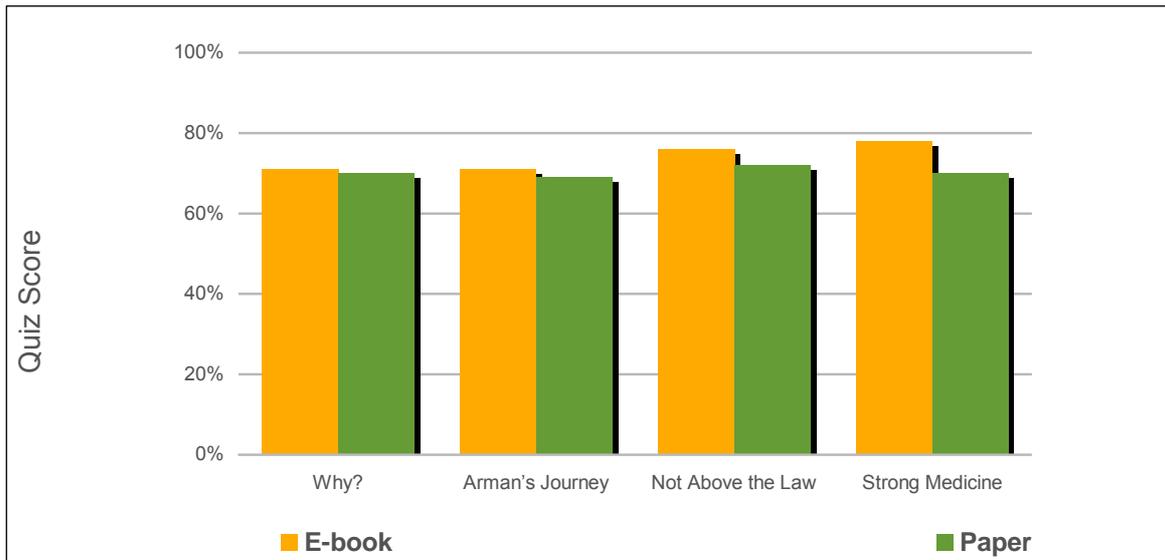
| Device Type                | Number used |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Amazon Kindle              | 1           |
| iPad& Android Tablet       | 12          |
| iPhone& Android Smartphone | 47          |

It is worth noting that in many cases, the students who owned a tablet also owned a smart phone, and many of them shared the reading across both devices. For the sake of consistency, all students were asked to use the freely available cross-platform Amazon Kindle application to read their e-book.

## Results

The comprehension quiz results shown in Figure 1 display a very slight bias in favor of the e-book, the percentage difference in quiz score being marginally greater for the higher level students than in the beginners group.

Most of the participants in this study had never read an e-book before, and reported paying a little more attention to their reading at the beginning of the book because of the novelty factor of reading English books on screen. However, this temporary increase in concentration probably does not account for the larger gains seen in the intermediate-level group.



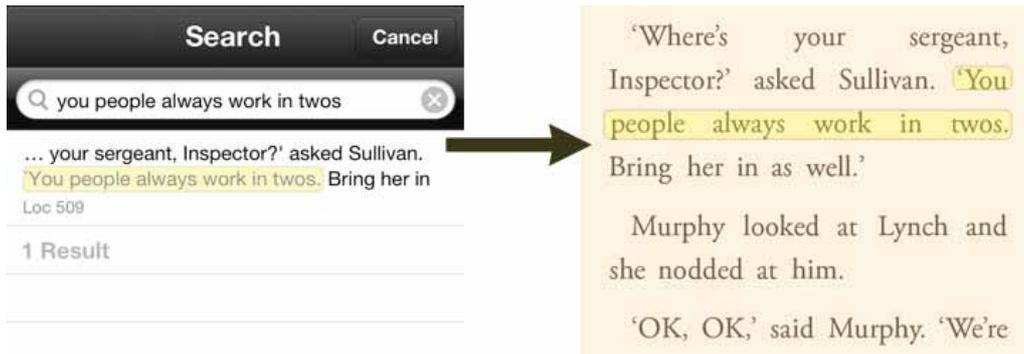
**Figure 1: Results of comprehension quizzes**

A more likely explanation for this is that a number of students openly admitted to “cheating” in the “who says this?” questions of the comprehension quizzes. It is worth stressing that this was not done maliciously, as this project and indeed the extensive reading program itself are not assessed parts of the course. Rather, the students used the search function of their device in order to locate the information rather than trying to remember it themselves, as displayed below.

Who says this?

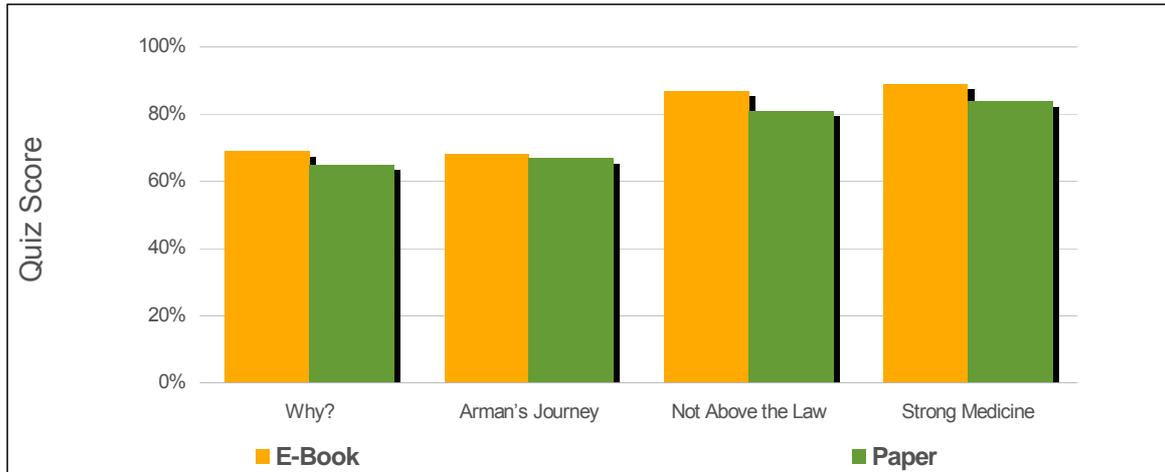
*'You people always work in twos.'*

- Murphy
- Sullivan
- Keegan
- Orla



Considering that this type of question usually makes up 50% of the grade of a Moodle Reader quiz, and that the pass grade is normally set at 60 or 70%, it then becomes rather easy to pass the quiz when one can quickly find half of the answers by simply using the e-reader's search function.

The results of the vocabulary quizzes (Figure 2) were similar in showing a small benefit of using e-books in the extensive reading program. The vocabulary quizzes were taken in class, without access to the devices, so the built-in dictionaries were not used during the quizzes. One possible explanation for the differences seen in vocabulary acquisition is that e-readers and e-reading applications offer an integrated dictionary, which can be called up simply by selecting the unknown word. This dictionary is a regular, English-English, dictionary, and as such is not particularly useful for language learners, particularly for the beginner level students. However, a high proportion of the intermediate-level students reported having made regular use of the integrated dictionary, when they would probably have simply skipped the unknown word had the capability not been present in the e-reader. This could explain why reading the e-book provided a slight edge in scores for the intermediate level group.



**Figure 2. Results of the vocabulary quizzes**

### **Motivational aspects**

Over three quarters of students reported they would likely read more if they had the option to read e-books, and 70% of them want to see an e-book rental system added to their library. However, 20% said they thought money would be better spent on increasing traditional paper reader collections.

Most students did not feel they read faster on e-readers. None of the 55 students who reported not having access to a dedicated e-reader planned to buy one.

Open feedback comments from students offers an interesting view into their attitudes toward the use of technology in reading exercises. Many students reported that they like reading e-books simply because it makes them “look cool” (sic). As extensive reading becomes a more widespread component of English teaching programs in Japan, an increasing number of students can be seen reading graded readers in public spaces such as trains, libraries, or university cafeterias. However, lower level students sometimes feel a little embarrassed at being seen reading beginner-level readers as the book cover and its thinness provide very visual clues of their level. When reading English text on a smart phone or e-reader, guessing the text level at a glance is much more difficult, and lower level students take comfort in that.

Another feature of e-books widely favored by students is the convenience aspect. As mentioned earlier, a large proportion of the students who were equipped with tablets also had smart phones, and virtually all had access to computers. As such, they were able to read on all devices interchangeably by using the cloud synchronization services offered by Amazon (and most e-books providers). Being able to pick up their reading on their phone after having left their tablet or e-reader at home allowed them more flexibility in choosing their reading time.

As mentioned in the vocabulary results section above, virtually all higher-level students found it very useful to have an integrated dictionary directly accessible with the text in one place. For the most part, e-book graded readers are delivered in a simple electronic text with illustrations format. A small number of titles are also available as stand-alone applications, offering value-added features such as quizzes, interactivity, and more importantly, a level-graded glossary. Integrating such a glossary with most or all e-book graded readers could be a useful way for all levels of students to practice and learn vocabulary with only minimal interruption to the reading flow.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that students are still strongly attached to traditional paper books. For a start, these provide a stronger feeling of achievement when finished. Finishing an e-book provides no physical gratification, as opposed to turning over the last page of a paper book and finally closing its cover. In addition, students reported that they find it easier to gauge their own progress while reading paper books. E-books do provide an indication of progress, usually as a percentage read, or by displaying the number of pages read and the total number of pages. Nonetheless, being able to “see” their progress as they read through paper books was preferred by most students. In addition, one notable drawback of the sync service available when switching devices is that, while the correct location in the book is preserved across all of them, the page size and thus the number of words displayed on the page varies according to screen size. This repagination means that the student may stop reading at, for example, page 53 on their smart phone, and pick up reading at page 21 on their tablet. This created confusion for some students, who manually jumped too far ahead in the book in order to continue reading from, what they thought was, the correct page number.

Finally, most students reported finding it harder to focus for a long time on e-books, mostly because of the more or less constant flow of interruptions and screen notifications from online services such as Line, Facebook and e-mail. Even with their smart phones set to

silent mode, visual notifications provided regular distractions from the reading. This was naturally far less of a problem when reading traditional paper books.

### **Current Issues with using e-books in an ER program**

There are a number of existing and potential issues connected to the use of e-books in extensive reading programs. These range from low availability of titles, to the current use of ER management systems that are not well adapted to e-books.

There is currently no widespread library lending system for e-books. The existing systems are getting easier, and cheaper, but may still be out of reach of many educational establishments. In addition, it may be years before such systems are widely available to those physically outside the United States.

One possible way around this problem could stem from the ever-decreasing cost of e-readers. Cheaper devices could open the way to pre-loaded device lending by libraries, where a student borrows a device that contains multiple graded reader titles, instead of borrowing the e-books themselves. Another way is to make libraries available online, or to organize institutional subscriptions to online graded reader services such as xreading.com. It is safe to assume that the number of graded reader titles available as e-books will only increase, thus maximizing options for students and institutions.

The problems detailed in the comprehension quiz section above could be addressed by switching to questions that do not directly use exact parts of the text, but rather are designed to assess the comprehension of concepts or ideas explained in the text. Such questions would be substantially more difficult to answer by using the search function of the devices, thus reducing the chances of students using the search function to find the answers.

### **Conclusion**

E-books may offer marginal benefits in extensive reading compared to traditional paper books. A number of existing limitations mean that it may be difficult to deploy program-wide e-reading at present, but current and future developments indicate that e-books

will soon make up a significant part of all books read, and thus will become an important component of extensive reading. Further study focusing on possible differences in on-screen reading speed, as well as long-term continuity in motivation in e-reading should offer clearer insights in this exciting development.

*Germain Mesureur teaches at Keisen University and at The University of Tokyo. His research focuses on Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Extensive Reading, and applications of technology in the classroom environment.*