



## EXTENSIVE READING IN JAPAN

ERJ

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## ER SIG News

As one of the proofreaders, I have had a chance to preview this issue before writing this. I am very impressed with how the other contributors have combined their intellect, their experiences as educators and researchers, and their time to produce the remarkable articles in these pages. I trust that you will enjoy and learn from this issue just as I have, and I would also like to encourage you to share your own insights into ER practice and research by submitting an article to *Extensive Reading in Japan* or the *Journal of Extensive Reading*.

You will find that one section of this issue is a preview of the ER Colloquium on Saturday, October 26 at JALT 2013. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to join us for these presentations as well as the Annual General Meeting held immediately after. I really hope that you will come to these events and be an active part of the SIG. Whether it is as an attentive listener, as someone forging new research or teaching partnerships, or as a person standing up to volunteer to help run the SIG, you can make a valuable contribution to this community and we welcome you.

Finally, I want to thank our editorial team for all of their work putting together ERJ, and to wish you all happy reading!

Thomas Bieri  
ER SIG Coordinator

Published by the JALT ER SIG [www.ersig.org](http://www.ersig.org)  
October, 2013 ISSN 2187-0853

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# Thank you ER SIG

Dear ER SIG officers & members,

Thank you for awarding me the first ever ER SIG Presenter Grant to speak at the PanSIG conference in Nagoya on 19 May, 2013.

For those who missed it, I gave a poster presentation about the principles and practices of ER. It was a good opportunity to start a discussion with teachers who might not be familiar with ER. I tried to highlight the ER principles brought forward by Richard Day and Julian Bamford, as well as share my own experience teaching ER at junior high, senior high, and university in Japan. During the conversations I had with a variety of attendees, including one of the plenary speakers Judith Hanks, I was again surprised to hear about the many different ways of teaching reading and what people's idea of ER is.

Other than presenting on ER, the PanSIG conference was a chance for me to get more focused on doing research. The Sunday plenary was "Ten Rules for Doing Effective Research" by Robert Croker. It was a very good grounding for starting a research project and, together with ideas and inspiration from the other presentations I attended, my current research project will hopefully be better for it.

The ER SIG Presenter Grant meant that this year I will be able to afford to attend and present at two conferences rather than just one, and bring an updated version of the PanSIG presentation to the ER World Congress in Seoul. I greatly appreciate the support and recognition from the JALT ER SIG and hope that more people will apply for the grants in the future and thereby help promoting and informing about Extensive Reading.

Sincerely yours,

Bjorn Fuisting  
Ritsumeikan University

## Presenter grants

The grants for 2013 have all been allocated, but please consider applying next year. This grant is intended to encourage the presentation of research related to extensive reading or extensive listening.

# Must Reads you *must* write about

Leslie Chivers

Have you ever had a burning desire to share something you've read, to tell a loved one, colleague, friend or student, "You've just got to read this!?" This is your chance to do it in writing and to share something of yourself—your personality and opinions as a reader!

The ER SIG promotes sharing of reading with our monthly website feature, Bookshelf. The brainchild of Membership Co-Chair Heather Doiron, officers have been writing monthly contributions at [www.ersig.org/drupal-ersig/bookshelf](http://www.ersig.org/drupal-ersig/bookshelf). We have decided to throw Bookshelf open to our current members to find out what you like to read for yourselves or think is a good read for students.

If you are interested in writing for the Bookshelf, check out the above link and write to the website editor, Leslie at [admin@ersig.org](mailto:admin@ersig.org) to let us know you are interested. We will get back to you with a suggested timing for a contribution.

When we finalize the schedule we will ask you to provide

1. your name
2. the written text of the recommendation: a hundred or so words per book, maximum 2 books per contribution
3. (optionally) your position, job, institution or any other descriptor to indicate your ER or educational interest.



ERS  
2014



The seventh ER seminar will be held in Tokyo at the end of September. Proposals for presentations on the theory and practice of extensive reading and listening are welcome. First call for papers: February 28th, 2014. See our website for more details.

# Milne Award

Richard R. Day, the Founding Chair Emeritus of the Extensive Reading Foundation was awarded the John. A. Milne Innovation Award in the Service of Extensive Reading. The award was presented at the Second Extensive Reading World Congress, held at Yonsei University, Seoul Korea, Sept. 13-15, 2013.

Richard Day is professor in the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawai'i. In addition to being the founding chair of the Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF), Day is the co-editor of the journal, *Reading in a Foreign Language*. He is also the author or co-author of numerous articles, book chapters and books on Extensive Reading, most notably *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom* and *Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language*, (both Cambridge University Press with Julian Bamford). He has been active in promoting Extensive Reading for over three decades.

Day has been a visiting professor at Ubon Rajathanee University and Assumption University, Thailand, Ha Noi University of Foreign Studies, Vietnam, and Ashiya University, Japan. He has also led teacher development workshops in China, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

Marc Helgesen, Chair of the ERF, said at the ceremony, "Richard has been and remains a promoter of Extensive Reading and a teacher, mentor and friend to reading teachers around the world."

The Award is named in honor of John Milne. As creator of the Heinemann Guided Readers series in the 1970s, Milne believed that the traditional grading of vocabulary and structure was not enough to make a book suitable for language learners. He therefore took a different approach, basing his series on good, clear writing, relevant content, careful explanation and control of information, and intuitive word and structure control. These innovations have been crucial in the development of language learner literature.

The Extensive Reading Foundation (<http://erfoundation.org>), founded in 2004, aims to promote Extensive Reading as a highly effective means of language learning. To this end the Foundation offers awards to the best new graded reader titles annually, maintains an annotated bibliography of research into Extensive Reading, and conducts other activities to promote research and the implementation of Extensive Reading.



VOLUME 6 NUMBER 5



## Young Learners

### The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

BY WASHINGTON IRVING

RETOLD BY CASEY MALARCHER

ILLUSTRATED BY FABIO LEONE

COMPASS PUBLISHING

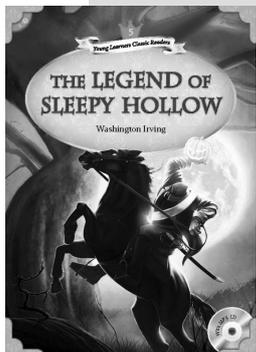
ISBN: 978-1-59966-678-5

#### JUDGE'S COMMENT:

Innovation and classic story-telling are mixed seamlessly in this story. The book includes a playlet for a class performance and wonderful illustrations.

#### READER'S COMMENT (ONLINE):

It's very exciting. The art is so dramatic.



## Adolescents and Adults - Beginners

### The Girl with Green Eyes

BY JOHN ESCOTT

ILLUSTRATED BY DYLAN GIBSON

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

ISBN: 978-0-19-479434-3

#### JUDGE'S COMMENT:

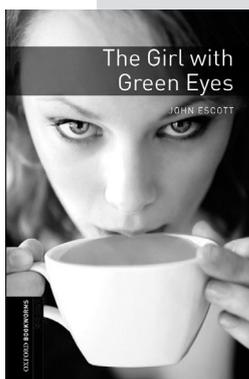
Who is the girl with the green eyes? Why is she so interested in Mark? And is the man in the hotel really her stepfather? Find out when you read this story. Boy meets girl --- with a difference!

#### READERS' COMMENTS:

I like the whole story because it is very mysterious.

The following student comment was originally in Japanese:

This is a fast-paced action story. A young man was cheated by a beautiful girl with green eyes, in the commission of a crime, and placed on the wanted list. But with the help of his friend and a strange homeless guy, he took the sketchbook from the girl. I cannot stop reading with excitement.



## 2013 ERF Language Learner Literature Award winners

The Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF), an unaffiliated, not-for-profit organization that supports and promotes extensive reading in language education, takes pleasure in announcing the winners of the 9th Annual Language Learner Literature Award for books published in 2012. An international jury chose the winning book in five categories, taking into account the Internet votes and comments of students and teachers around the world. The judges' comment is followed by reactions from readers of the book.

## Adolescents and Adults – Elementary

### Les Misérables

BY VICTOR HUGO

RETOLD BY JENNIFER BASSETT

ILLUSTRATED BY GIORGIO BACCHIN

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

ISBN: 978-0-19-479440-4

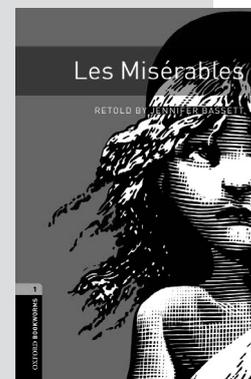
#### JUDGE'S COMMENT:

This well-written retelling is an excellent way for beginner/ elementary level learners to get to know this great story. We found ourselves involved in the story, caring about the characters. In particular, the "set-the-stage" sections help the reader quickly catch up on important events without creating an overly-complex narrative. The recent popularity of the film musical should increase students' interest, and lead many to a rewarding reading experience.

#### READER'S COMMENT (ONLINE):

This book uses easy words, so it was easy for me to understand. In addition, its descriptions and expressions were very clear. These let me feel the same feelings of several characters. I felt sometimes sad, sometimes happy. I love this story!

MORE ON PAGE 7...



## Where is the extensive in extensive reading?

Ben Shearon  
Tohoku University



Extensive reading is a very simple concept. Read lots of easy, interesting material in the target language. Steadily read more challenging material as your reading skills improve. Continue indefinitely.

For teachers, this simplicity can be a drawback. Once the program is designed and the students have been briefed, what is the teacher supposed to do in class? Walk around and observe? Sit at the front and read too? Walk around and chat with students as they read? Process students' reading records or diaries?

All of these are valid options, but can be difficult to explain to students, colleagues, and administrators. After all, teachers are supposed to teach, right? Never mind that in a lot of cases, students are going to see more benefit from reading silently than from other activities.

Perhaps this is why most extensive reading methodology books, presentations, and classes focus on supplementary activities: pair and group discussions, presentations about books, exercises to focus on the content of books, role-plays, acting out the story, drawing pictures showing the story, interviewing students as one of the characters from the book, etc.

All of these supplementary activities are valid too, but when they become the core of an extensive reading program we have a problem.

For students to be doing extensive reading, they have to read extensively. Most of their time should be focused on reading, both in and out of class. Teachers should be focusing on encouraging students to read and getting easy, interesting books into their hands.

📖 Reading one graded reader over the summer break is not extensive reading.

📖 Reading five graded readers over a semester is not extensive reading.

📖 Reading a graded reader and discussing it in class is not extensive reading.

That is not to say that supplementary activities do not have a place in ER classes, but for teachers to claim that their students are doing extensive reading there has to be a large amount of reading going on.

At Tohoku University we expect students to

read at least 7,000 words per week as part of their ER class. Many students choose to read a lot more, but 7,000 words per week is the minimum required for a passing grade. This number was determined based on student reading speeds and the amount of time students can reasonably be expected to spend on a single class per week.

Reading goals will differ based on student ability and motivation, as well as the policies of each school, but I hope we can agree that for any extensive reading class a substantial amount of reading should be involved.

Channeling Paul Nation's book *What Should every EFL Teacher Know* (2013), here is what I think ER teachers should be doing. In order of importance, from most important to least:

1. Assess student needs and design an appropriate reading program
2. Explain the theory behind ER and how to do it
3. Monitor and guide students as they read
4. Conduct supplementary activities

If you teach extensive reading classes or are involved with an extensive reading program, how would you answer the following questions?

Do you have a program tailored to your students with specific goals and procedures?

Do your students understand the theory behind extensive reading and the procedures of your program?

Do you monitor your students reading? Know what they read and how they are doing?

Do your students spend most of the time they devote to your class actually reading?

Do your students read a significant amount?

Do your students continue reading after their ER classes finish?

These, to me, are the key elements of conducting extensive reading classes, and should form the foundation of ER programs. Supplementary activities can come later.

Visit the ER SIG table at JALT2013 in Kobe to pick up a free copy of the bilingual *Tohoku University Extensive Reading Manual*.



## Using L1 to get more out of your ER program

Andrew O'Brien

Kyoritsu Girls' Junior and Senior High School, Hachioji Campus

As part of my extensive reading program, I frequently assign pair discussions. The students are expected to share their reading experiences with each other, usually by talking about the books they have most recently finished reading. During the first few years of the program, I pushed the students to discuss entirely in English, giving as much guidance as I could afford, for example via handouts. Now, however, especially with my junior high third-year students in their first year of ER, but also with most of my high school first-year students, this activity is done mainly in Japanese (L1), with me throwing in some useful English along the way. Why? What led to the change?

Despite all of my efforts, book descriptions like the one below were a regular occurrence. The students were using English, which was one of the initial and primary goals, but I found it frustrating and lacking substance; the students didn't seem to be gaining much through the experience. Over time I discovered that allowing the use of the students' first language in certain activities and assignments dramatically improved their willingness to participate, helped keep weaker students from feeling left out, and had a very positive impact on their descriptive prolificacy. To demonstrate the difference in substance between conversations done in English and those done in Japanese, here is an example of what I might hear my students saying:

### "English-Only"

(in heavily accented "katakana" English)

*A: This book is good. Pictures, cute. Nice story. I like princess stories.*

### Japanese

*A: I thought the pictures were nice – they definitely helped me understand the story. Hmm...what else? I guess that overall, the story was interesting. I didn't understand a few words here and there, and there were names that I couldn't pronounce, but, I dunno...I guess if you like fairy tales, as I do, then you'll probably still enjoy it, even if it is a little difficult. In fact, it looks harder than it is because there are a lot of words on each page, but really it's not that bad, you get used to it...also, it's different from the movie- I was surprised! I think I might even like the book better. Anyway, why don't you check it out? If you don't like it just put it back.*

On the one hand, the English-only version could be considered a success if the goal is purely to have the students speak in English. On the other hand, if the goal is to promote an interest in reading in English, to facilitate the exchange of useful information regarding the content and quality of the books, or to share in the

general reading experience, then I would consider the English-only version a near complete failure.

Additionally, the difference between doing this activity in English and doing it in Japanese can be as equal a relief to the listener as to the speaker. When done in L1, I find this activity, and others like it, to be invaluable aspects of a larger goal of encouraging a positive attitude towards reading, as they promote a sense of "we're all in this together", rather than "every man for himself", and can accommodate students of various abilities working together. Creating a situation in each class where the students can openly and comfortably discuss with various partners what they have read gets them to break out of their shells, helps them to identify books that they might like to read, or perhaps avoid, and gets them used to the practices of summarizing, sharing opinions and using persuasion, which they don't otherwise seem to do very often. Also, by sharing their experiences, students teach each other how to approach the books, what can be learned and enjoyed when reading in English, and how to deal with the difficulties they might encounter. Not least of all, most students seem to take these conversations more seriously than when I occasionally do similar activities in English-only.

It's important to keep in mind that students, in particular those of lower ability, have two difficult tasks to deal with simultaneously when holding discussions in English: 1) what to say and how to say it, and 2) how to then convey those ideas in English. This of course doesn't even take into account the effort required on the receiving end of the discussion. Realistically, a lot of very worthwhile things that the students would like to express are far beyond their English-speaking levels. When in an English-only environment, the students are isolated in their ideas and their experiences, and, as a result of shyness or

some other cause, may end up never making an effort to talk about their reading experiences outside of class, either.

Perhaps it should be noted that early on in the program, and regardless of which language is being used, my students tend to be very brief in their explanations; I suspect this is often due to a lack of self-confidence and experience, though in some cases, the students haven't actually read the books and are simply bluffing. Either way, given time, most students start to say more as they get used to the activity. Weaker students also learn how to express their ideas by listening to their peers' descriptions. Also, if a student doesn't have a book to talk about, I still encourage them to participate by being a good listener. Students who don't have something to talk about because they aren't motivated and haven't read much tend to be weaker at English in general, and therefore shouldn't be overly criticized. This activity is especially helpful for them, as eventually most come across a book they are willing to pick up and try out.

Ultimately, when deciding whether to allow Japanese into the English lesson, it's important to consider not only the level of the students, but also the real objective of the activity. If the objective is to have students speak purely in English, perhaps to help them learn to find ways to express what they want to say in a simplified manner, or to learn to deal with the frustration of not being able to say exactly what they want in a second language, then certainly using L1 would be inappropriate. However, if the objective is to propagate a sense of meaningfulness associated with reading in English and promote a shared sense of enjoyment, both of which are especially useful early in the ER program, then I highly recommend giving L1 a chance to contribute its fair share in your overall ER program.

See *ER activities in L1* on page 13.

LLL Award Finalists (See *ERJ 6.1* for more details)  
*The Canterville Ghost* and *White Fang* retold by Jane Cadwallader, ELI  
*The Little Match Girl* retold by Bill Bowler, OUP  
*Gulliver's Travels* retold by Janet Borsbey & Ruth Swan, ELI  
*Marley and Me* retold by Anne Collins, Pearson  
*The Case of the Dead Batsman* by Peter Viney, Garnet  
*Owl Hall* by Robert Campbell, Macmillan  
*One Day* retold by F.H. Cornish, Macmillan  
*Sherlock: A Study In Pink* retold by Paul Shipton, Scholastic



## Intermediate

### The Green Room

BY ROBERT CAMPBELL

ILLUSTRATED BY VALENTINA RUSSELLO  
HELBLING LANGUAGES

ISBN: 978-3-85272-327-3

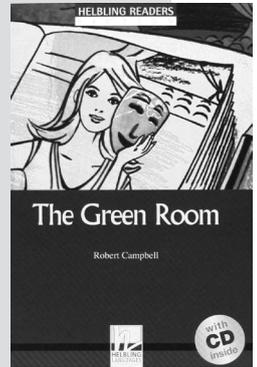
#### JUDGE'S COMMENT:

This story is about adolescents' conflicts and growing up process. What makes it special is the clever way in which the author interweaves the main plot with the plot of the play-within-the story.

This is a well-constructed narrative with a cleverly written plot that develops exploring parallels with Shakespeare's work .

#### READER'S COMMENT (ON-LINE):

The main characters are almost same age as me, and the story includes love story, so I enjoyed reading the book. One of the main characters lied. And I can understand why she wanted to lie for an audition, so I felt her feelings while reading.



## Upper Intermediate/Advanced

### Manhunt

BY RICHARD MACANDREW

MAP ARTWORK BY MALCOLM BARNES  
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

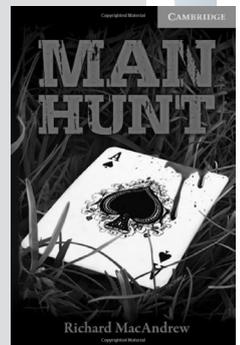
ISBN: 987-01-107-62455-1

#### JUDGE'S COMMENT:

This original murder mystery, set in a rural community, is a compelling read for crime story enthusiasts. Moving back and forth between the voices of the criminal and the police, MacAndrew draws the reader into the narrative. With clear, yet vivid language, the reader is able to participate in the problem-solving of the detectives as they unravel the mystery.

#### READER'S COMMENT (ONLINE):

I would recommend the book as it is very interesting. It was full of suspense. The language was easy to understand and I was very keen to read as the storyline is awesome.





# HOW WE DO IT...

## a Japanese university's ER community of practice revisited

Peter Hourdequin  
Tokoha University

In a 2011 paper in *ERJ 4.1* (Hourdequin, 2011), I made a case for the usefulness of looking at ER programs through the lens of communities of practice theory. In that article, I introduced some communities of practice concepts, and used a small-scale case study I did in 2010 to illustrate how these concepts could be applied to understanding the activities of a fledgling university ER circle. In the three years since I conducted this initial research, the extensive reading community of practice I observed has grown exponentially. It has expanded from a small "circle" led mainly by one instructor and populated by about a dozen or so active students, to become a broad community of practice that incorporates almost every student in my university's Faculty of Foreign Studies, supported by the university's language learning self-access center.

To say that ER activity is widespread today in Tokoha's Faculty of Foreign Studies is not to claim that all students practice ER with equal commitment. They do not. But evidence that ER practice has become more common, and more widely understood is not hard to find. Whereas normative ER practice was previously confined mostly to a small group of students in a university "circle", nowadays on any given day, many students can be seen practicing ER in various locations throughout the university campus. Also, knowledge about ER has become more widespread. For example, in the freshman oral communication classes I teach, I can now assign ER book reports in the third week of the first semester with confidence that students are aware of the basics of ER practice.

Still, ER and its related activities have yet to be formally codified as either curricular components or an extra-curricular "program" at our university. Practices have developed, and participation has increased dramatically, but this has all happened somewhat informally. In this follow-up paper, I'll explain "how we do it" now at Tokoha University by revisiting some key concepts from communities of practice theory. I'll also discuss how physical spaces and book resources have fostered the expansion of ER activity at Tokoha University over the past four years.

### The setting

With the start of the current (2013-2014) academic year, Tokoha University has become the largest private university in Shizuoka Prefecture. Three

formerly separate Tokoha Gakuen group universities have become branch campuses housing differing faculties. The Shizuoka campus of Tokoha University, described here, was formerly known as Tokoha Gakuen University, and is home to the Faculty of Foreign Studies within which ER activity has become widespread.

### Key concepts revisited

Three key concepts from communities of practice theory proved useful in my initial case study research into the activity of Tokoha's small ER circle, and these are equally useful in examining the faculty-wide practice that has developed in the intervening years. These concepts are the three characteristics of practice—mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Here, I will discuss each of these concepts in turn and apply them to an understanding of current ER practice at my university.

#### 1. Mutual engagement

As noted above, ER activity at Tokoha has never been centrally mandated in the curriculum, and neither has it been formally structured into a program outside of its relatively small roles in the classrooms of a few instructors. ER has, however, become more and more central to the lives of students in our faculty of foreign studies, and this is due almost entirely to the mutual efforts of a few key instructors. The story of how this has happened is a story of what communities of practice theory terms "mutual engagement". Wenger

(1998) states that:

The first characteristic of practice as the source of coherence of a community is the mutual engagement of participants. Practice does not exist in the abstract. It exists because people are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another. In this sense, practice does not reside in books or in tools, though it may involve all kinds of artifacts (p. 73).

The relationship at the core of the growth of Tokoha's ER community of practice is a close alliance between two instructors. These two teachers share a joint affinity for reading, and a common belief in the efficacy of ER as a legitimate language learning practice. Though inhabiting different areas of expertise, and working at different stages of their careers, these two instructors were able to come together in a joint enterprise that has served to enrich student learning while also yielding positive opportunities for professional development and advancement.

The same senior instructor who led the small reading circle I studied in 2010 was instrumental in expanding ER activity to include all students in Tokoha's faculty of foreign studies, but this was not something she could accomplish alone. It was through "mutual engagement" with another key faculty member who runs the Foreign Language Learning Study Support Center (FLSSC) that the community was able to expand so dramatically in such a short time. These two faculty members initially purchased books with intra-university competitive joint research funds for the self-access center, and they also began to give basic guidelines for extensive reading in their classes. More importantly, they modeled the practice for their students by exhibiting a passion for reading the new books that they were able to purchase. The instructor who runs the self-access center also encouraged the administrative assistant there to read as many books as possible, thus creating a core of knowledgeable role models who could engage students in conversation about books, and offer reading advice based on student preferences and reading levels.

The sustaining force driving an ER community of practice is the web of relationships that exist among

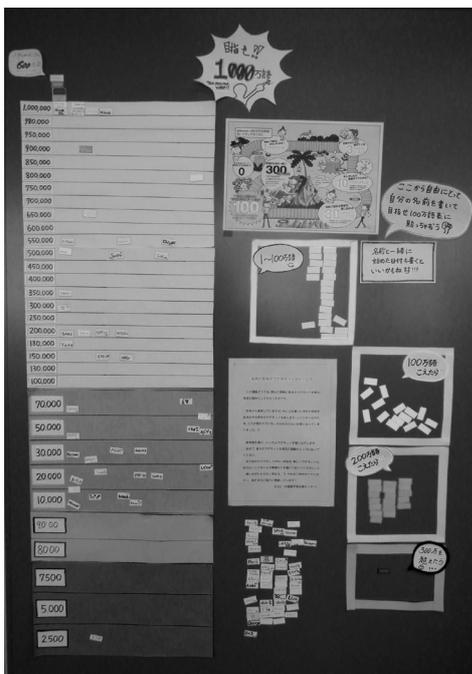
practitioners. Wenger (1998) is emphatic that such relationships are not always harmonious and peaceful, as the term "community" normally implies; the relationships that exist in a community of practice are diverse and complex, and tensions and conflicts may arise. But to the extent that these relationships sustain themselves, communities of practice are able to thrive and in some cases grow. This is what I've observed over the past four years at Tokoha University.

## 2. Joint enterprise

The communities of practice concept of "joint enterprise" refers to the process whereby meanings and practices are negotiated among community members. In the reading circle I observed in 2010, I focused on negotiations of meaning and practice among student participants. In that case, students with varying degrees of book knowledge and reading experience worked together to establish practices suitable to the group. They shared tacit knowledge about ER as well as explicit knowledge and opinions about individual books, series, and authors. The social practice of reading together helped scaffold practice for newcomers.

Though such negotiations often occur within institutional contexts—in this case that of a university—the practices that emerge are connected to common ideals associated with broader historical, cultural, and professional discourses as well. For the students I studied in 2010, this meant working by themselves and with their instructor to develop local variations of relatively standard ER practices. For the instructors who were instrumental in growing the ER community at Tokoha since 2010, familiarity with





separate and overlapping professional discourse about ER and self-access learning served to help them transcend institutional constraints, and to design situated practices best suited to local objectives. These practices are discussed below.

### 3. Shared repertoire

A community of practice's shared repertoire refers to the "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adapted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). In terms of ER, this means, for example, an understanding of Day & Bamford's (2002, 2004) principles of ER. It also means some fluency in the vocabulary of ER practice such as "word count" and "yomi-yasusa level", and familiarity with reader series names, popular book titles, ER journaling practices, etc.

Over the past three years, both of the key instructors discussed above have begun introducing ER to first year students in various mandatory classes, not only ones with "reading" in the title. Students in Tokoha's English department are divided into four levels, and take required courses as leveled cohorts. Because different instructors teach different sections of the required courses for each level cohorts, ER could not be introduced to all students in the faculty of foreign studies if these two instructors did so only in the reading classes they teach. If one truly believes in the efficacy and importance of ER, one way of addressing this problem would be to create an official program, or advocate for the inclusion of ER within in first year reading classes for all four leveled cohorts. Perhaps realizing however that curricular initiatives are political endeavors often fraught with implementation problems, these instructors found a simpler solution: instead of trying to control how reading was taught in other classes, they introduced ER in their own reading classes, and reached the other students by introducing ER in grammar and writing classes they taught. In this way, all first year students in the department of English, and many of the students in the department of global communication (the other department in our faculty) received at least a preliminary introduction to ER. In some classes taught by these two teachers, time was given for sustained silent reading, and in some cases the maintenance of ER journals formed a component of students' grades, but consistency in this type of practice is not essential for the community's growth.

Because a shared repertoire of ER practice has been so successfully propagated throughout the faculty, in my oral communication classes I am able to call on students to report (in various ways) on books they are reading outside of class. I can have confidence

that students understand ER practice, and when, for example, I ask students to self-evaluate whether books they report on are appropriate to their level, I know that this is done within the context of shared understanding of the meaning of "appropriate level" within ER practice.

### Making room for ER

Though most importantly driven by the passions and commitment of teachers and students, ER communities of practice, of



course, require books and physical spaces to thrive. The way ER spaces are designed and occupied, and how books are accessed and shared are factors that have significant impact on the success of ER communities of practice. There are two main spaces designed for ER at Tokoha University—a section of the university library, and the university's language learning self-access center—and both of these spaces have evolved in significant ways to foster ER participation among the student population.

## The library

When I conducted my initial research at Tokoha Gakuen University (now Tokoha University), an ER community of practice was just beginning to take form. One instructor was meeting once or twice a week with the small ER reading circle she started on the ground floor of the university's main library. The meeting space was a conference room walled with Japanese books and containing one large meeting table. Outside of the conference room were a few shelves of ER books, but other ER resources were scattered throughout the library. Containing one (frequently closed) door and no windows, the space served to literally contain ER practice within a very limited, low-visibility space. As I noted at the time, the "circle" was essentially closed, with limited opportunity for what Lave and Wenger (1991) call "legitimate peripheral participation"—that is the transition from curious newcomer to engaged practitioner.

In the years since my initial participant observations of the small reading circle in this less-than-ideal library setting, new spaces for ER have been created, and students have occupied them in great numbers. The library underwent a significant remodeling in the summer of 2011, and all of the library's approximately 6000 ER books were consolidated into one new *tadoku corner*. Authentic materials such as children's books were not relocated to this area though. All of the books in the *tadoku corner* are available for borrowing for the library's standard two-week period.

This space is also on the ground floor of the library, and though it is now even more difficult to locate, it is visible from the outside through floor-to-ceiling windows, and furnished with small tables and chairs where students can sit and read comfortably. Students frequently gather in this space



to read silently, chat quietly, and casually exchange information about books.

Core ER proponents at our university express frustration with the fact that they were not consulted in the library's redesign, or its lending policies for ER books. A more prominent location within the library for the "tadoku corner" would certainly benefit students by offering opportunities for what Murphy (1996) calls "near peer role modeling", and what Wenger (1999) calls opportunities for "legitimate peripheral participation".

## ER in the Foreign Language Study Support Center

Despite the value provided by the consolidation of ER resources and space in the university library, the development of reading spaces and resources in our university's foreign language study support center (FLSSC) can be seen as the most significant catalyst to the formation of a department-wide ER community of practice. The FLSSC was first created in 2008, and though ER activity has always taken place there intermittently, it wasn't until the 2010-2011 academic year that the FLSSC began to actively support ER.

The FLSSC is a large, highly visible language learning self-access center located in the single main hallway that leads to our university's cafeteria and convenience store. Large windows fill the upper half of the FLSSC's hallway wall, making it easy for passers-by to notice activity in the center. Posters and notices on the windows, however, serve to obscure direct views into the center. This means that language learners (and ER practitioners) in the center are not

distracted by seeing their friends walking by; and by the same token students looking for their friends in the center need to actually enter to find them.

The center supports various aspects of student language learning, including study skills development, web-based training, achievement and aptitude testing (EIKEN, TOEIC, TOEFL) support, and many aspects of study abroad administration and support. The FLSSC is currently staffed by one full-time lecturer from the Faculty of Foreign Studies, and one administrator; five to ten third and fourth year students work as teaching assistants (TAs) in the center every year as well.

The center has a lending library of about 2000 books: a wide variety of graded and leveled readers, representing most of the major publisher series, as well as authentic materials that include children's books and young adult fiction. Many books contain CDs, and audio books are also available for extensive listening. The center has a stockpile of portable CD players available for students who want to listen there.

The FLSSC lending library continues to grow with funding obtained annually by my department's three core ER proponents—the two faculty members described above and me—who order two to three hundred new titles annually using intra-university cooperative research competitive grants.

All books and CDs, except for some of the authentic children's books, are available for borrowing. The center's lending system is decidedly analog: for each book, a simple paper form requires students to record their name, student number, check out and return dates, and the book's catalogue number. In contrast to the library's two-week lending period, ER books borrowed from the FLSSC should be returned within a day or two. This policy encourages students to develop good time management skills, requiring them to think realistically about how much time they will be able to spend reading on a daily basis. Also,



a FLSSC staff member or TA must sign books back in when students return books. This helps limit the loss of materials, but it also serves to encourage interaction between students borrowing books and center staff and TAs. Such interactions are good opportunities for casual advice about reading level, recommendations, and reading time management.

## Conclusion

This short paper has explored ER community growth through the lens of communities of practice theory. Hopefully it has revealed some important features of how ER can be expanded in a university community without complicated curricular or programmatic changes, and notably, without high-tech assessment measures. Robb (2002) asserts from his experience that "When there is no designated 'reading class' where the instructor can directly supervise the students, there is a very good chance that students will not do the reading unless there is a clear follow-up or tracking mechanism to hold them responsible for their work." But our experience at Tokoha University suggests a different story. Here, with little supervision, minimal tracking, and no "program" per se, many students appear to recognize the value of reading. It's what their teachers do, and it's what their peers do; it's a practice embraced by their community, and that appears to be enough.

## Acknowledgments

The two excellent teachers and ER proponents referred to in this paper are Emiko Rachi and Satomi Shibata. I'd like to thank them both for helpful comments they offered me on an earlier draft of this paper.

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## Student Pair Book Discussions

Andrew O'Brien

### INTRODUCTION

This activity is designed to take advantage of the students' native communication skills for the purpose of getting more out of your extensive reading program, for nurturing a native perspective on the English reading experience, and to promote open communication regarding English books.

Although the teacher doesn't have to participate directly in the discussions, I do recommend giving the students some guidelines, including time limits, suggestions about what to mention when describing their books, and what kinds of questions to ask when listening to someone else's book description.

### RECOMMENDED FOR

Teachers of low-level EFL Ss who are reading at the level where there is enough content for discussion, and teachers who have some fluency in Japanese (or L1).

### SUITABLE FOR

Early- to Mid-program

### NEED

To do the activity in its purest form, the teacher needs nothing, though a timer would be useful if implementing in 4/3/2 format, and a blackboard could be used for writing up suggestions related to the conversations. The students need to have with them a book they are currently reading or have just finished reading. Students should ideally be in pairs, though small groups of up to 3 or 4 students are fine.

### TIME

10-20 minutes

### PROCEDURE

Have students take out the books they've borrowed. Tell them they are going to talk about their books with each other. The first few times doing this I put up on the blackboard some suggestions (in question format – see below) for what to think about. I always write the questions in English. Have the students confirm with each other what everything means, and give them 2-3 minutes to think about what they want to say before beginning the conversations. (See Helgesen, 2010, for an introduction to the importance of giving students time to think before speaking activities.)

Here are some questions that you could use:

*What book did you read? Is it fiction or non-fiction?*

*Who was it written by?*

*How did you like the book?*

*What's it about? (What kind of story is it? What are the main events of the story?)*

*What parts of the book/story did you enjoy? Why?*

*What's your favorite line or quotation? Why?*

*(If fiction) What are the names of the characters? Who is your favorite character? Why?*

*What reading level is the book? How was that level for you?*

*Do you recommend this book to the person you're speaking to? If so, why? If not, why not?*

Next, have everyone stand up and talk to someone besides the person they were sitting nearest to. This gets them moving around and breaks up cliques. Encourage students to be as visual as possible, to use their books and point to parts of the story while talking. Instruct idle pairs to find new partners after both students have had the opportunity to talk about and show their books. I usually end the activity after most students have spoken with two or three different classmates.

This activity also works very well in the 4/3/2 format, whereby students speak for 4 minutes the first time, 3 minutes the second time, and 2 minutes the third time.

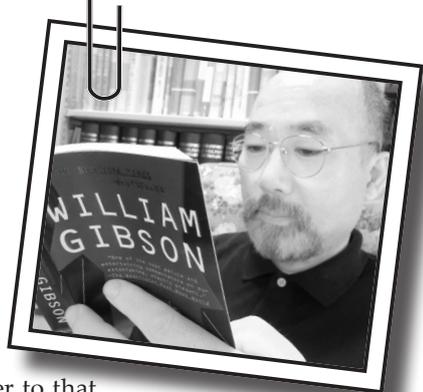
For a possible follow-up, ask students at random which books most caught their attention, or which books they might like to read next. This allows the teacher an extra opportunity to monitor which books the students are currently interested in. This could be done in either English or Japanese, depending on the needs and abilities of your students.

### ADDENDUM

I try to get involved in discussions periodically, but I keep my role in English as much as I can get away with, allowing the students the opportunity to answer in Japanese if they find they are unable to say what they need to say. If they are being lazy and I think they can say what they want to in English, I encourage them to try. I also give students various phrases and structures to help them along in English.

### REFERENCE

Helgesen, M. (2010, October 22). *Think Time—the power of task planning* [Video File] Retrieved from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBB4WnaTpZo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBB4WnaTpZo)



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

Stephen A. Shucart and Mamoru Takahashi  
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Which is better, a plot-driven story or a character-driven story? The answer to that question is similar to the one given to the wife of a logician right after she had a baby. When she asked her husband, "Is it a boy or a girl?", the logician answered, "Yes".

Motivation is considered to be one of the key components that drives second language acquisition, and nowhere is this more evident than in the field of extensive reading. Helping students choose the proper graded reader is one of the keys to increasing and maintaining their motivation. By giving meta-information on patterns found in the text, we can change our students' perspectives, raise their awareness when choosing a book, and increase their enjoyment of the stories they read.

Obviously, the goal of this paper is not to debate the intrinsic merits of plot-driven versus character-driven stories, nor is it to be a creative writing primer on how to write a character-driven or plot-driven novel. Rather the authors will present the findings of the pilot study of an ongoing project to rate graded readers using a "plot versus character" continuum on a 7-part Likert scale. We will then analyze the results, and show how a teacher of an extensive reading class can use this data to help facilitate their student's decision-making when choosing the most appropriate graded reader.

### Materials

During the first semester of 2012, the authors read a number of novels in the Oxford Bookworms Library (henceforth OBW): 3rd Edition, Stage 4 (1,400 Headwords + Average word count 16,000) and Penguin Readers (henceforth PR): Level 4 (1,700 Headwords).

There were several key features that were identified after reading them. First of all, the novels of OBW Stage 4, and PR Level 4 were evenly distributed along the plot vs. character continuum. Some books were more plot-oriented and others were more character-oriented, and nearly half of the books were in the middle of the continuum. But, when all the books were organized according to genre, the results showed a significant divergence. Later we'll discuss how genres are related to the plot vs. character continuum.

### Key question

But first, a key question needs to be addressed: what is the difference between plot-driven and character-driven stories? Here are some ideas for classifying them. If the story involves detailed descriptions of external events such as chase scenes, fight scenes, and the search for a specific person or object, then the novel is probably plot-driven. If, on the other hand, the story revolves more around the inner feelings and thoughts of the protagonist, and the problems overcoming his or her emotional shortcomings, as well as resolving misunderstandings between individuals in order to solve some sort of moral quandary, then the novel is probably more character-based.

This paper will first present the background and methodology of this study, and then we shall present the data. Next the results will be analyzed, and finally we shall present our conclusions.

### Background

While there is a large number of books and articles supporting the validity of the core concepts of extensive reading and its efficacy in the field of Second Language Acquisition, we have yet to encounter any pragmatic studies on the books themselves.

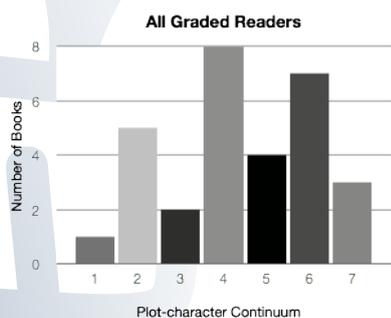


Figure 1. Penguin Readers – Level 4

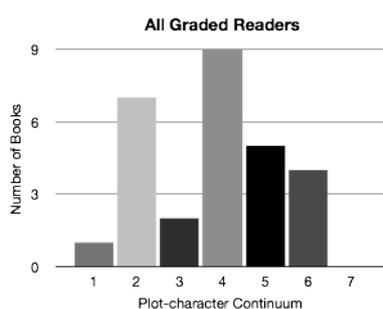


Figure 2. Oxford Bookworms – Level 4

There is literature on the how-to aspects of setting up and running an extensive reading program, the logistics of maintaining a library, either through the school or as a personal library for the ESL/ESL program. Much has been written comparing classroom reading programs to autonomous reading programs, as well as vocabulary-oriented studies on the proper level of comprehensible input. However, we have yet to encounter a systematic study of the stylistics of the graded readers themselves. This paper hopes to address that situation, and provide teachers with a general understanding of how the plot-driven versus character-driven aspects of the novels can allow them to better facilitate their students in making an informed decision as to which graded reader to choose. Proper choices can increase a student's motivation and help them to read more effectively, fluently, and with a deeper understanding of the texts.

## Methodology

Though the ultimate goal of this research is to be as all-inclusive as possible and analyze a cross-section of graded readers from Level 1 through Level 6, we reasoned that, to obtain a general sample for our starting point, we should use graded readers from the middle of the spectrum. Penguin classified Level 4 as intermediate, so we decided that this should provide the proper balance point for the pilot research. Since we had access to both the Oxford Bookworms and the Penguin Graded Readers, we deemed it best for consistency for each of the researchers to analyze only those books from the same publisher. (See the Appendix for a copy of the form we filled out for each book.) The information collected included author and

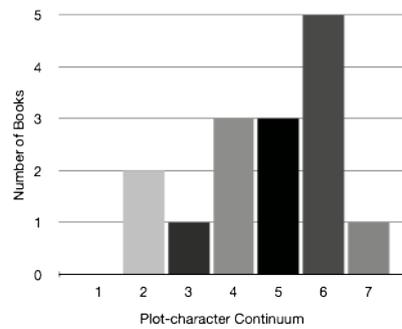


Figure 3. Penguin Readers – Level 4 Classic

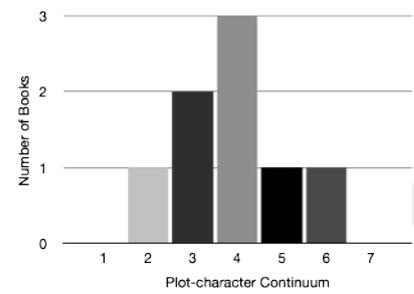


Figure 4. Oxford Bookworms – Level 4 Classic

title, genre, the seven-part Likert scale and an area for comments to note the reasons for our subjective classification. Since this was a subjective analysis, the authors met almost daily to compare notes in an attempt to utilize similar criteria for our judgments. Once the raw data was collected we entered our findings into the Apple application Numbers and generated bar graphs to better facilitate visual pattern recognition.

## Results

Figures 1-8 give a visual illustration of the raw data gathered from our research. Along the x-axis, 1 indicates plot-orientation and 7 indicates character-orientation. We chose to include a bar graph to better visualize and compare the results.

## Discussion

The first pattern that emerges from this research is the fact that, for the totals of all the books in both the OBW and PR books, #4 on the Likert scale—the balance point on the plot versus character spectrum—typified the majority of graded readers: 8 books (32%) for OBW and 9 books (27%) for the PR. It was only when we separated the totals according to genres that a different pattern emerged. Classic books had a tendency to be more character-oriented while mystery and thrillers were to be found more on the plot-driven side of the continuum.

Two obvious questions presented themselves. Is the plot vs. character continuum something intrinsic to the genres or is it a strategy used by the editors of graded readers? Compared with the classics, the genre novels have a tendency to group at the far ends of the continuum. For example, a large number of mystery



Figure 5 – Penguin Readers – Level 4 Mystery

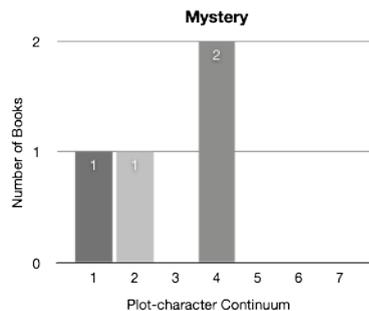


Figure 6 – Oxford Bookworms – Level 4 Mystery

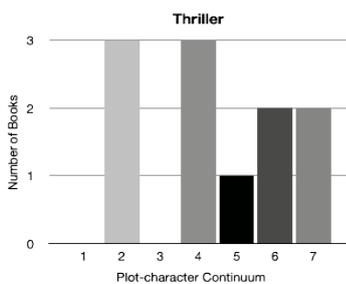


Figure 7. Penguin Readers – Level 4 Thriller

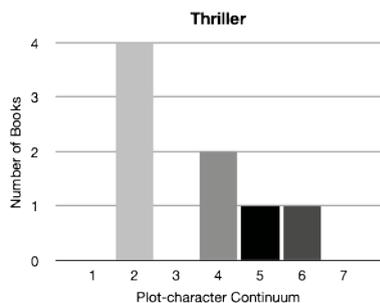


Figure 8. Oxford Bookworms – Level 4 Thriller

and thriller novels are classified as plot-oriented, with mysteries falling even more on the plot side of the spectrum. Many thrillers are of the psychological variety and thus deal with the twisted motivation of serial killers, whereas mysteries tend to hold their readers’ interest by trying to conceal the real perpetrator of the crime until the last moment, which necessitates a more complex and twisting plot.

### Conclusion

Though this research is still in its embryonic stage, several patterns are beginning to emerge. Most overtly, the discovery of the plot versus character-driven continuum itself is a major step towards deconstructing the decision-making process involved in making an informed choice of a graded reader. Then, realizing the significance that genre plays in the continuum gives the teacher of an extensive reading class a new tool for increasing their student’s motivation. Besides genre, the authors feel that the level of the book will be a significant factor in dictating where on the spectrum a graded reader will fall. We speculate that the lower level readers, with their reduced vocabulary, will tend towards plot-oriented stories. Nouns and verbs – the action words, drive an action-packed plot more than depict the inner psychological workings of a protagonist. Graded readers from the higher levels, with larger base vocabularies, will allow for more character development in stories, and we suspect that the higher-level books will tend more towards the character-driven end of the spectrum. Also, graded reader versions of classic novels tend to be more complex in nature and thus fewer classics can be adapted to the lowest level of the readers. These are all topics we plan to investigate as we catalog more books each year. Ultimately, we hope to apply this

methodology to Levels 1-6 of a variety of graded readers and to expand beyond those published by only the two companies utilized for this preliminary research. Finally, the mere fact that extensive reading instructors are actually reading the books they assign to their students will increase students’ motivation to become autonomous learners and lifelong readers. To that effect, the

following quote from the American humorist Will Rogers is appropriate: "You can't teach what you don't know, anymore than you can come back from where you ain't been".

### Appendix

PLOT VS CHARACTER									
Title:									
Level:									
Author:									
Genre:									
	Plot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Character
Notes:									

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# Innovations in ER: A website for creating graded text

Daniel Stewart  
Kaisei Academy



Six or seven years ago I was at a conference sitting and chatting with Rob Waring when Charles Browne walked over and sat down. For the next half hour I didn't say a word. I was just mesmerized listening to the two of them talk about ER and vocabulary learning. They would finish each other's sentences and stretch the ideas. It was like watching Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck trading guitar riffs. At the time I thought it would be great if these two leaders in our field could work together. Now it has finally happened. They have teamed up to create a website called Extensive Reading Central. This article will look at one part of that website – The Online Graded Text Editor (OGTE).

## The Way it has Been

The key to a successful ER programme is having materials at the correct level for the students. Graded readers are available for almost all levels of students, but what about the other materials used in class? Many teachers have students do ER for homework and then talk about the books in class. Teachers often have to create materials for this type of activity. For example, they might create a sample conversation of two students discussing what books they have read. After reading the sample, students then talk about their own books with a classmate. Here is an example of such a sample conversation-

Jun: What book did you read for homework?

Mari: It's called *Monkeys from Mars*. Have you read it?

Jun: No, I haven't. What happens?

Mari: A spaceship full of Martian monkeys comes to earth.

Jun: Do they want to hurt people?

Mari: No, but the humans don't know that so they attack the monkeys.

Jun: That doesn't sound like a good idea.

Mari: It wasn't.

Jun: Do the monkeys get killed?

Mari: That's a secret. You have to read the book yourself.

Jun: Okay, I will. What book did you read?

Mari: ...

Ideally this sample conversation would be at the same level as books the students are reading. Up until now, the teacher had to create the materials themselves, but writing at a given level is skill that requires a lot of practice.

Making classroom materials is not the only time

teachers have to create hand-leveld texts. It is also necessary for research. Not every school can afford a commercial pre and post test so often teachers write a passage to use for a cloze test. The teacher uses their own judgment to create text at a certain level. This takes time and is quite difficult.

## What is Good About it?

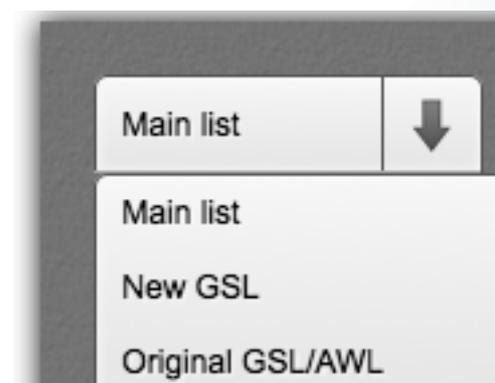
The OGTE website assists teachers in writing texts. It does not replace the judgment of an experienced teacher, but enhances it. Imagine your students are reading graded readers with about 300 headwords for homework. You can write a rough version of the text and then use OGTE to polish it

It is also useful to check the level of existing texts. Imagine you find an interesting article at to [www.wired.com](http://www.wired.com). Copy it and paste it into OGTE and you can see what words will likely be difficult for your students.

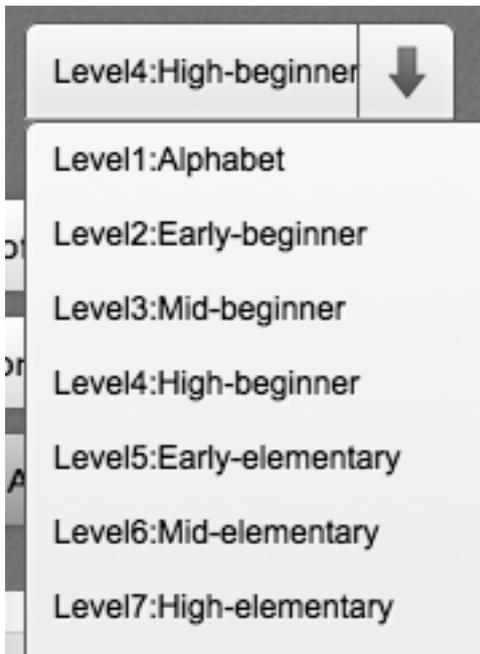
## How do you use it?

Here are the steps you need to follow to modify your own text.

1. Go to [www.er-central.com](http://www.er-central.com) and click on OGTE Editor in the Author's section.



2. Pick which list of words you want to use. Currently you can choose from the General Service List (GSL), the New General Service List recently created by Browne and others (New GSL) or the Main List. In the near future other lists will also be included such as TOEIC, business, PET and KET. In this case I will choose the Main List, which has over 25,000 records.



3. Pick which level you would like. I am choosing Level 4 – High Beginner.

4. Paste in the text you have written. I will use the sample conversation shown above.

5. Wait a few seconds while the OGTE automatically examines the text. It is extremely quick even with very long texts because the manipulation is done in your browser. Your text is not stored on the ER Central servers. Not only does that increase speed, but also it means your texts are secure.

Above the text there are several boxes. The first is called Out of List. This shows 15.05% of the words in my text do not appear in the list I chose – the Main List. For example, the name of one of the speakers is Mari. That name is not in the Main List so it appears in red letters in the text.

6. I can double click on the word Mari and then click on the Ignore this Word

button. All instances of the word Mari automatically switch from red to green and the number of Out of List words goes down to 8.60%.

7. The second box above the text is Out of Level. These words are shown with a double red underline. Currently 15.22% of the words in the text are more difficult than I wanted. At most I want that number to be 5% unknown words so students can understand the text. Therefore I will concentrate on lowering that percentage. In the first line the word *homework* is double underlined. I know for a fact all my students know that word even though it is beyond the High Beginner level. The same is true of the words, *monkey* and *secret*. So I can mark them to be ignored and the percentage of words moves down to 8.60%. For the rest of the Out of Level words I will need to do some rewriting. For example, I used *spaceship*. I can change that to *rocket*. It is still out of the level, but I know my students understand that word as it is a katakana word so I can click on the Ignore this word button. In the same sentence it now says *rocket full of Martian monkeys* with *full of* double underlined. I can simplify that by changing it to *rocket with Martian monkeys*. Similarly I can change *Do the monkeys get killed?* to *Do the monkeys die?* and *but the humans* to *but some men*. With those changes the number of words outside of level is now 4.44% so my students can likely understand the text. Notice as well I found a typo in my original text. The spaceship does not *come* to earth, it *comes* to earth. I just fixed that directly in OGTE. There is no need to go back to the original,

Out of List 15.05% Out of Level 15.05% In List 62.37% Ignored 0.00% Ignore this word

Jun: What book did you read for homework?

Mari: It's called Monkeys from Mars. Have you read it?

Jun: No, I haven't. What happens?

Mari: A spaceship full of Martian monkeys come to earth.

Jun: Do they want to hurt people?

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Jun: That doesn't sound like a good idea.

Mari: It wasn't.

Jun: Do the monkeys get killed?

Mari: That's a secret. You have to read the book yourself.

Jun: Okay, I will. What book did you read?

Mari: ...

Out of List 8.60% Out of Level 15.05% In List 62.37% Ignored 6.45%

Jun: What book did you read for homework?

Mari: It's called Monkeys from Mars. Have you read it?

Jun: No, I haven't. What happens?

Mari: A spaceship full of Martian monkeys come to earth.

Jun: Do they want to hurt people?

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Jun: That doesn't sound like a good idea.

Mari: It wasn't.

Jun: Do the monkeys get killed?

Mari: That's a secret. You have to read the book yourself.

Jun: Okay, I will. What book did you read?

Mari: ...|

make the change and paste it into OGTE again. OGTE reexamines the changes on the fly and adjusts the statistics.

With these changes, my text is now at an appropriate level for my students. I could have made these changes without OGTE, but it would have taken a lot more time as OGTE pointed out exactly where I needed to make changes. It is so simple, that you might even consider making several versions of the same text. You could have one at the 300 word level and additional ones at the 200 and 400 word level. That way different students in the same class could do the same activity with level appropriate materials. There is even a Refresh OGTE button so you don't have to quit your browser to start again.

### Potential weaknesses

There are a few problems yet with the OGTE, but none of them are major. First of all the website is set up for use with Windows machines using the Firefox browser. It can be buggy with other browsers. For example, when I tried it with a Mac using Firefox the colour of words did not change when I clicked on the Ignore this word button. The website is still in Beta. Once it is released it will work with other browsers as well. I had no trouble using a Mac with the Safari browser.

Another issue can be seen in the pictures above. Contractions such as *it's* and *haven't* show up as Out of List words. This is no big deal. You can either change them to *it is* and *have not* or click on the Ignore this word button. When I mentioned this to Rob Waring

he explained that they fixed it, but then when they made a change to a different part of the website the apostrophe problem returned. This has happened several times now so they are leaving fixing the apostrophes until everything else is set.

An improvement I would suggest is to put head word numbers beside the levels. So it would say *Level 4: High beginner (201-300)* instead of just *Level 4: High beginner*. That would make it easier to pick the correct level.

The final problem is not a problem at all. Some people will insist a word like homework should be in the top 300 words. You can't please everyone with the

lists. Everyone has different opinions on what words should be included in a list. The British National Corpus has *homework* as the 7,300th most common word. If you don't like the current lists, you can get Waring and Browne to add a list of your own creation. Keep in mind though that regardless of which list you use OGTE is just a tool. It will not eliminate the need for human writers. We are still needed to make decisions on words that OGTE points out.

### Conclusion

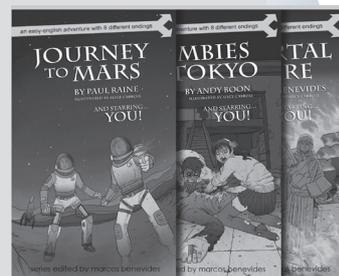
Sometimes you need to write texts for classroom use or research. OGTE is an extremely effective tool to help you write those texts quickly and well. It is also useful to check the level of existing texts. The website is already solid, but as more people use it and give advice it will get even better, so please give it a try.

### Coming soon!

The Atama ii-Books series is made up of simple, high-quality, multi-path ebook titles in a variety of adventure-based genres, for children or for adults. Titles include one full-colour illustration every 115 words. Texts are around 300 headwords and 2,500 running-words, similar to "Starters" from other publishers.

The series is produced in Japan by Marcos Benevides, with titles by Andy Boon, Mark Firth, Ramy Habeeb, Lesley Ito, Ted O'Neill, Paul Raine, and Chris Valvona.

Visit [www.atama-ii.com](http://www.atama-ii.com).





## 2013 ER COLLOQUIUM PREVIEW

### The relationship between speed reading and extensive reading

Rob Waring

Notre Dame Seishin University

There are distinct similarities and differences between speed reading and extensive reading and they complement each other in terms of pedagogical implementation and cognitive processing. Speed differs for different types of reading materials. Some online speed reading programs can help record and track a learner's fluency development over time.

Many people assume that speed reading is the same as extensive reading and in many ways they are very similar. Proponents of both schemes expect students to read easy texts with a primary focus on fluency but there is a difference in terms of relative emphasis on comprehension or on building lexical access speed. Speed reading is primarily a linguistic task focused on developing word recognition speed and developing appropriate eye movements. Extensive Reading differs in the sense that its aim is not faster word recognition per se but the practice of reading text fluently with almost all the text being understood. While high comprehension is important for speed reading, very high levels of comprehension are not necessary. Typical speed reading programs expect learners to comprehend 80-90% of the text and often tell them that if they understand 100% of the text, they are reading too slowly.

The rationale for speed reading is essentially based on the notion that increasing speed leads to faster recognition (Bell, 2001). That is, if you practice something more quickly than you would normally do something, then you'll train yourself to do it faster. Long distance athletes often follow the same regimen by constantly trying to improve lap times in short bursts for shorter distances which will supposedly give them better overall speed for longer distances. Speed reading helps learners to recognize words faster without necessarily focusing on high levels of comprehension.

Typically researchers have suggested that for the average person, speed reading is limited by physical constraints such as the speed at which the brain can recognize words, or the speed at which the eye can

move from word to word. The average native speaker reads at about 250-350 words per minute but with training can increase this. Many people subvocalize when reading (i.e. say words in their head as they read) and being able to switch this off can increase speed. There is some evidence that deaf readers, who cannot subvocalize as they don't have the sounds for words, can read considerably faster than non-deaf readers. They also seem to have a larger span of words they process in one saccadic movement.

Typical methods for enhancing reading speed include repeated readings of the same text, or timed reading where learners are asked to continue reading the same text but to read x% faster than before. Rapid Serial Visual Presentation is a new method of speed recognition whereby words are flashed on a screen in the same place with reading rates of 720 words per minute being common. One advantage of this is that because the words are flashed in the same place on the screen one by one the reader has no time to subvocalize. This method is said to be very beneficial for readers with dyslexia or those with problems with eye movements when reading. However, repeated words are often not identified and can lead to temporary repetition blindness and lack of comprehension. Moreover, once the train of thought is lost, the user cannot easily re-read sections. There are also issues of image recognition, and this method is limited to digital presentation.

One's reading speed is not constant for all types of texts. Reading prose in paragraph format involves different eye movements from reading somewhat more randomly on webpages or a small smartphone screen. It is now well established that people read 20-25% slower on a screen than they do on paper and this has obvious effects on the amount of material they can read in a given time. Further research is also needed to determine how the busyness and highly distracting nature of webpages affect reading speed.

Second language learners must choose from among the different ways to build their reading speed, and they should determine how to balance their time between speed reading and extensive reading.

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#### Reference

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## Student narratives of extensive reading investment

Peter Hourdequin and Satomi Shibata  
Tokoha University

"Investment" is a concept that connects social practice to identity formation, drawing upon Bourdieu's (1999) notions of social and linguistic capital. Peirce (1995) was the first SLA researcher to employ this concept as an alternative to existing conceptualizations of motivation. For Peirce (1995), investment "accurately signals the socially and historically constructed relationship . . . to the target language and . . . the [learner's] sometime ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (p. 17). In our research, we use the concept in a similar way, though with a narrower focus: we explore investment in ER practice by EFL learners who already appeared to be heavily invested in English language learning.

With this research project, we are exploring the following questions:

*How do students perceive ER practice within the context of their own English learning?*

*What factors contribute to students investment / non-investment in ER practice?*

*How might students ER practices be seen to relate to their L1 reading habits?*

This study was conducted within the Faculty of Foreign Studies of a medium-sized four-year university in Shizuoka, Japan, where participation in extensive reading practice has been growing significantly over the past four years. Most students encounter ER in classroom settings, but ER is also strongly supported in the university's self-access language learning center. Previous research we conducted into ER participation at our school (Rachi et al., 2012) indicated that most students in our faculty tend to practice ER for a year or more and read more than 300,000 words per year. Avid readers in our faculty tend to read up to and exceeding one million words per year.

To select research participants for this study, the three researchers pooled their implicit knowledge about students' ER practice, and agreed to recruit ten students who appeared to be highly motivated intermediate to advanced English learners with more than one year of ER experience. Though all of our participants exhibited a strong affinity for English

learning, in our recruitment we sought to include a mix of both avid and reluctant readers.

Our research project used narrative frames as a data collection tool to uncover the terms with which students describe their ER practice and its putative efficacy. A narrative frame is "a written story template consisting of a series of incomplete sentences and blank spaces of varying lengths. It is structured as a story in skeletal form" (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 402). Based upon our research questions and discussions about the kind of information we wanted to elicit from participants, we constructed a two-page narrative frame in Japanese. Our goal was to create spaces for participants to reflect upon their own ER practices.

The two Japanese members of our research team, who are also ER practitioners, tested the frame themselves and recommended revisions based upon this experience. After obtaining informed consent, we asked each participant to complete a written narrative frame within one week of receiving it.

The ten completed narrative frames that we received offer a wealth of information about how participants view ER in relation to their study of English at university. As of this writing, we are still in the process of analysing the rich textual data that we have received. Our approach to analyzing the data is loosely based upon a grounded theory approach: The three researchers involved in this project will first work independently to highlight key words and phrases in the data and to possibly identify patterns that emerge related to investment; after working independently, we will meet as a group to share our insights and make sense of the results we found collectively.

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## 2013 ER COLLOQUIUM PREVIEW

### Developing explicit grammatical knowledge and high- and low-frequency vocabulary through ER and IR

Stuart McLean

This experimental research provides evidence that ER is not only more effective than combined intensive reading and grammar translation at the facilitation of incidental high-frequency vocabulary growth, but is also at least as effective as combined intensive reading and grammar translation at the development of explicit grammatical knowledge and low-frequency vocabulary knowledge.

First- and second-year Japanese university EFL learners ( $N = 50$ ) were randomly assigned to ER or IR groups. Written receptive vocabulary knowledge of the first 1,000-word frequency level was measured through a true or false vocabulary test. Written receptive vocabulary knowledge of the first and second 1,000-word frequency levels was measured through a Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), and written receptive vocabulary knowledge of the first to eighth 1,000-word frequency levels was measured through the Vocabulary Size Test (VST). Finally, explicit grammatical knowledge was measured through the structure subset of the Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT). Pre and post high-frequency vocabulary measures were taken, while only post-test CELT and VST measurements were taken.

In-class participants conducted the same speaking learning activities while both treatments were conducted outside of class and time on task was controlled for. The ER group conducted 70 minutes of ER as homework. The participants' sixty-minute average reading amount was established (4,602 words), and so a weekly reading target of 5000 words was set. The IR group participants completed IR and grammar translation exercises from two entrance examination preparation textbooks that came with recommended completion times as homework, and students were

asked to complete tasks totaling at least seventy minutes a week. Participants recorded how much homework was completed each week in homework journals.

To provide evidence of reading comprehension, ER group participants were required to complete tests on the Moodle Graded Reader Module related to the books they had read. Students were monitored and encouraged to ensure that they completed their weekly reading target.

IR group participants read 16,466 words and completed related exercises, while ER group participants read 107,964 words. The self-reported mean time spent conducting the ER treatment (63.7 minutes) was not significantly greater than that by the IR group (59.8 minutes).

The pre-treatment true and false test results for the two groups of participants indicated that the ER group had a non-significant, slightly greater knowledge of the first 1,000-word frequency level. The IR group had a non-significant slightly greater knowledge of the combined first and second 1,000-word frequency levels. As no significant difference was present between the groups' vocabulary test scores, gains between the pretest and the delayed posttests by the two groups were compared.

Gains in written receptive vocabulary knowledge of the first and second 1,000-word frequency levels by the ER group were significantly greater than those by the IR group. This suggests that ER, through allowing students to read more fluently and providing a comprehensible frame in which unknown words are met and recycled more frequently than IR, has facilitated incidental vocabulary growth. The greater and stronger significance of growth in the first 1,000-word frequency level than in the first and second 1,000-word frequency levels might be expected considering the expected greater frequency of vocabulary recycling within the graded readers read by ER group participants than in the material read by the IR group participants.

This research, while providing evidence of the efficaciousness of ER and the limited efficaciousness of IR, also provides an example of how researchers may attempt to control time on task during ER research, and evidence of the advantages of conducting experimental rather than quasi-experimental research.

The ER Colloquium is at 4:15 Saturday 26th October in room 301, Kobe Convention Center, Portopia, Kobe.

## ER in Japanese universities:

### How they do it.

Thomas E. Bieri  
Nanzan University

What is extensive reading (ER)? How do you define the term? How do you use it in your teaching practice? I set out to discover the answers to these questions among ER practitioners in Japan and compare their answers with widely accepted principles of ER.

When I say widely accepted principles of ER, I take as my basic starting point the principles outlined by Richard Day and Julian Bamford

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.

(Day & Bamford, 1998; 2002).

In order to compare these principles with perceptions and practices of language instructors in Japan, I created and carried out a survey. I created it online and sent an explanation and a link to the JALT Extensive Reading Special Interest Group's mailing list, which at that time had over two hundred addresses. This was a set of instructors who I felt had self-identified as being practitioners of, or at least having strong interest in, extensive reading by joining the ER SIG. I hoped for a large response, especially since the survey was rather short, but only received 22 responses.

The survey consisted of eight questions in total. The first two were open-ended and without making some kind of answer to both of these questions, respondents were unable to submit their answers.

1. What do you understand the term "Extensive Reading" to mean?

2. Please describe how you use Extensive Reading in your teaching. Be as detailed as you like.

All other questions were optional. Questions

three, four and five asked respondents to choose one (or more) responses from a list. They were as follows:

3. What grade level of students do you primarily use Extensive Reading with?

Elementary School; Junior High School; High School; College/University; Graduate School; Other

4. Choose any types of materials you commonly ask or allow your students to use.

Graded Readers, Fiction; Graded Readers, Non-fiction; Leveled Readers (written for native speaker learners); Pictorial or Graphic-rich materials; Authentic Fiction; Authentic Non-fiction; Other

5. Do you set a specific amount of reading for students to do? If so, what method do you use?

Number of words read target; Number of pages read target; Number of books read target; Time spent reading; Other

I also asked, "Do you ever assign specific materials to be read for Extensive Reading?" and "If you grade students' Extensive Reading, how do you do it?"

After receiving the responses, I looked for answers that either supported or contradicted the principles outlined above, tallied and analyzed them, and tried to draw some conclusions about the perceptions and practice of ER in Japan. While such a small sample size as well as sometimes contradictory and/or incomplete data makes it hard to make any confident generalizations, I did conclude that practice in Japanese universities may run counter to principles in the areas of learner autonomy regarding what and how much they read, in using comprehension quizzes, and in assigning grades for extensive reading. It also appears possible that practice may not match the principles in the areas of encouraging faster reading and the roles of teachers.

## References

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Don't miss the Great Book Giveaway at the end, and the SIG AGM afterwards!

## Reader response journals in EFL

Eleanor Kane

Shimane University

Many teachers dislike the artifice of book tests and written reports, preferring to have students read rather than respond to their reading. There is always this dichotomy in ER programmes, a tug between wanting students to enjoy their reading and ensuring that students are actually doing it. After reading Donalyn Miller's *The Book Whisperer* (2009), I decided to try reader response journals with my students last semester.

As Miller says, "The reality is that you can never mandate or monitor how much reading your students are doing" (p. 143). And yet, she has a class of grade school children reading prolifically each year, well on their way to becoming lifelong readers. One of the tools she uses is the reader response journal for the children to record their free voluntary reading. However, Miller's work deals with an L1 setting while literature on reader response journals in EFL generally concerns class novels or highly advanced students of literature.

To introduce the idea of a reader response

journal, I gave students an A4 notebook and asked them to decorate the cover with pictures relating to their hobbies and things that they enjoyed, including books. I thought that this would allow me to recommend books to students I did not yet know.

We created our own format for the notebooks in class, gluing a genre wheel to the inside cover, and adding a page for 'books I want to read', which students added to as they listened to their classmates' recommendations. A page of writing prompts is also useful. I decided against including a reading log here because I knew that it would take several days to return the notebooks to students.

For the first entry, students were given a writing prompt in class to write one page about their favourite Japanese writers and genres, ask some questions, and tell me if they had ever done ER before. I deliberately asked for one page so that enthusiastic students could write single-lined, tiny handwriting while other students could write less. Each time I returned the notebooks I gave students some prompts in addition to instructing them to answer my questions from the notebook.

Having the writing prompts certainly saved my time when replying since I could write roughly the same initial reply and then respond to student questions and ask specific questions about their reading. Still, teachers should plan on *at least* five minutes per student for every journal entry. It's useful to be near ER books while you respond so that you check titles and authors and how those books are catalogued in your library when making recommendations to students.

74% of students claimed to love this homework, 20% claimed to like it, while 7% disliked it. 96% said that they could write their response in one hour or under. 82% claimed to read more because of writing the journal. My presentation at the ER Colloquium will discuss these results and students' reactions to the journals, in addition to practical concerns such as what items to include in the journals, and how to respond effectively. I will also bring along some journals and reading logs to show other teachers what to expect.

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## ER outreach grant

As part of its outreach program, the ER SIG is happy to announce two library seed endowments, one for within Japan, and one for overseas. To be eligible a recipient must demonstrate a need for or benefit of acquiring specific ER materials for their teaching context, a reasonable likelihood of these materials providing ongoing support to reading education and potentially being a seed for a wider establishment of a program, and not currently have access to a budget adequate to purchase the required materials. The application procedure and other requirements can be found on the ER SIG website. It is intended that each year at least one recipient for each endowment (the overseas and the domestic) will be selected, provided that SIG funds are adequate and that qualified applications are received. We also look forward to working with our Associate Members in seeing how they also can support this mission.

## Navigating extensive reading through uncharted territories

Mathew White & Sophie Muller

Thanks to the support fostered through the First Extensive Reading World Congress and the grant received from the Extensive Reading SIG, we were able to create and implement "Reading for Independence: Tibetan Program", a series of extensive reading workshops for Tibetan refugees in India.

Creating an ER program can be a daunting task even in teaching contexts in which we are already familiar. However, we have found overcoming the challenges of developing programs outside our zones of familiarity creates ideal situations for professional development, and developing this and other volunteer ER programs overseas has helped us grow as teachers and researchers.

In terms of teacher development, many of the benefits come from the opportunity for team teaching, which has forced us to prioritize and articulate our teaching beliefs, allowed for peer observation, and fostered cooperation and synergy in lesson planning and curriculum design. Developing and implementing the program also allowed us to increase our repertoire of reading activities: the supportive team teaching environment empowered us to try new or underutilized activities. As the student-teacher ratio was lower, we could engage more with students on a one-on-one or small-group basis.

Furthermore, participation in the program deepened our familiarity with, and appreciation of, extensive reading materials, graded and non-graded. We were compelled to more closely examine the reading materials we were providing to students to:

- integrate them all into one unified readability system;
- search for examples within the materials in order to educate students on elements of style in writing;
- prepare ourselves with knowledge of books we could recommend to students with different reading preferences, and at various reading levels and ages.

As for research insights, we are now even more convinced that reading is more than a task undertaken to learn English: reading is a humanistic enterprise, connecting the reader to the world, her peers and herself. It is thus limiting to assess the efficacy of ER solely on standardized test performance, and we find

it disheartening to see so much attention being paid to that.

To measure the benefits of ER in terms of human potential, the definition of motivation as outlined by the Self-Determination Theory (Deci, 2000) could be an efficient tool. Motivation is indeed presented as a continuum and the psychological characteristics of its different stages provide a great canvas to chart the territory of reading motivation and create an ER Motivation Scale.

The Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al., 1989) as well as the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (Widfield, 1997) are two instruments that could also be adapted or used as references in the process of establishing an ER Motivation Scale. Students should be invited to this new territory in the later stages of translation of the scale and its pre-testing.

We hope that an ER Motivation Scale will reflect the enthusiasm and love of reading we have witnessed in Japan and our volunteer ER programs overseas, as well as provide another perspective in the assessing of ER efficacy; as with navigation, it is better to have more than one star in the sky.

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VOLUME 6 No. 2

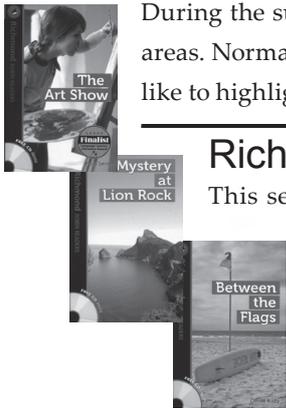
## New graded reader releases

Bjorn Fuisting

During the summer break it is always good to take stock of your ER library and see if it needs replenishing in any areas. Normally most new releases come to Japan in time for the new school year but this year they keep coming. I'd like to highlight three newcomers, one in book form, one e-book only and one that now is available in both formats.

### Richmond Robin Readers (Nellie's English Books)

This series of graded readers will finally be available in Japan thanks to Nellie's English Books. They are launching the full catalogue of 57 original stories written for the EFL market. Over the years it has been awarded 7 finalist LLL awards and taken home the grand prize twice. It is made up of 6 levels ranging from 300 to 1800 headwords and each book comes with a CD, glossary and extra activities. If you are looking to expand your library with some high quality original stories, this series is worth checking out, especially levels 1-3.



### ELI Graded Readers (englishbooks.jp)

The ELI books have been available in book form for a while in Japan but this award winning series deserves some more attention, especially now when englishbooks.jp will also carry the whole range of 60 titles as e-books as well. The ELI readers are divided into 3 series:

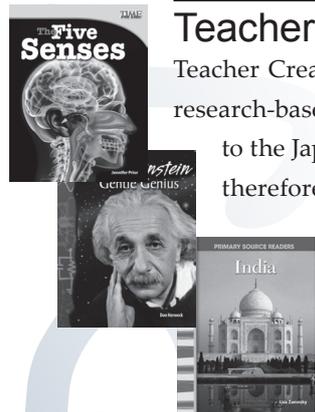
Young Readers	Teen Readers	Young Adult Readers
24 titles	14 titles	22 titles
4 stages	3 stages	6 stages
100-400 headwords	600-1000 headwords	600-unabridged

The Young Readers and Teen Readers series are a mix of original stories and retold classics, whilst the Young Adult Readers series only has retold classics. Each book or e-book comes with an audio recording, picture dictionary/glossary, and extra activities. There is also a free downloadable guide and more support material on the ELI homepage. This is a well-written and thought-out series with highly engaging stories, which has resulted in three titles being selected as finalists for the LLL awards both in 2012 and 2013. I would definitely recommend having a look at especially the Young Readers and Teen Readers since I am sure they would be a welcome addition to most ER programs.



### Teacher Created Material (Pandabooks.jp)

Teacher Created Materials is an award winning California-based publisher with a reputation for high quality research-based educational material. It is very interesting that Pandabooks.jp is bringing some of their e-readers to the Japanese market. Note that these series are originally published for native English speakers and might therefore not suit all ER programs. Also, it seems like only a small part of the very substantial series are currently available (sold as Add-on Packs in the United States). However, the e-readers are all of high quality with compelling content.



TIME Readers	Science Readers	Primary Source Readers
Nonfiction	Famous scientist	World cultures through time
14 titles	10 titles	10 titles
Grades 2-5	Grades 4-8	Grades 4-5

In other news, the e-book revolution continues with Pandabooks.jp adding other series and titles to their already large stock of e-readers. You can now get e-readers from these series: I'm Reading, Story Club, Imagine, Right Now, Garnet Oracle, Express Classic, and Graphic Shakespeare. Most of the new series are originally written for native speakers of English, so they might be best suited for international schools or your own child. In the same genre but in book form are the Express Readers sets (by englishbooks.jp) that range from classic children's stories to illustrated classics. You can also stock up with new offerings of Oxford University Press's Dominoes and Oxford Read & Discover, Macmillan's Graded Readers as well as Scholastic's Readers and Popcorn Readers. The full list can be viewed at: [www.ersig.org/drupal-ersig/new-releases-graded-readers](http://www.ersig.org/drupal-ersig/new-releases-graded-readers).

## Recent research in extensive reading and extensive listening

Stuart McLean

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Burrows, L. (2013).

*The effects Of extensive reading and reading strategies on reading self-efficacy* [e-book]. US: ProQuest Information & Learning; 2013. Available from: PsycINFO, Ipswich, MA.

This study investigates the role that extensive reading and reading strategies play in the cultivation of reading self-efficacy. Participants were divided into four groups: an intensive reading group (control group), an extensive reading group, a reading strategies group, and an extensive reading/reading strategies group. The findings highlight the detrimental effects of teaching methodologies which deprive learners of the opportunity to develop their own cognitive abilities. With the introduction of reading strategy intervention and/or extensive reading practice, the participants in the experimental groups of this study were able to develop the skills needed to become more autonomous, empowered readers.

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Chun, E., Choi, S., & Kim, J. (2012).

The effect of extensive reading and paired-associate learning on long-term vocabulary retention: An event-related potential study. *Neuroscience Letters*, 521(2), 125-129.

Behavioral results indicated that both extensive reading (ER) and paired-associate learning (PAL) led to substantial short term retention of the target words. In contrast, on a long-term basis, ER was more effective than PAL to a considerable degree as indicated by a large effect size ( $d=1.35$ ). Evidence from the N400 effects ( $d=1.70$ ) observed in the parietal electrode group (P3, Pz, P4) provided further support for the superior effects of ER over PAL on long-term vocabulary retention. The converging evidence challenges the assumptions of some L2 researchers because it provides the first ERP evidence that ER is more conducive to long-term vocabulary retention than PAL.

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de Burgh-Hirabe, R., & Feryok, A. (2013).

A model of motivation for extensive reading in Japanese as a foreign language. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 25(1), 72-93.

Numerous studies have reported that extensive reading (ER) has a positive influence on affect. Recent studies suggest that ER changes motivation. This study presents a model of complex and dynamic motivation for ER. This qualitative study examined the motivation for ER of nine learners of Japanese as a foreign language. Data from interviews and journal entries were analyzed for factors influencing their motivation. The participants' motivation changed as different factors interacted, leading to different patterns of engagement with ER, which fit within the model. Implications concern the importance of varied materials and of making ER obligatory.

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de Burgh-Hirabe, R., & Feryok, A. (2012).

Japanese as a Foreign Language extensive reading and self-regulation: Case studies of high school language learners. *New Zealand Studies In Applied Linguistics*, 18(1), 21-35.

This study concentrates on the processes through which students conduct Extensive Reading. Much of the research on ER uses large-scale surveys that may not reveal what learners actually do when reading extensively. Findings posit that students who met both study and ER expectations were those who could self-regulate their behaviour and context. Additionally, external demands, especially the national exam, distracted students from conducting ER outside of class. The implications are that reading in class would secure a certain amount of reading for all students, and this could also provide support for developing self-regulatory abilities.

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Haider, Z., & Akhter, E. (2012).

Extensive reading in EFL classroom at secondary schools in Bangladesh: Current practices and future possibilities. *International Education Studies*, 5(3), 126-133.

The study reports the responses of 100 secondary English teachers on different aspects of using extensive reading tasks in the EFL classrooms of Bangladeshi junior secondary schools. It is found that though the teachers of Bangladesh express positive beliefs about the benefits of extensive reading, the techniques they follow in their classrooms at present mostly encourage intensive reading. A combination of initiatives such as teacher training, awareness-raising, curriculum reform and changing existing assessment formats can promote the practices of extensive reading activities among secondary school learners.

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Hung, S. (2012).

Extensive reading for undergraduate EFL learners: Multimodal text vs. linear text. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A*, 72.

Scholars have advocated that the literacy of multimodal text is indispensable and irreversible in this era of widespread use of Information and Computer Technology (ICT). In response to this advocacy, this quasi-experimental study was designed to examine effects of English internet extensive reading on the development of English proficiency of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). The current study examines effects of the extensive reading of multimodal text against that of linear text. The pedagogical implications incorporate the extensive reading of linear and/or multimodal text into formal EFL curricula and utilize multimodal informational text.

Nation, P., & Anthony, L. (2013). Mid-frequency readers. *Journal of Extensive Reading*, 1, 5-16.

This article describes a new, free extensive reading resource for learning the mid-frequency words of English and for reading well-known texts with minor vocabulary adaptation. A gap exists between the end of graded readers at around 3,000 word families and the vocabulary size of around 8000 word families needed to read unsimplified texts. Mid-frequency readers are designed to fill this gap. They consist of texts from Project Gutenberg adapted for learners with vocabulary sizes of 4,000, 6,000, and 8,000 word families. The article also discusses research that needs to be done on mid-frequency vocabulary and readers.

Racine, J., Benevides, M., Graham-Marr, A., Coulson, D., Browne, C., Poulshock, J., & Waring, R. (2013).

Vocabulary acquisition, input, and extensive reading: A conversation. *The Language Teacher*, 37(4), 56-60.

JALT member Joseph Poulshock recently posted a video entitled "How do humans acquire language?" to the extensive reading (ER) website BeeOasis.com. In it, he describes his Acquire Language by Understanding Messages (ALBUM) theory, by which he means that the comprehension of input—for example, through ER—is the best way to acquire a second language. The video prompted an online discussion in which a number of JALT members exchanged ideas about the acquisition of vocabulary, the role of ER in the acquisition of various aspects of word knowledge, and the relative importance of input to the language acquisition process. An abbreviated version of this conversation is presented in the article.

Stoeckel, T., Reagan, N., & Hann, F. (2012). Extensive Reading Quizzes and Reading Attitudes. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(1), 187-198.

Teacher evaluation of extensive reading has often been discouraged by ER experts because of its possible negative effect on students' attitudes toward reading. Little investigation has been done to verify this view. One study conducted by Reed and Goldberg (2008) found that L2 reading attitudes of 130 Japanese university students who took weekly ER quizzes for one semester did not differ from those of 127 students in a control group. The purpose of the present study was to address this gap in research as well as the methodological shortcomings of Reed and Goldberg's study.

Wanzek, J., Vaughn, S., Scammacca, N. K., Metz, K., Murray, C. S., Roberts, G., & Danielson, L. (2013).

Extensive reading interventions for students with reading difficulties after grade 3. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(2), 163-195.

This paper extends a report of research on extensive interventions in kindergarten through third grade (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007) to students in Grades 4 through 12, recognizing that many of the same questions about the effectiveness of reading interventions with younger students are important to address with older students, including (a) how effective extensive interventions are at improving reading outcomes for older students with reading difficulties or disabilities and (b) what features of extensive interventions are associated with improved outcomes. Ten studies met criteria for a meta-analysis for effects on comprehension, word reading, word reading fluency, reading fluency, and spelling outcomes.

Webb, S., & Macalister, J. (2013).

Is text written for children useful for L2 extensive reading? *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(2), 300-322.

The researchers completed a corpus-driven analysis of 688 texts written for children, language learners, and older readers to determine the vocabulary size necessary for comprehension for each text type. A vocabulary size of 10,000 words plus knowledge of the proper nouns and marginal words was required to know 98% of the words in both text written for children and text written for older readers. A vocabulary size of 3,000 word families plus knowledge of the proper nouns and marginal words was necessary to know 98% of the words in text written for language learners.

Yamashita, J. (2013).

Word recognition subcomponents and passage-level reading in a foreign language. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 25(1), 52-71.

Three word recognition subcomponents (decoding, sight word reading, lexical meaning access) and general English language ability were examined in terms of their contributions to predicting the reading comprehension and reading rate of Japanese university students learning English. Multiple regression analyses revealed that, in addition to the contribution made by English language ability, lexical meaning access was a significant predictor of both reading comprehension and reading rate, and decoding was a predictor of reading rate only. These results not only supported some previous findings but also added new insight into the influence of efficiency of lexical meaning access on reading comprehension.



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