

Final Action Research Report (2010)

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1. Title Starting an Extensive Reading Program

2. Context

Level: Second-year students of senior high school
Class size: 21 students
Time: 50 minutes × 2 lessons / week
Subject: Writing
Textbook: Practical English Writing (Ikeda Shoten)
Koubun Note(構文ノート) (Yamaguchi shoten)
Extensive Reading Materials (leveled readers, graded readers)

Problems:

<students>

- Students have always read difficult texts and struggled to understand the surface meanings of the texts. Thus they have a strong reading habit of word-by-word translation even if they read relatively easy texts.
- Students have never read English for pleasure. The reading materials given to them are either textbooks and workbooks in order to translate the sentences, learn new vocabulary, understand the difficult constructions and solve the comprehension questions.
- Students have difficulty in writing about their daily topics in easy English. There is a huge gap between the level of English they read and what they write.

<teachers>

- Teachers strongly believe that intensive reading with traditional grammar-translation method is beneficial to improve their reading skills and overall English skills.
- Teachers strongly believe that it is more important to give grammar exercises and translation than to give chance to write about daily topics related to their lives.
- Teachers are not familiar with Extensive Reading Program and were not aware of the benefits of Extensive Reading. Thus they show little interest in extensive reading.

<materials, syllabus and assessments >

- There is no single extensive reading materials at school.
- I was just transferred to this school in April, 2010. The course syllabus was already made in the previous year. Thus it is difficult to introduce the extra activities of extensive reading and creative writing activities in Writing class. Even though I manage to introduce these activities as extra ones, it is far more difficult to introduce alternative assessments of the activities in the assessment plan of Writing class.

3. Goals

- to introduce extensive reading activities and find a way to start a program at this school .
- to help students to read for pleasure and have them read more than 30 books.
- to help students to express their ideas about what they read.

4. What I did

- Prepared approximately 200 extensive reading materials.
 - Applied School Scholarship for teachers and obtained 50,000 yen for purchasing books. Also obtained the permission of starting extensive reading program from a principal
 - Collected approximately 50 sample books and donated approximately 80 books in order to make an extensive reading library
 - Asked School Librarian to purchase extensive reading materials.
- Slowly introduced Extensive Reading activities in class.
 - Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)
 - Interactive Book Talk
 - ‘My favorite book’ posters
 - Checking reading speed for extensive reading materials
- Created a new elective class of extensive reading for third-year students in 2011 and made a syllabus for the new class.
- Made a budget for extensive reading materials for the next year.

5. Results

1) The Amount of Students’ Reading

The amount of reading was measured by the total number of words (Σ of the words) and the total number of books (Σ of the books) the students read. As seen in Table 1, the average number of total words read for six months was 30,548.60 and the average number of total books was 34.05.

Students started to read Leveled Readers during 15-minute Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) time in July. They had 15-minute in-class SSR several times in July and September but were not asked to read outside of the class. From October students were asked to read outside of the class in addition to in-class SSR. However, it was getting more and more difficult to make time for in-class SSR because students needed more and more time for creative writing activities in class. As a result, students had in-class SSR only twice a month and they were not motivated to read outside of the class. From December extensive reading class was regularly offered once a week and in-class SSR was increased from 15 minutes to 25 or 30 minutes. Gradually students started to read outside of the class.

Table 1 The Amount of Reading from July to February (n=20)

	Ave	Max	Mini
words	30,548.60	48,886	13,720
books	34.05	43	21

2) Reading Speed (WPM)

Students read one book from Penguin Readers (Starter level, 900 running words) and checked the reading speed for extensive reading materials. Students wrote a short summary and comments in Japanese and checked their reading speed after finishing reading a whole book. As seen in Table 2, students greatly improved their reading speed from 94.67 Word Per Minutes (WPM) in October to 185.48 WPM in February. The gain score was 90.81.

Table 2 WPM of Individual Students (n=21)

Students	WPM in October	WPM in December	WPM in February	gain	ΣOf the words read	ΣOf the books read
1	69	200	153	84	13,720	24
2	93	131	190	97	22,015	33
3	106	177	<u>236</u>	<u>130</u>	38,825	42
4	69	119	130	61	25,706	35
5	107	128	195	88	25,911	49
6	81	109	<u>226</u>	<u>145</u>	31,845	38
7	96	77	112	16	32,755	40
8	99	154	193	94	27,215	26
9	77	105	182	<u>105</u>	29,707	34
10	103	135	167	64	30,318	30
11	129	159	<u>258</u>	<u>129</u>	48,886	28
12	101	125	190	89	22,982	30
13	87	110	195	<u>108</u>	26,607	35
14	137	177	<u>224</u>	87	40,140	21
15	90	117	<u>247</u>	<u>157</u>	29,366	43
16	86	110	188	<u>102</u>	34,837	33
17	85	114	133	48	36,472	33
18	88	80	103	15	25,637	34
19	123	142	<u>220</u>	97	no data	no data
20	74	73	173	99	24,019	39
21	88	107	180	92	44,009	34
Ave	94.67	126.14	185.48	90.81	30,548.60	34.05

3) Students Survey

Attitude Survey was conducted only once in February. The first question asked what STEP grades students held. As in Table 3, only 3 students held Pre-second grade and 11 students didn't hold any grades. This result didn't illustrate their overall English skills because only two students took STEP test after entering high school. They were not interested in taking STEP test but in the term examination and mock tests.

Table 3 Do you hold STEP Grades? (N=21)

	none	Third	Pre-second	Second	Pre-first
Feb	11	7	3	0	0

The second question asked whether students liked English in general. As seen in Table 4, about half of the students said 'they cannot decide' and the mean score is 3.24.

Table 4 Do you like English ? (N=21)

	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 cannot decide	4 agree	5 strongly agree	<i>mean</i>
February	0	2	12	7	0	3.24

The third question asked whether students enjoyed reading English books. As seen in Table 5, 11 students agreed or strongly agreed. It should be noted that no students disagreed. The mean score is 3.62 and it is a little higher than the one in Table 4.

Table 5 Do you enjoy reading English books? (N=21)

	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 cannot decide	4 agree	5 strongly agree	<i>mean</i>
February	0	0	10	9	2	3.62

The fourth question asked whether students enjoyed the story when they read ER books. As seen in Table 6, 12 students agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score is 3.71 and it is a little higher than the one in Table 5.

Table 6 Do you enjoy the story when they read ER books? (N=21)

	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 cannot decide	4 agree	5 strongly agree	<i>mean</i>
February	0	0	9	9	3	3.71

The fifth question asked whether students believed that they could improve your reading skills through extensive reading. As seen in Table 7, 17 students agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score is 4.00. It shows that students had never experienced extensive reading before but they came to believe that extensive reading was beneficial in improving their reading skills only after six-month extensive reading experience.

Table 7 Do you believe that you can improve your reading skills through extensive reading? (N=21)

	1	2	3	4	5	
	strongly disagree	disagree	agree a little	agree	strongly agree	<i>mean</i>
February	0	0	4	13	4	4.00

Regarding habits of translation and use of dictionary, two questions were asked. Table 8 shows that 80 % of students stopped consulting the dictionary and kept reading. Table 9 shows that students who rarely translate the sentences into Japanese was only 3 even though they read a certain amount of easy books. It should be noted that 5 students still had a habit of translating many times when they read extensive reading books. It shows that it took time and more reading to get rid of the habit of word-by-word translation.

Table 8 Do you consult a dictionary when you meet unknown words? (N=21)

	1	2	3	4	
	always	many times	sometimes	no / skip	<i>mean</i>
February	0	0	4	17	3.81

Table 9 Do you automatically translate the sentence into Japanese when you read English books? (N=21)

	1	2	3	4	5	
	always	many times	sometimes	rarely	none	<i>mean</i>
February	0	5	13	3	0	2.90

Table 10 illustrates that only one student finally acquired a habit of reading during the morning reading time once or twice a week ('often'). 16 students acquired a habit of reading during the morning reading time once or twice in two weeks ('sometimes'). At this school, students had morning reading time only twice a week. It was difficult to make use of that time for them to start reading outside of the class. However, no students read during the morning reading time until October, thus it was a big difference for students to start reading during the morning

reading time.

Table 10 Do you read English books during the morning reading time? (N=21)

	1	2	3	4	
	none	occasionally	sometimes	often*	<i>mean</i>
February	2	2	16	1	2.76

often* = once or twice a week

Table 11 shows that 4 students have never read at home and that 12 students read at home once or twice in two weeks. The mean score is 2.62 and it is a little lower than the one in Table 10. It illustrates that students started to read outside of the class during the reading morning time at school first and then they started to read at home. To acquire a habit of reading at home was more difficult than that of reading during the morning reading time at school.

Table 11 Do you read at home the day before the class? (N=21)

	1	2	3	4	5	
	none	occasionally	sometimes	often	Very often	<i>mean</i>
February	4	5	8	3	1	2.62

often* = once or twice a week

5. What I learned:

- 1) In-class Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) is indispensable to maintain ER program especially during the initial period. First, teacher's scaffolding during in-class SSR plays an important role in their ER performance during the initial period. Second, in-class SSR can secure time for students to be engaged in reading because students cannot read outside of the class from the beginning. Teacher should decide how much SSR time students need according to their extensive reading performance and their reading attitude.
- 2) Interactive Extensive Reading activities can help build a reading community and increase their motivation to read more. Students enjoyed sharing their reading experience in 'Interactive Book Talk' and 'My Favorite Books' poster activities. However, occasional Book Talk did not help students learn how and why their peer enjoyed reading. In July and September, students were not influenced by their peer's reading because 'Interactive Book Talk' was not provided often. The more Book Talk were introduced along with more in-class SSR time, the more they consulted each other about what books to read during and after Book Talk.
- 3) Creative Extensive Reading activities and Interactive ER activities can help develop pleasure reading and reading comprehension skills. SSR helped students improve their reading speed greatly but did not help develop other comprehension skills such as interpretation (I think ...), evaluation (I like) and prediction. Because there were no

class reader activities, students had little opportunities of talking about the characters and events in the same book. Thus students didn't fully experience the pleasure reading by exchanging their reading and comments. Individual reading is not sufficient to develop other reading skills and pleasure reading.

- 4) Keeping reading logs and writing only one reflection report are not sufficient for students to become independent readers. More reflection reports were needed to become independent readers. Only three students could reflect and write a long comments on their reading. (See Appendix 3)

6. Future issues:

1. To give at least four reflection reports a year and to share the students' comments in class.
2. To develop an extensive reading guideline for students so that they can be aware of the benefits of extensive reading.
3. To introduce class readers in earlier stage where students are still reading ORT or FRL series.
4. To make a syllabus for extensive reading so that students can read at least more than 50,000 words.

Lesson Plan for Extensive Reading

1. Level: Second-year students of senior high school
2. Class size: 21 students
3. Textbook: Oxford Reading Tree, Foundation Reading Library
4. Subject: Writing
5. Objectives:
 - Students can enjoy reading self-selected materials.
 - Students bring a book they've read out-of class and express their opinions about their reading in pairs.
 - Students write a book review on their favorite book.
6. Procedure of Extensive Reading Program in December
 - (1) Day one (Second week of December)
 - a. *Interactive Book Talk*: Students are required to read a book before the class. In pairs, they introduce the book they've read by asking five questions about a book. Q1: Who are the main characters? Q2 When did it happen? Q3 What happened? Q4 Why did it happen? Q5 Do you like this story? Then they change partners and repeat this process two more times.
 - b. *Sustained Silent Reading*: Students select a book they want to read, and read it at their desks for 20 minutes. When they finish reading it, they write a reading log.
 - (2) Day two (the third week of December):
 - a. *Interactive Book Talk*: same as above

- b. *Favorite Book Review*: Students finish writing the book review with pictures and drawings during the class and at home. They are required to write a book review in Japanese in order not to copy the blurb. Then, in class, students read the partner's book review, and ask questions about the book in English. They change partners and repeat the process two more times. After the class, we make an original guide book of "Book Review" so that students can refer to it whenever they want.

<Appendix 1>

'Interactive Book Talk'- sample questions

Instant Oral Book Report

I read (a book called) _____
This is a love story.

Do NOT write on this!

Genre :	Classics	True Stories	Crime/ Mystery
	Fantasy	Horror	Thriller and Adventure
	Comedy	Love/ Romance	Other

- Q1. Who are the main characters?
- Q2. When did it happen?
- Q3. Where did it happen?
- Q4. What happened? (Q5. Why did it happen?)
- Q6. Would you show your favorite page?
- Q7. Do you like the story? Why/Why not?



<Book Information>

Level : Starter/ Level 1 / Level 2 / ORT Stage _____ / LLL Stage _____
Publisher : Oxford Penguin Macmillan Cambridge Other


My Favorite Books


Get the Ball!

FRL Level 1 521 words

Alex と Anthony が「水泳水所属するチームのサッカーの試合が中心とあるお話を」(w)

観客が盛り上がる中、両者ともにボールを奪い合う。反則まで出る試合が続き続いた。しかし、あんなにニコウにさせて二人の仲が「ラッキー」から変化し...!?





感心 (w)

2作品ともスポーツを通じて勝ちこせ以上には大切なことを最後に著述して「おもしろい作品です!!」スポーツには熱心な人、最後にほほえみながら持ちこたえることができた (w) の個性にスポーツをこえている人に「感心!!」

I Always Win!

FRL Level 3 681 words

Ryan と Tyler が自転車レースで、1位、2位を争うために決まらなかった。Ryan は毎年優勝している、Tyler は背負いたが、Tyler は自分の Tyler との違いを知りたい!! 勝者の行方は思わぬ展開に (w)!! 最後に「なぜか?」本質に大切なものを白と黒...!?

Go Jimmy Go!

FRL Level 4 1347 words

STORY

Jimmy は活発でスポーツが大好きだ。また彼は車いすに乗っている。学校ではもうすぐ体育祭が始まるとうじていた。彼が 800 メートル走に出場すると言ったとき、学校中が驚いた。周りの人に心配されながらも彼の猛特訓は始まった。はたして、彼はレースに勝つことができるのだろうか...

コメント

Jimmy にとって車いすに乗っていることはハンデではなかった。車いすに乗っていても彼はスポーツが大好きで、アスリートだったのだ。Jimmy の一生懸命さに力をもらえる一冊です。

