

Newsletter No.10

Workshop in February

<Part 1>

Date: February 25, 2017, 10:30-14:30

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room A-31, Bldg. Minami

Title: “Evaluating Your Students' Extensive Reading”

Presenter: Junko Yamanaka

(Chukyo University, Aichi Gakuin University)



Abstract: Ideally, there should be no need for Extensive Reading evaluation – when students develop a liking for reading and read in quantity, their language skills should naturally improve. However, when ER is implemented in a school curriculum, teachers are most often required to give grades or some form of evaluation. Should the grades be based on the amount students have read? Should there be tests? Can you measure students' affect? This workshop focuses on classroom-based assessment, discussing possible goals and objectives of ER programs. Possible assessment tasks in the “broadened conceptualization” of ER (Beglar, 2012) will also be suggested.

The number of participants: 40

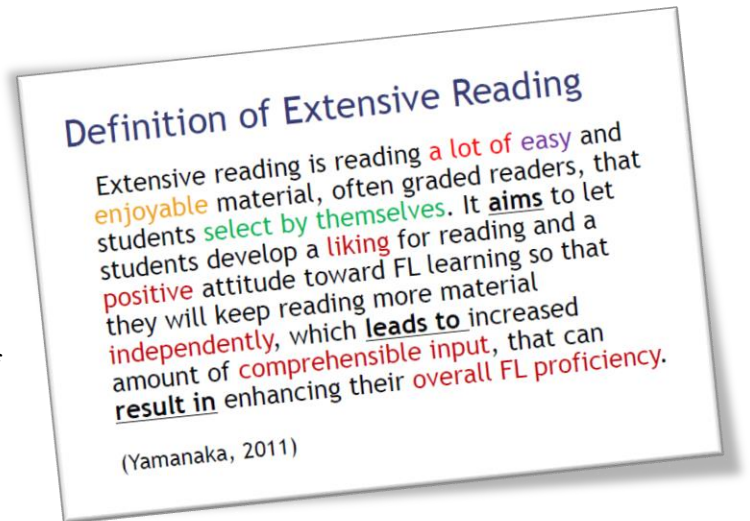
1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- Sharing information of books of pair work – because it is really good to show their enjoyment and to use English communicatively.
- I really liked the book showing activity where we talked about why we selected the book or what the story was about. It made me want to read my book more.
- If I had an ER class, I would use ‘writing added story’ to help students enjoy and reflect the story they read.
- It was so helpful to learn exactly how she teaches her classes. I was able to picture the whole semester plans very well.
- I cannot employ extensive reading in our curriculum right now because there are some difficulties. I thought how she evaluates students without tests was very interesting. I gradually believe the power of ER now.
- I’m having a hard time to introduce ER to my junior high. I need to do some in-class activities before letting them read independently. I liked radio drama as Junko sensei does.
- I want to use the activity where students listen to a conversation from a book and take a dictation, then they add illustrations of the scene. Additionally I want to have students practice the conversation. They know the context of the conversation so they can relate to the speakers feelings and it must be fun.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- There are many possible ways to evaluate something unmeasurable.
- I think there are many aspects of students' language proficiency that are not evaluated. If these are evaluated and recognized, it will be possible to think about new ways to each more effectively.
- Calculating WPM in first or second day of class is critical for ER classes.
- Many ways and aspects to evaluate students' reading. Junko's explanation gave me an concrete idea about conducting ER class.
- I learned some key points; class goal in reading class has no test and teachers don't correct mistakes but they just tell students about the common mistakes.
- Making criteria for assessing students' positive attitude, liking for reading, etc. is really important to assess the students' progress.
- I still think it's difficult to make use of ER in the classes of JHS. I think it's more useful for JHS students to use the idea of intensive reading.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): How I thought it is difficult to introduce ER in junior high school because the students don't know many words. How do I introduce ER and prepare books in JHS?

A: For junior highs I recommend graded (or leveled) readers (mostly picture books) written for very young English native speakers who are learning to read. These days there are also many kinds of story books and photo books for non-native young learners too. Get samples and choose age-appropriate and right level books. There are many levels, both fiction and non-fiction. Avoid higher levels or books with a lot of text on each page. I recommend the following:

Publisher	Series	Recommended Levels
Cengage Learning	Our World Readers	1, 2, 3
Macmillan	Macmillan Children's Readers	1, 2, 3
Macmillan	Macmillan Factual Readers	1, 2
Oxford	Oxford Reading Tree	1, 2, 3 (maybe also 4, 5)
Pearson	Story Street	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Pearson	Penguin Kids	1, 2, 3
Seed Learning	Kids' Classic Readers	1, 2 (maybe also 3, 4)
Seed Learning	Compass Readers	1, 2 (maybe also 3)

Those books are very attractively designed with many colorful pictures and / or photos, which help comprehension greatly. Check out Scholastics BookFlix, an online literacy resource with videos too.

Also recommended highly is the Foundation Readers by Cengage Learning. Appropriate levels are 1,2,3 and maybe 4. This series was written specifically for young Japanese learners, very easy to read, and

popular among junior-high, senior-high and college students. Level 1 is written using only 75 headwords, yet the stories are fun to read.

You could use part of your class time for free reading of such books I recommended above. Let them read just freely. Tell them they don't have to understand every word, and that there will be no comprehension questions or tests. If you want to have them keep a simple record of the books they read, do so. Think of activities if time allows, for your students to enjoy. If using class time is difficult, make a "book club" and make time for them to read after class or during recess.

Usually for ER, students are supposed to choose a book they can understand more than 98 % without dictionary, but for junior highs, this can be more flexible. If they can enjoy the books and want to read more, that is good enough. In my opinion, the most important goal for junior highs is for them to develop a liking for reading. If they attain this goal, they will keep reading in high school too, and that is the most important thing, I believe.



Q (2): Any recommendation of books or website articles for beginners like 1st year students in junior high schools or those who have difficulties in reading alphabet?

A: Reading materials need to be comprehensible, but I'm struggling in finding basic ones for them. Use the lowest level(s) of the readers I recommended above in the answer to Question (1). I also highly recommend Apricot Picture Book Series written by Mikiko Nakamoto. Excellent books with CDs for children and junior highs.

Q (3): How do you recommend easier books to students who want to read too difficult books for them? Some students want to read the books their friends read, but their levels of English are different.

A: You need to tell your students that the benefit of ER comes from reading material that they understand 98% or more. They need to be informed why they are doing ER and what is the best way to benefit from it. Input needs to be "comprehensible", and fluency can be developed only by "fluent" reading. (If you read difficult material slowly, fluency will not be nurtured) Students should always select "*easy and enjoyable*" books that they can read with fluency. I tell my students to read "*very easy*" books, "*very, very easy*" books or "*very, very, very easy*" books! (But they need to be *enjoyable*) Your students can of course try the book their friends read, because "wanting to read" is fantastic, but if they find it difficult, tell them they should do 塩漬け (shio-zuke) and try the book later when they feel comfortable with it.

Q (4): Do you think homework of extensive reading you do can be a burden if junior high school students do the similar thing?

A: Do you mean reading a book at home and turning in a book report? If the books they check out are appropriate levels that they can enjoy, for example those books I mentioned in answers to Question 1 and 2, it is possible, I think. However, the book report or any task required should be very easy, non-threatening and not time-consuming. It



would be nice if it is something even enjoyable to do, such as creating a simple book introduction card with some illustration, for example.

Q (5): How can students really know how much time they spent reading a book? I never really know how many minutes I spend on reading each book either in English or Japanese.

A: They could simply measure the time with a watch, a smartphone, a kitchen timer or the clock on the wall. I often do it with my sumaho timer or my small kitchen timer. If they have to stop reading a book in the middle, they can do the measuring again when they resume. It is good for teachers to know their own WPM too.

Q (6): I'm still wondering the amount of books would be equal to the liking of reading in classroom-based evaluation.

A: It is probably not proper to say that the amount read is “equal to” how much they liked to read. However, since there is no way of proving (or expressing in numbers) how much “liking” students had, one can assume that if students read a lot, they probably enjoyed reading. Actually, those who do *not* enjoy reading do *not* read in quantity. When students read a lot, on the other hand, very often the teacher can tell, from observations and book reports, that they really liked to read. Please be aware, however, that I give points to the *amount* students read, not to the *feeling* they had. While using the reading amount as one basis for evaluation, I try to assess the program by knowing how much students enjoyed ER, based on data and observations.



Q (7): When do teachers introduce Extensive Reading class in schools?

A: For JHS, SHS and college, I recommend starting ER in the first year. Then students can continue ER for two more years. The more time, the more language input.

Q (8): What suggestions do you have for mid-beginners of elementary students for extensive reading?

A: Do you mean elementary school students or elementary level students? Does mid-beginner mean not a true beginner? Either way, I recommend using an audio CD attached to the reader. Reading and listening to the story at the same time or listen to the CD after the book is read. Beginning students need audio support. Also suggested is using easy picture books. Pictures and photos support comprehension.

Q (9): Are some genres more popular than others?

A: I do not see any outstanding ones. Love romance, love comedy, detective stories, suspense, science fiction, famous people, history, adventure, fantasy, they are all popular. Therefore it is important to have many different genres ready for students to choose from.

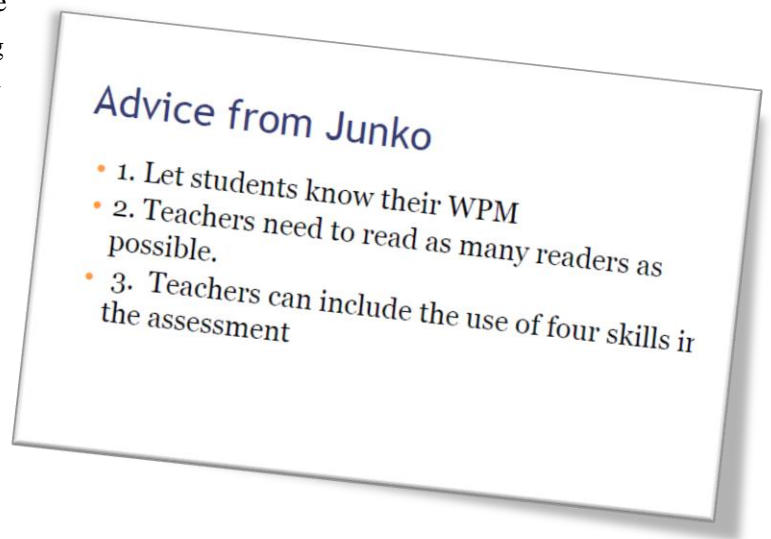
Q (10): Is it trustworthy of the measurement ‘Y.L (読みやすさレベル)’?

A: I believe YL is quite trustworthy. It is based on judgements by Japanese people who have actually read the books. However, I do not use YL measurement myself because the scale looks too detailed to me.

Q (11): You told us that you are using 30 minutes for silent reading in your class. I thought extensive reading is homework and students should read books outside the classroom. What is the meaning of in-class reading?

A: In a Senmongakko and a university where I used to teach, ER was 30% of the whole grade of a reading class. We had to use an intensive reading textbook, and did not have silent reading time during class, and so ER books had to be read at home only. However, currently I can use the whole 90 minutes for ER, which allows the student to read both at home and in the classroom.

In-class silent reading (SSR, Sustained Silent Reading) is very important for three reasons. Reason 1: You can assure reading time for your students. Many are busy with part-time jobs, club activities, other class assignments, etc., and have difficulty finding time to read at home even if they are motivated. Reason 2: The teacher can observe students and check if they are reading proper level books or if they are enjoying reading, and can give guidance to them. My students often come to me during SSR time and ask me, "Do you have any easy and enjoyable books that you recommend?" Reason 3: Students' concentration power increases. They can be absorbed in reading during SSR and you might experience one of "the most beautiful silences on earth" (Henry, 1995). (See Takase 2010, pp.60-67)



<Part 2>

Date: February 25, 2017, 14:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Juanita Heigham (NUFS)

Abstract: Monthly report on action research

The number of participants: 14



Workshop in March (This workshop is for Action Research Group members only.)

Date: March 25-26, 2017

Venue: Hotel Takeshima (Gamagori, Aichi)

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt (NUFS), Robert Croker (Nanzan University)

Title: Final presentation of action research