A Report and Suggestion on Implementation of Extensive Reading in the Practical English Program at Yokohama City University

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Abstract

In this article, the effect of extensive reading in the Practical English Center (PEC) at Yokohama City University (YCU) is examined. Although extensive reading has been suggested to be beneficial in terms of multiple aspects of language learning, instructors and students at the PEC have expressed their various concerns and struggles with it. The data was collected from brief interviews with instructors and a free-writing essay by students, both conducted during the second semester of the academic year of 2015-2016, and the results are highlighted according to three different themes. This article showcases some of the in-class activities related to extensive reading that were successfully implemented in the author’s classes in order to encourage both instructors and students to engage in extensive reading more actively.

Keywords: extensive reading, in-class extensive reading activity, autonomy, motivation

1. Introduction

Extensive reading is one of the approaches to reading instructions for both first and second languages. It has been shown to be effective in various areas of language learning such as vocabulary learning, motivation and attitude, reading comprehension, spelling, and overall linguistic comprehension in the EFL context (e.g., Elley, 1991; Elley & Mangubhai, 1981; Hafiz & Tydor, 1990; Lai, 1993a, 1993b; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Nakanishi & Ueda, 2011; Poulshock, 2010;
Robb & Susser, 1989; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007). At Yokohama City University (YCU), extensive reading has been incorporated into Practical English II (PE II), a reading class since 2007. However, in contrast to what the research on extensive reading has suggested, there are a variety of barriers and concerns with implementing and evaluating extensive reading in and outside of classroom reported by both instructors and students. Thus, since it seems that little attention has been paid to this case, the purpose of this primary article is to reveal the current status quo both from students’ and instructors’ perspectives on extensive reading and what kind of issues and concerns they have in contrast to the principles/characteristics of extensive reading, and to show some examples on how the Practical English Center (PEC) can motivate students to read more and instructors to start a more systematic approach to extensive reading.

2. Literature Review

2-1. What is reading?

It has often been pointed out that the concept of reading is hard to define. Simple definition has been provided by Day and Bamford (1998) as “the construction of meaning from a printed or written message” (p. 12). Elsewhere, Grabe (2009) cited the definition of reading by Urquhart and Weir (1998) as “the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print” (p. 14). Mikulecky (2011) defined reading in a more intricate manner as “a complex conscious and unconscious mental process in which the reader uses a variety of strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author is assumed to have intended, based on data from the text and from the reader’s prior knowledge” (p. 5).

In addition, Nation (2009) mentioned that there are prerequisites to be able to read in either their first or second language. These prerequisites include: a learner needs to “know at least some of the letter shapes”, to “be aware that words are
made up of separable sounds (phonemic awareness)", to “know basic English
writing conventions” (left to right, top to bottom), and to know the spoken forms
of most vocabulary initially encountered in a text (p. 9). He further claimed that
there are four components of a reading course that should each account for 25% of
class time; which are “meaning-focused input”, “meaning-focused output”,
“language-focused learning”, and “fluency development” (p. 6-8). Extensive
reading would play a significant role in the meaning-focused input and fluency
development depending on what level of books learners choose to read.
Furthermore, extensive reading would play a different role in each component.
Meaning-focused input should focus on the practice in reading for a range of
purposes, which is supposed to be level-appropriate reading. Reading should be a
way of developing language proficiency. That means that learners should know
about 98% of the vocabulary in a text so “they can learn the remaining 2%
through context” (p. 6). On the other hand, fluency development can be achieved
through extensive reading as well, based on the basic beliefs that learners should
read texts with 100% known vocabulary, learners should do speed reading practice
and activities, “learners should enjoy reading and feel motivated to read”, and
“learners should read a lot” (p. 8). Thus, when learners have the knowledge of
95-98% of words, extensive reading would be meaning-focused input, and when
the learners have the knowledge of 100% of words, it would be fluency
development (Nation, 2009).

Cognitively, reading has been researched among various cognitive
psychologists. The most well-recognized model of reading is an interactive
cognitive process model (Day & Bamford, 1998). Conventionally this model sees
reading composed of two separate processes; the lower-order processes and
higher-order processes. The first ones include word recognition, lexical access
including speed, accuracy, and automaticity, orthographic processing,
phonological processing, semantic and syntactic processing, morphological

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processing, syntactic parsing, and working memory (Grabe, 2009). All of these processes play an important role in reading in both first language and second language; however, the extent to which one process is used over the other or when they are used and in what combination they are used is still unknown. The other one is the higher-order processes of comprehension such as text model of reader comprehension, situation model of reader interpretation, use of context and background information, goal setting, strategy use, metacognitive awareness, metalinguistic awareness, and comprehension monitoring (Grabe, 2009). All these processes also play roles in reading, but to what extent for different contexts and situations is still unknown (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2013). However, it has been shown that these processes cannot happen without lower-order processes. Many have theorized and developed different reading models to describe how these processes work together, or not, when reading (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009).

2-2. What is extensive reading?

There are four approaches to reading instructions according to Bamford and Day (1998); Grammar-translation, comprehension questions, skills and strategies, and extensive reading. Conventionally, a lot of English classes as a foreign language seem to focus on the first three approaches, which are categorized as intensive reading (Day et al., 2011), but extensive reading has grabbed more attention to researchers and teachers in the classroom recently than before. So what is extensive reading? Just as the definition of the term, reading, this has also been considered difficult to define and there are multiple ways to define it on the different levels. On the simpler side, Day and Bamford (1998) stated that extensive reading means “rapidly reading ‘book after book’” (p. 6). Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992) defined that it is “intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for
reading” (p. 133). More in detail, Grabe (1991) explained that “longer concentrated periods of silent reading build vocabulary and structural awareness, develop automaticity, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence and motivation” (p. 396). In short, extensive reading is not so much about the form, but more about the content of the materials. It should also encourage readers to start with very easy materials that are their “i minus 1 level”, with “i” being the reader’s current reading level (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 16). Thus, extensive reading is quite different from the conventional notion of reading classrooms which tend to focus more on intensive reading.

As characteristics of extensive reading, Day and Bamford (1998, 2002) have described them as ten principles as follows;

1. Students read as much as possible,
2. A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available,
3. Students select what they want to read,
4. The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding,
5. Reading is its own reward (no major evaluation),
6. Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students,
7. Reading is individual and silent,
8. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower,
9. Teachers orient students to the goals of the program,
10. The teacher is a role model of a reader for students.

(1998, p. 7-8, see also Day and Bamford, 2002)

As seen in principles 1, 3, 5, and 7, extensive reading focuses on students’ autonomy quite significantly. On the other hand, extensive reading has historically not been paid attention in the language classroom because of principles 2 and 10 especially in the foreign language setting. This is mainly because most of the English teachers in this setting are not used to the concept of extensive reading,
and also because there are not so many resources to put an extensive reading program into practice (Grabe, 2009). It should be also noted that although extensive reading is a student-centered approach in nature, as principles 4, 6, 8 show, instructors need to play a crucial role in guiding students to involve in extensive reading in an appropriate manner. Finally, instructors should also play an active role in monitoring students’ progress and in showing students their own positive attitude toward reading as a reader as principles 9 and 10 suggest.

2-3. Empirical research on extensive reading

In this section, some of the major studies that focus on the effectiveness of extensive reading are introduced. There are several aspects of the effect of extensive reading that researchers have examined; second language reading ability, affect, vocabulary, overall linguistic competence, writing, and spelling to name a few. Overall, it has been shown that an extensive reading program generally brings positive results on most of the studies. Day and Bamford (1998) showed some of the studies on extensive reading in second/foreign language in their book and all of them showed positive impact on the readers. One of the most extensive studies on this subject was done by Elly and Mangubhai (1981) in Fiji. They conducted a carefully organized eight-month study in a primary school to examine the effect on the students’ reading and general language proficiency including listening and writing, and the result suggested significant benefits on them. Elsewhere, Janopoulos (1986) explored the writing proficiency among university ESL students, and Pitts, White, and Krashen (1989) investigated the impact on adult ESL learners’ vocabulary gains. Lai (1993a, 1993b) revealed that there was overall positive effect on students’ reading proficiency and vocabulary in a secondary school in Hong Kong, and Hafiz and Tudor (1990) also reported the gains in vocabulary base and writing in a primary school in Pakistan.

More significantly, the impact on the readers’ affect is worth mentioning.
Hafiz and Tudor (1989) and Tudor and Hafiz (1989) inquired the effect of an extensive reading program on adolescent ESL students in England and it is evident that there were significant gains not only in reading proficiency but also in positive affect on reading, and general linguistic competence including writing. Robb and Susser (1989) investigated university EFL classrooms in Japan and reported the positive impact on reading proficiency and affect. Similarly, Elley (1991) examined the reading proficiency and positive affect on students in EFL classes in a primary school in Singapore and addressed some gains. A brief report by Cho and Krashen (1994) revealed that there were also increases in reading proficiency, vocabulary, positive affect, and oral skills among ESL adult immigrant learners in the United States. A study by Mason and Krashen (1997) showed overall gains in reading proficiency, positive affect, and writing among university EFL students in Japan. Furthermore, although it has not been done extensively, several studies have shown that there were some gains in spelling proficiency outside of extensive reading context in foreign/second language (Day & Swan, 1998; Polak & Krashen, 1988). Overall, Day and Bamford (1998) summarized the empirical evidence that:

Extensive reading, of course, has an essential role in developing the sight vocabulary, general vocabulary, and world knowledge on which fluent reading is based. It can also give students confidence and a positive attitude toward second language reading – of no small importance considering the fundamental role that reading so often plays in academic success (p. 44).

Also they mentioned “extensive reading may play a role in developing the capacity for critical thinking so important for success in higher education” (p. 45). In reality, some students might think that extensive reading is only for pleasure and does not positively affect their academic reading skills. Nevertheless, when introducing extensive reading to class, instructors should highlight the fact that it would be very difficult to handle reading dense academic materials unless readers
build enough fluency in reading and have confidence in their reading skills, and extensive reading can help them gain them over time.

3. Extensive reading in the context of YCU

3-1. Overall

As mentioned above, extensive reading has been introduced to the Practical English Program since 2007. As Dutch (2013) explained the overall structure of the program, it provides three required English classes for students who do not obtain the score of 500 on TOEFL-ITP (The Test of English as Foreign Language, Institutional Testing Program) or 600 on TOEIC (The Test of English for International Communication) as an alternative; PE I for listening, PE II for reading, and PE III for grammar. Students are divided into two levels, Finishing and Extending, based on the score of the TOEFL-ITP test that they take previously. Extensive reading is part of the instructions in PE II on both levels and any students can borrow graded readers from the PEC for this and other purposes. According to a PEC staff member, there were 466 kinds of graded readers and a total of 2,238 of them were available as of January 19th, 2016. Most of the books are published from Penguin Readers by Pearson, Oxford Bookworms Library by Oxford University Press, and McMillan Readers by MacMillan Education. There are six levels in Penguin Readers but Level 1 books are not available to check out because they are considered below the level of most of the students’ reading proficiency. In the academic year of 2015, 1,056 students took PE class for the first semester, and 672 students for the second semester. From April 1st, 2015 to January 19th, 2016, 861 students checked out total of 4,615 books from the PEC. Most of the books that they checked out are Level 2, 3, or 4, and the top five most popular books are all from Level 3.

Although it has been eight years since extensive reading became an integral part of the PE II instructions, there does not seem to be a concrete guideline to
implement it in the classroom and each instructor has a certain level of freedom to
decide how and how much they would like to incorporate extensive reading into
their classes. I conducted a brief interview about how extensive reading was
implemented inside and outside of the classroom for each PE instructor. Not
surprisingly, the result showed that the way extensive reading was carried out
varied in each class, and the overall perception regarding the effect of extensive
reading was somewhat mixed. One instructor confessed that students just did not
seem to care about extensive reading and did not know what to do with it. Another
instructor mentioned that the list of books that students claimed that they had read
did not match the result of the computer data from the PEC, which meant they
might have made up their work. On the other hand, another instructor said that
their students held an overall positive attitude toward extensive reading, and they
had read more than they were told to read at the beginning of the semester. Most
of the instructors assigned some sort of written work such as book reports or book
reviews, and almost all instructors did not do any extensive-reading-related
activities in the classroom. Thus, in most of the PE classes, extensive reading has
done solely outside of class as one of the homework assignments.

3-2. In the author’s class

Compared to the instructors that I have interviewed, extensive reading has
been emphasized in the reading instructions as more related activities have been
adopted into my class. Since I am still in the process of figuring out what the best
way is to implement extensive reading, I have tried various methods to include
extensive reading both inside and outside of the PE classroom. However, one
thing that I realized was that there is a significant disparity in the number of books
that students read between the Finishing Level and the Extending Level. Most of
my PE II classes on both levels include Sustained Silent Reading (Pilgreen, 2000)
where students spend 15 to 20 minutes just reading a book that they choose
silently in class, and short book reports every time they finish reading one book. In addition, students are expected to submit a list of books called “ER Book List” that they read at the end of the semester so that they can keep track of them during the semester (see Appendix A). This helps me understand what kind of books and how many books are read for each student and keep records of them. Once or twice a month, students spend 30 to 40 minutes in class doing various activities related to the graded readers that they are reading or finish reading. Thus, on both levels, approximately the same amount of time and contents is spent for extensive reading both inside and outside of classes. However, by documenting the ER Book List over two years, it has become clear that students on the Finishing Level read significantly more than students on the Expanding Level. In the academic year of 2015-2016, students in the Finishing Level classes read 6.4 books on average in one semester; on the contrary, students in the Expanding Level class only read 3.6 books per semester. This is a remarkable difference in terms of the amount of reading, and, needless to say, it is far from one of the basic ideas of extensive reading, to read a lot in the target language from the ten principles (Day & Bamford, 1998).

4. Struggles and issues from students’ perspectives

Because of the presence of persisting difference between the Finishing Level classes and the Expanding Level classes, I gave students an in-class anonymous, open-ended, free-writing assignment where they could report how they involved with extensive reading and freely express their feelings and opinions on it. What is evident from the survey is that for students who did read graded readers extensively had overall positive impression on extensive reading including vocabulary gain, reading fluency, and positive attitude toward reading in English. On the other hand, students who did not read extensively tended to have more negative impression on extensive reading for a variety of reasons. For the purpose
of this article, the comments that they wrote about extensive reading are limited to the struggles and issues that they claimed to have. Their essays revealed that there are three salient themes as follows;

Theme 1: the already-existing negative attitude toward the English language or reading in English

Theme 2: the difficulty in time management

Theme 3: the difficulty in book selection

The most salient themes is the first one; negative impression toward English that they had already had when they started extensive reading. It was reflected in comments such as “It is very frustrating to read in English”, “I just hate English”, “I just can’t help but feel reluctant when it comes to reading in English”. The second theme, the difficulty in time management, includes comments such as “I didn’t have time to read”, “I do not have a custom to read books in any languages”, “I don’t have time to write book reports”, and “Reading is not on my priority list”, “The PEC was always closed whenever I had time to go”. The last theme, the difficulty in book selection, was revealed by comments including “I don’t know what to read”, “I couldn’t find any interesting books”, and “All the books are too difficult for me to read” (all translated by the author).

All of these are reasonable response to the fact why they did not read as many graded readers as students in the Finishing Level. As emphasized above, it is also true that in order for extensive reading to work in the reading curriculum, students’ autonomy and motivation to read is essential and students who do not seem to have it such as the ones above would be less likely to gain benefits from it. Nonetheless, I believe there is some profound space for instructors to solve some of the struggles and issues that these students expressed. Below are some practical suggestions on specific activities and methods that I have employed in the past that are tailored to meet the students’ needs and also that were received positively by the students from the free-writing assignment and small talks that we had in
and outside of classes.

5. Suggestions for extensive reading activities that encourage students’ autonomy to read

Four activities and methods are shown below as examples for instructors to encourage students to read more, and to want to read more. Many books have been published dedicated to extensive-reading-related activities, but I found “Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language” edited by Bamford and Day (2004) particularly helpful. It contains a variety of activities related to extensive reading that instructors can put to good use depending on what purpose they would like to focus on. I have gained and adopted many ideas from this book that I incorporated into my extensive reading activities in the classroom, most of which have been quite successful as well.

5-1. Introducing extensive reading

From the previous interviews with instructors at YCU, a few instructors mentioned that one of the reasons that they thought students did not read as much was because they did not understand why they engaged in extensive reading. Especially this is an important insight because in the context of PE classes, most of the students have received English education in public schools where the amount of reading done is generally extremely small (Mizuno, 2015) and extensive reading is rarely introduced into their curriculums. It is also shown from the free-writing assignment mentioned in the previous section that the majority of the students had never heard the phrase “extensive reading” and they had never done it before entering YCU, either. Therefore, it is extremely important how instructors introduce the concept and the program of extensive reading to their classroom to hopefully give students a new and positive impression on it from the beginning (Theme 1).
An introduction activity that worked well in my class comes twofold. The first part is composed of a mini lecture on explaining what extensive reading entails, what is expected with an explicit goal of the semester, and why we do extensive reading. I explained how extensive reading works and the benefits of doing it by summarizing the research results related to extensive reading, just using simpler and easier words. As mentioned above, students in the Practical English program are very much aware that they are expected to get a certain score on TOEFL or TOEIC, so I especially emphasized that extensive reading would help them improve their reading fluency and learn new vocabulary if it is done appropriately, which is generally considered important in order to do well on these exams. At the same time, it is necessary to make sure that students understand that extensive reading might be quite different from conventional reading classes that they had previously and it also takes a lot of time to read extensively so they know in advance how much time outside of class they should spend reading graded readers (Theme 2).

The second part is a student-centered pair activity or a short game to have an opportunity for students to actually choose and read graded readers. There are many ways to do this but what I found particularly well-perceived is an activity called “Identify the Books” introduced by Yamanaka (2004) (see Appendix B). Students are first introduced to the word ‘blurb’ by learning what it means and how it helps them expose themselves to graded readers and choose books that they want to read for extensive reading (Theme 3). Then, students read a list of blurbs of nine graded readers on a handout while the teacher puts ten graded readers around the classroom against the wall with the front cover on. I usually choose Level 1 books from Penguin Readers by Pearson. Students make a pair and walk around the classroom to find out which blurb matches each book against the wall. They can look at the title of the books and the pictures on the front covers but they cannot touch the books to see the back cover or the inside. Each pair has to write
down the title of the book for each blurb and also discuss the reasons they think so. Since there is one more book in the classroom than blurbs on the handout, they also need to guess which book does not have a matching blurb. Instructors can make it a competition as well if it fits the classroom’s atmosphere. After the whole class goes over the answers, students choose one book from the ten graded readers that they read blurbs for or something else if available and read the whole book for the rest of the class. Since they are from Level 1, most of the students are able to finish reading it by the end of the class. This is a crucial point for this activity since it is essential for students to build initial confidence as L2 readers and to gain the first positive impression on extensive reading (Theme 1). This activity is also the first opportunity for instructors to put many of the extensive reading principles including 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 into practice. In the following class, students should also be able to engage in in-class extensive reading activities if suitable.

5-2. Reaction report

As the fifth principle of extensive reading by Day and Bamford (1998) suggested, it would be ideal if there were no evaluation in extensive reading. However, in most academic English classes, it is necessary for teachers to assess students’ progress in reading from extensive reading. One way to make an assessment has been a reaction report where students write about the book that they read. In YCU, most of the instructors have employed some forms of reaction reports with different levels of intensity. Some instructors take advantage of the opportunity of this as an academic writing exercise, so their students are expected to write a few paragraph long essay for each book. Other instructors use more open-ended format. Various formats of book reports were compared and discussed in detail by Dutch (2013). In my class, students are encouraged to read as many books as possible just as the ten extensive reading principles suggested and
stressed the idea that the ultimate purpose of extensive reading is to read, not to write. Every time they finish reading one book, they write a short report on what they read and how they feel about it on a book report form (see Appendix C). This style worked well for the Finishing Level classes.

However, it is also true that one of the reasons that students especially on the Extending Level did not quite become involved with extensive reading was because of the existence of reaction reports. Thus, it is possible to not rely only on reaction reports to see the students’ progress and to have students produce an oral summary instead by using an activity 4/3/2 suggested by Renandya (2004) (Theme 2). This is a fluency exercise for speaking, and in this case students are to summarize the book that they are currently reading or just finished reading to three students in the class, the first time for four minutes, the second time for three minutes, and the last time for two minutes. As Nation (1989) indicated, this activity contains three characteristics in order to improve the speakers’ oral fluency: time pressure, different listeners, and repetition of speech. However, in most of my classes, speaking for four minutes for the first time seemed to be quite challenging even on the Finishing Level, so shortening the time to three minutes, two minutes, and one minute for the Finishing Level and two minutes, one and half minutes, and one minute for the Expanding Level seemed to work better especially when students were new to this activity at first. By doing this fluency exercise, students can practice summarizing the book that they read and also train their speaking fluency at the same time. They are also exposed to different books that they might have not read yet, so it helps them choose next books more easily with their classmates’ feedback (Theme 3). Otherwise, students can also produce a written form of summary beforehand as a practice and preparation for this fluency activity in class. In addition, this activity can be carried out not only to summarize the book but also to talk about their feelings and opinions on the book such as their favorite scene or character, or their related experiences, or personal lessons.
from the book for advanced readers.

5-3. In-class extensive reading activity

Although reading itself is an individual act, it also plays an important role in creating a sense of a positive reading community in the classroom which, in turn, can positively influence the students’ attitude toward reading in English (Day & Bamford, 1998). This is an integrated activity with speaking and writing that requires students’ creativity and flexibility, adopted from an activity called “Character by the Letter” by Prather (2004). First, students choose one character from the books that they are reading (in case of a non-fiction book, they can choose either a person or a thing that is discussed in the book or the author of the book). Then, they find partners to talk to and they tell them about the story of the book as if they were the characters from the book. In classes where students are not used to speaking English without time to prepare beforehand, instructors can give them some time to think of the story and take notes if necessary. The listeners can also take notes if they wish, but instructors should stress that this is not a dictation exercise, so they do not have to write down every word that the speakers are saying. The purpose of the activity for the speakers is to use their imagination and practice speaking in English. The purpose of the activity for the listeners is to imagine the story and determine if they are interested in reading the books. They can use the handout to follow the instruction (see Appendix D). Students repeat this activity for three or four times with different classmates. The purpose of this is for them to have an opportunity to boost their oral fluency from this meaning-focused, repetitive activity (Nation & Newton, 2009) and also to get more information about different books that they could choose to read in the future (Theme 3). After they finish talking and listening to their partners, they choose one book that they find the most interesting, and they write a short letter to the character. The letter can be about how they feel about the character including what
they like or do not like about them, or asking questions about their life stories or behaviors. It is an open-ended letter, so students can freely express themselves in their writing. This writing part can be a take-home assignment if there is limited time in the class.

Overall, this activity was perceived positively from the students especially about the writing part. They mentioned in the free writing that it was fun to imagine the character in writing the letter and also to get new information about books that they can read in the later time (Theme 3). As mentioned in the previous section, there are a lot of students who do not mind reading, but feel reluctant to write book reports (Theme 2). This can be an alternative activity that encourages students to speak and write freely at the same time which does not take up time outside of the classroom. Thus, even if instructors wish to decrease the amount of book reports or reaction reports to assign for students, they can still have opportunities to practice writing in English in class by activities like this.

5-4. Extensive reading progress chart

While it is important to keep extensive reading student-centered and leave to students to decide what, when, and where they read, teachers can play an active role in encouraging students to make progress in the classroom. One example that Day and Bamford (1998) recommended is to display a reading progress chart on the wall in the classroom. This progress chart method has been employed by several instructors in the PEC as well. In my class, a piece of large paper with each student name on the row and numbers of pages that they read on the column is displayed in the Practical English classroom (see Appendix E). Each student is given several colors of dot-shaped stickers to fill it out so that for each book they read they use different colors. One thing that I found useful is to keep the number of pages on the column small enough such as five or ten pages so that students can put at least one sticker in each PE II class after SSR. This is important in a sense
that students can regularly be a part of the reading community in the classroom. By using this wall display, not only are students encouraged to keep reading more by being able to keep track of their reading progress visually (Theme 2), but also teachers can easily find out which students might need assistance and support from them.

I also used another piece of large paper for fluency exercise progress suggested by Nation (2009). Each student quickly reads a short passage fast from “Reading for Speed and Fluency” by Nation and Malarcher (2007) level 4 for the Finishing Level and level 3 for the Extending Level. After reading the passage, they check and write down how long it takes them to read the passage, and they answer short comprehension questions related to the passage. We check the answers as a class and they fill out this other chart for fluency exercise progress by writing down their time to read and the score for comprehension questions. It helps students understand that learning reading in English is not only about doing textbook work, but also about improving fluency in reading on a regular basis, in a sense that extensive reading and timed reading for fluency should go hand in hand. By displaying two separate posters on the wall, some of my students commented that they had a daily opportunity to see their visible progress and also grew a sense of healthy and productive competition among them in the classroom reading community.

6. Conclusions and future research

Extensive reading is originated in a simple idea that reading a lot of easy and interesting books should help readers learn the target language. However, in reality, my experiences and instructors’ comments show that instructors need to spend great amount of time and energy to encourage and motivate students to read extensively. It is also important for instructors to consider diverse factors at play in implementing extensive reading. This article aimed to untangle some of the
struggles and concerns that both instructors and students have regarding extensive reading in the context of YCU, and to make some suggestions on how some of the struggles can be mediated. It should also be emphasized that although this article mainly focused on the difficulties that students have, there have been many students actively engaged in extensive reading who reported positive impact on them learning the target language. It is my hope that the four suggestions on in-class activities mentioned above help struggling students solve some of the issues they have.

As previous research has shown, the results of extensive reading has been widely positive, yet it seems that the majority of instructors at the PEC are still in search for a better way to implement it in their classrooms. Thus it is a critical issue that needs to be tackled in the future by collecting and analyzing more comprehensive data both from students and instructors on the limitation and difficulties with extensive reading, and by coming up with solutions that are specifically tailored in this context that could foster students’ and instructors’ motivation and autonomy to engage furthermore.
References


## Appendix A

### ER Book List

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<th>Book Title/Publisher</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
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*Nagashima  A Report and Suggestion on Implementation of Extensive Reading in the Practical English Program at Yokohama City University*
Appendix B
Blurb and Title Match

Work with your partner. There are ten books around the classroom. Walk around with your partner and examine each book carefully. You can look at the title and the picture on the front cover, but you cannot touch them to see the inside or the back. Read the blurbs below and find the right match for each book and discuss with your partner why. Since there are only nine blurbs on this handout, you also need to figure out which book does not have a blurb. Good luck!

1. People often talk about the dangerous old town of Barcelona. Kim and Dave soon know why. There is a man with scary eyes and a knife and he starts chasing after Kim. Who will help her?

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS __________________________________________

HOW DO YOU KNOW?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

2. The four March sisters have problems. Their father is away in the war and they don’t have much money. But the girls have happy times, too! Read this story of family love in a difficult year for the Marches.

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS __________________________________________

HOW DO YOU KNOW?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

3. Every year, Peter and Susan go to Lea-on-Sea. Every year it is the same. But this year there is a man pretending to be Peter. Why? What does he want? Will this be their last visit?

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS __________________________________________

HOW DO YOU KNOW?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
4. A girl’s job takes her to many places. She loves art, and in Rome she sees some beautiful pictures by a young painter. But he can’t sell them and has no money. She likes him. Can she sell his pictures for him?

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

5. It’s a dog’s birthday, and his human friend gives him an unusual present. At first, the human uses the present to take the dog for walks, but when a penguin comes to stay at their place, he uses them one night for something different – very different!

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

6. A man wants to kill the Police Commissioner. But who is he? Can Steve Malone find the killer? He only has two days…

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

7. Donna sees Mark on the boat to Spain. She likes him and he likes her. Then Mark sees Donna dancing with his brother, Dave… Is Donna in love with Mark? Why is Dave dancing with her?

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS

HOW DO YOU KNOW?
8. Brian and David are on a motorcycle race in the jungle. It is a difficult one. The roads are not very good and there is a lot of rain. But those are not the only problem in the jungle…

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

9. He loves adventures. He has them at home, at school, and with his friends. He has one adventure in a graveyard, and one in a cave. Who does he see there, and why is he afraid?!

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

10. Which book does not have a blurb?

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS

HOW DO YOU KNOW?
Appendix C

Name: ___________________ Class: ______

**Book Report _____**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the title of your book?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What level is it?</td>
<td>What genre is it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the book about? (summary: make sure to include the ending. What happens in the end of the story?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you recommend this book? (Circle one)</td>
<td>Very much. If you like ______________, yes I do (write the genre). Not really. Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where does the story take place?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What time period is it set in?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you feel when you finished the book? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the best (or worst) thing about the book? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was your favorite character? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long did it take you to read it?</td>
<td>How many pages?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Name: ____________________________ Class: ______

ER Speaking/Listening Activity

This is a **speaking and listening activity** based on the ER book that you are reading!

1. Choose one character from the book that you are reading and **become the character** for this activity. If you are reading a non-fiction book, you can either be the author of the book or someone or something real from the book.

2. Take some time and take notes about what you know about the character and what you want people to know about the character below. This is a fluency speaking practice, so try not to write an entire script.

3. Walk around the classroom and **explain (1) your character and (2) the story to four of your classmates as if you were the character from the book.** Other classmates will do the same with you. **Take notes about their books** on the back of this handout if you like.

4. When you finish speaking and listening to stories from the four people, choose one character that you find most interesting and **write a short letter to them.** You can write about anything in the letter such as talking about how you feel about the character and asking any questions.

What is the title of the book? (Level )

What is the name of the character you choose to be?

What is the relationship of the character to the story?

Memo (Do not write down scripts!)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the name of the student?</th>
<th>What is the name of the student?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the title of the book? (Level  )</td>
<td>What is the title of the book? (Level  )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the name of the character?</td>
<td>What is the name of the character?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the relationship of the character to the story?</td>
<td>What is the relationship of the character to the story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo:</td>
<td>Memo:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you interested in writing a letter to this character?</td>
<td>Are you interested in writing a letter to this character?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the name of the student?</th>
<th>What is the name of the student?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the title of the book? (Level  )</td>
<td>What is the title of the book? (Level  )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the name of the character?</td>
<td>What is the name of the character?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the relationship of the character to the story?</td>
<td>What is the relationship of the character to the story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo:</td>
<td>Memo:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you interested in writing a letter to this character?</td>
<td>Are you interested in writing a letter to this character?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear ___________________________ (Character’s name), (the student’s name: ___________________________)


Sincerely,

________________________ (your name)
Appendix E

Extensive Reading Progress Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Student 1</th>
<th>Student 2</th>
<th>Student 3</th>
<th>Student 4</th>
<th>Student 5</th>
<th>...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Books Read</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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