DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING EXTENSIVE READING WITHIN A READING PROGRAM

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Introduction

Bunkyo Women's University was begun in 2001 by Bunkyo Gakuen. In 2002, the name was changed to Bunkyo Gakuin University. A great deal of planning went into the making of the University, which is even now undergoing reform of the facilities, structural reform, and conversion from a women's university to co-education. Much of the preparation for the 2001 start was done in the preceding years; similarly, the elaboration of the details of syllabi and such subcomponents of the curriculum for the second year, or sophomore year, was done in 2002. One of the duties that fell to me was the development of the second year reading syllabi. As a result of my research into this field, I came to the conclusion that the incorporation of the operative principles of extensive reading would be vital to a successful reading program.

Background of Extensive Reading

What is extensive reading? The need to define the type of reading known as extensive reading came about in a response to the prevalence of intensive reading in the TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) field. Reading clearly involves a variety of cognitive processes, and these processes are different for fast, skilled readers, and slow, novice readers such as children and people reading in a language in which they are not fully literate. There also exists what could be called a culture of instruction, which can be observed as changing over time, and across cultures. Without going into these processes or instructional cultures in great detail, let us just say that researchers observed that the "reading" done by highly literate individuals was not the same as the "reading" done by language learners. Thus arose the need for a definition of these two types of reading, which have been termed "Intensive Reading" (IR) and "Extensive Reading"(ER).

Intensive and Extensive reading differ in several ways. Foremost among these is the

speed, or rate of reading. Another difference is in the quantity of reading. A third difference is the difficulty, and other differences are the factor of choice, and testing.

Intensive reading describes reading that is very slow. Typically, reading speeds for extensive reading are below 100 to 150 words per minute (WPM), and they can be much, much slower than this. The reason for this is that intensive reading is fundamentally translation in many cases. The reader may pause to look up words in a dictionary, radically slowing the reading rate. The reader may also mentally, or even physically translate the sentence into the reader's first language (L1) by writing down the translation of words, or speaking the translated sentence aloud.

Intensive reading also typically involves small quantities of reading. The reader may struggle with a single paragraph, or perhaps a page or two of reading. A large intensive reading assignment may be just a few thousand words. For a highly literate reader, this is just a few minutes of reading. This is due to the fact that the second language reader is translating word-by-word and sentence-by-sentence.

A related issue is difficulty. Because the textual samples used for intensive reading are at a relatively high level of difficulty, it forces the reader to resort to a strategic process of carefully translating the target text.

The matter of choice is also relevant. In intensive reading, the reader typically has no choice of reading material. Reading material is chosen by the instructor. This has been the custom in our teacher-centered pedagogical culture until recently.

The reader is usually tested for comprehension of IR materials. Reading materials are modeled on test formats and the reader reads them for the purpose of answering test questions.

Many of the characteristics of IR combine to make it a frustrating, unpleasant and unproductive experience for the reader. As a result, many language learners say that they dislike reading.

Extensive reading attempts to make reading more successful by employing the strategies that a highly literate reader uses in his or her L1. First of all, one goal of extensive reading is to read large quantities of text, not hundreds or thousands of words, but 100,000 or more, sometimes even up to a million words, or many books. This can greatly alter the cognitive process of reading. After seeing a word many times, the time needed to recognize it will become nearly instantaneous — no more looking in the dictionary. As readers become more proficient, they do not look at letters but instead see most words, especially common words, as a unit, or as "sight words". The highly proficient reader does not look at the letters of a word, or even at each word, but actually sees chunks of

several words at once as a unit. This greatly increases the speed at which it is possible to read.

In extensive reading, the speed, or rate of reading is intended to be faster and more natural, or more like reading in the L1. Extensive reading is usually defined as reading at a speed of 150 wpm or faster. Given that a literate native may read at a speed of 500 wpm or faster, 150 wpm is still a low percentage of the target speed, yet it is much better than the pace of translation-like intensive reading. Several techniques are utilized in order to enable learners to read at a faster rate, including the method of using simplified reading materials to reduce the cognitive load on the reader.

Simplification, or the use of less difficult reading materials, us a characteristic of extensive reading. In extensive reading, a lower level of difficulty is needed. Lowering the difficulty of the text makes it possible to read more quickly, with far fewer interruptions to look up words in a dictionary. In fact, the goal is to make it unnecessary to use a dictionary, by keeping the number of unfamiliar words at a low level. Research has shown that the quantity of unfamiliar words must be at a level below 3 or 4% in order for extensive reading to occur. At that level, an unfamiliar word appears only every 25 or 30 words, on average. This means that the reader can read a sentence or two with excellent comprehension before encountering an unfamiliar word. The sentences that were comprehensible form a context, which becomes a tool for accurately guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar word. If unfamiliar words are 5 percent, 10 percent or higher, the reader becomes confounded. Unable to comprehend even one or two sentences unaided, the reader has no context with which to interpret unfamiliar items, forcing the reader to resort to a dictionary. Unfortunately, the first choice is often not an English-English dictionary, but an English-Japanese dictionary, further reducing the amount of English reading input. Although it is possible to learn words from a dictionary, this is not the fundamental way that vocabulary is acquired. As evidence for this, note that dictionaries are a modern invention which did not exist in ancient times, yet people learned vocabulary in their first, second, and further languages in all historical eras. As a further illustration, consider a 23-year old college graduate with a modest vocabulary of 100,000 words. In 20 years, this person has acquired 100,000 words, or an average of 13 words a day. I do not recall myself or anyone else looking up words in a dictionary 13 times a day. We learned the words we know by encountering them in context and gradually, over 5 to 15 exposures, getting a precise sense of the definition of the word, almost entirely subconsciously, without stopping to think about it or look it up. In fact, if we had attempted to learn words by looking each one up, the actual number of look-ups would be much higher since we would

have had to look each word up 5 to 15 times. Furthermore, words which were looked up in a dictionary would not have been embedded in the compelling context of something that we were deeply involved in reading, hence such words would have been unlikely to be remembered. In short, a dictionary is not bad, but is a highly inefficient tool for increasing one's vocabulary. Extensive reading thus uses vocabulary-learning strategies that are more sophisticated and productive than the overuse of a dictionary.

Lowering the difficulty of a text does not mean using children's literature, or lessening the intellectual challenge of reading, as some may assume. Difficulty is lowered by controlling vocabulary, and in some cases, grammatical complexity. Unusual, low-frequency words can be methodically replaced by common, familiar, high-frequency words in many cases. This technique can bring most reading material within the range of most ESL or EFL readers. This technique is used to produce Graded Readers, which, as the name suggests, are graded according to the lexical level.

A factor that was touched on earlier is choice. IR readings are typically imposed on the reader by the teacher in a teacher-centered pedagogical culture. However the enthusiastic reader in L1 as well as a second language L2 is the reader who has some choice as to what to read. This has a huge influence on enjoyment, motivation, and progress. Reading something you have chosen to read is pleasurable, and therefore reinforces the desire to read, leading to more extensive reading, which then leads to improved literacy. In addition, Extensive Reading promotes learner autonomy.

Similar to choice is the issue of testing. (Even if the reader chose freely, the teacher could still choose to test what the learner has comprehended.) Extensive reading is not usually tested. Knowing that one was to be tested would change the experience of reading. Clearly we are not tested on everything we read in our L1, yet we learn to read. Therefore extensive reading seeks to replace testing with alternative means of assessment in cases where assessment is required. Some possible methods of collecting data for assessment are these: a student could talk to a small group about the book that they just read, answer questions from the teacher about the book, or write their impressions upon concluding reading the book. The key here is that the reader is reading to his or her own satisfaction and for a global understanding of the text, not memory of details.

Institutional Factors

Regardless of the merits of extensive reading, it must fit into an institutional framework in a coherent way in order to be most effective. The institutional constraints of Bunkyo Gakuin University include the curriculum design, class size, class levels, teacher factors,

and time factors.

The reading curriculum for both first and second year students is divided into four skill areas; in other words, there is not a unified four-skills class. Students are required to take English skills classes in Listening, Communicative English, Writing, and Reading. Because there are no distinct classes for Extensive Reading and Intensive Reading, both types of reading would need to be integrated into one course design.

A second constraint is class size. Class size for reading classes at Bunkyo Gakuin University is around 36 students. This is twice the size of Communicative English and Writing classes, which normally enjoy a small class size of 18 students. Even so, this size of class is not considered unduly large, but it reduces the practicality of some means of assessment.

A third constraint is the system of skill levels. In 2001 and 2002 the University English skills courses were divided into 2 skill levels based on proficiency tests. Students scoring in the upper 20% of scores were classified in the "Blue" level and the other 80% were evenly distributed into a "Green" level. The rationale for this system was that high-proficiency students could benefit from being segregated and given more challenging coursework. Less-proficient students, on the other hand, would not benefit from being isolated and given less challenging work, thus they were grouped into the mainstream "Green" skill level. This system was criticized by teachers as having too much variance of scores in the "Green" level, causing difficulty in teaching and slowing down the "Green" groups. As a result, 3 skill levels were made. These consisted of the original "Blue" group, a "Green" group of the 60% of students in the middle of the distribution, and a "Yellow" group of the 20% of students with the lowest placement test scores. This system of 3 levels is in place now, with slight modifications.

Teacher factors and time schedules are another constraint. The Reading course would be taught mostly by full-time teachers but also by a few part time teachers. Usually native English-speaking teachers would be available to teach these courses, but in a few cases, a course would be taught by a non-native speaker of English.

The Second Year Reading Program at Bunkyo

The second-year reading program at Bunkyo was designed to have an Intensive Reading component and an Extensive Reading component. In order to stress both components equally, the grading guidelines suggest that an equal portion of the grade, thirty percent each, be derived from Extensive Reading and from Intensive Reading. This is intended to ensure that both of these types of reading are used and are important to both the students

and teachers in determining a grade.

Intensive Component

The Intensive Reading Component involves reading weekly assignments in a textbook and mastering the content and vocabulary that is presented there. The selected textbooks were chosen because they contain readings on a variety of topics related to cultural differences and knowledge of international matters that are consonant with the aims and goals of the Faculty of Foreign Studies. Some of the topics are education, cities, naming customs, sports, the family, children's rights, and superstitions. Each of these topics is dealt with in a Unit, which is further divided into Chapters. These Chapters deal with the subject matter on a more national basis. For example, the unit on Education has three chapters, which describe education in the U.S., Korea, and Saudi Arabia. The textbook has a systematic process of reading the passage three times, once for the main idea, once for detailed information, and a third time for consolidation. Activities are included which are suitable for in-class work or homework, and it is expected that the instructor give additional quizzes and tests to assess the intensive reading component. Additional readings on the same topics from contemporary news sources are one possible supplementary source for assessing the comprehension of content and vocabulary from the textbook. The textbooks that are used are Developing Reading Skills–Beginning (Second Edition) by Linda Markstein, Heinle and Heinle 1994, and Developing Reading Skills–Intermediate 1 (Second Edition), by Linda Markstein and Louise Hirasawa, Heinle and Heinle 1994. The "Intermediate" book is used for the Blue level classes, and the "Beginning" book (which is actually quite difficult to bear the tag "beginning") is used for the Green and Yellow levels of Reading 2.

Extensive Component

Graded Readers are used as reading materials for the extensive reading component. Penguin Graded Readers were selected for their high quality as well as the ease of ordering sets of books rather than individual books. Penguin Graded readers have been, as the name suggests, graded according to lexical and grammatical difficulty. Level 6 uses a vocabulary of approximately 3000 words, while Level 1 tries to use the most common 300 words of the English language to convey the story. An "Easystarts" level of around 200 words is also available. In some cases these books are original writings for the series, but most often they are adaptations of existing literature, films, folk stories, or biographies of popular people. Grammatical complexity has been reduced by using active rather than

passive constructions wherever possible, breaking up complex sentences into shorter, simpler sentences, and paraphrasing or retelling the story, basically rewriting it, in some cases.

TOEIC and EPER Levels

It was important to select books at various levels of difficulty that would match the students' reading ability. In order to do this, the TOEIC scores of first year students were examined to find the distribution of scores. These scores were then classified into EPER levels, which are levels of reading ability defined by the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER). As it happened, the majority of our students had TOEIC scores that would place them in EPER levels D and C (intermediate), with smaller numbers at EPER Level B and even fewer students at Level A. (Table 1)

Table 1 : This chart relates EPER levels to major EFL exams (from Hill, 1997 p.25).

EPER Level	Average Vocabulary	Student Level	Cambridge	TOEFL	TOEIC	Transition to L1 Books
G	300	Starter				
F	500	Beginner				
E	800	Elementary		350	150	
D	1200	Low Intermediate		400	300	Ages 10-12
C	1600	Intermediate		450	450	
B	1900	High Intermediate	FCE	480	530	Ages 13-15
A	2200	Advanced	CAE	530	650	
X	3000	Bridge	CPE	550	730	

Graded Readers and EPER Levels

The results can then be compared to the information from the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading, matching the series of Graded Reader to the EPER Level. (Table 2) The tables constructed by David Hill match the EPER level to the level that is used in a series of Graded Readers.

Table 2: This chart shows how selected series of graded readers by different publishers fit into the system of EPER levels. (from Hill, 1997, p.26).

EPER Levels

Series		G	F	E	D	C	B	A	X
Longman Classics				Stage 1	Stage 2 , Stage 3	Stage 4			
Longman Originals		Stage 1	Stage 2		Stage 3	Stage 4			
Oxford Bookworms Black & Green series			Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	
Penguin Readers	Easystarts	Level 1		Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	

Quantity of books and other logistics

Bunkyo Gakuin University second year reading classes in the faculty of foreign studies are divided into 5 classes of about 36 students each, with one Blue level class, three Green level classes, and one Yellow level class. By ordering over 300 graded readers and dividing them among the five classes, each class could have a small portable library of over 60 volumes. This number is very important because if each student in the class has checked out one book, there must still be enough books remaining in the library to provide variety and selection for a person who is returning a book to check out another. With a collection of 60 books, 36 people can check out a book and still leave a reasonably wide selection of 24 books for the next user to choose from. In addition, it is important that the choices which a student has are at (or below) the level at which that student reads, hence the close attention to matching the EPER levels of the selected readers to the TOEIC levels of the various strata of students in the class.

Portability

The Graded Readers themselves are small volumes, usually between 40 to 100 pages each, so a collection of 60 volumes is not too heavy to lift. Plastic baskets similar to shopping baskets or picnic baskets were obtained for the storage and transportation of the extensive reading graded readers library to and from the classroom.

Library

Now, additional orders of Oxford Graded Readers have been obtained for the library, broadening the collection. The portable mini-library-in-class system will soon by replaced by a go-to-the-library-to-get-the-book system. This will give the students a wider selection, and somewhat more responsibility for their own reading, while encouraging them to use the library. It will also relieve the teacher of the burden of carrying and providing the books and will consolidate the collections into the library for efficient management. The negative side of this change is that the teacher will not have close control and contact with the texts any longer.

Utilization of class time

The design of the Reading 2 syllabus, with 2 components weighted equally, does not necessarily imply that the instructor would use the class time for the two components equally. Instructors typically interpret a syllabus with their own teaching style. In some extreme cases this means they depart completely form the planned syllabus shared at the institution, which could be unhelpful but could also be a good thing at times. In most cases, instructors will follow the syllabus 70% of the time, and do something original of their own interpretation 30% of the time. A syllabus design that allows for this flexibility is likely to be the most successful. In the case of Reading 2, the precise use of classroom time is not prescribed. Some teachers may wish to do the extensive reading, the graded readers, as homework, and concentrate on the textbook as a whole class during class time. It is possible that yet another teacher will opt to use the assigned reading in the textbook as homework, and use the class time for students to do extensive reading, or perhaps even sustained silent reading (SSR). It is not difficult to imagine valid and practical ways of conducting the class according to either of these two strategies, and ones in between. It is felt that these details are best left to the individual instructor.

Assessment

It was stated earlier that while Intensive Reading can be assessed through traditional means such as multiple -choice tests, testing of Extensive Reading is thought to be counterproductive or even inimical to the concept of ER. A number of means of assessment of this component were considered, including the idea of having students report what they read to a small group, having the teacher ask students to explain what they have read, and writing about what they have read. Although the concept of using discussion was very attractive since it would employ the speaking skill, due to the size of the class

and potential for this activity to draw too much time away from intensive reading, a written means of assessment was chosen. Rather than simply asking students to write without any structure, a structured form — actually 2 structured forms — were used. One is the Extensive Reading Completion Form, and the other is the Vocabulary Discovery Report. This documents form the front and back sides of a Book Report.

Extensive Reading Completion Form

The Extensive Reading Completion Form was modeled on similar but simpler forms used by teachers who are running other successful Extensive Reading Programs at Japanese Universities. The form collects information about the student and the book, including data to help the teacher evaluate the number of words, or quantity of reading, that a student is doing. It also gathers data on whether the student would recommend the book. This can be used to evaluate what texts and genres are popular among the students, thus enabling the instructor to make a list of popular titles and providing data that will avoid the waste of ordering unpopular or unwanted titles. Students also grade the difficulty, which is not strictly predictable on the basis of the book's advertised level; it will vary depending on the student and other factors. Other items draw on the reader's affective reaction to the book. Everybody has a natural human emotional reaction to the characters in the story and the story itself. Students are asked to explain their reaction to the book, and summarize the book briefly.

Summarizing is an extremely essential skill. Students often have interesting insights into the meaning of the book, which they express in response to question 15, regarding what they were able to learn from the book or how it changed them. The Extensive Reading Completion form is attached as Appendix A.

Vocabulary Discovery Report

The reverse side of the ER Completion Form is called the Vocabulary Discovery Report. In this space, students are asked to list five unfamiliar words or multi-word expressions that they encountered in their reading of the book. Together with each word, they also list the sentence that they found it in, the book and page where it was, the word-class of the word, its definition, the dictionary source of the definition, and their own original sentence using the new word. The Vocabulary Discovery report is attached as Appendix B.

Areas for Future Development
1) Unused Genres

I feel that this course design accomplishes the goals of extensive reading and intensive reading quite well. However, there are some areas of weakness. One such area is genres. The reading genres that we use are mainly academic prose in the intensive reading textbook, and fiction in the case of the extensive reading component. There are many genres of reading are not yet included in Reading 2. I would suggest the reading of movie scripts, which closely mirror an idealized form of how people speak in everyday conversation. In addition, the various genres of reading involved in everyday life and business are not included as an essential part of Reading 2. Although we sometimes use newspaper articles, we do not use notices or announcements that one might find on the wall in an airport, restaurant, hotel, bus, or other public pace. We do not use business letters, or letters which one might receive from a utility company or other organization through the mail. Instruction booklets and advertisements are not used in Reading 2. Genres of these widely varied types from everyday life and business reading may be important to include for two reasons: first, it is the type of reading which we actual need to use in daily life, and second, genres of this type are used in standardized tests, such as the TOEIC, which are used to gauge student's level and progress. The types of reading skills which are required for reading these realia-style readings are different from the reading skills which are employed to read fiction or ordinary prose.

2) More Content-based courses

As the curriculum comes up for review and renewal, it is a worthwhile exercise to consider how the curriculum as a whole could be re-designed with the experiences of the last few years in mind. One possibility that I would suggest is that we consider having an Intensive Reading and an Extensive Reading class as two separate classes. Another idea is to have a larger number of classes in which reading is done, for example, a newspaper English or Media English course. Other possible courses which one can imagine having a heavy reading component are Current Events, Global Issues, Environmental Issues, World Literature in English (including literature in translation), Religions of the World, and so on. Teachers could collectively brainstorm a fairly long list of possible reading course titles. Another possibility is that reading should be more closely integrated into writing and speaking. That possibility opens up an even wider range of topics that could be applied to content-based courses.

Conclusion

I have discussed the institutional background of Bunkyo Gakuin University and the

characteristics of Extensive Reading in explaining how an Extensive Reading component was incorporated into the second year Reading course. I found the program to be successful in reaching its goals although there are other reading needs that have yet to be addressed. I hope this may be of help to people who are designing extensive reading programs of their own.

References

Hill, D.R. Graded (Basal) Readers – Choosing The Best. The Language Teacher Online, May 1997. Available: http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/files/97/may/choosing.html.

The Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading, http://www.ials.ed.ac.uk/eper.html.

Appendix A: The Extensive Reading Completion Form is completed when a student completes a book for their Extensive Reading requirement. It is shown below.

Extensive Reading Completion Form

You should complete this form every time you finish reading an English language book.

You will be given credit for every English language book you read.

You may get more credit for reading a longer book.

1) **Date** of this Report: _____ / _____ / _____

2) Your **name**: _____

3) Student **number**: _____

4) Book **Title**: _____

       Author: _____

       Level: _____

       Series or Publisher: Penguin-Longman   Oxford   Cambridge

5) How much **time** did it take you to read the book? (in hours and minutes)_____

6) How many **words** are **on an average page** in the book? _____

7) What is the number of printed **pages** in the book? _____

8) Estimate **how many words** are in the book: (pages x words-per-page) _____

9) Would you recommend the book to another student? Circle your answer.

      I strongly **recommend** this book! (10) (9) (8) (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) I do **not** recommend it!

10) How difficult or easy was the book to read? Circle your answer.

      It was very **difficult**. (10) (9) (8) (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) It was very **easy**.

11) What is the name of one of main **characters** in the book that you liked (or did not like)?

12) Explain briefly **why you liked or did not like the character**:

13) Explain briefly **why you liked the book, or why you did not like the book**.

14) Write a **summary** of the story, in English, in your own words. Write 3 or 4 short sentences:

15) Could you **learn** anything from the book? What? Did it **change** you? How?

Vocabulary Report ⇨

Appendix B: The Vocabulary Discovery Report is also completed when a student finishes reading a book for their Extensive Reading requirement. It is on the reverse side of the Extensive Reading Completion Form.

Reading 2   Vocabulary Discovery Report

*On this page you will report on new vocabulary that you find in the Graded Readers. When you find a new word that you cannot guess the meaning of, look it up and make a note of it here. Include the **word**, the **sentence** that the word was in, the **book** it was in, the **page** number, the word-**class** (adjective, noun, adverb, verb, etc.) and **definition** of the word from an English-English **dictionary** of your choice, and your original **new** sentence using this word. Please make one report for each book that you read. Include at least 5 words, but no more than 10. You may include 2 or 3-word-verbs such as get+along, put+up+with, and see+off. You may also use compound nouns such as self-confidence.*
Example:

Word: outsource   Sentence: When a company outsources, jobs move.
Page & Book: p.47 of Business at the Speed of Thought by Bill Gates
Word-class: verb
Definition: To send out (work, for example) to an outside provider or manufacturer in order to cut costs.
Dictionary source: The American Heritage` Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, 2000. Online at www.onelook.com.
My new sentence: I outsourced the cleaning of the kitchen to my little sister for 500 yen.

(This example is followed by a large area of lined paper where students can write the five examples of their own.)