Evaluation of the Cognitive and Affective Advantages of the *Foundations Reading Library* Series

STUART MCLEAN
Temple University, Japan

This paper provides criteria and methodology for an evaluation of graded readers following a review of the cognitive and affective aspects of L2 reading material, offering a different perspective on their readability and entertainment value as perceived by proficient English readers. Cognitive strengths are evaluated considering the degree to which they encourage the automatization of reading, dual coding and generative use. Affective strengths are evaluated considering comprehensibility, interest to readers, and reading support, in line with the recommendations of Hill (1997) and Claridge (2012). The author feels that native English speakers and proficient non-native speakers are unable to assess the level of interest that graded readers, especially easier ones, may provide. As a result, the degree to which books are considered interesting was established through Japanese readers' opinions, which follows Hill's (1997) recommendation that when assessing readers' enjoyment of graded readers, we should simply ask: Are they a good read? The *Foundations Reading Library* series was found to be highly suitable for Japanese university students with little or no extensive reading experience.

Keywords: extensive reading, graded readers, cognition, affect, evaluation

Day and Bamford (1998) separate Second Language (L2) reading motivation into two categories: *expectancy* and *values*. Within the category of *values*, while the sociocultural environment is important, pre-existing attitudes towards L2 reading are more important. Within the category of *expectancy*, materials have a greater influence than L2 reading ability on L2 reading motivation (Figure 1), which is more useful to teachers, who can do little to improve the sociocultural environments of students. As a result, it is essential that Extensive Reading (ER) materials should be interesting (Nation, 2009; Williams, 1986) and easily comprehensible (Krashen 1993; Nation, 2009; Takase, 2007). Additionally, as in first language (L1) reading, it is through the facilitation and automatization of cognitive processes during L2 reading that L2 reading proficiency increases (Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Nation, 2009). L2 reading affect and cognitive reading development are influenced by L2 reading material (Grabe, 2009). Consequently, an evaluation of the *Foundations Reading Library* series (Waring & Jamall, 2007) in terms of affective and cognitive aspects for Japanese university students has been conducted.
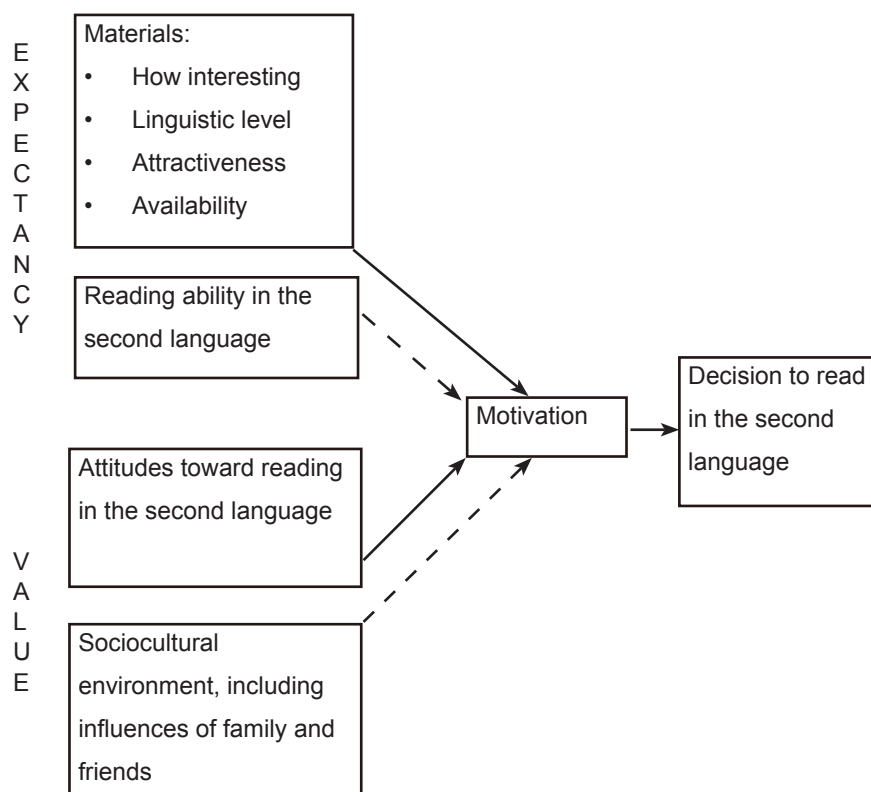
Figure 1. Model of the major variables motivating the decision to read in a second language (solid lines indicate stronger influences than broken lines), adapted from Day & Bamford (1998, p28)

Literature review

Commonly, reviews of Graded Readers (GR) and ER material look at their literary value qualitatively. In the following literature review, this writer hopes to identify features that contribute to ideal GR material in relation to cognitive and affective aspects, to assist in the following quantitative evaluation of the *Foundations Reading Library* series.

Cognitive aspects
Books must be highly comprehensible
Through their comprehensibility, GRs allow for large amounts of material to be read in contrast to unsimplified texts (Beglar, Hunt & Kite, 2012). It is through such extensive exposure to print that cognitive reading processes are eventually automatized (Grabe, 2009). These processes include word recognition, syntactic parsing and semantic proposition formation.

Rapid and automatic word recognition is a pre-requisite for fluent, enjoyable reading comprehension. Word recognition refers to recognizing a word's written form, and then calling up that word's meaning from the reader's long-term memory. Through multiple exposures to a word's form, recognition of that word becomes automatic. However, thousands of hours of reading practice are necessary for word recognition to become automatic (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

Fluent readers automatically perform syntactic parsing, and fluent reading is dependent upon this ability. Syntactic parsing is the segmentation of text into meaningful grammatical phrases to support clause-level comprehension (Klauda & Guthrie, 2008). This is dependent upon a reader's ability to recognize phrasal groups and to recognize word order among clauses (Grabe, 2009). Studies on first-language reading have demonstrated that learning how to syntactically parse reading material has led to greater global comprehension (Amble & Kelly, 1970; O'Shea &

Sindelar, 1983). It is only through extensive engagement with printed texts that readers may develop this skill.

Finally, fluent readers automatically perform semantic proposition formation, which is the process of forming clause-level units through combining structural information with word meanings (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). The fluent reader builds comprehension through integrating the meaning of recognized words which are stored in short term memory, grammatical cues and the message already integrated from the previously read material. As the fluent reader continues to read, more semantic information is activated and previously read material which is still relevant is kept active. If certain ideas are referred to multiple times or recycled they become a central premise or idea (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

Fluent reading involves understanding more than 98% (Hu & Nation, 2000) or 99% (Carver, 1994) of the words in a text. These figures emphasize the importance of highly comprehensible text. Day and Bamford (1998) refer to L2 extensive reading taking place at *i* minus 1, where *i* is a student's current level of acquisition. This contrasts with the *i* + 1 suggested by Krashen (1981) in his comprehensible input hypothesis. For many EFL students with little experience in reading graded readers, *i* + 1 can be challenging (Day and Bamford, 1998).

Highly comprehensible text allows for L2 readers to read text without translating it. However, it should be remembered by teachers and researchers that even if a student knows all the words of a text in their decontextualized forms, it is still possible that the student may not comprehend that text. As a result, the Start with Simple Stories (SSS) method is recommended, especially for low-proficiency learners and those who have no L2 English ER experience (Furukawa, 2011). SSS is an example of an operationalization of *i*-1 or even *i*-3. SSS also assists Japanese students reading for meaning

without translation, and overcomes the differences between the reading systems of English and Japanese (Nakanishi & Ueda, 2011). The role of accompanying audio material assisting readers to read in a more natural way has been suggested by Nishizawa, Yoshioka and Fukada (2010); and by Nakanishi and Ueda (2011). While audio recordings to accompany written texts are an advantage for a GR series, high comprehensibility of a GR text is essential.

The promotion of reading fluency is a goal of ER (Nakanishi & Ueda, 2011; Nation, 2009), and this may be achieved through ER and timed repeated readings (Nation, 2009; Day & Bamford, 1998). However, timed repeated reading practice requires texts with no unknown words (Nation, 2009).

Furthermore, highly comprehensible texts are essential because comprehension and decoding compete for limited working memory. When low-proficiency L2 readers meet non-sight words and analyze their separate components, much of the limited processing capacity of working memory is utilized. This greatly reduces available working memory capacity for overall comprehension (Pressley, 2006). This in turn reduces the amount of reading that can take place within a given amount of time, while also affecting motivation negatively. This is crucial because more motivated students read more (Takase, 2009), and it is only through exposure to large amounts of text that students may develop automatized cognitive processes for reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

The term "large amounts" is vague, and requires clarification in terms of L2 extensive reading. Nishizawa, Yoshioka and Fukada (2010) found that reading 300,000 words from easy-to-read books was a threshold for significant increases in TOEIC scores. Beglar, Hunt and Kite (2012) found that students reading from 160,000 standard words improved their reading speed with statistical significance. A standard word (Carver, 1982, 1990) is every six-character unit,

including spaces between words. Considering the difficulty of the books read, it is believed that the number of words read is 15% more than the number of standard words (personal correspondence with David Beglar, 2013), so the Beglar, Hunt and Kite (2012) study suggests a threshold of around 180,000 words. Nishizawa, Yoshioka and Fukada (2010) and Sakai (2002) recommend reading one million words for students to become confident and able L2 readers. However, rarely do ER programs result in university students reading such large amounts. Nishizawa, Yoshioka and Fukada (2010) report an average of around 600,000 words per year for students who engaged in ER in class up to three times a week and for homework; Beglar, Hunt and Kite (2012) report between 136,000 and 200,000 standard words. A meta-analysis investigating the number of words necessary to show statistically significant gains from ER would be of value. Reading amounts necessary to achieve specific learning goals will vary. Few teachers in Japan, especially without in-class reading, can hope for their students to read such "large amounts" as one million words, or even 300,000 words, in a single year. For significant gains in reading speed, comprehension and confidence among Japanese university students, ER must be part of the curriculum for an entire university, or at least an entire department, for two years or longer.

Dual coding
The dual coding theory (Paivio, 1971) proposes that human cognition consists of two subsystems that process knowledge simultaneously: one subsystem for verbal objects, and one for visual objects. The verbal subsystem processes and stores linguistic information while the visual subsystem processes and stores images and pictorial information. While the two subsystems may be activated independently, the interrelations and connections of the two systems facilitate the dual coding of information, resulting in enhancement of recall and recognition of content. Dual coding theory, if correct, also allows for learning and comprehension to take place more often because the visual and verbal information formats do not compete with each other, allowing processing to take place in one subsystem when it is not possible in another (Reed, 2010). Therefore, books which provide pictures, especially pictures to accompany words readers might not know, constitute particularly effective teaching material.

Generative use
While research has shown mixed results for ER in increasing readers' L2 vocabulary (Grabe & Stoller, 2011), it is more commonly believed that ER assists vocabulary knowledge depth development partly through generative use (GU) (Joe, 1998; Nation, 2001). Vocabulary knowledge depth development takes place through a receptive form of GU, which is referred to as varied use, when the same lexical item is encountered or used in unfamiliar or differing contexts (Nation, 2001). For example, in the sentences "I meet my friends every Saturday" and "This is a big meet", the word "meet" is used in varied forms. The more a GR series re-uses words within and throughout its separate books in varying contexts, the more opportunities a learner has to deepen existing vocabulary knowledge, as well as learn new vocabulary items.

Affective aspects
Reading material at an appropriate level
When evaluating the affective aspects of GRs, comprehensibility is key (Day & Bamford, 2002; Takase, 2009; Furukawa, 2011). Figure 2 demonstrates the two cycles that result from reading material which is too difficult, and from reading material easy enough for L2 ER.

Nuttall (2005) first termed the two states "The vicious circle of the weak reader" and "The virtuous circle of the strong reader". These terms were changed to those in Figure 2 to follow the spirit of ER. The virtuous cycle of reading appropriate L2 ER material is also an illustration of the Extensive Reading Bootstrap Hypothesis (ERBH) (Day & Bamford, 1998). The ERBH describes a process in which gains from an action are fed back to achieve greater results more quickly and with less effort.

"The vicious cycle of reading difficult material"

"The virtuous cycle of reading appropriate L2 ER material"

doesn't understand

reads slowly

doesn't read much

doesn't enjoy reading

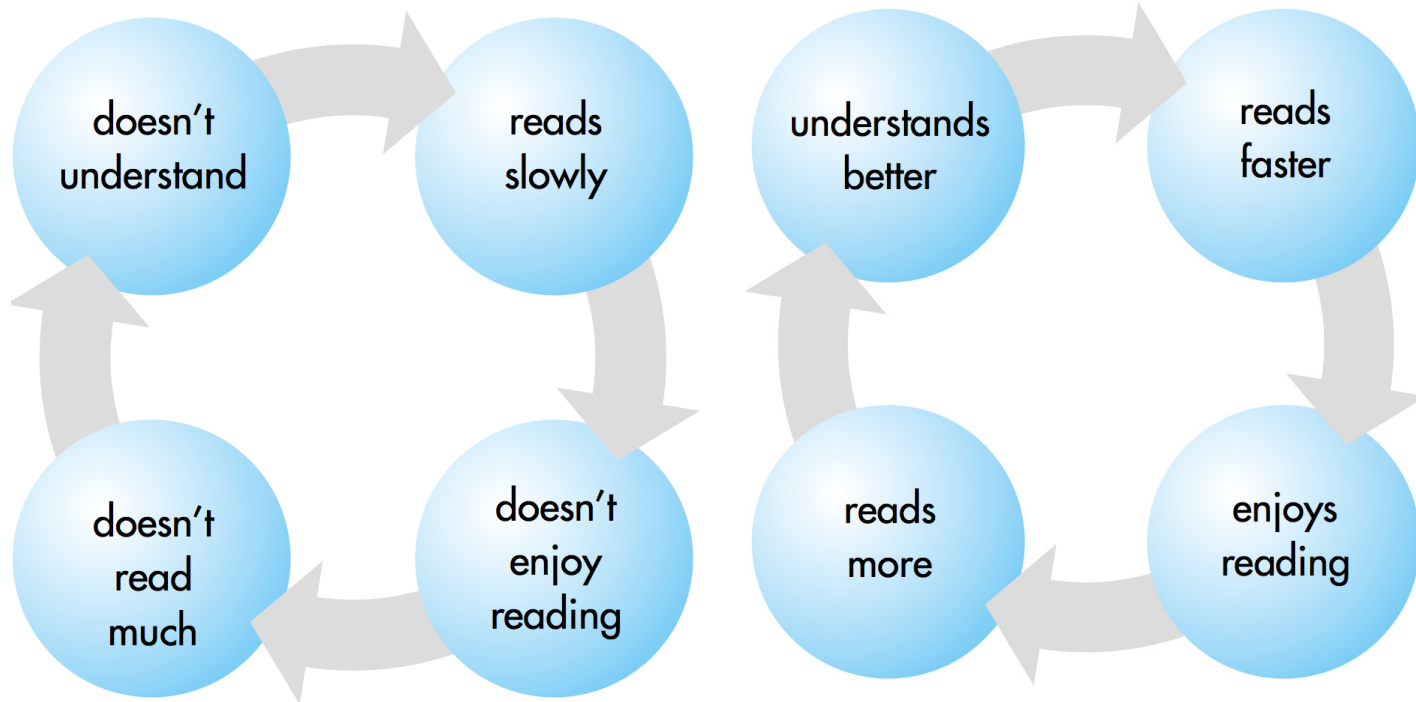understands better

reads faster

reads more

enjoys reading

Figure 2. "The vicious circle of reading difficult material" and "The virtuous circle of reading appropriate L2 ER material", taken from "The Extensive Reading Foundation's Guide to Extensive Reading," and adapted from Nuttall (2005).

An example is a small amount of extensive reading resulting in increases in students' self-efficacy in L2 reading, after which students then increase the amount that they read in the L2. Additionally, Day and Bamford (1998) describe the role of expectancy and value models in motivating ER, stating that through providing comprehensible material, GRs increase readers' expectancy that they will successfully read, comprehend and enjoy L2 material.

Interesting material
Day & Bamford (2002) stress the importance of GRs being interesting to read. The benefits of reading interesting material and enjoying it are demonstrated by Figure 2, and are captured by the ERBH. However, determining what books might interest Japanese university students is not possible without asking a large number of them.

GRs supporting reading
Hill (1997) states that GRs should be evaluated for the degree to which they support reading. While highly comprehensible, interesting texts support reading, Hill (1997) states that short books provide short-term achievable goals. Wanting to find out what happens in a story provides readers with an immediate purpose to use language. Day and Bamford (1998) also see value in shorter texts for the beginner readers, when explaining that lower proficiency readers can read for only twenty minutes at a time. Hill (1997) further suggests that the evaluator of a GR should consider the degree to which a GR assists readers in understanding and reading the language used in that book.

To conclude, GRs that (a) are highly comprehensible, (b) are considered interesting, (c) support reading through providing short text and

Table 1. Descriptive details of the Foundations Reading Library

Title	Headwords	YL	Rating	Words	1k	1+2k	Reading time
Sarah's Surprise	75	0.6	7.2 (298)	526	94.5	96.9	5:40
Goodbye, Hello	75	0.6	7.5 (376)	568	96.6	98.6	6:02
Rain! Rain! Rain!	75	0.6	7.4 (385)	504	94.6	99.6	5:43
Bad Dog? Good Dog!	75	0.6	7.2 (351)	622	95.6	99.1	6:36
Get the Ball!	75	0.6	7.4 (17)	521	96.0	98.1	5:54
The Tickets	75	0.6	8.7 (15)	620	92.9	97.7	6:45
FRL Level 1 Average			**7.3 (1442)**	**560**	**95.0**	**98.3**	**6:11**
SK8 for Jake	100	0.7	7.3 (11)	724	94.9	96.0	7:47
The New Guitar	100	0.7	7.0 (11)	716	90.0	93.4	7:45
Trouble at the Zoo	100	0.7	7.2 (282)	757	92.1	94.7	7:46
Singer Wanted	100	0.7	7.0 (271)	648	92.0	98.3	6:48
Old Boat, New Boat	100	0.7	7.3 (231)	713	97.3	98.2	8:11
The Cave	100	0.7	7.5 (261)	726	95.9	97.5	7:35
FRL Level 2 Average			**7.2 (1067)**	**714**	**93.7**	**96.4**	**7:36**
Slam Dunk for Mark	150	0.8	7.6 (266)	771	96.6	97.9	8:04
Kung Fu Kid	150	0.8	7.3 (272)	762	97.2	99.5	8:02
A Good Friend	150	0.8	7.3 (280)	980	96.3	98.7	9:26
Quick Thinking	150	0.8	7.2 (289)	693	95.8	98.3	7:29
I Always Win!	150	0.8	7.2 (270)	681	93.3	100	7:09
Quiz Night	150	0.8	6.9 (157)	895	95.1	97.2	9:47
FRL Level 3 Average			**7.3 (1534)**	**797**	**95.7**	**98.6**	**818**
I Spy	200	0.9	7.2 (359)	1280	93.8	98.6	13:46
Go Jimmy Go!	200	0.9	7.5 (284)	1347	92.0	98.3	13:07
Do I Tell?	200	0.9	7.0 (339)	1330	97.7	99.3	13:01
Lost at Sea	200	0.9	7.0 (204)	1405	92.2	96.6	14:56
The Shipwreck	200	0.9	7.5 (12)	1301	89.9	95.0	13:21
Mystery on the Island	200	0.9	7.8 (14)	1422	96.6	98.5	14:34
FRL Level 4 Average			**7.2 (1212)**	**1348**	**93.7**	**97.7**	**13:12**
Who's Best?	250	1.0	7.4 (26)	1605	97.1	98.5	15:17
The Big Test	250	1.0	7.2 (406)	1127	96.1	99.0	11:57
Where's Lorena?	250	1.0	7.4 (17)	1636	95.3	98.3	17:01
Boys vs. Girls	250	1.0	7.4 (274)	1710	92.2	95.7	17:52
Think Daniela!	250	1.0	7.4 (317)	1444	91.6	96.7	14:58
The Bear's Mouth	250	1.0	7.0 (221)	1684	91.3	95.8	16:34
FRL Level 5 Average			**7.3 (1261)**	**1534**	**94.0**	**97.3**	**15:36**
The Lost Wallet	300	1.1	7.5 (20)	2590	95.0	96.8	26.15
No, You Can't!	300	1.1	8.2 (22)	2345	91.9	97.7	26.58
Does He Love Me?	300	1.1	7.4 (22)	2633	94.7	98.4	28.46
A Helping Hand	300	1.1	8.7 (10)	2447	95.4	98.5	26.57
Trouble at Sea	300	1.1	7.0 (204)	2301	92.8	97.6	25.02
The Old Promise	300	1.1	7.2 (13)	2634	95.5	98.9	28.17
FRL Level 6 Average			**7.2 (291)**	**2492**	**94.2**	**98.0**	**27:01**
Let's Party!	350	1.2	7.5 (376)	2690	97.1	98.8	28.57
Do it!	350	1.2	7.6 (18)	2471	95.9	97.4	28.48
My Mom, The Movie Star	350	1.2	7.5 (259)	2892	95.7	98.8	31.35
The Secret Tunnel	350	1.2	7.4 (321)	2285	92.9	96.8	25.37
Love Online	350	1.2	7.6 (313)	2926	96.0	98.2	32.36
The Golden Monkey	350	1.2	7.8 (286)	2852	91.7	96.0	32.34
FRL Level 7 Average			**7.6 (1573)**	**2686**	**94.9**	**97.6**	**29:42**
FRL Series Average			**7.3**	**1447**	**94.5**	**97.7**	**15:28**

YL = Yomiyasusa level. Under the rating heading the first figure represents the book's rating with a maximum score of 10 on the Moodle Graded Reader Module and the figure in brackets is the number of Japanese readers who rated the book. 1K = the percentage of words from the 1,000-word frequency level. 1+2k = the percentage of words from the 1,000 and 2,000-word frequency levels. Student reading times represent only a rough indication of the necessary reading time.

(d) support comprehension are considered affectively advantageous for learners.

Description of the *Foundations Reading Library* series

The *Foundations Reading Library* is published by Cengage Learning. Details of all 42 books in the series are shown in Table 1. To assist reader comprehension, each book in the *Foundations Reading Library* series starts with a section called *Before You Read,* which explains low frequency words from the text (Figure 3), and every page contains illustrations which assist reading comprehension (Figure 4).

Figure 3. An example of a *Before You Read* **page from the** *Foundations Reading Library*

Analysis

Learning materials should of course be evaluated with the target learners in mind. This paper evaluates the *Foundations Reading Library* series appropriateness for Japanese non-English major university students. Shillaw (1995) and Barrow, Nakanishi and Nishino (1999) suggest that the vocabulary size of non-English major Japanese students is around 2300 words. Japanese pre-university education does not traditionally include ER (Hino, 1988), and neither does Japanese university education. As a result, most Japanese university students have limited ER experience, or none. Additionally, many Japanese university students of English do not directly read English passages—even those within their ability to read comfortably—but translate them (Nishizawa, Yoshioka & Fukada, 2010). Finally, many Japanese students have low L2 reading self-efficacy and are, as a result, poorly motivated to read in English (Takase, 2009). These three factors should be considered when selecting material for the target students.

Establishing lexical load of the Foundations Reading Library
To establish the percentage of words within each thousand-word frequency grouping of written English, the text of each book was analyzed using *Vocabprofile*. *Vocabprofile* is an online program designed to analyze a written English text to find what proportion of words appearing in the text are of high or low frequency in written English. *Vocabprofile* uses data from large corpora to calculate word frequency rates. *Vocabprofile* was developed by Tom Cobb and is freely available on the Lextutor site.

Establishing rates of vocabulary recycling among different levels of difficulty within the Foundations Reading Library
The contents of the 42 books making up each *Foundations Reading Library* level were
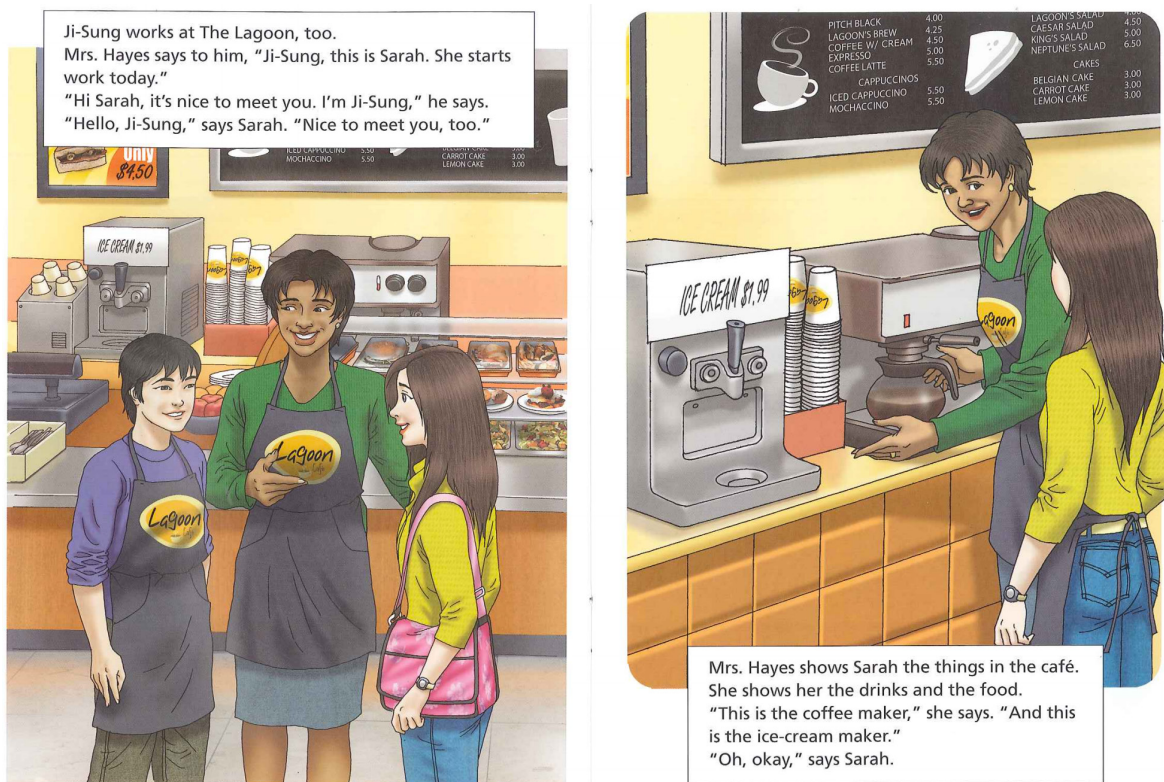
Figure 4. An example of the large images, which are on all pages of the *Foundations Reading Library*

in accordance with the *Foundations Reading Library* headwords. The percentages (Table 2) of word recycling between and among *Foundations Reading Library* levels were established utilizing Paul Nation's *Range* Program. *Range* provides information on the frequency of each word within the processed text, and the frequency of the same word in the British National Corpus.

Establishing Japanese university students' opinions of books

The Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF) established the Language Learner Literature Awards for graded readers in English in 2004. The Foundation hopes the awards will support the development of language learner literature in English, and encourage extensive reading in language education (erfoundation.org). While the awards allow readers to vote for books online, they still filter English learners' opinions through the judgment of native or highly proficient users of English. Readers may vote only for those books nominated by publishers

and then shortlisted by "an international jury" (erfoundation.org). In contrast, the *Moodle Graded Reader Module*, which is a website where readers take comprehension tests on GRs they have read, asks students "How did you like this book?" and offers a multiple-choice selection of different evaluative scores for the book. This method seems more in line with Hill's criteria that "To assess how well graded readers motivate learners, we should focus on their content and ask 'Is the book a good read?' and 'How interesting is it?'" (1997, p59). This would question the wisdom of native or highly proficient English speakers evaluating GRs for their literary merit, linguistic features or appearance. This writer feels that the GR ratings gathered through the *Moodle Graded Reader Module* are among the most authentic representations possible of the target reader opinions because only ratings made by individuals who registered with the *Moodle Graded Reader Module* in Japan were utilized in this study, and most Japanese users of the *Moodle Graded Reader Module* are university students.

Table 2. The percentage of tokens at each *Foundations Reading Library* **level used at that and subsequent reading levels.**

Headwords	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
75	84.0%	76.5%	73.2%	71.3%	72.6%	70.3%	71.1%
100	1.2%	7.1%	5.2%	5.0%	5.0%	5.1%	4.8%
150	3.0%	1.3%	8.4%	6.6%	5.8%	5.6%	5.1%
200	1.8%	1.5%	1.6%	6.6%	4.2%	4.9%	4.0%
250	1.4%	0.9%	1.3%	0.4%	3.5%	2.7%	3.1%
300	0.9%	0.9%	1.3%	0.7%	0.5%	4.0%	2.4%
350	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.1%	1.4%
PT	6.1%	10.4%	6.3%	7.4%	7.0%	5.8%	6.3%
NOT IN	1.1%	0.8%	2.3%	1.4%	1.2%	1.5%	1.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

PT **refers to tokens which are pre-taught in the books'** *Before You Read* **sections.** *NOT IN* **refers to words which are not included on the** *Foundations Reading Library***'s headword list. Levels 1 through 7 at the top of the table refer to the** *Foundations Reading Library***'s levels of reading difficulty as designated by the publisher.**

The cognitive and affective strengths and weaknesses of the *Foundations Reading Library*

Books must be highly comprehensible
Considering the expected English vocabulary size of the students in question (around 2300 words), and the fact that 98% of the tokens from the *Foundations Reading Library* series are from the 2000 most frequent words of written English, this writer concludes that the *Foundations Reading Library* is highly comprehensible for the target students. While this is not 100% coverage (which may be necessary for SSS), most of the individual words from outside the first 2000 are loan words or are explained on the *Before You Read* page. Daulton's (2008) list of English loan words in Japanese was used to identify loan words used in the *Foundations Reading Library* series. As a result, this writer believes that the *Foundations Reading Library* texts are as close as possible to 100% comprehensibility as could be expected to sustain a narrative that would attract and hold the interest of Japanese university students. This high comprehensibility is a clear advantage for exposing students to large amounts of printed L2 text. This high rate of exposure promotes unassisted engagement with text, which promotes the automatization of the cognitive processes of word recognition, syntactic parsing and semantic proposition formation,

all of which are necessary for fluent reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

By using the audio texts that accompany the books in the *Foundations Reading Library* series, students may "shadow" the GRs in order to move away from translating L2 text into the L1, a habit deeply engrained in Japanese students (Nishizawa, Yoshioka & Fukada, 2010). Shadowing contrasts with the behavior of L2 readers who are used to translating texts into the L1, and who are commonly seen identifying parts of speech for individual L2 words in an attempt to comprehend text. Additionally, the high comprehensibility of the *Foundations Reading Library* series will help students enter the virtuous cycle of reading appropriate ER material (Figure 2). From this, they can gain greater motivation to read, which as previously described leads to self-reinforcing gains in reading ability.

Generative use
Table 2 shows that the rate of recycling of headwords throughout the series is high. For example, the words within the 75 headwords band consistently make up more than 70% of books at all seven of the FRL levels. It can be expected that these words are used in different sentences, in different tenses and as different parts of speech throughout the series. To illustrate this,

three sentences using the word *down* from Levels 1, 3 and 7 of the *Foundations Reading Library* are presented: "*The rain is coming down*", "*Adib falls down in front of the teacher*" and "'*Put that down' said Jimmy*". Such continuous recycling will increase vocabulary knowledge development and facilitate vocabulary growth through GU (Nation, 2001).

Dual coding

The *Foundations Reading Library* series illustrations aid comprehension by showing the action of the narrative. They also assist vocabulary learning and foster dual processing and dual storage of text, assisting comprehension by allowing for visual processing to take place when literal processing is not possible (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Hill's (1997) recommendation to evaluate books for how well they assist in the process of comprehension also supports the strength of the *Foundations Reading Library* series. The *Before You Read* sections are less efficacious than the full-page illustrations because they are located only at the beginning of each book. Turning pages back to the *Before You Read* section may slightly disturb the flow of reading, but this facilitates vocabulary learning. After reading the *Before You Read* section, upon finding an unknown word in the text, a learner will try to retrieve the meaning of the unknown word. For learning lexical form and meaning, the retrieval of meaning from the learner's memory is more efficacious than mere exposure to the meaning of a word (Barcroft, 2007; Ellis, 1995; Nation, 2001). If the reader cannot recall the meaning of the unknown word and refers back to the *Before You Read* section, then this also assists the vocabulary learning process through keeping the unknown target word form in working memory for extended periods (Ortega, 2009).

The popularity of the Foundations Reading Library

The fourth column of Table 1 shows ratings out of ten by users of the *Moodle Graded Reader Module* in Japan for each *Foundations Reading Library* book, and in brackets, the number of evaluators for each book. The *Foundations Reading Library*

series is generally popular. However, within the target population of Japanese universities, books from *Foundations Reading Library* were not found to be the most popular titles. This might be a result of the *Foundations Reading Library* series originally being written with younger learners in mind, and not university students. This would explain the findings of Stewart (2008), who states that the *Foundations Reading Library* series has captured the hearts and minds of young Japanese learners. Additionally, in fairness to the *Foundations Reading Library*, writing very engaging stories with as few as 75 headwords must be challenging.

Reading support

Along with the texts' high comprehensibility, the *Before You Read* sections and full-page illustrations support reading in the *Foundations Reading Library* series. Additionally, as Hill (1997) points out, short stories and their short-term goals are beneficial and necessary for beginners, who can read for up to only twenty minutes (Day & Bamford, 1998).

While all books at all *Foundations Reading Library* levels contain mostly the first 1000 most frequent words of English, a major difference from one level to the next is in the length of books. The availability of books of various reading times is advantageous because it allows students with different motivations and different concentration spans to read books at lexically appropriate levels.

Conclusion

This paper recommends the *Foundations Reading Library* for university students who have no or limited experience of L2 English ER: that is, most Japanese university students. The *Foundations Reading Library* series is popular among the target group of Japanese university students. Additionally, the highly comprehensible texts, with support provided by the *Before You Read* sections, the whole page illustrations, the ac-

companying CDs, and the possibility of reading Level 1 books within five minutes, all result in the *Foundations Reading Library* encouraging the development of a positive affective posture among the target students towards L2 reading.

Cognitively, the high comprehensibility of *Foundations Reading Library* texts allows students to read fluently, which exposes them to, and leads them to process, large amounts of text (the complete series contains 60,311 words) over relatively short periods of time. This assists in the development and automatization of word recognition, syntactic parsing and semantic proposition formation (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Through the recycling of vocabulary, GU facilitates the development of vocabulary knowledge and some vocabulary growth. While illustrations make stories more comprehensible, in the *Before You Read* sections of the books, they also assist in vocabulary growth. In conclusion, the *Foundations Reading Library* is cognitively and affectively appropriate for Japanese university students with limited L2 English ER experience.

Acknowledgments

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