

# The Language Teacher

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Yoshihara, R. (2011). Learning and teaching gender and sexuality issues in the EFL classroom: Where students and teachers stand. *The Journal and Proceedings of GALE*, 4, 5-20.

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## Disclaimer

This literature review, entitled “Owning Inclusive Sexuality in the English Language Classroom” has been published only once, in the JALT GALE SIG’s periodic publication. When published, the text was 12 pages, and has been reduced, as requested, for publication in JALT’s the Language Teacher. As far as what has changed since original publication, all sections were shortened, and some examples/supplementary details were removed. Nothing has been added.

## Citation

Lubold, S. (2013). Owning inclusive sexuality in the English language classroom. *The Journal and Proceedings of GALE*, 6, 44-51.

# Using LI to get more out of your extensive reading program

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When deciding whether to allow Japanese into the English lesson, it’s important to consider not only the level of the students, but also the real objective of the activity. This article explores the use of LI as a means to an end: to promote a sense of meaningfulness associated with reading in English and cultivate a shared sense of enjoyment, both of which are especially useful in any ER program.

英語の授業に日本語の使用を許容するかどうかを決める際に、生徒のレベルを考慮に入れるだけではなく、その授業の活動の本来の目的を考えるべきである。本論では、目的に向けた手段としてのL1（日本語）の使用について考察する。つまり英語で読むこと（読解）に意味があると感じさせ、楽しさの共有感覚を育むことである。どんなERのプログラムでも、その両方が特に役立つことは言うまでもない。

**A**s part of my extensive reading program, I frequently assign pair discussions. The students are expected to share their reading experiences with each other, usually by talking about the books they have most recently

## SIG Spotlight: ER SIG

The JALT ER SIG exists to help promote Extensive Reading (ER) in Japan and via our website, our newsletter, the ERJ Journal, and presentations throughout Japan we aim to help teachers set up and make the most of their ER programmes.



finished reading. During the first few years of the program, I pushed the students to discuss entirely in English, giving as much guidance as I could afford, for example via handouts. Now, however, especially with my junior high third-year students in their first year of ER, but also with most of my high school first-year students, this activity is done mainly in Japanese (L1), with me throwing in some useful English along the way. Why? What led to this change?

Despite all of my efforts, book descriptions like the one below were a regular occurrence. The students were using English, which was one of

the initial and primary goals, but I felt frustrated that their descriptions lacked substance; the students didn't seem to be gaining much through the experience. Over time I discovered that allowing the use of the students' first language in certain activities and assignments dramatically improved their willingness to participate, helped keep weaker students from feeling left out, and had a very positive impact on their descriptive prolificacy. To demonstrate the difference in substance between conversations in English and those in Japanese, here is an example of what I might hear my students saying:

*English-only (in heavily accented "katakana" English)*

*A: This book is good. Pictures, cute. Nice story. I like princess stories.*

*Japanese*

*A: I thought the pictures were nice—they definitely helped me understand the story. Hmm . . . what else? I guess that overall, the story was interesting. I didn't understand a few words here and there, and there were names that I couldn't pronounce, but, I dunno . . . I guess if you like fairy tales, as I do, then you'll probably still enjoy it, even if it is a little difficult. In fact, it looks harder than it is because there are a lot of words on each page, but really it's not that bad, you get used to it . . . also, it's different from the movie—I was surprised! I think I might even like the book better. Anyway, why don't you check it out? If you don't like it just put it back.*

On the one hand, the English-only version could be considered a success if the goal is purely to have the students speak in English. On the other hand, if the goal is to promote an interest in reading in English, to facilitate the exchange of useful information regarding the content and quality of the books, or to share in the general reading experience, then I would consider the English-only version a near complete failure.

Additionally, doing this activity in Japanese can be equally relieving for the listener as it is for the speaker. When done in L1, I find this activity, and others like it, to be invaluable aspects of a larger goal of encouraging a positive attitude towards reading, as they promote a sense of "we're all in this together", rather than "every man for himself", and can accommodate students of various abilities working together. Creating a situation in each class where the students can openly

and comfortably discuss with various partners what they have read gets them to break out of their shells, helps them to identify books that they might like to read (or perhaps avoid) and gets them used to the practices of summarizing, sharing opinions and using persuasion, which they don't otherwise seem to do very often. Also, by sharing their experiences, students teach each other how to approach the books, what can be learned and enjoyed when reading in English, and how to deal with the difficulties they might encounter. Significantly, most students seem to take these conversations more seriously than when I occasionally do similar activities in English-only.

It's important to keep in mind that students, in particular those of lower ability, have two difficult tasks to deal with simultaneously when holding discussions in English: firstly, what to say and how to say it, and secondly, how to convey those ideas in English. This of course doesn't even take into account the effort required on the receiving end of the discussion. Realistically, a lot of very worthwhile things that the students would like to express are far beyond their English-speaking levels. When in an English-only environment, students may feel isolated in their ideas and experiences, and as a result of shyness or some other cause, may end up never making an effort to talk about their reading experiences outside of class, either.

Perhaps it should be noted that early on in the program, regardless of which language is being used, my students tend to be very brief in their explanations; I suspect this is often due to a lack of self-confidence and experience, though in some cases, the students haven't actually read the books and are simply bluffing. Either way, given time, most students start to say more as they get used to the activity. Weaker students also learn how to express their ideas by listening to their peers' descriptions. Also, if a student doesn't have a book to talk about, I still encourage them to participate by being a good listener. Students who don't have something to talk about because they aren't motivated and haven't read much tend to be weaker at English in general, and therefore shouldn't be overly criticized. This activity is especially helpful for them, as eventually most come across a book they are willing to pick up and try out.

Ultimately, when deciding whether to allow Japanese into the English lesson, it's important

to consider not only the level of the students, but also the real objective of the activity. If the objective is to have students speak purely in English, perhaps to help them learn to find ways to express what they want to say in a simplified manner, or to learn to deal with the frustration of not being able to say exactly what they want in a second language, then certainly using L1 would be inappropriate. However, if the objective is to propagate a sense of meaningfulness associated with reading in English and promote a shared sense of enjoyment, both of which are especially useful early in the ER program, then I highly recommend giving L1 a chance to contribute its fair share in your ER program.

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#### Disclaimer

“Using L1 to get more out of your ER program” originally appeared in “ERJ Extensive Reading in Japan, The Journal of the JALT Extensive Reading Special Interest Group”, Issue 6.2, October 2013. Due to space limitations, the activity “Student Pair Book Discussions”, originally published in connection with the article, has been omitted.

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# Viewing low motivation and competence through a learner-development framework

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Having taught highly-motivated, highly proficient English language students for several years in Australia, suddenly teaching low-motivation, low-proficiency students in compulsory English classes in Japanese universities was surprising, frustrating, and challenging. After several years of confusion, the lights began to come on when I became familiar with a few themes within the learner development literature.

Reading about, and experimenting within, self-efficacy theory and language learning strategies-based instruction have helped make it possible to not only understand students better, but also provide the kind of teaching and support most likely to be meaningful and beneficial.

オーストラリアで様々な国から来た生徒を数年間教えていた時は、生徒のモチベーションも、英語のレベルも高かった。その直後に日本の大学で必修英語の授業を持ち始めた時、生徒のモチベーションも英語力も低いのに驚きと不満を感じ、毎日が挑戦の連続であった。数年間は困惑することも多かったが、学習者の発達文献に関係するいくつかの論旨を読んでいくうちに、理解できるようになってきた。

自己効力感理論や言語学習ストラテジーに基づく指導法を読んだり試みたりすることは、生徒を理解できるようになるだけでなく、意義があり有益な授業ができる助けになる。

Over the last couple of years I've become aware of just how necessary it is for us as teachers to be able to help our students become better learners. This is particularly true for teachers who, like me, spend a lot of time with low-proficiency low-motivation students. Becoming familiar with a few aspects of learner development over the last few years has given