



# Extensive reading definitions, effectiveness, and issues concerning practice in the EFL classroom: Japanese teacher trainees' perceptions

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This study empirically examined the perceptions of extensive reading (ER) among Japanese English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teacher trainees. Thirty-four Japanese undergraduate and graduate students taking EFL teacher training courses at seven universities participated in a questionnaire survey on perceived ER definitions, effects, and practical challenges. Participants' questionnaire responses were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Results revealed that 1) some participants' ER definitions differed among themselves as well as from those proposed in previous research; 2) while most of the participants agreed with ER effectiveness in developing reading and writing proficiencies, a majority of them did not consider ER as beneficial to developing listening and speaking proficiencies; and 3) the participants had some concerns on future ER practice including how to implement ER. These findings suggest that the participants may become teachers while holding some misconceptions of ER and its practice, and indicate the necessity of future research on ER challenges at the stage of teacher training.

**Keywords:** *extensive reading definitions, extensive reading implementation, extensive reading misconceptions, teacher training*

More than a century ago, Harold Palmer coined the term "extensive reading" in his seminal book, *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages*, published in 1917 (Kelly, 1969). Since then, there has been considerable research and practice of extensive reading (henceforth, ER) in first, second, and foreign language classrooms around the world. This idea that the more we read, the more we reap, can be defined as "an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy material in the new language" (Bamford & Day, 2004, p.1). ER has received attention partially as a result of criticism of the converse approach, Intensive Reading (IR), in

the foreign language learning classroom. While IR aims to promote the reading of relatively short and difficult texts through translation into the readers' first languages, ER, in contrast, provides learners with opportunities to be exposed to a great amount of text, based on the idea that learners can "learn to read by reading" (Day & Bamford, 1998, p.124).

The effects of ER have been reported in language teaching and learning. Previous research has suggested the effectiveness of ER for the progress of reading fluency (e.g. Iwahori, 2008), writing proficiency (e.g. Hafiz & Tudor, 1989), grammatical knowledge (e.g. He, 2014), vocabulary

acquisition (e.g. Liu & Zhang, 2018), attitudes and motivation (e.g. Nishino, 2007), and even listening and speaking proficiencies (e.g. Cho & Krashen, 1994; Inagaki & Inagaki, 2011). Despite these potential ER effects on language learning, however, some researchers (e.g. Huang, 2015; Macalister, 2010) have lamented the situation where fewer teachers and schools have introduced ER into their reading curricula, suggesting the need for a careful examination of the issues that may hinder its implementation.

This paper surveyed Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher trainees' perceptions of ER from three perspectives: 1) definitions, 2) effectiveness, and 3) issues concerning practice. While some researchers (e.g. Chang & Renandya, 2017; Huang, 2015) surveyed in-service EFL teachers' perceptions of ER, there are, to the best of the present author's knowledge, no studies which explored pre-service teachers' perceptions of ER challenges. Surveying their perceptions could also reveal ER research limitations and challenges that may be hindering its implementation.

## Literature Review

### ER Definitions and Their Challenges

The definition of ER mentioned above (Bamford & Day, 2004) describes two basic characteristics of ER: the amount of reading and the level of materials. However, the definitions recognized by researchers and practitioners have varied (Boutorwick, Macalister, & Elgort, 2019), although researchers (e.g. Day, 2015; Day & Bamford, 2002; Waring & McLean, 2015) have tried to clarify what ER is and share common understandings of the definition. For instance, concerning what "easy" material means (Bamford & Day, 2004, p. 1), Day and Bamford (1998) suggested that ER

material levels should be within the learner's comfort zone, represented as "i minus 1" (p. 16). In contrast, Krashen (1985), who also pointed out the importance of a large amount of input in language acquisition, advocated "i + 1" as an idea related to the input hypothesis, which considers comprehensible input that is slightly beyond the learner's linguistic level, i.e., "i + 1," as the optimal input for language learning.

In another example, there is the expectation of pleasure in ER. Day and Bamford (2002) proposed ten principles pertaining to language teaching through ER (see Table 1). Among them, it is suggested that "the purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding" (p. 138). The element of "pleasure" seems important in that Krashen (2004) also called ER "pleasure reading." In addition, other ER definitions include pleasure as a critical component of ER. Susser and Robb (1990), among others, gave an oft-cited definition of ER, in which they described the importance of pleasure: "with the intention of obtaining pleasure from the text" (p. 165). In contrast, however, Waring and McLean (2015), who classified ER definitions into core and peripheral elements, concluded that the element of "pleasure" is optional, meaning that ER does not necessarily need to be pleasurable.

**Table 1. The “top ten principles” of ER (Day & Bamford, 2002, pp. 137–140)**

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1. The reading material is easy.
  2. A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available.
  3. Learners choose what they want to read.
  4. Learners read as much as possible.
  5. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
  6. Reading is its own reward.
  7. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.
  8. Reading is individual and silent.
  9. Teachers orient and guide their students.
  10. The teacher is a role model of a reader.
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These inconsistencies and ambiguities in ER definitions might impair ER effectiveness, bring about inconsistencies in ER research findings, or lead to some misunderstandings or misconceptions of research results. Therefore, it may be necessary to examine where these discrepancies come from in more detail.

#### **ER Effectiveness and its Challenges**

ER has been promoted as effective in language learning over many years from the perspectives of those who want to encourage ER practice. For example, two recent meta-analyses (Jeon & Day, 2016; Nakaniishi, 2015) concluded that ER is effective in language learning overall. However, it is doubtful whether we can consider ER as a panacea (Green, 2005). In particular, whether ER is effective in developing listening and speaking proficiencies, as has been claimed by some researchers, should be carefully examined.

While it may be worth expressing caution over the ambiguity of the definitions of “listening” or “speaking,” there are some studies reporting the potential effectiveness of ER in terms of listening and speaking skills. In particular, Cho and Krashen (1994) reported the growth of oral profi-

ciencies in a case study with four Korean and Spanish participants who learned English as a second language (ESL). After reading the Sweet Valley series extensively, the participants answered that they “felt that reading helped their oral/aural language proficiencies” (p. 667) in the interview. Regarding listening proficiency, in a case study of Japanese EFL learners, Inagaki and Inagaki (2011) suggested that the participants’ listening proficiency improved by virtue of an ER program. However, it is worth noting that neither of these studies were based on interventions involving the relevant abilities, such as the use of audio materials or reading while listening. In the case of Cho and Krashen (1994), moreover, it cannot be denied that the ESL setting enabled the participants to be exposed to oral input outside the classroom, although the authors insisted, without clear evidence, that “they had limited interactions with native speakers of English” (Cho & Krashen, 1994, p. 666). In addition, it is quite doubtful whether performance improvement perceived by learners can be interpreted as the actual growth of their proficiencies.

In addition to the limitations of such empirical studies on implementing ER, the

reported effectiveness of ER in terms of developing listening and speaking abilities is contradictory to language learners' negative perceptions of the effectiveness. Fujii (2018), for example, reported that the majority of his Japanese high school students considered ER as ineffective in improving their listening and speaking abilities. Therefore, this discrepancy between the results of the empirical studies implementing ER (e.g. Inagaki & Inagaki, 2011) and studies on learner perceptions (e.g. Fujii, 2018) should be examined further because there are few studies which have reported such perceptions except Fujii's (2018).

### **ER Practice Challenges**

To date, a number of studies have referred to practical issues of employing ER in the classroom. However, most of them are problems specific to a certain context of the studies, meaning that it remains to be examined whether such problems are shared by other ER practitioners among different contexts.

The time limitation inside and outside the classroom has, for example, been considered an ER challenge. O'Sullivan (2012), on one hand, pointed out that Japanese students are too busy to read extensively out of the classroom, prioritizing "their time such as club-activity, part-time jobs and many classes" (p. 23), although they may not read books even if they have free time (e.g. Milliner, 2017). On the other hand, it may not always be easy to secure the wide exposure to printed materials within a class because teachers may have to concentrate on exam-oriented instruction (Chen, 2018).

In addition to the dearth of school and student time for ER, cost and reading materials are also regarded as problematic. Robb

(2018, p. 1) labeled ER as "expensive reading," as teachers or schools are required to purchase a variety of books, based on one of Day and Bamford's (2002, p. 137) principles: "A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available." As for the reading materials themselves, some researchers pointed out that the materials, mainly graded readers, may be "childish" (Byun, 2010) and therefore demotivating. In addition, Mikami (2017) reported some of the learners' negative perceptions of reading materials, including the difficulty in finding a book whose level is within their linguistic proficiency. Considering the situation where learners' and teachers' perceptions of graded readers are not always reflected in the development of the materials by publishers (Claridge, 2012; Holster, Lake, & Pellowe, 2017), it is also worth examining what teacher trainees, who will become teachers in the near future, think about reading materials.

Previous research has also referred to other ER challenges such as difficulties of assessing ER outcomes (e.g. Carney, 2016) and "student academic dishonesty" (Tagane, Naganuma, & Dougherty, 2018, p. 9). As for the difficulty of assessment, on one hand, ER practitioners might not be convinced of the best way of assessing ER, which has led to "silence" on the discussion about ER assessment (Beglar, 2013, p. 7). Another challenge, "student academic dishonesty" (Tagane, Naganuma, & Dougherty, 2018), refers to cases where, for example, students watch related movies or websites translated into their L1s instead of reading the books, or where they copy friends' book reports in order to complete their own instead of writing them themselves. These underhanded behaviors may lead teachers to have a distrust of the importance of ER, which may, in the end, prevent them from introducing

such programs voluntarily into their reading curricula.

However, there are few studies on perceived ER challenges except those by Chang and Renandya (2017) and Huang (2015), both of which surveyed Taiwanese teachers' perceptions of ER issues. To the best of the present author's knowledge, no studies have investigated Japanese teacher trainees' perceptions. As an attempt to address this research gap, it is necessary to explore what teacher trainees considered as problematic in terms of ER practice, which is the very aim of this study.

There are two reasons for surveying teacher trainees' perceptions of ER. First, although little has been said as to whether pre-service teachers have any issues and concerns about ER, teacher trainees' perceptions of ER might reveal some practical issues or important challenges concerning ER definitions and potential effectiveness that are unique to this population, leading to some implications for the present teacher training courses. Second, Borg (2003) suggested that what in-service teachers will think and do can be affected by their previous experience as students or teacher trainees before becoming teachers. Therefore, research on teacher trainees' perceptions of ER may reveal some challenges to implementing ER. With the above as the background, this study addressed the following three research questions:

1. How do teacher trainees define ER? Do their definitions vary among themselves?
2. To what extent and how do they perceive ER to be effective in developing learners' language ability (reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary) and motivation?
3. What do they consider as ER challenges to implementing ER in Japanese school contexts? Do they have any concerns about ER?

## Method

### Participants

The participants in this study were one undergraduate and 33 graduate students (males = 16; females = 18), all of whom were taking teacher training courses at seven universities in Japan to earn EFL teaching licenses upon graduation at the time of study participation. Twenty-one of them had experienced ER as students, while ten had not (three did not respond on this item). Meanwhile, one participant had previous experiences of ER practice as a *juku* cram school instructor. However, this does not mean that the participant had practiced ER in a similar way to classroom teachers.

It is true that the participants in this study had various backgrounds in terms of being undergraduate or graduate students, gender, university, experience of ER practice, and stage of training. This may raise questions about the homogeneity of the group and therefore the comparability of their answers. Furthermore, due to the small number of participants, which was one of the limitations of this study, they could not be divided into sub-groups for analysis. However, all of the participants in this exploratory study were at that time taking teacher training courses following the core curriculum of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), which is implemented similarly in any teacher training programs at universities in Japan. In other words, the participants from different universities should have been following very similar training courses to earn

EFL teaching licenses upon graduation. As for the stages of training, in addition, all of the participants had finished taking classes concerning English teaching methods by the time of study participation. In this study, therefore, the participants were seen as a homogeneous sample for the analysis.

### Material

A questionnaire (see Appendix) was designed by the author, based partly on Day and Bamford's (2002) principles for ER teaching, for the purpose of surveying teacher trainees' perceptions of ER. Both a paper version and an electronic version of the survey were developed.

The questionnaire, administered in Japanese, comprised five sections: three with Likert scale questions and two with open-ended questions. To address the first research question (ER definition), an open-ended question (Section 1) required the participants to provide their definition of ER in their own words. Furthermore, eleven Likert scale questions (Section 2) were adapted from Day and Bamford's (2002) ten principles, which are considered as descriptions of ER characteristics (see Table 1). The participants rated their degree of agreement with each principle on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1" (strongly disagree) to "5" (strongly agree).

As for the second research question (ER effectiveness), the participants were asked to answer seven Likert scale questions (Section 3) concerning the effects of ER on developing reading, writing, listening, and speaking proficiencies, grammar and vocabulary, as well as motivation, all of which have been considered as ER benefits. For each item, participants rated their degree of agreement with each statement on the same 5-point Likert scale as that for

Section 2.

Regarding the third research question (ER practical challenges), six Likert scale questions (Section 4) and an open-ended question (Section 5) were included in the questionnaire. The questions in Section 4 concern potential challenges of ER practice associated with student time, school time, cost, reading material, assessment, and "student academic dishonesty" (Tagane, Naganuma, & Dougherty, 2018). The participants reported the degree to which they considered each to be an issue in ER practice on the same 5-point Likert scale as that for Sections 2 and 3. Section 5 required them to describe as many ER challenges as possible in their own words.

### Procedure

The author first asked some acquaintances in person to introduce subjects who would be eligible to participate in this study. Once potential participants were identified, the author informed the participants about the aims and procedures of this study in detail, along with the anonymous and voluntary nature of their study participation. All participants then consented to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. After that, they completed the questionnaire and submitted their responses to the author as an e-mail attachment or by hand. It took about 15 to 20 minutes for each of them to complete the questionnaire.

### Analysis

All questionnaire responses were computer coded. SPSS ver. 25 was used for calculating descriptive statistics on participant responses to the multiple-choice items. The author coded participants' responses to the open-ended questions and classified them into categories according to the content. The data presented in the subsequent

sections were translated from Japanese into English by the author.

## Results

### **Research Question 1: How do teacher trainees define ER? Do their definitions vary among themselves?**

For Section 1, the participants' open-ended descriptions of ER definitions were classified into nine categories: (1) large amounts of reading (27 responses), (2) higher/lower reading level (15 responses), (3) general comprehension as a reading goal (8 responses), (4) no dictionary use (8 responses), (5) pleasure as a reading goal (5 responses), (6) faster reading speed (3 responses), (7) reading with a time limit (2 responses), (8) reading the same texts repeatedly (2 responses), and (9) comparison of ER with other reading methods ("I have an image of ER as located between intensive reading and rapid reading?"; 1 response).

Interestingly, some of the ER definitions exhibited contrasting views on the level of reading material, and on reading speed. Regarding the levels of reading materials, for example, some participants described ER as an activity which makes learners "read as many stories written in a little easier English than their own level as possible," while others defined the concept as, "To read books whose levels are higher than [the learner's] own level (Krashen's 'i + 1') without dictionaries." There was also a difference in the perception of reading speed. One respondent answered, "To read a lot and fast. ... To read fast." However, this response contrasted with another definition: "To read a large number of English texts. Regardless of the reading speed."

In addition to the definition gaps among the respondents, other descriptions were,

to the best of the author's knowledge, not referred to in previous descriptions of ER. One such definition worth noting is the need for a time limit, despite the fact that timed reading practice has not been considered as a necessary component of ER programs. Furthermore, another participant emphasized the importance of repetitions in ER, which again has not been referred to previously.

Next, Table 2 shows the results of Section 2, which focused on the ER characteristics Day and Bamford (2002) advocated as ten ER principles. The mean ratings of above 4.0 with relatively smaller standard deviations reflecting a few variations in the level of agreement for six out of the eleven statements suggest that a majority of the participants agreed with six of Day and Bamford's (2002) principles. These were the ones concerning the need for a variety of topics of reading materials (Item 2), readers' freedom to choose materials (Item 3), a large amount of reading (Item 4), teacher's role as a reader (Item 10), the purposes of ER, i.e., pleasure (Item 5), and general understanding of information (Item 6). However, the mean ratings for Principles 7 and 8 concerning the need for post-reading quizzes and reading speed were the lowest ( $M = 2.9$  and  $M = 3.2$ ), while their standard deviations were large enough to indicate the presence of variations in the level of agreement with them across participants. These results suggest that a certain number of the participants did not agree with all of Day and Bamford's (2002) principles often cited by ER researchers as an ER definition.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Section 2 concerning ER Characteristics (N = 34)**

Item	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	min.	max.
2 (availability of various materials)	4.6	0.5	4	5
4 (a large amount of reading)	4.4	0.6	3	5
6 (general comprehension)	4.4	0.71	2	5
10 (teacher guide and orientation)	4.4	0.82	2	5
3 (student choice of material)	4.2	0.97	2	5
5 (purpose: pleasure of reading) <sup>1</sup>	4	0.97	2	5
1 (easy reading material)	3.8	1.04	2	5
9 (teacher silence while reading)	3.3	1.16	1	5
11 (teacher reading with students)	3.3	1.23	1	5
8 (rapid and fluent reading) <sup>1</sup>	3.2	1.23	1	5
7 (no need for after-reading Qs)	2.9	1.17	1	5

Note. <sup>1</sup> One participant's response was missing.

**Research Question 2: To what extent and how do they perceive ER to be effective in developing learners' language ability (reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary) and motivation?**

Table 3 displays descriptive statistics for Section 3, which asked participants to rate their level of agreement with statements

about perceived benefits of ER. Overall, the higher means and smaller standard deviations suggest that many participants considered ER as effective in developing reading proficiency and vocabulary, meaning that the participants' perceptions of such effects were congruent with previous research findings (e.g. Iwahori, 2008; Liu & Zhang, 2018).

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Section 3 concerning ER Potential Effectiveness (N =34)**

Item	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	min.	max.
1 (reading proficiency)	4.5	0.51	4	5
6 (vocabulary)	4.3	0.76	2	5
5 (grammar) <sup>1</sup>	3.9	0.91	2	5
7 (motivation)	3.6	0.78	2	5
2 (writing proficiency)	3.5	0.93	2	5
4 (speaking proficiency)	2.9	0.81	1	4
3 (listening proficiency)	2.7	1.14	1	5

Note. <sup>1</sup> One participant's response was missing.



In contrast, for listening and speaking proficiencies, the corresponding items had the lowest means ( $M = 2.7$  for Item 4 and  $M = 2.9$  for Item 5). Table 4 further shows the participants' responses to Items 3 and 4 in more detail. Those who answered negatively to Item 3 (ER effect on developing listening proficiency) outnumbered those who responded positively. Also, there were ten participants who did not regard ER as effective in speaking proficiency development, while nine participants re-

sponded positively. These results were contradictory to the standpoints of some studies that reported ER effectiveness in developing listening and speaking proficiencies (e.g. Cho & Krashen, 1994; Inagaki & Inagaki, 2011). However, it should also be noted that more than a few participants answered "I don't know" on the development of listening ( $n = 9$ ) and speaking ( $n = 15$ ) proficiencies.

**Table 4. Number of Responses to Items 3 and 4 (Effects on Listening and Speaking Proficiency Development) (N = 34)**

Item	Not effective	Little effective	Effective	Very effective	Don't know
3 (listening proficiency)	5	11	7	2	9
4 (speaking proficiency)	1	9	9	0	15

**Research Question 3: What do they consider as ER challenges? Do they have any concerns about ER?**

Table 5 presents the results of descriptive statistics for items in Section 4. The items in this section asked participants to rate how much they felt areas such as lack of time, cost, materials, assessment, and student disobedience are practical challenges. Overall, participants viewed lack of school time (Item 2) as the most problematic ( $M = 3.5$ ), with moderate variability among the responses ( $SD = 1.13$ ), indicating that there were a certain number of participants who did not consider the time constraint in the

classroom as problematic. Unexpectedly, none of the means were above 4.0, which corresponds to "Somewhat Agree" with the items being challenges to ER. On the contrary, three out of the six items had means below 3.0, and, considering the smaller standard deviations, a number of participants did not regard materials ( $SD = .77$ ) as practical challenges in an ER program. Nevertheless, other items had relatively larger standard deviations, meaning that the number of those who saw them as problematic was not small.

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Section 4 concerning ER Practical Issues (N =34)**

Item	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	min.	max.
2 (lack of school time)	3.5	1.13	1	5
6 (student disobedience)	3.1	1.09	2	5
5 (ER assessment)	3	1.16	1	5
1 (lack of student time)	2.9	1.09	1	5
3 (cost)	2.5	1.11	1	5
4 (materials)	2.2	0.77	1	4

Next, Section 5 asked the participants to write what they considered as ER challenges in their own words. Their answers were classified into seven categories according to the content: (1) difficulty in motivating students (14 responses), (2) taking too much time (11 responses), (3) choosing reading materials (8 responses), (4) cost (3 responses), (5) lack of students' reading habit regardless of languages (4 responses), (6) how to teach ER (3 responses), and (7) difficulty of assessing ER outcomes (3 responses).

Among others, the perceived difficulty of ER instruction was shared by three participants: "Instruction is difficult [in an ER program]" or "Although the good aspects of ER became obvious, I have a concern about whether I can actually introduce it into the classroom." It is worth noting their viewpoints on teaching ER classes being a challenge, because there has been little reference to this kind of challenge in previous research.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The primary goal of this study was to empirically explore Japanese EFL teacher trainees' perceptions of ER definitions, effectiveness, and issues concerning practice in the classroom.

The results concerning the first research question on ER definitions suggest that

some of the participants' definitions of ER were different from one another as well as those proposed previously. Specifically, discrepancies were observed in study participants' perceptions of the levels of ER reading materials between "i minus 1," which ER researchers have advocated (e.g. Day & Bamford, 1998), and "i +1," the concept based on Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis. In addition, some participants appeared to regard reading speed as irrelevant to ER. Furthermore, a number of participants did not support one of Day and Bamford's (2002) principles that ER teachers should not use post-reading comprehension quizzes. However, it is worth noting that, contrary to this principle, quite a few ER researchers consider post-reading comprehension quizzes to be useful (e.g. Robb, 2015; Stoeckel, Reagan, & Hann, 2012).

The findings related to the second research question (potential benefits of ER for language learning) indicated that fewer participants believed in the ER benefits to oral/aural proficiencies, running counter to the previous research reporting its effectiveness (e.g. Cho & Krashen, 1994; Inagaki & Inagaki, 2011). Instead, their perceptions tally with Fujii's (2018) survey reporting Japanese high school students' perceptions of ER.

Finally, the findings related to the third

question on issues concerning ER practice illuminated the participants' awareness of ER challenges. Specifically, many participants considered motivating students to be a challenge. In addition, some participants had concerns about practicing ER in the future, which has not often been referred to in previous studies.

As for the perceptions of ER definitions, an interesting finding was the discrepancy between "i + 1" and "i minus 1." This disagreement can be critical because, as Bahmani and Farvardin (2017) and Chiang (2016) pointed out respectively, the difference in ER material levels may affect EFL learners' motivation and attitudes, although there were no statistically significant differences in the degrees of reading comprehension in either study. In particular, "i + 1" materials may increase L2 reading anxiety, while "i minus 1" ones may decrease it (Bahmani & Farvardin, 2017). Also, Chiang (2016) found that EFL learners who read "i minus 1" materials in an ER program developed positive attitudes toward L2 reading. If the levels of reading materials may make a difference, the perception difference between "i + 1" and "i minus 1" would matter as well. Nevertheless, as Beglar and Hunt (2014) pointed out, few studies have offered information on levels of ER materials and readers' proficiency. In other words, we may not be able to identify the participants' "i"s or levels of reading materials used in such studies which might or might not be beyond the participants' linguistic levels. Therefore, the differences in the perceptions of ER material levels can be an important finding in that further research on the difference between "i + 1" and "i minus 1" should be encouraged, contributing to the future discussion of the degree to which variation in ER definitions should be accepted.

In addition, the findings in Sections 4 and 5 can be considered as important characteristics of the participants' own perceptions of issues concerning ER practice. One possible reason for the results could be the fact that only one of the participants had previous experience of teaching ER, though as a *juku* cram school instructor and not as a schoolteacher in the classroom. This lack of ER experience may have made it difficult for the participants to imagine such practical challenges (Section 4) and to visualize actual instruction (Section 5) in a classroom. Another plausible reason for the perceived issues regarding ER practice might be the inadequate contribution of teacher training courses in terms of ER instruction.

Ten participants said that their teacher training courses had affected their perceptions of ER, because the courses had encouraged them to develop an accurate understanding of what ER is, while 19 answered that they were not useful for their perceptions of ER (five participants' responses were missing). The latter participants ( $n = 19$ ) further said that they gave this answer as they had not had opportunities to learn about ER in their courses, meaning that the teacher training courses did not teach them ER. While ER proponents, who want their students to appreciate the importance of ER, could take the opportunity of teaching it in their courses, these courses may still not be sufficient to alleviate student-teachers' concerns about ER. At the same time, the inadequacy of teacher training courses from the perspective of ER instruction has received little attention in previous research. Interestingly, some of the participants who referred to the usefulness of teacher training courses pointed out that before taking the courses they had misconceptions about ER, and that they were able to realize their per-

ceptions of ER were wrong after finishing the courses. Therefore, the findings in this study can be an avenue to discussing further the *raison d'être* of teacher training courses as places where teacher trainees have the chance to learn about ER before starting teaching in the future. Before that, we may need to understand to what extent teacher training courses have offered opportunities for teacher trainees to learn about ER, and how many students will become teachers without knowledge of, or with some misconceptions about, ER.

While this study has offered some useful insights into the challenges of ER, it is not without limitations. One is the small sample size that makes it difficult to generalize the results to other teacher trainees in Japan. Second, it is not certain whether the study participants would become teachers upon graduation because those who earn teaching licenses do not necessarily enter into the teaching profession in the future. Third, it is debatable whether or not the inconsistent perceptions of ER definition and effectiveness as well as the awareness of practical challenges would really give rise to inconsistency in the quality of ER practice across teachers or even hinder the introduction of ER in the classroom. Despite these limitations, this exploratory study can be a starting point for further discussion on perceptions of ER practice.

In conclusion, the current study has identified that 1) there were some inconsistencies among teacher trainees' definitions and perceptions of effectiveness of ER, and that 2) they had some ideas and concerns about issues concerning ER practice which have not been highlighted in previous research. The findings have also suggested that the participants held these perceptions even before having the opportunity to practice ER in the classroom.

Further empirical work is required on the theoretical and practical challenges of ER at the stage of teacher training in different contexts. Such studies should also address how teacher training practice could be utilized.

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## Appendix. Questionnaire on perceptions of ER definitions, effectiveness, and practical challenges (administered in Japanese)

**Section 1:** 「多読」とはどのようなものかについてなるべく詳細に説明してください。 [Describe what extensive reading is in as much detail as possible in your own words.]

**Section 2:** 「多読」という活動に関する以下の記述を読み、それに対するあなたの考えとして最も当てはまる数字を選んでください。 [Read the following items about an extensive reading activity and choose the best number for each item.]

1: 全くそう思わない [I strongly disagree.] 2. そう思わない [I disagree.] 3. わからない [I don't know.] 4. そう思う [I agree.] 5. とてもそう思う [I strongly agree.]

[1] 「多読」で使用する読み物は現在の言語力よりも簡単なものであるべきだ。 [The level of reading materials used in an extensive reading activity should be easier than a learner's current linguistic level.]

[2] 「多読 [extensive reading]」で使用する読み物は様々なものが多数そろっているべきだ。 [There should be a large variety of reading materials in an extensive reading activity.]

[3] 「多読 [extensive reading]」で使用する読み物は、教員ではなく生徒自身が好きなものを選ぶべきだ。 [It is students, not teachers, who should choose reading materials used in an extensive reading activity.]

[4] 「多読 [extensive reading]」では、生徒はできるかぎりたくさん読むべきだ。 [In an extensive reading activity, students should read as much as possible.]

[5] 「多読 [extensive reading]」の目的は楽しむことである。 [The purpose of an extensive reading activity is to enjoy reading.]

[6] 「多読 [extensive reading]」では全ての文が正確に理解できなくても全体的に理解できていればよい。 [In an extensive reading activity, you don't need to understand all the sentences accurately but in general.]

[7] 「多読 [extensive reading]」はそれ自体が目的であるため、内容理解問題を課すべきではない。 [An extensive reading activity is for its own reward, so there should not be post-reading comprehension questions.]

[8] 「多読 [extensive reading]」では、比較的速い読解スピードで読むべきだ。 [In an extensive reading activity, a learner should read at a relatively rapid speed.]

[9] 「多読 [extensive reading]」は個人的な作業であり、先生は沈黙を保つべきだ。 [Because extensive reading is an individual activity, teachers should keep silent during the activity.]

[10] 「多読 [extensive reading]」で教員は生徒に活動の主旨や内容を十分理解させるべきだ。 [Teachers should ensure their students fully understand the main purposes and procedures of



an extensive reading activity.]

[11] 「多読 [extensive reading]」の時間は、教員も生徒と一緒に読書をすべきだ。[In an extensive reading activity, teachers should read together with their students.]

**Section 3:** 「多読」に関する以下の記述を読み、それに対するあなたの考えとして最も当てはまる数字を選んでください。[Read the following items about extensive reading and choose the best number for each item.]

1: 全くそう思わない [I strongly disagree.] 2. そう思わない [I disagree.] 3. わからない [I don't know.] 4. そう思う [I agree.] 5. とてもそう思う [I strongly agree.]

[1] 「多読 [extensive reading]」は生徒の英語学習において、リーディング能力の向上に効果がある。[Extensive reading benefits a learner by developing his/her reading proficiency.]

[2] 「多読 [extensive reading]」は生徒の英語学習において、ライティング能力の向上に効果がある。[Extensive reading benefits a learner by developing his/her writing proficiency.]

[3] 「多読 [extensive reading]」は生徒の英語学習において、リスニング能力の向上に効果がある。[Extensive reading benefits a learner by developing his/her listening proficiency.]

[4] 「多読 [extensive reading]」は生徒の英語学習において、スピーキング能力の向上に効果がある。[Extensive reading benefits a learner by developing his/her speaking proficiency.]

[5] 「多読 [extensive reading]」は生徒の英語学習において、語彙力の向上に効果がある。[Extensive reading benefits a learner by developing his/her vocabulary knowledge.]

[6] 「多読 [extensive reading]」は生徒の英語学習において、文法知識の向上に効果がある。[Extensive reading benefits a learner by developing his/her grammar knowledge.]

[7] 「多読 [extensive reading]」は生徒の英語学習において、情意面（モチベーション）の向上に効果がある。[Extensive reading benefits a learner's motivation.]

**Section 4:** 「多読」に関する以下の記述を読み、それに対するあなたの考えとして最も当てはまる数字を選んでください。[Read the following items about extensive reading and choose the best number for each item.]

1: 全くそう思わない [I strongly disagree.] 2. そう思わない [I disagree.] 3. わからない [I don't know.] 4. そう思う [I agree.] 5. とてもそう思う [I strongly agree.]

[1] 生徒は課外活動（部活動・アルバイト等）で忙しいので、「多読 [extensive reading]」は指導に取り入れにくい。[Because students are busy with extracurricular activities [such as club activities and part-time jobs], it is difficult for teachers to introduce ER in their curricula.]

[2] 学校における授業時間・授業日数には限りがあるので、「多読 [extensive reading]」は指導に取り入れにくい。[Because of the lack of school time, it is difficult for teachers to introduce ER in

their curricula.]

[3] 費用が高いため、「多読 [extensive reading]」は指導に取り入れにくい。[Because of costs, it is difficult for teachers to introduce ER in their curricula.]

[4] 「グレードリーダーズ [graded readers]」は生徒の「多読 [extensive reading]」の動機づけ（モチベーション）を低下させるものだ。[Graded readers will demotivate a student to engage in extensive reading].

[5] 「多読 [extensive reading]」に取り組む生徒の評価が難しいので、「多読 [extensive reading]」は指導に取り入れにくい。[Because it is difficult to assess students engaging in extensive reading, it is difficult for teachers to introduce ER in their curricula.]

[6] 「多読 [extensive reading]」において、生徒の主体的な読書活動を信頼することができない。[In an extensive reading activity, students' independent reading activities cannot be trusted.]

**Section 5:** あなたは、「多読 [extensive reading]」の問題点を指摘するとしたらそれは何だと思いますか。[Describe ER challenges in as much detail as possible in your own words.]