Stories of avid extensive readers in a university-level EFL course

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This study follows the cases of six students identified as extensive reading outliers—learners who read significantly more than their peers at a Japanese university. Following an inquiry into good or successful language learners, the researcher was interested in what insights avid extensive readers could teach, and whether these insights could help develop classroom approaches. In this paper, the process by which ER was implemented in the EFL course for Japanese university students precedes a narrative detailing each student's story. The analysis revealed some similarities between each of the learners—(1) many were avid readers in their L1, (2) most established personal goals to help reach the class reading targets, and (3) passing the post-reading quizzes appeared to elevate the self-efficacy of the learners. There were, however, more differences than similarities, which led the researcher to advocate a range of strategies for encouraging more reluctant or less motivated EFL readers to read extensively.

In the words of motivational guru Tony Robbins "successful people leave clues" and with this phrase in mind, the researcher/teacher set out to learn from successful extensive readers. For the purposes of this study, successful extensive readers are identified as avid readers—readers who read far beyond the EFL course's word targets. Although a range of approaches for evaluating extensive readers have been identified (e.g., Brierley, 2009), the focus on actual words read aligns with "learners read as much as possible", the fourth principle for teaching extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 2002), and reading volume being mentioned in many working definitions of extensive reading, such as Helgesen's (2005, p. 25) "students reading *a lot* of easy, enjoyable books." In this paper, the cases of six students identified as avid extensive readers in an EFL program at a Japanese university are described. Importantly, this study was interested in how these learners approached ER and what

strategies they brought to the process. In addition, it was hoped that by identifying some of the practices of successful extensive readers, approaches to supporting less successful readers could be uncovered.

Literature Review

In Joan Rubin's (1975) seminal TESOL Quarterly article titled *What the good language learner can teach us*, she urged language teachers to consider what successful students can teach them about language learning. She highlighted that "if we knew more about what the successful learners did, we might be able to teach those strategies to poorer learners to enhance their success record" (p. 42). Rubin's article was a watershed moment for a wave of interest in so-called *good language learners*. In 2008, to honour Rubin's work, Carol Griffiths edited a collection of articles on this subject in a book entitled *Lessons from Good Language Learners*. A good language learner may be an overly broad topic to define; however, one salient characteristic appears to be the learner's active participation and contribution to their own learning (Chamot, Bernhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1999 as cited in Kawai, 2008). As noted in the introduction, for this study, *Good Extensive Readers* (avid readers) are identified as the readers who read far beyond the class's word targets.

Learners' experiences of extensive reading have been a popular area of research inquiry. In particular, the relationship between ER and learner motivation (e.g., Judge, 2011; Nishino, 2007; Takase, 2007; Yamashita, 2013), or how teaching measures such as post-reading quizzes (e.g., Brierley, 2009; Robb & Kano, 2013; Stoeckel, Reagan & Hann, 2012) and word targets

(e.g., McLean & Poulshock, 2018) affect readers' motivation have been a particularly popular area. Unmotivated or reluctant readers have also been a subject of interest (e.g., Milliner & Cote, 2015; Nishino, 2007; Pang, 2008; Takase, 2012; Ro, 2013), but surprisingly, few studies have focused on the opposite end of this spectrum, avid extensive readers. Two of these studies will be considered in detail below.

Extensive reading contest winners at a Japanese university were the subjects of a study by Cheetham, Harper, Elliot, and Ito (2016). The successful students either (a) read more than 100,000 words, or (b) passed 40 MReader quizzes (i.e., read over 40 books) over a 15-week period. Using questionnaires (n=36) and interviews (n=9), the study sought to identify the important factors that contributed to each student's success and whether the lessons learned from these students could be reconfigured to motivate other learners in the university's program. The authors found that the avid readers responded positively to the reading targets set for the MReader challenge. Interestingly, the targets were a more decisive motivational factor for the students who achieved the 40-quiz target. Another factor that appeared to motivate students was that they could choose books which were easy to understand. However, when the choices were restricted for one group of their sample, it was clear that reading became less pleasurable. Related to book difficulty, some students sought more challenging books to read, which the authors identified as a motivation to improve one's English skills. Some of these avid readers were motivated to acquire new vocabulary (and accordingly, chose more difficult books to read), while others were encouraged by reading fluency improvements. A final motivating factor was passing the MReader quizzes and the rec-

ognition the site provided (e.g., institution leader boards and stamp collections). The post-reading quiz website gave students important reassurances on their reading progress, and they enjoyed having some tangible evidence that they (a) read successfully, and (b) could effectively comprehend a book.

Patrick Judge (2011), an instructor and manager of a Japanese high school's ER program, examined enthusiastic extensive readers (N=9) "who were reading much more than they need to in order to do well in the class" (p. 167). The two-and-a-half-year case study focussed on what motivated these students to read in quantities far exceeding their peers. Data were collected through various approaches (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, reading records, and observations both in-class and inside the graded reader library). Important themes to emerge from Judge's analysis included: (a) literacy was valued in each of the student's families, (b) six of the nine participants loved to read in their L1, Japanese, (c) students saw reading as a central part of their lives, and that reading in English contributed to their idealized or dreamed future, and (d) students appreciated the autonomy afforded by the ER program; students could read whenever was right for them and they could choose what they wanted to read. As a demotivating factor, several students complained about the page-count system used to manage student accountability. In response to this objection, Judge (p. 176) countered, "I believe dropping page counting is not feasible, administratively or practically; some students would fail to read even a single book, and it would be difficult to assess those that had read." Similar to Judge, assessment of ER is essential for many practitioners, but page count systems, represent an unreliable measure of how much

students read (e.g., font and page sizes differ). Word count is recommended as better method for connecting formative and summative assessment of ER (Brierley, 2009).

While Cheetham et al. (2016) and Judge (2011) offered some useful insights into avid extensive readers, they failed to consider the classroom context and the teaching conditions which moved their learners to read in such large quantities. Cheetham et al. considered students who were reading for an external goal (i.e., to win prizes and receive recognition in a campus-wide reading competition) and in only some cases was ER embedded in the English class's curriculum. Similarly, Judge (2011) was focused on his school's ER program, not what was happening in individual classrooms. As such, the study attempts to build upon these investigations of avid extensive readers and identify some of the teaching conditions that nurtured them. With these aims in mind, the following research questions were established:

1. What motivated the avid readers to read in such large volumes?

2. Which conditions set by the teacher enabled avid readers to read in large volumes?

3. How did the avid readers manage their approach to ER?

Research Methods

Data Collection

Students who significantly exceeded word targets were invited by the researcher (& teacher) to participate in a semi-structured interview focusing on how they managed

their ER in the course. Interviews were scheduled at the end of the semester after grades for the class were announced to ensure students' responses were not shaped to curry favour with their teacher. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. The semi-structured format featured 12 pre-decided interview questions, and the researcher was free to follow-up or seek additional information wherever appropriate.

The core interview questions included:

- How many books did you read in your L1 in 2018?

- What motivated you to read in large quantities?

- What strategies did you use to manage the process?

- What process did you go through when choosing books?

- Did you set personal goals throughout the process?

- What changes in your reading proficiency have you observed through the duration of the course?

- How did you interpret the feedback received on the reading? (e.g., quiz scores, reading speed measures, comparisons with peers)

- Will you continue ER after this course?

- Was there a turning-point for you while you were reading? For example, after you read an interesting book or you reached a state of flow, did you experience a more positive attitudinal position?

Although the questions were written in English, students could digress into their native language, Japanese. Moreover, students received a copy of the questions one week prior to the interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Japanese responses were translated by the researcher (a bilingual English and Japanese speaker) to English for this review. These transcriptions were cross-checked to enhance the reliability of emergent data. To examine the instrument's inter-rater reliability, two colleagues (Japanese L1 English users) independently reviewed the audio transcriptions, and they agreed with the researcher's assessment of all six interviews.

Although having the teacher-researcher conducting the interviews leaves the study vulnerable to accusations of bias, the researcher echoes Judge (2011, p. 166) in arguing that this design was more appropriate because the researcher had an established relationship with each student and had closely observed their ER throughout the course.

To augment the interview data, and enhance each reader's story's retelling, some quantitative data were collected. These included MReader logs (MReader.org), TOEIC® test scores, and changes in silent reading rate measured using a method derived from Millett's (2017) timed-reading course.

The researcher carefully followed ethical guidelines for research with students. Approval was sought from the university's research committee to conduct the study. Upon accepting the invitation to participate, students signed a written consent form that allowed the researcher to analyse their reading logs, test scores, and interview data. Pseudonyms were used

throughout to protect students' identities.

Participants & the ER component

The ER component was part of a mandatory four-skills English as a lingua franca course for first-year students at a Japanese university (aged 18-21). The course lasted 15 weeks. All students were identified as basic English users (i.e., A2 on the CEFR or TOEIC band 310-395) according to a TOEIC test they sat in the previous semester. The researcher taught all classes, and they met twice or four times a week for a total of 200 minutes per week.

For approximately 10 minutes of class time, twice a week, students worked on a timed-reading (TR) component. Based on the students' reading levels, Millett's (2017) *Speed Reading for ESL Learners 500*

BNC reading course was deemed most appropriate. The course contains 20 300-word passages; therefore students read an additional 6000 words (5035.17 standard words) as part of the TR practice.

Given the researcher's interest in the area, ER was an important part of the courses. It accounted for 10% of the overall grade, and roughly ten minutes were dedicated to silent reading, book discussions, and follow-up ER training in every class. In order to reach the monthly reading (word) targets, students were expected to read outside of class time. To more clearly describe how ER was implemented, Waring and McLean's (2015, p. 165) guidelines for reporting an ER intervention were adopted (see Table 1. below).

Table 1. Summary of ER core and variable dimensions detailing how ER was implemented in the EFL courses (adapted from Waring & McLean, 2015)

Core Elements	Managed in this context by:
Fluent, sustained comprehension	● Analysis of reading speed using Millett's (2017) 500 BNC Speed Reading Course ● Post-reading quizzes (mreader.org) ● ER awareness exercises to promote fluent comprehension of texts. (e.g., Brierley et al., 2010)
Large volume of material	● Students were asked to read more than 100,000 words (recorded in MReader) to receive a maximum score dedicated to ER (10%) ● To ensure that students read consistently, smaller monthly word targets were set
Reading over extended periods	● Students borrowed graded readers from the university library or the teacher's private collection
Longer texts	● Students choose books at a level appropriate for them
Variable Elements	
ER is conducted at home or in class	● 5-10 minutes at the start of every class was dedicated to ER and technical training during a 60-class (four-times-a-week for 50 min) treatment period. ● Students were instructed to engage in ER in their own time.
ER is required	● Participation in this ER program was not compulsory. However, students who failed to participate forfeited 10% of their final grade.
ER is monitored	● ER was monitored by the MReader system ● Students were observed reading in the class by the teacher.
The reading is assessed	● Students received 10 points (10%) towards their overall grade if they reached the 100,000-word target. ● A passing grade of 60% was set in MReader for the post-reading quizzes.
Reading follow-up activities	● Post-reading quizzes (using MReader) ● Follow-up training on how to practice ER effectively ● In-class discussions concerning engaging titles, reading analytics, book levels, and the importance of ER
Graded or non-graded readers used	● Graded-readers from university library (some initial restrictions were placed on the level of the book).
Longer or shorter texts	● Students were free to choose texts of any length as long as the title was at an appropriate level for them.
Freedom to select texts	● Students were free to choose titles from the university's library. ● No book with the same title could be counted.

Results: Avid Extensive Readers' Stories

For the avid extensive readers, important similarities included: (1) all but one read over 150,000 words, (2) all were avid readers in their L1, Japanese, (3) participants were influenced by the word-targets, (4) most set personal reading goals to help them reach the class's ER word targets, (5) all increased their silent reading rates by the end of the program, and (6) all indicated that they appreciated being able to choose what they wanted to read. A description of each reader follows.

The student's standard-words-per-minute (swpm[1]) silent reading rates are based on the average reading rate for the first three (i.e., #1, #2 & #3) and the last three (i.e., #18, #19 & #20) reading passages from Millett's (2017) *Speed Readings for ESL Learners 500 BNC* speed reading course. All participants also scored more than 70%, or six out of eight questions correct for the comprehension questions related to each of these reading texts.

Hide (male, 19 years)

- Department: Humanities (Japanese Education)
- TOEIC Score: 255 (a temporary health condition may have influenced his performance on the day of the test)
- Silent reading rate scores: Before 67 swpm, After 158 swpm.
- Words Read: 143,525
- Books Read: 63

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[1]   Standard word counts for each of the timed reading texts were retrieved from Dr. Brandon Kramer's homepage: https://brandonkramer.net

Hide's story showed an interesting mix of self-discipline and fluctuating motivation. He is an avid reader in his L1, and he read 15 Japanese novels in 2018. Hide was initially motivated to engage in extensive reading after the teacher shared stories of avid extensive readers and improved TOEIC test scores (e.g., Mason & Krashen, 2017). At the beginning of the course, Hide followed his teacher's advice and chose lower level graded readers (GRs) in the 1000-word range. He found he enjoyed biographies about sports stars (e.g., David Beckham and Pele) and focussed on reading similar titles. With these shorter, more accessible books, he established a morning routine where he read a title during his morning commute and completed the post-reading quiz when he arrived at the university (N.B., all English classes were held in the morning for four days a week). This routine, which he described as "one day, one book," became a source of pleasure for him, and he tried to maintain this rate of ER throughout the semester. A second turning point was when he selected a longer book in the 3000-5000 word range. He enjoyed the more complex story, and the sense of satisfaction after passing the post-reading quiz was much more significant. More importantly, however, was the confidence he felt after seeing how much his word count increased in MReader. It made the 100,000-word target for the course seem more attainable. Hide shared that because he enjoyed reading in his L1, he had an established reading practice, so transferring this practice to L2 reading was somewhat seamless. He also enjoyed his new ER routine and expressed interest in reading GRs after the course as he had a very positive perception of the stories he read.

Aya (female, 19 years)

- Department: Humanities (Japanese Education)
- TOEIC Score: 205
- Silent reading rate scores: Before 95 swpm, After 102 swpm.
- Words Read: 162,315
- Books Read: 32

As a Japanese Education major, Aya was an avid reader in her L1, and she read roughly ten Japanese novels in 2018. She was initially motivated to engage in ER because of the grading rewards. She recognized that her L2 listening skills were poor and wanted to do well in reading to make up for this deficit. She was quick to settle on Oxford Bookworms' titles in the 3000- to 5000-word range as (a) they were easy for her to read, and (b) these titles almost always had a MReader quiz. She also set a goal for herself to read a book every day.

Interestingly, she noted that she did not benefit from some of the classroom activities related to ER. She liked to read quietly in her house, and she found it hard to read during the class's silent-reading time. Upon observing this point, she decided to dedicate this time to taking post-reading quizzes for the book she read the day before. Also, she noted that she did not benefit from book discussions as she was reading at a higher level than her peers. Her interest in fiction was also misaligned with the non-fiction titles preferred by other class members. When asked if she would like to continue reading GRs after the course, Aya said, "most likely, not."

Tomo (male, 19 years)

- Department: Liberal Arts
- TOEIC Score: 300
- Silent reading rate scores: Before 103 swpm, After 128 swpm.
- Words Read: 202,899
- Books Read: 56

Tomo already associated reading in his L1 with enjoyment. He was drawn to working hard at extensive reading as he enjoyed reading in his L1, and he wanted to follow online discussions relating to his favourite soccer team, Manchester City. When asked about how he was able to reach the class's word targets, he noted that he had a lot of free time during the semester and that he simply enjoyed reading. Having extra free time meant that Tomo was not overly strategic in his approach to reading. He found books in the 3000 to the 4000-word range to be appropriate, and stuck to them. Importantly, having free time made him less likely to struggle with titles that he felt were boring or too difficult to read. He would stop reading a book if he did not like it. The word targets and reading goals for the class did not influence how much he read either. Rather it was the enjoyment he drew from reading every day. Despite this positive stance, Tomo did not intend to continue reading GRs after the course.

Riri (female, 19 years)

- Department: Liberal Arts
- TOEIC Score: 325
- Silent reading rate scores: Before 78 swpm, After 141 swpm.
- Words Read: 156,000
- Books Read: 82

Riri was one of the most striking cases. She read 82 GRs in the semester. In the beginning stages of the course, she cited the word targets and grading rewards as influential. She quickly established a routine where she read a book every day and carefully planned how she could reach

the course's monthly word targets. As she lived a busy student life, she tried especially hard to read during the class's silent reading time. She would always make sure she had a book to read, and during the interview, she noted that she would move her chair or avoid talking to classmates at the start of class to create a reading space that was free of distractions. Riri was also very strict about her book choices. She would initially choose a book based on the cover and read one page to determine its difficulty. If there were more than two unknown words on the page, Riri would not borrow the book. Moreover, while reading, if a book became too difficult or boring, she would stop reading it. As for the factors that contributed to Riri reading as much as she did, she credited it to the monthly word targets, which in her words, gave a "clear goal" to work towards, and the ER awareness training because it helped her to understand the importance of reading fluently and enjoyably throughout the program.

Masa (male, 20 years)

- Department: Engineering
- TOEIC Score: 255
- Silent reading rate scores: Before 107 swpm, After 148 swpm.
- Words Read: 179,397
- Books Read: 27

Masa, an avid reader of Japanese texts, took longer to stand out from his classmates as an avid extensive reader. In his interview, Masa noted that he was interested in improving his reading fluency as some of the textbooks for his major, computer programming, were in English. In addition, because he loved fiction, he wanted to try reading some famous English titles (e.g., the Harry Potter series). When the course began, he was too busy

working on the school festival and other events related to his club, so he only read to the class's minimum reading targets. A turning point for him was a class discussion concerning the favourite titles read in the course (undertaken in about the seventh week, or half-way point of the course). During the discussion, another student introduced a more difficult book, White Fang. Talking with his classmate triggered an interest in reading more challenging books as (a) he could significantly increase his word count, and (b) he could select some of the famous English titles he had dreamed about reading (e.g., Heidi and Robin Hood). When describing this turning point, Masa felt that the teacher's instructions misled him. In the early stages of the program, the teacher pushed the class to focus on completing numerous short, easy GR titles (to encourage students to become accustomed to borrowing books, reading regularly, and taking post-reading quizzes on the MReader system). Masa noted that he felt the books were too simple and boring, and he did not know that he was allowed to read more difficult GRs.

Masa's second turning point was the two-week winter vacation which allowed him more time to engage in ER. During this period, he set a goal of reading two books every day. Before leaving for this vacation, he carefully chose the titles he was interested in reading and took photos of the entire books with his smartphone. He argued that this step was necessary because he wanted to read the books anytime, anywhere (such as during the long train ride back to his hometown). During this focussed reading period, Masa noticed his reading fluency improve. He said comprehension became much more straightforward, and passing the post-reading quizzes reinforced his belief that he could

comprehend the GRs more fluently. Also, passing a series of challenging post-reading quizzes in a row emboldened him to try the more difficult GR titles that interested him. He found that some of the historical British and American titles were too culturally dense, so he focussed on reading film titles as the differences between the book and the movie interested him. He found a thrill when he could establish these differences. Upon returning from the Winter break, Masa continued to read a book every day, and he finished reading 179,397 words in the semester. He described two instances where his improved reading fluency became apparent. Firstly, while watching an American film dubbed into Japanese with English subtitles, he noticed that he could follow the English subtitles much more than before. Secondly, in the timed reading exercises, Masa noticed his increasing reading speeds and a newfound ease comprehending the texts. Masa plans to continue extensive reading so he can more comfortably understand the English textbooks that he will meet later in his engineering studies.

Nao (male, 19 years)

- Department: Engineering
- TOEIC Score: 390
- Silent reading rate scores: Before 87 swpm, After 150 swpm.
- Words Read: 155,500
- Books Read: 60

In his interview, Nao appeared to be the most ambitious to improve his English skills of all interviewees. He was an avid reader in his L1, reading over ten novels during the year, and five texts related to his major, software engineering. Nao was driven to excel as a computer programmer in the future, and he wanted to apply his skills working abroad as he believed there

were greater financial rewards for him there. He employed several strategies to help him reach his reading goals for the course. Firstly, he dedicated his commuting time on the train to reading a GR. He made a rule that he would open his GR as soon as he found a seat and was careful to store multiple GRs in his bag. Nao's second tool to leverage his motivation was the ranking data or leader board displayed in MReader. He wanted to be the highest ranked student for his level at the university, so he regularly checked this information. Despite this somewhat competitive stance, Nao stressed that he was not driven to choose titles that would enable him to achieve such goals. Instead, he tried to choose stories that interested him, and he also looked for famous English titles such as White Fang. Nao observed changes in his reading fluency as the semester moved along, which he also cited as having a motivating effect for him. His words per minute (wpm) scores in the Speed Reading exercises improved, and he excitedly described the newfound ease at which he could follow online chats between his engineering research group. As Nao observed these changes, he stated that he wanted to continue ER, and he looks forward to reading more exciting titles and improving further.

Discussion

This section will offer a response and a reflection on the answers to each research question.

1. What motivated students to read in large volumes?

A common thread among the learners in this study and Judge's (2011), is that the successful extensive readers were avid

readers in their L1. They had established reading practices, they understood the benefits of reading extensively, and they already had a sense of "fun" associated with reading. For example, Nao noted "as reading books is a hobby of mine, I never felt this process was hard or demanding." Many also brought with them an interest in reading titles that they had perhaps read in their L1, or popular titles that they were familiar with. As Masa mentioned, "when selecting books, I aimed for the books that I was already familiar with (e.g., Robin Hood, Heidi, Call of the Wild). I knew the titles, but I didn't know the stories, so I chose those books." Similar to Judge, some of these avid readers also recognized how ER could contribute to their idealized or dream future (e. g., working abroad as a computer programmer and interacting with fans on your favourite soccer team's discussion board). A response from Nao captures this feeling: "I've also heard that programmers are paid much more overseas that they are in Japan. So, I want to improve my English, and my skills reading English."

On the issue of promoting learner-regulated motivation Ushioda (2008) argued that learning needs to be "driven by learners' own personal needs, goals, and interests" (p. 27). Listening to these effective extensive readers, it appears that each member exercised some individuality when it came to goal setting. Some set daily reading goals for themselves. They carefully set aside time for ER each day (e.g., during their commute to university or during the silent reading time in class). They carefully selected GRs that were in alignment with their interests. Some were more careful than others to choose books at the appropriate reading level. One student checked the campus-wide leader boards to leverage their motivation. An-

other took photos of entire books to make regular reading easier.

Further, Ushioda (p. 30) highlighted two key principles for sustaining student motivation over the long haul: (1) motivation must emanate from within the learner (not something that is externally managed by the teacher), and (2) learners have to realize a sense of agency over the processes that shape their motivation. Nevertheless, it appears that some interventions from the teacher were worthwhile. Many students responded to the word-targets set for the course. That is to say, they appreciated having a tangible target to work towards, but the avid readers diverged from the teacher and established their own approaches to reach these goals. For example, Hide and Aya aimed to read one book a day, or they focussed on reading a specific genre (e.g., Masa and movie titles) or a specific series of books (e.g., Aya choosing Oxford Bookworms). These learners also leveraged some of the feedback they received on their reading. Similar to Cheetham et al.'s (2016) participants, some checked the class or school leader boards to boost their motivation, others benefitted from passing a post-reading quiz, while some were motivated by speed increases in timed-reading exercises or experiences using English outside of the class.

As long as the motivation is regulated or overseen by a teacher, learners cannot be expected to develop skills to manage their motivation independently (Ushioda, 2009). The following section thus discusses how teachers can directly help students manage their motivation for ER.

2. Which conditions set by the teacher enabled students to read in large volumes?

Post-reading Quizzes

The avid readers generally appreciated having the post-reading quiz component embedded in the ER program which correlates with the findings of Cheetham et al. (2016). Passing a post-reading quiz gave these learners a valuable motivational boost because they offered a "reward of success" or "satisfaction of progress" (Nation & Waring, 2019). Passing a quiz for a more challenging or longer book also appeared to move these learners to seek more challenging or interesting titles that they had perhaps avoided reading because they believed the book (or post-reading quiz) would be too difficult. The positive motivational effect of having post-reading quizzes embedded in an ER program was also observed in a study by Stoeckel, Reagan, and Hann (2012). Moreover, using a quiz system like Mreader, which collects data on students' progress (both within the class and institution) helps teachers to demonstrate actual learning progress to learners, which Nation and Waring (2019) argue is critical for leveraging learner's motivation to read extensively.

Word Targets

The focus on tangible word-targets appeared to be appreciated by some of the avid readers. Interestingly, however, some did not respond to the short-term word targets. Instead to get to the final reading target, most established their own reading goals (e.g., one day, one book, or making sure you are near the top of the campus-wide MReader leader board). While this observation may indicate that avid readers are somewhat unresponsive to shorter-term word targets, research suggests that this type of goal setting could still be valuable for lower performing readers. An empirical investigation into the effects of reading targets on similar level Japanese university EFL students by McLean and Poulshock (2018) found weekly word targets enabled their learners to do more ER, and it promoted higher levels of reading self-efficacy. Moreover, participants continued to read extensively after the targets were removed, and they tended to read longer books. It can be concluded here that learners stand to benefit from their teachers setting ambitious ER word-targets for their learners.

Reading in Class

Some of the avid readers appreciated having silent reading time in class. As Riri noted "We always had time to read in class, so I tried to use that reading time effectively." Devoting class-time to silent reading is recommended by Nation and Waring (2019) because it demonstrates the value of doing it and teachers can monitor students (p. 174). An important finding from the avid readers, however, was that some established a productive routine based around these silent reading periods. For Aya, after finding that she could not comfortably read during these periods, she dedicated silent reading time to taking MReader quizzes. For Riri, it was often the only time she had to read in her busy university days, so she made sure she could make the most of it. These examples underscore how dedicating class time to silent reading can foster better ER routines.

Timed Reading Training

As Nation and Waring (2019) recommend, an excellent way to tap into learner's motivation to read extensively is for teachers to establish opportunities for their learners to witness obvious progress. To this end, the experts recommend teachers keep records of the books read, reading times, and comprehension scores for post-read-

ing quizzes. Including the Timed Reading component (Millett, 2017) in this course appeared to help some of these avid readers to observe the fruits of their labour. All learners increased their reading speeds, with most improving by more than 50 swpm by the end of the course. In their interviews, some participants, such as Nao, cited timed reading scores as evidence of improved reading fluency. Masa also noted that "in the speed reading exercises, I have found those texts much easier to follow towards the end." It goes without saying then that timed-reading components compliment an EFL teacher's ER program nicely. Timed reading programs are not only useful in promoting reading fluency and reader motivation, they also create a platform for learners to observe reading progress.

ER Discussions in Class

There was some evidence that class discussions influenced the avid readers. Not only did book discussions introduce interesting titles, but the meetings also gave students the opportunity to discuss approaches to ER. In Masa's case, the book discussions helped show that he could try reading more difficult graded reader titles, and he could try to read some of the famous English titles he had heard about (e.g., Robin Hood). One useful suggestion from a participant about how to improve discussions was to stage them inside the library. In this study, classes took place roughly one kilometre away from the library; therefore excitement created by discussing engaging titles may have been lost because students had to travel so far to the library.

3. How did these students manage their approach to ER?

Careful Book Selection

These avid readers appeared to identify the genres or types of books they liked and focussed in on these points. Aya targeted the Oxford Bookworms series. Tomo and Hide found books in the 3000-5000 range a good fit for their reading ability. After some experimentation, Masa enjoyed reading the film titles because he found a thrill in identifying the differences between the book and the film's story. As these avid readers moved to focus on a narrow spectrum of titles, perhaps the importance of this finding for teachers is that it pays to encourage learners to focus on a preferred genre, series or length of book. Renandya, Krashen and Jacobs (2018) presented similar advice. The authors argued for L2 teachers incorporating narrow, series reading into their reading programs. Their arguments included (1) creating a source of narrow language input (Krashen, 2004), and (2) series books being more motivating because readers become familiar with the characters, language, and writing style of the authors. Another noteworthy argument was that the volume of familiar vocabulary and formulaic language found in series books can enhance the reader's comprehension and mitigate some of the common problems developing readers face.

Personal Goal Setting

While each avid reader was influenced by the course's overall word targets, each participant drew motivation from different areas to read in such large quantities. Monthly word targets, for example, did not seem to be overly influential on these avid readers. The interesting findings were how each learner controlled their behaviour and actions. Riri took steps to ensure she had productive silent reading periods in class. Nao and Hide tried to read during their commuting time, and to achieve

this goal, they made sure they always had graded readers in their school bag. Hide also committed himself to reading one book each day. In order to read a book a day, Masa took photos of entire books with his smartphone just so he could read his books anytime, anywhere. Aya decided to read a book at home each day and take post-reading quizzes during the silent reading time in class. Whenever his motivation was down, Nao "watched my ranking in the class and rank at the institution. This really motivated me. I set a personal goal to read 20,000 at the start. I also set a goal to be number 1 in our class." The variety of approaches described here makes it difficult to provide a unified presentation on how teachers can nurture their students' goal setting and reading behaviour. Perhaps goal setting is best taught by sharing some of these students' approaches and asking students to decide for themselves.

Conclusion

This study reported on the cases of six students identified as avid or "good" extensive readers from EFL courses at a Japanese university. There were some similarities between these students: many were motivated readers in their L1, most established personal goals, and the post-reading quizzes appeared to elevate the learners' post-reading satisfaction. It was very apparent, however, that there was no specific archetype of a good extensive reader. Teaching interventions that appeared to nurture avid readers include: embedding a timed-reading component in the reading course to promote reading fluency and demonstrate reading progress; including post-reading quizzes (e.g., MReader or Xreading.com) to provide diagnostic feedback on ER and record reading progress; setting word targets to establish a clear

goal for the course; and, dedicating class time to silent reading to establish reading routines. In addition, teachers ought to consider advocating narrow reading or series reading and sharing avid readers' stories to help reluctant or weaker readers read more. The researcher hopes that the lessons learned from this study provide some insights into how teachers can more effectively support their learners during their extensive reading journeys.

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