

Well, in my experience, the answer is yes, but it takes a long time. I've been doing questionnaires with my students about this topic for years. Most report improvements in listening comprehension, but a few lament that even though they understand the features, it is still difficult to comprehend everything. There is no easy road to improved listening comprehension. It takes a lot of time. I tell my students that all these books you see in bookstores advertising English mastery in 30 hours with some new special method are all just fantasy. There is NO speed learning. It takes hundreds of hours of practice. However, with guidance and practice, students can improve.

Guidance is necessary?

Again, that's a question I've looked into, and my students overwhelmingly state that guidance helps. This suggests that more of these suprasegmental features should be taught explicitly.

Are English teachers in Japan addressing these differences in listening? Are they making their students aware of the concept of English as a stress-timed language? Are they increasing the students' awareness of top-down listening, for example?

Well, in my experience, some are and some aren't. People who have an interest in phonology do address these differences. Teachers without much training, or without a background in linguistics and phonology, often don't. Such teachers are simply not aware of these differences.

Where do you go from here? How do we move on from this point here teaching Japanese English learners in Japan?

Well, the answer to this question hasn't changed in all my 28 years in Japan. You need to have qualified people—people who know what they're doing—just as you need to have a qualified dentist working on your teeth. Yet this simple fact doesn't seem to be understood.

For example, recently, there has been a movement towards improving the English abilities of Japanese learners by implementing EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction). Such programs have already been introduced in many universities around Japan. As a result, such schools often look at hiring content teachers who don't know anything about language teaching or phonology, nor have they given one thought about the phonological differences involved in the language learning process. So, students are left to sink or swim in these EMI environments, and given the extremely limited

classroom time that students have, this strikes me as an inefficient way to spend their time. If you look at these EMI programs, the vast majority of the students in these programs end up unable to reach the stated goals of these programs. Even at the elite level of Japanese education, is this move to EMI going to help? I would say in most cases, no. I believe you need a CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) or an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) approach. That is, you need an English teacher in your English classes who is trained on the phonological differences. We need trained teachers who understand the needs of our students and can play an active role in helping the students develop their English listening skills. Developed listening skills will enable and empower students to go out and then learn on their own.

Thank you for your time and sharing your insights!

References

- Graham-Marr, A. (2015). Elevating the development of listening skills to foster SLA in an Asian context. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 2(2), 7-13.
- Graham-Marr, A. (2016). An Asia-centric approach to teaching listening skills explicitly. *NELTA Conference Proceedings 2016*, 75-77.
- Graham-Marr, A. (2017). Impediments to EMI and ESP in an Asian context. *The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 5(2), 285-295.
- Graham-Marr, A. (in press). Underdeveloped listening skills & lost learning opportunities. *JALT PanSIG 2016 Journal*.

For the second interview, we bring you an in-depth discussion with Richard Day, a professor in the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawai'i. Dr. Day is a co-editor of *Reading in a Foreign Language* and is co-founder of the Extensive Reading Foundation. Although he has written numerous articles and book chapters, his most influential publications are on extensive reading (ER). After Dr. Day's talk at the 4th World Congress on Extended Reading (ERWC) in Tokyo last summer, he had a conversation about ER with Cory Koby, an assistant professor of English studies at Miyagi Gakuin Women's University. Cory researches ER and is currently focused on building a high-volume ER program and



studying the affective factors that promote positive reading habits. He also serves as Sendai Chapter president for JALT. To the second interview!

An Interview with Richard Day

Cory Koby: Thank you for taking the time to sit with me today. I will start by following up on the ERWC plenary speech that you just gave. Can you summarize what your talk was about?

Richard Day: It was about “What in the world is extensive reading?” I wanted to look at the “ten principles” that we formulated and see to what extent they are brought into play both in research and in practice.

To what extent are they?

Quite a bit. Some of the principles were used a lot in the programs that we investigated, and a couple were generally not used as much, which is not too surprising.

Is it disappointing?

Oh no! Because when Bamford and I formulated this stuff, we distilled what we considered were successful characteristics, attributes, and factors in successful extensive reading programs. We didn’t believe that when people started ER programs, they would necessarily use all 10, but we wanted to stimulate people to think about the teaching of reading. What in the world was going on? Do I do ER? Do I let my students choose? Do I let them read easy material? How can I start?

Of the ten principles, which one did you find was the most written about and the most practiced?

One of them was “Students should read as much as possible.” That was a big one.

That’s the “extensive” part of ER?

Oh yeah! Also, there was “Reading is easy,” which I think is very important. Those were big ones. Then, “Student self-selection” was also up there, so we can say that those were the most commonly cited and actually implemented.

How about the least?

Good question! The least cited were “The teacher orients and guides students” and, “The teacher as a role model.”

In your talk, you spoke highly of the concept of “re-reading.” We don’t hear a lot about that in ER. Can you talk about why you are such a proponent of re-reading?

It’s been my own personal experience that when I read something like a novel for the second time, I get a different view, different insights, different interpretations. And I think, “Oh! I didn’t think of that the first time I read it.” I would like my students to have that experience. But on a pedagogical level, what happens is that they are encountering the same words again—the same lexical phrases, the same grammatical structures. This idea of enhanced input is probably going to happen the more they do it. And reading rate increases.

Would you say there is a magic number in terms of the minimum or maximum? You mentioned a number in your talk.

I mentioned two, but that was because I had ER incorporated into a Japanese ER program. Because this was a course that students got a grade for, and students were spending a lot of time doing ER, we wanted to give them credit for it.

To read twice?

No, we said in order to get the 15 points we were giving for ER, students had to read a certain number of books, and of that total they could read a book twice and that would be counted as two books.

So they could earn double credit on the same book?

Right! Some students did this, and some ignored it.

You gave them the option. And that’s what ER is all about—choice.

Exactly! When we interviewed the students, they said they liked that choice. They said some books they read weren’t worth re-reading, which we know is the case from our own experience.

You mentioned something in your plenary today that I don’t think anyone in the room had ever heard of. It seemed a little bit groundbreaking. I am talking about the “foreign language reading reverse transfer hypothesis.” Can you explain what that is?

Most people know the reading transfer hypothesis, which states when you’re learning to read in a sec-

ond language, L1 skills and strategies will transfer to the L2. I'm not sure that's totally true. So mine is, if you're not an L1 reader, and you're engaged in ER in the L2, and you get excited and enjoy it, you *may* start enjoying the pleasure and excitement of reading in your L1. It's transferring the affective feelings to the L1— from L2 to L1.

You use the word "may" because it's still a hypothesis.

Yes.

But anecdotally, you believe you've witnessed it.

Oh yes! I've got more evidence. I didn't mention it in this talk because this was ER, but students have told me that they didn't know anything about reading strategies in their L1. None! But now they transfer those reading strategies to the L1. There is no question about it!

There's the reverse transfer, right there.

Yes, because how much in our L1 have we been taught reading strategies?

Some more than others...

Some, but maybe not. You learn them in your L2 and you think, "Man, this is really good! I'm going to use it in my L1 reading." Therefore, I will continue to pursue both affective and strategy transfers.

Very interesting. Why should ER be a part of a language education program?

Well, it shouldn't be. It depends upon the goals of the program: What you want the program to do. If you say, "I want my students to become readers in the L2," then you should use ER.

As opposed to intensive reading?

Yes. Because there's been some nice research that shows that students who do ER will score just as well as students who do intensive reading programs where they answer comprehension questions and take tests. But students who do ER haven't done any of that; they take the same tests as the intensive group, they'll do just as well.

They'll do as well? Then why ER?

Why? Because of the affective. Would you as a teacher rather teach students who love to read and are excited about coming to class, or students who go through the motions because they have to?

You spoke in your plenary about one young lady, way back when you were on your sabbatical teaching in a high school, and she came back after that weekend. Can you explain a little bit about the context of that story?

Sure! I was teaching a reading course. I didn't call it intensive reading—it was a standard reading course. It was using a specially written book for third-year Japanese high school students. It was focused on answering comprehension questions. There was no translation, which was good because I couldn't do that. I was bored teaching it, and we were into our third or fourth week, and I thought, "Man, I can't see a whole semester of this. This is just terrible!" Then I thought more about it and I realized my students were not excited. They'd go through the motions. They'd do it because I asked them to do it. Then I thought to myself, "This is not right! I love reading, why don't *they* love reading?" So that's when I got some pleasure books, some interesting books, and brought them to class on a Friday afternoon. I said, "Here are some books. Take one that you like." That was just my idea. I had 35 students and I didn't know what they liked. I thought, maybe I'd have them select what they want, and they did. All that weekend I worried. I didn't know what was going to happen. I'd never heard of ER and didn't even know the term existed. The next Monday afternoon, one young lady comes into class waving a book with a huge smile on her face, "Sensei, sensei, I read a book!" I knew that I was onto something.

So you say that you hadn't heard of ER. When did the term first come to your attention?

Good question! About 1988. At that time, Julian Bamford was completing his MA and doing extension work at a university on the mainland. He asked me, well before this experience, to be a supervisor of a reading course he was doing. I was supervising him and we met up—he was in Tokyo and I was near Kobe. I told him about this experience with my student, and he said, "Have you heard of Extensive Reading?" and I said, "No, what is it?" So he introduced me to ER.

It wasn't coined at that time by the two of you, but it was something that predates the two of you working together.

Yeah, it was in the literature, but I was not aware of it. When he talked about it, I said, "That's what I'm doing!"

So you just discovered it organically?

Yeah. Accidentally.

In 1999, you and Julian had an interview for this same publication that I'm interviewing you for now (TLT). He suggested you both believe that "language learner literature is most appropriate for all but the most advanced learners." He indicated that, "writers of such material were skillful enough to provide both appropriateness and authenticity." Where do you stand on the graded readers versus authentic materials debate today?

Ok, the term that I want to use is "appropriate." If material written for L1 readers is appropriate for the situation, use it! If you need to have modified material written specifically for L2 learners, and it's appropriate, use it! For example if you're learning to play the piano, and you love Beethoven's fifth piano concerto, your teacher isn't going to give you Beethoven's fifth piano concerto. You'll get material written specifically for an adult beginning player. Same with teaching language: As you learn more, your level increases.

You have no objection to bringing in material, for example children's material specifically written for L1 children, into a language learning program?

Oh no! I did that in Japanese.

So level-appropriate material is critical, not exclusively language learner literature.

Oh no, not exclusively, but language learner literature is great.

Of course. But there are some who claim that only language learner literature is appropriate.

No, I don't agree with that at all.

Do you think that material needs to be modified to be comprehensible to L2 learners?

It depends upon the level of the students.

In that same interview I referred to earlier, you were asked a question, and I am going to ask that same question now because I think it needs updating. What do you feel is currently lacking in the literature? Or, what questions are in need of answering in ER today?

I think that, as I mentioned at the end of my plenary, we need more research on ER done in other languages. We definitely need that. The bulk of the stuff that I found in both of my studies has been English, either in second language or foreign language settings. We've got to have a lot more than that. Also I think we're missing younger learners. That really needs to be done. Also, what's missing is long-term effects. The "so what?"

The longitudinal studies beyond the classroom.

Yes! Not just a month out, because there has been some delayed stuff. I am talking about a year.

And beyond?

Sure! Why not? Follow up to see if our students are still reading in their L2. Yeah, I'd love to see that. Now my guess is that we would find people doing it and some people not doing it. That's my guess. But let's find out!

Right, we'd like to know how many are continuing, and perhaps what kind of program they came out of, to gauge the effectiveness.

Yes! That metaphor I used in my plenary, that an ER teacher is a drug dealer. We want to see if that's really true.

Rather than a cheerleader at the game, they are getting the learners hooked for life on ER. Where do you see ER heading in the near future, distant future, and maybe what role do you see technology playing?

Well, the use of the internet is going to be huge. I talked today about supervised ER versus independent ER. I think we're going to see much more independent ER because of technology—mobile devices, mobile phones, and the Internet.

Because of access.

Exactly! I think that if students are exposed to supervised ER, some will go to independent ER. That's my guess.

That's the concept of independence.

Right! Because I think that if the ER program succeeds, we create autonomous learners, totally autonomous. They don't need us. Our job is done. Go drink a martini! Right? You've done your job.

Thank you, sir! It was a great pleasure.

It was great fun. Thank you.

References

- Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (2002). Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 14*, 136-141.
- Donnes, T. (1999). Extensive reading revisited: An interview with Richard Day and Julian Bamford. *The Language Teacher, 23*(7), 4-7.