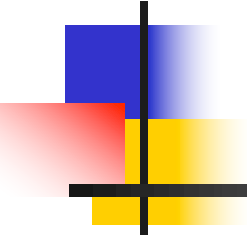


Optimum readability levels for Japanese elementary-level EFL learners



Toyota KOSEN
professor emeritus

Hitoshi NISHIZAWA

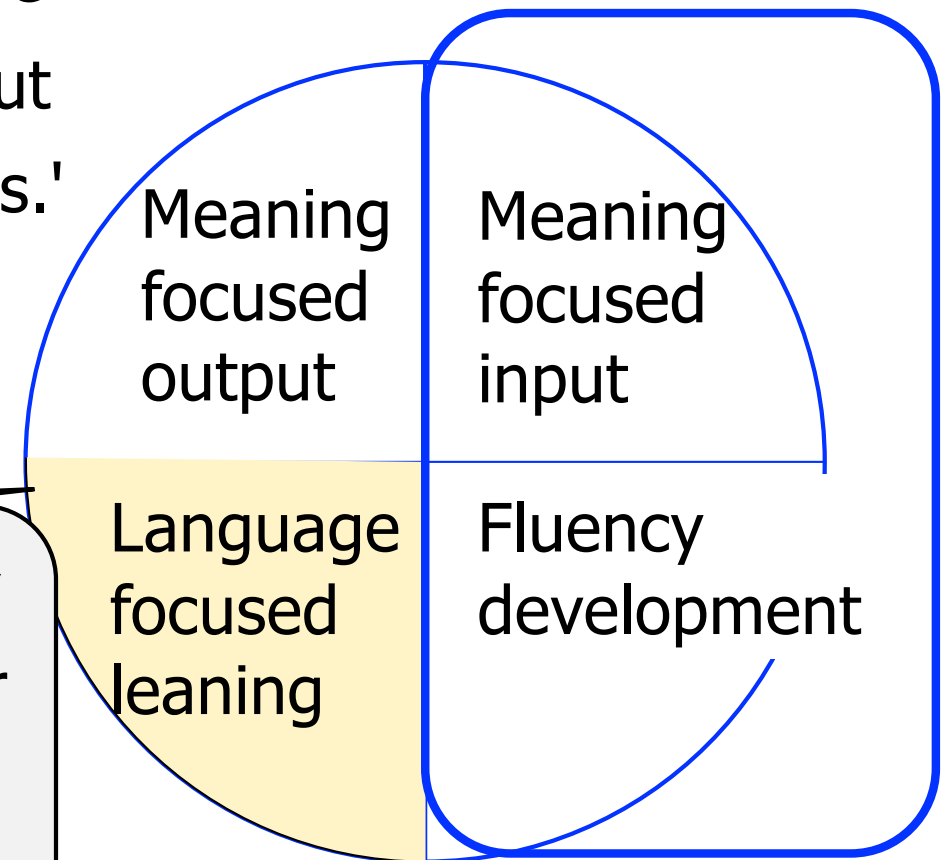
English teaching in Japan

Characteristics of EFL

1 'The classroom activities may be the only significant source of input and language use for the learners.'

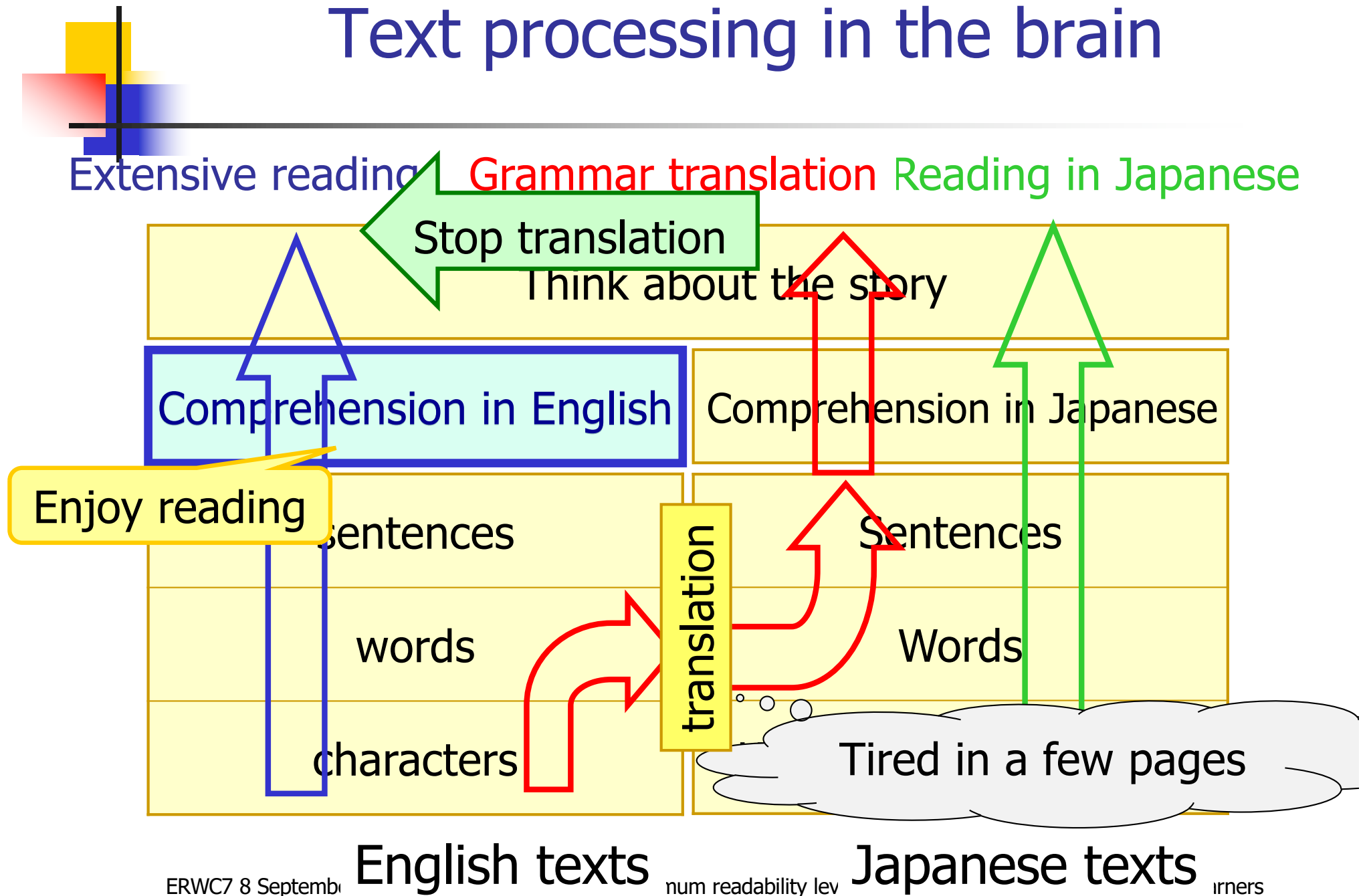
Students read English texts by grammar translation, and their English knowledge is explained in Japanese

Extensive Reading



The **four strands** (P. Nation, 2013, What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?)

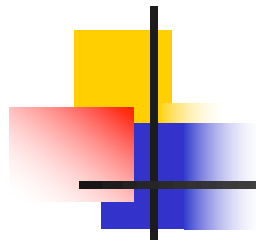
Text processing in the brain





Extensive Reading

- Successful ER programs for L2 and FL (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002)
 - Students read **as much as possible**
 -
 -
 - Reading material are **well within the linguistic competence** of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar
 -



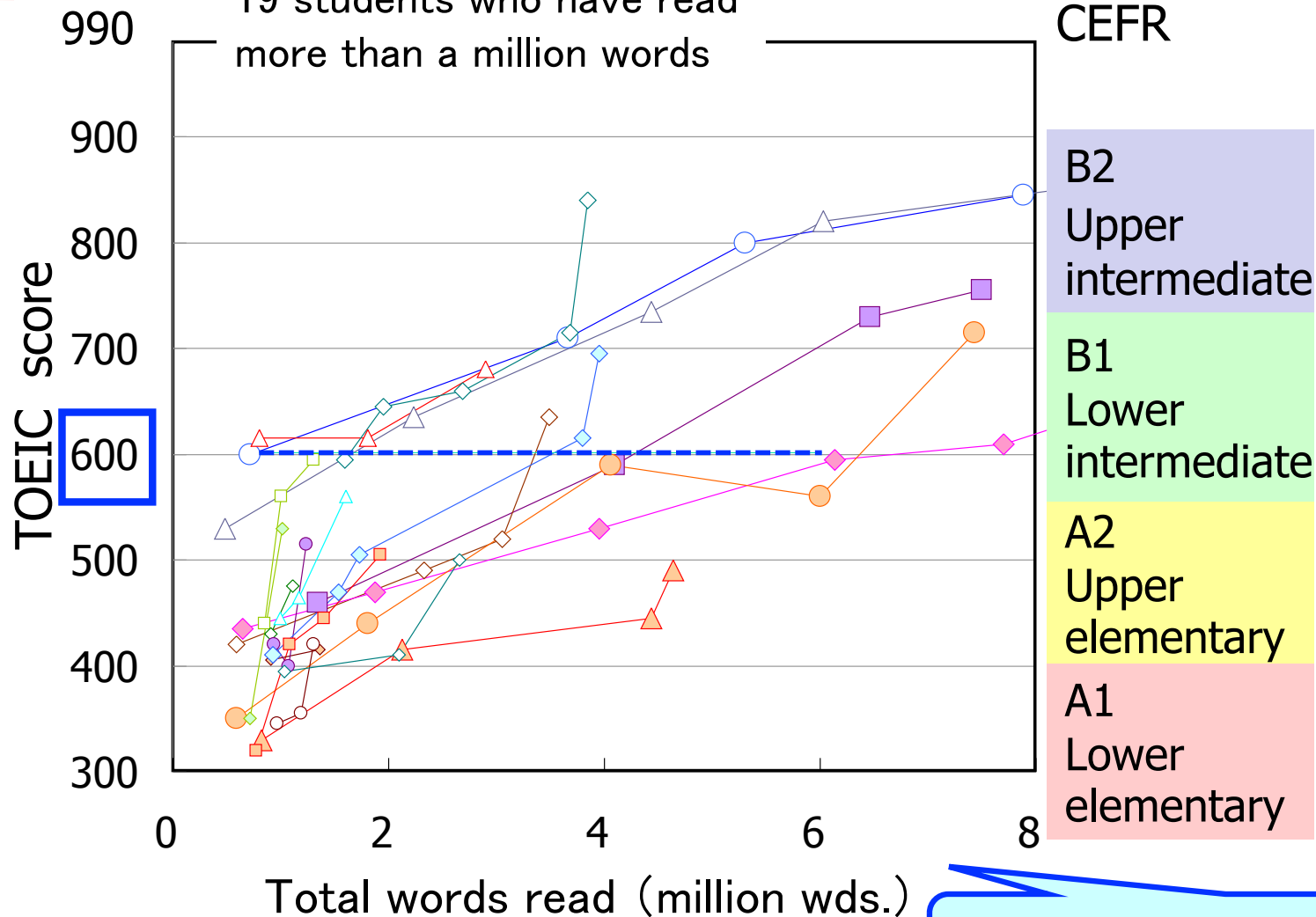
Extensive Reading for Japanese elementary-level EFL Learners

- Successful ER programs for L2 and FL (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002)
 - Students read as much as possible
 - How many total words do elementary EFL learners need to read to achieve the CEFR B1 level (TOEIC 600)?

TOEIC score increase by ER

2005~2009

19 students who have read more than a million words



1 – 6 million total words



Extensive Reading for Japanese elementary-level EFL Learners

- Successful ER programs for L2 and FL (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002)
 - Students read as much as possible
 - Elementary EFL learners need to read 1 – 6 million total words to achieve the CEFR B1 level (TOEIC 600).
- Reading material are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar
 - What is the optimum readability levels for A1, A2 learners?



Long-term ER program at Toyota KOSSEN, Japan

2004~2021

KOSEN in Japanese School System

English skills were the serious weakness

KOSEN
(National Institute of Technology)

Advanced Course
(2 years)

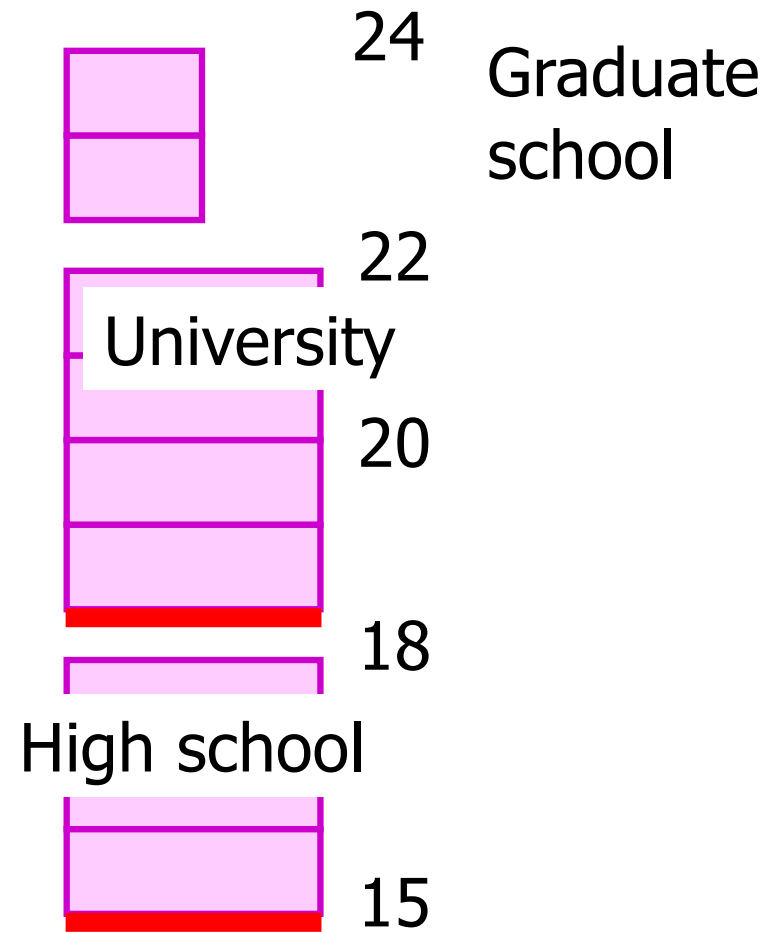
Foundation Course
(5 years)

7-year
ER program

1st

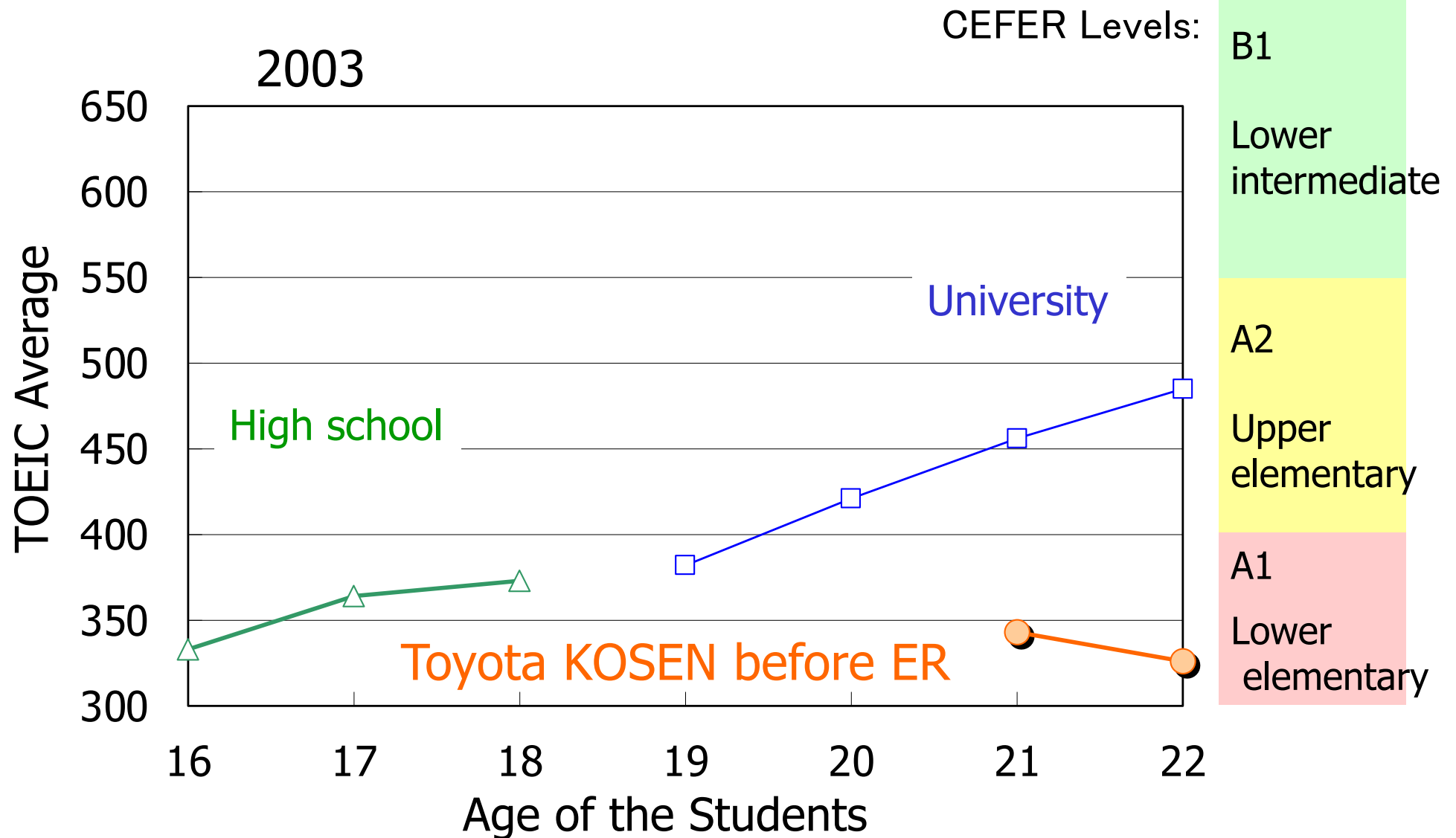
1% of the generation

Junior high school



Japanese elementary-level EFL learners

TOEIC Scores of Japanese Students



Effect of Studying Abroad

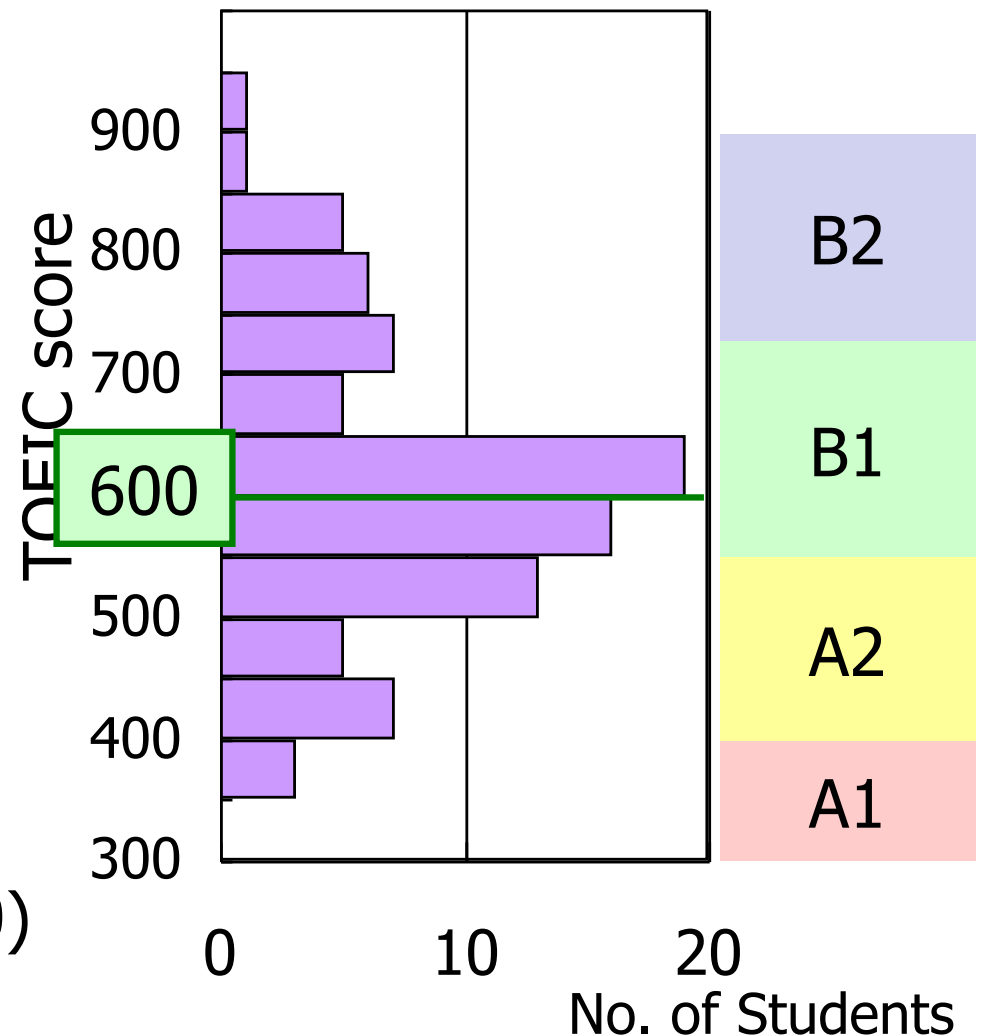
TOEIC scores of 88 3-rd year KOSEN students.

They had stayed in English-speaking countries for 10 months before the tests.

10 months
in ESL environment

Average 606
(2006 – 2010)

CEFER Levels:



English Courses at Toyota KOSEN

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

563h — 2004 academic year — +135h (24%)

Foundation course	Advanced c.	Age	General Education (21 Fdt.+4 Adv.)			E&E Dept. (4+2)
		22	① English II	① Advanced E.		① E. for E&E Engineers
		21	① English II	① English for T.		① E. for E&E Engineers
		20	② English I	① English II		① E. for E&E Engineers
		19	② E. Reading	② E. for S&T		① E. for E&E Engineers
		18	② E. Reading	② E. for S&T		① E. for E&E Engineers
		17	② E. Reading	② E. Expression		① E. for E&E Engineers
		16	② E. Reading	② E. Grammar	② Conversation	

ER
Lessons
(SSR)

①: 1 unit (45 min. × 30 wks.) minimum readability levels for Japanese elementary-level EFL learners

English Classes at Toyota KOSEN

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

563h — since 2007 academic year — +135h (24%)

Foundation course	Advanced c.	Age	General Education (21+4)			E&E Dept. (4+2)
		22	① English II	① Advanced E.		① E. for E&E Engineers
		21	① English II	① English for T.		① E. for E&E Engineers
		20	② English I	① English II	SSR +68h	① E. for E&E Engineers
		19	② E. Reading	② E. for S&T		① E. for E&E Engineers
		18	② E. Reading	② 1		① E. for E&E Engineers
		17	② E. Reading	② 1		① E. for E&E Engineers
		16	② E. Reading	② E. Grammar	② 1	

①: 1 unit (45 min. × 30 wks.) imum readability levels for Japa 30% of total 700h

Reading Journal

記録
シート

枚目

英語で読書を楽しむ3原則

①辞書は引かない ②分からないところはとばす ③つまらなければやめる

2

No	月日	Title	Series name	YL	語 頁	行 率	総単語数	所要時間 min	評価	感想・メモ
		今までの合計					48400	速さ W/m		
31	6月 26日	six sketches	PGR/	1.0			1200	18分	★	手にとりやすい 単行本集 Taka...
32	6月 21日	Kim's choice	PGR0	0.8			900	15分	★★	
			PGR/	1.0			500	60語	★	
			AN I Can Read Book							
			PGR/	1.0						
			OBW0	0.8						
37	6月 25日	DRIVE INTO					1500	15分		
38	6月 26日						6500	100語		
39	6月 28日						3600	35分		1回読んでみた。
40	6月 29日	Stuart Hides Out	ReadBook				0100	103語		
							1600	20分		
							1700	80語		
							400	8分		映画で知ったから 読む意欲がわいた
							62100	50語		

Series name
4-character
Code

ORT3, LLL6,
PGR0, OBW0

Word count
&
Total words

Evaluation if the student ...
 ★★★★★ recommends to friends
 ★★★★ has fun to read
 ★★★ doesn't say good/bad
 ★★ disappointing story
 ★ doesn't recommend

YL
Readability level for
Japanese EFL Learners
(0.0~9.9)



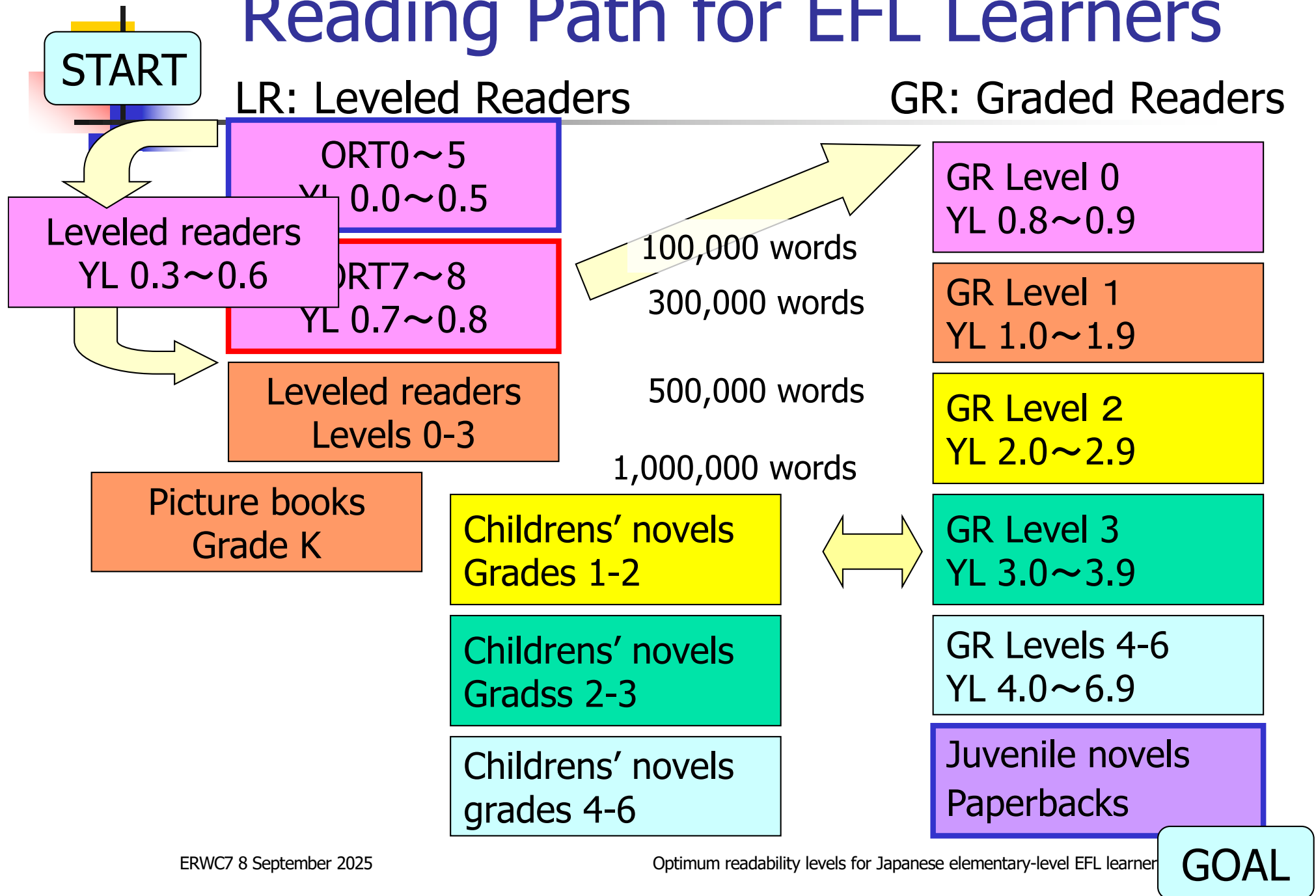
YL (Yomiyasusa Level)

Readability level for Japanese EFL Learners

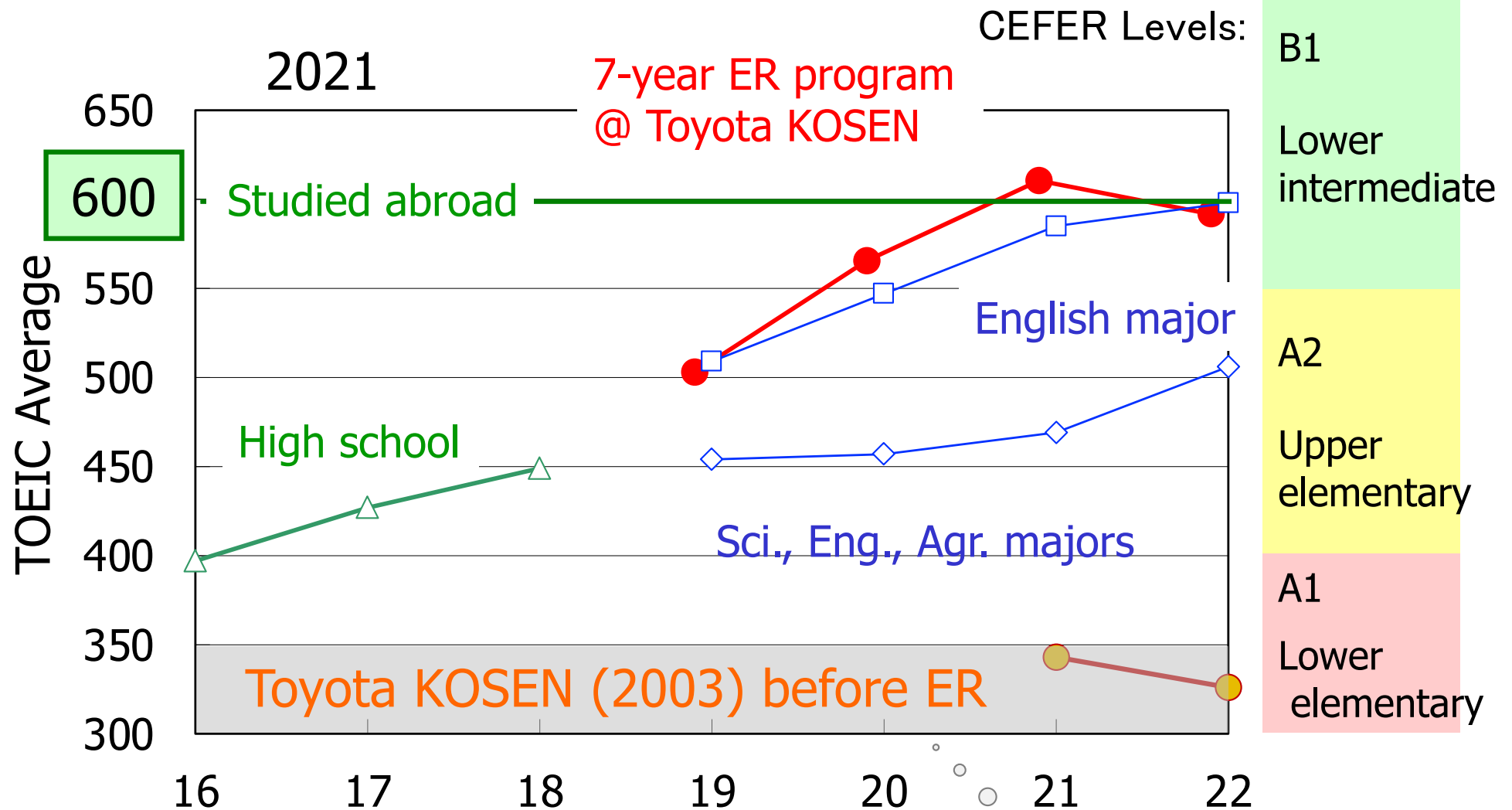
YL values for typical book-series for ER (0.0~9.9)

YL	Series	Head words	Text length
0.0 – 1.0	ORT1–9, Oxford Reading Tree Stage 1-9		1 – 1,600
0.8 – 0.9	PGR0, Pearson Readers Easystarts	200	700 – 1,400
1.0	CER0, Cambridge English Readers Starter	250	2,000 – 2,600
1.4	CER1, Cambridge English Readers Level 1	400	3,700 – 4,900
1.6 – 2.0	MMR2, Macmillan Readers Beginner Classics	600	5,900 – 10,700
2.0 – 2.4	OBW1, Oxford Bookworms Stage 1	400	4,600 – 7,300
2.2 – 2.6	PGR2, Pearson Readers Level 2	600	3,100 – 10,700
2.6 – 2.8	CER2, Cambridge English Readers Level 2	800	7,700 – 10,200
3.2 – 3.4	OBW3, Oxford Bookworms Stage 3	1,000	8,100 – 12,700
4.0 – 5.0	PGR4, Pearson Readers Level 4	1,700	11,000 – 33,000
5.5 – 6.0	CER5, Cambridge English Readers Level 5	2,800	17,000 – 39,000

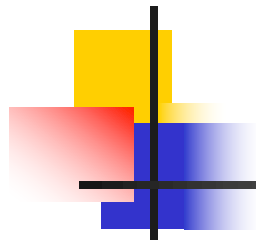
Reading Path for EFL Learners



TOEIC Scores of Japanese Students



Couldn't measure improvements in first three years



Extensive Reading for Japanese elementary-level EFL Learners

- Successful ER programs for L2 and FL (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002)
 - Students read as much as possible
 - Elementary EFL learners need to read 1 – 6 million total words to achieve the CEFR B1 level (TOEIC 600).
- Reading material are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar
 - What is the optimum readability levels for A2 learners?



Method

Find the optimum readability levels
for CEFR **A2** learners

(TOEIC **400 – 550**)



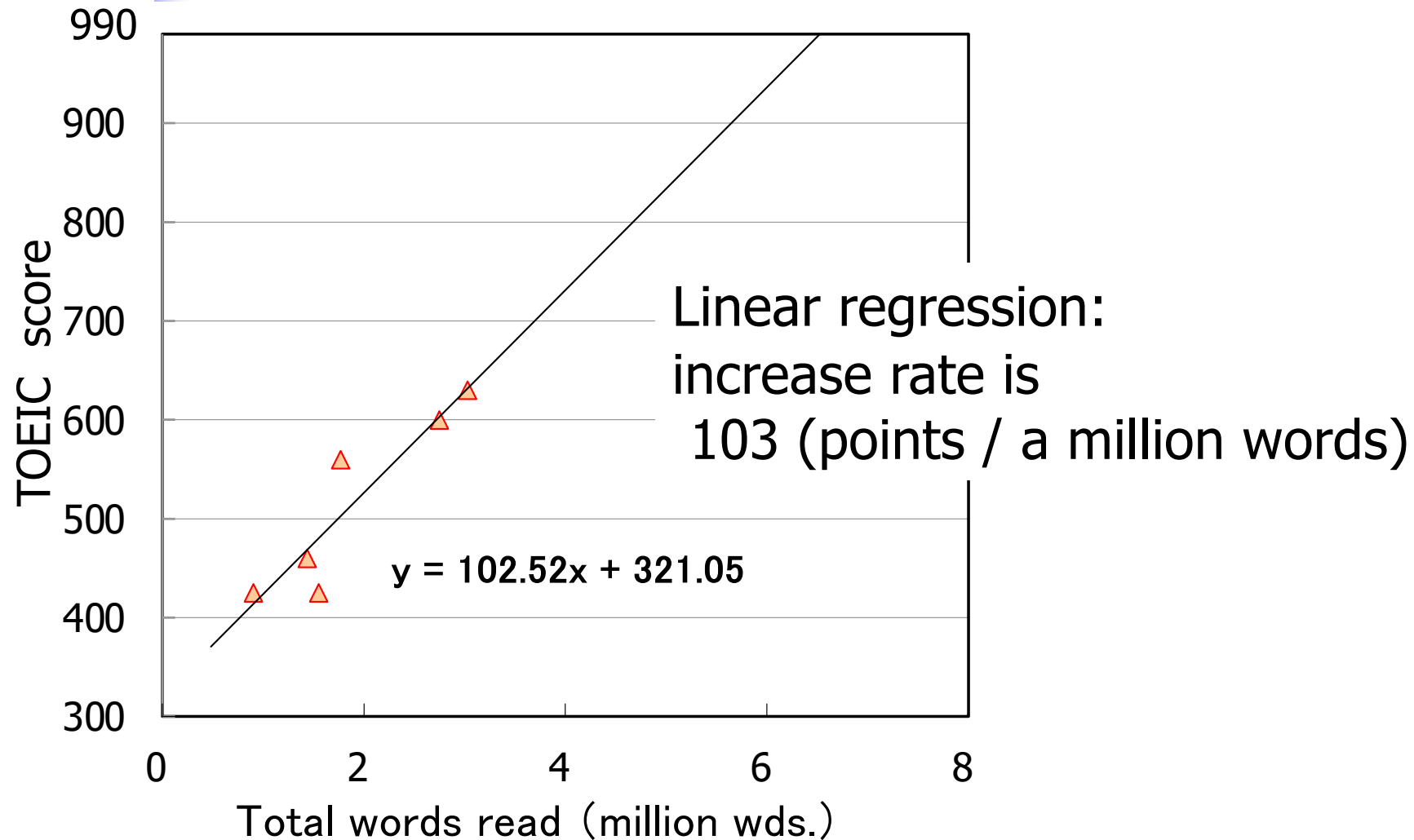
Follow the improvement of A2 learners by the TOEIC test scores

●
3

- 305 students who had joined the course in 2004-2020 and had read **a million total words or more** in the program
 - 38 students were excluded because they stayed in English-speaking countries for more than six months, or they were international students
- 62 students who took the TOEIC tests twice or more
 - (the first score < 650, the last score < 850)
 - They had read 0.4 million words or more between the tests
- 42 students whose reading journals recorded the YLs when they took the TOEIC tests

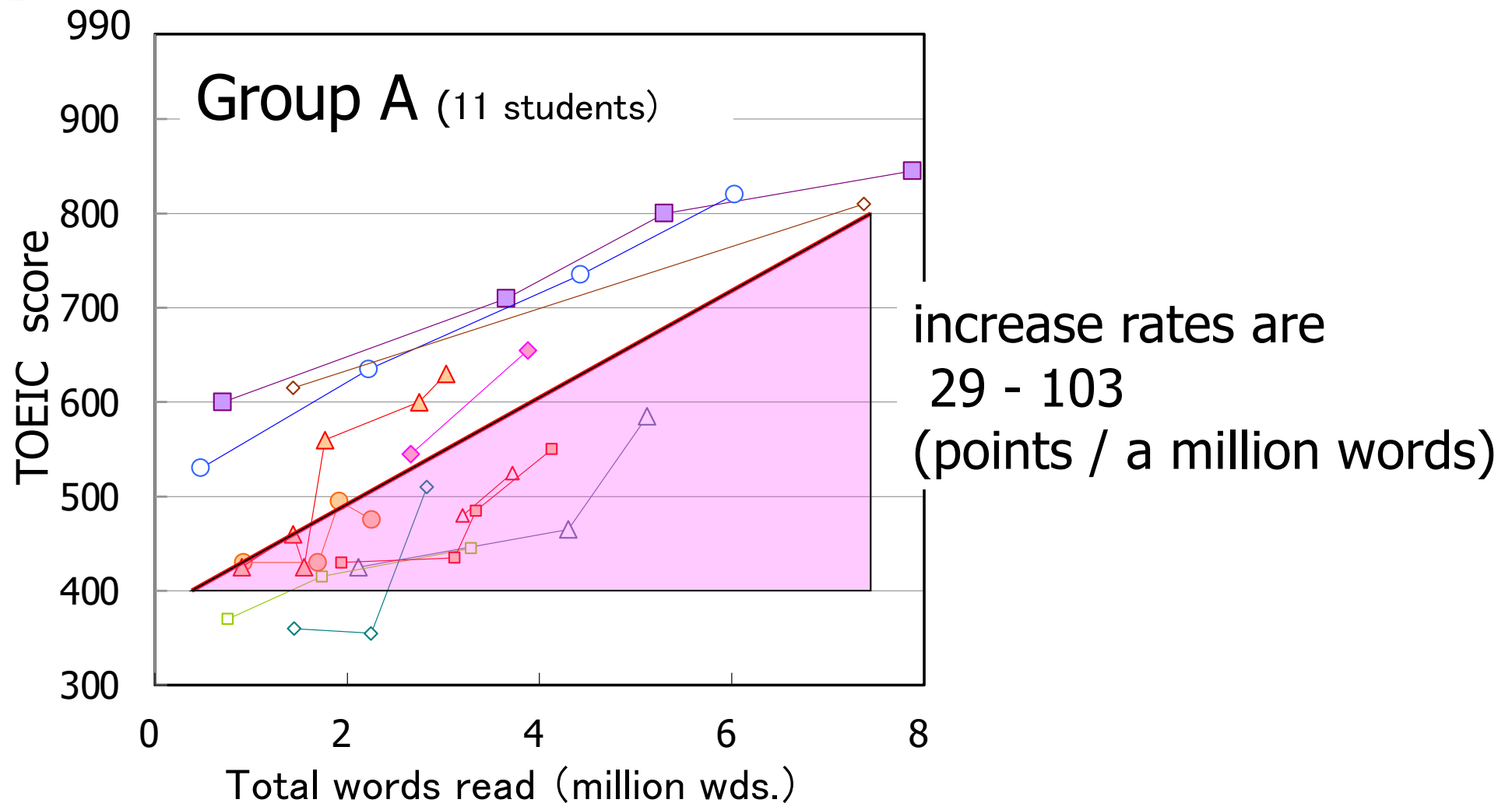
Calculated the TOEIC score increase rates

TOEIC score increase rate



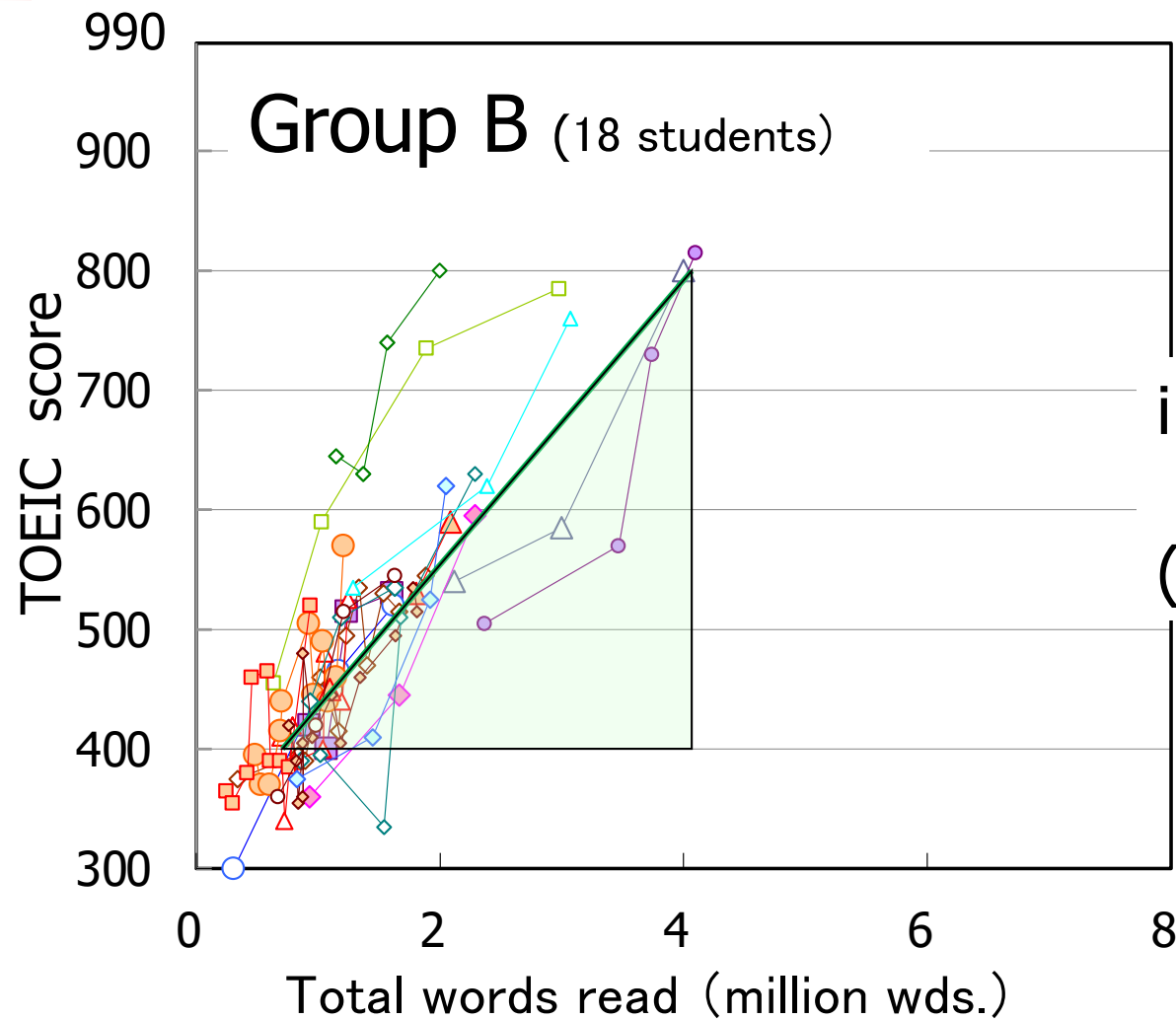
TOEIC score increase rates

1

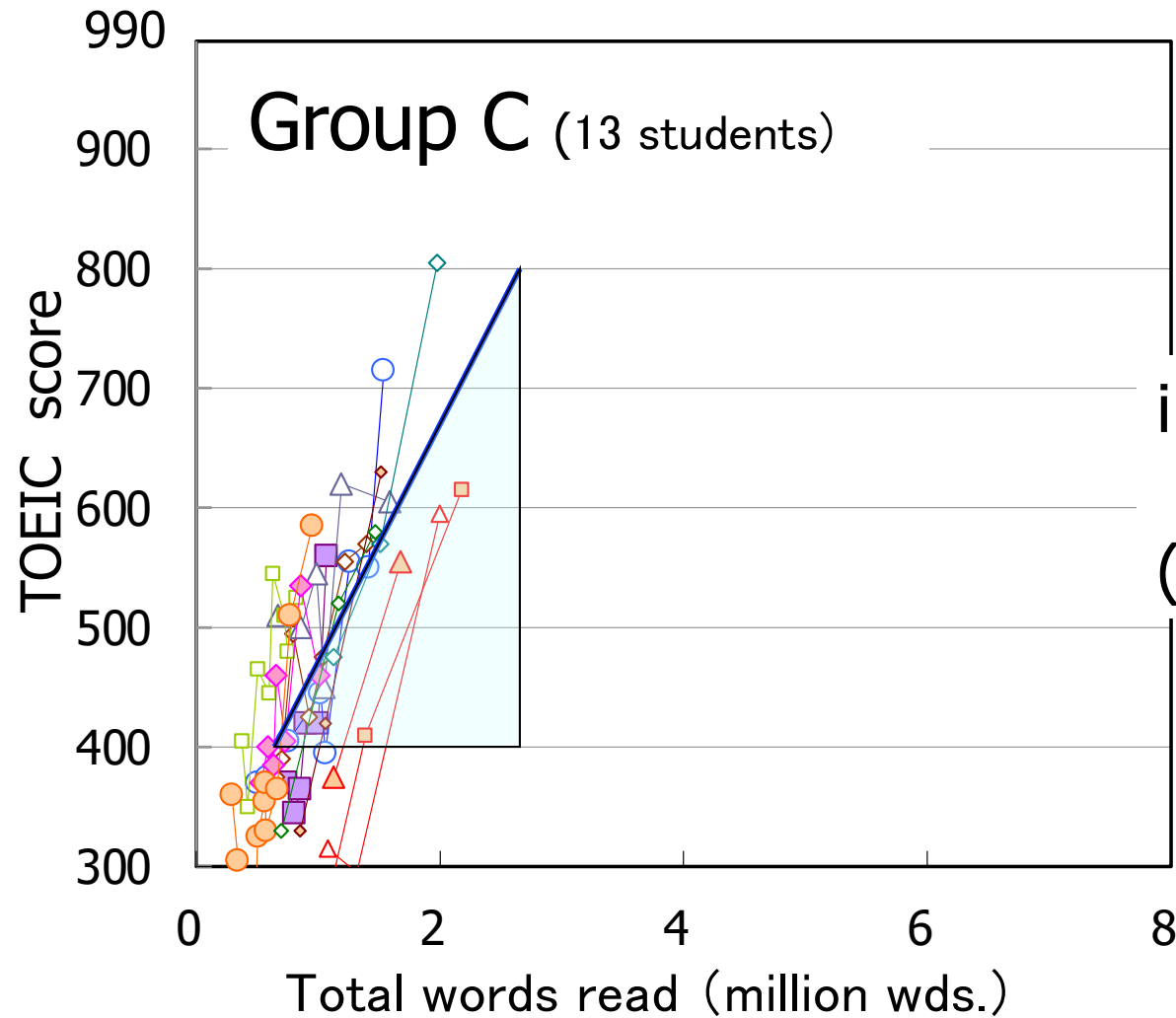


TOEIC score increase rates

1



TOEIC score increase rates



increase rates are
212 - 451
(points / a million words)

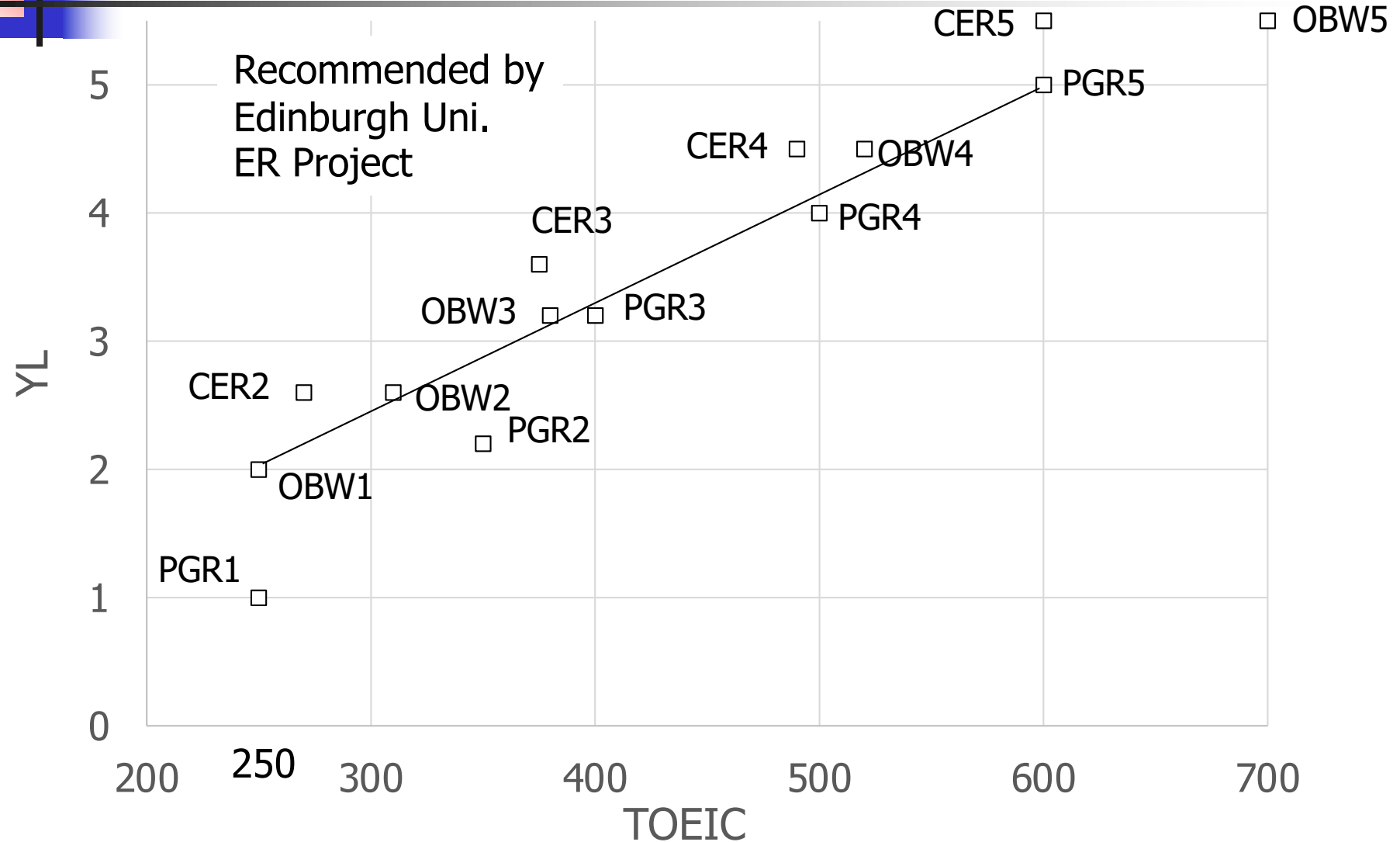


Result (1)

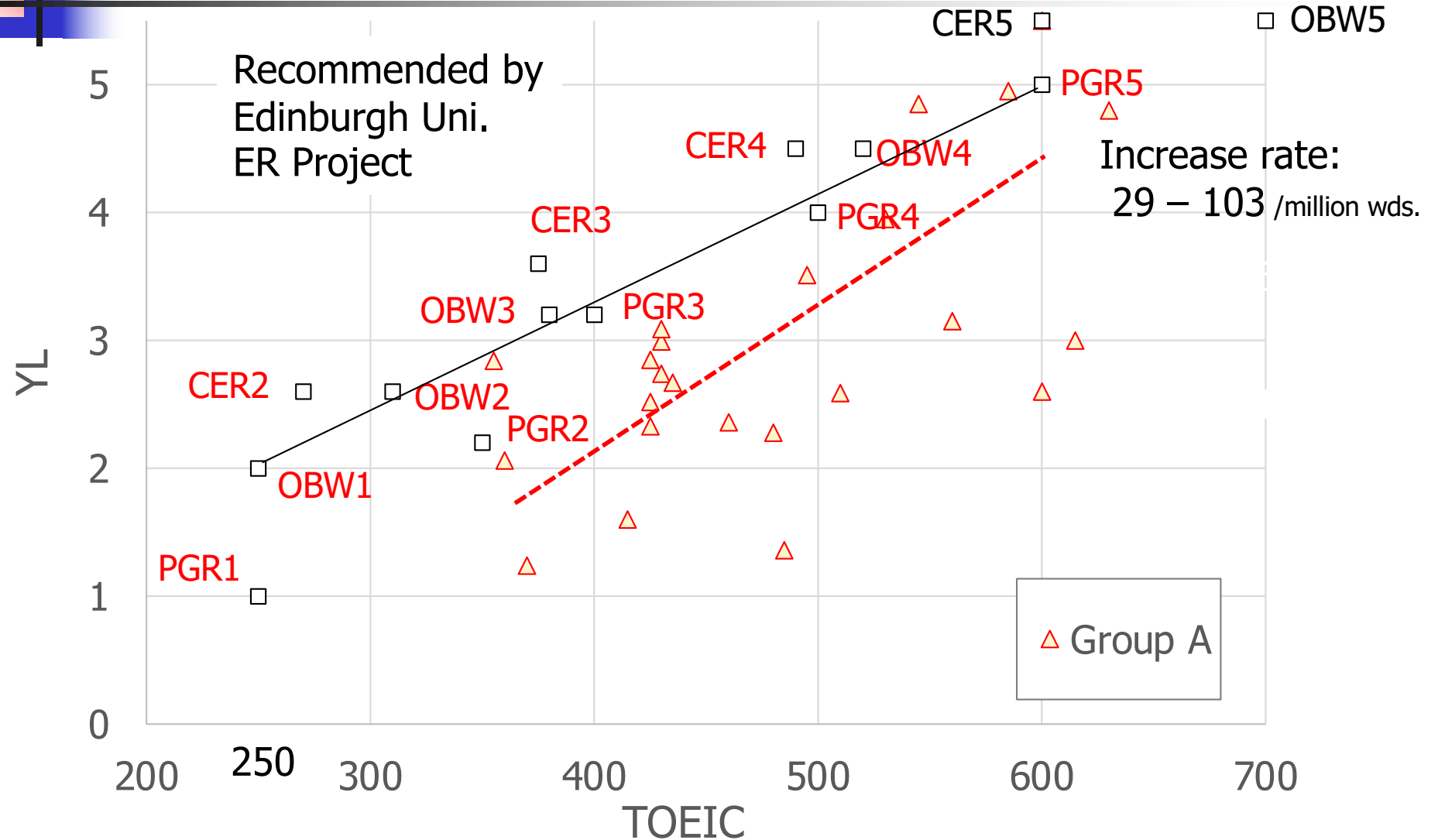
Find the optimum readability levels
for CEFR **A2** learners

(TOEIC **400 – 550**)

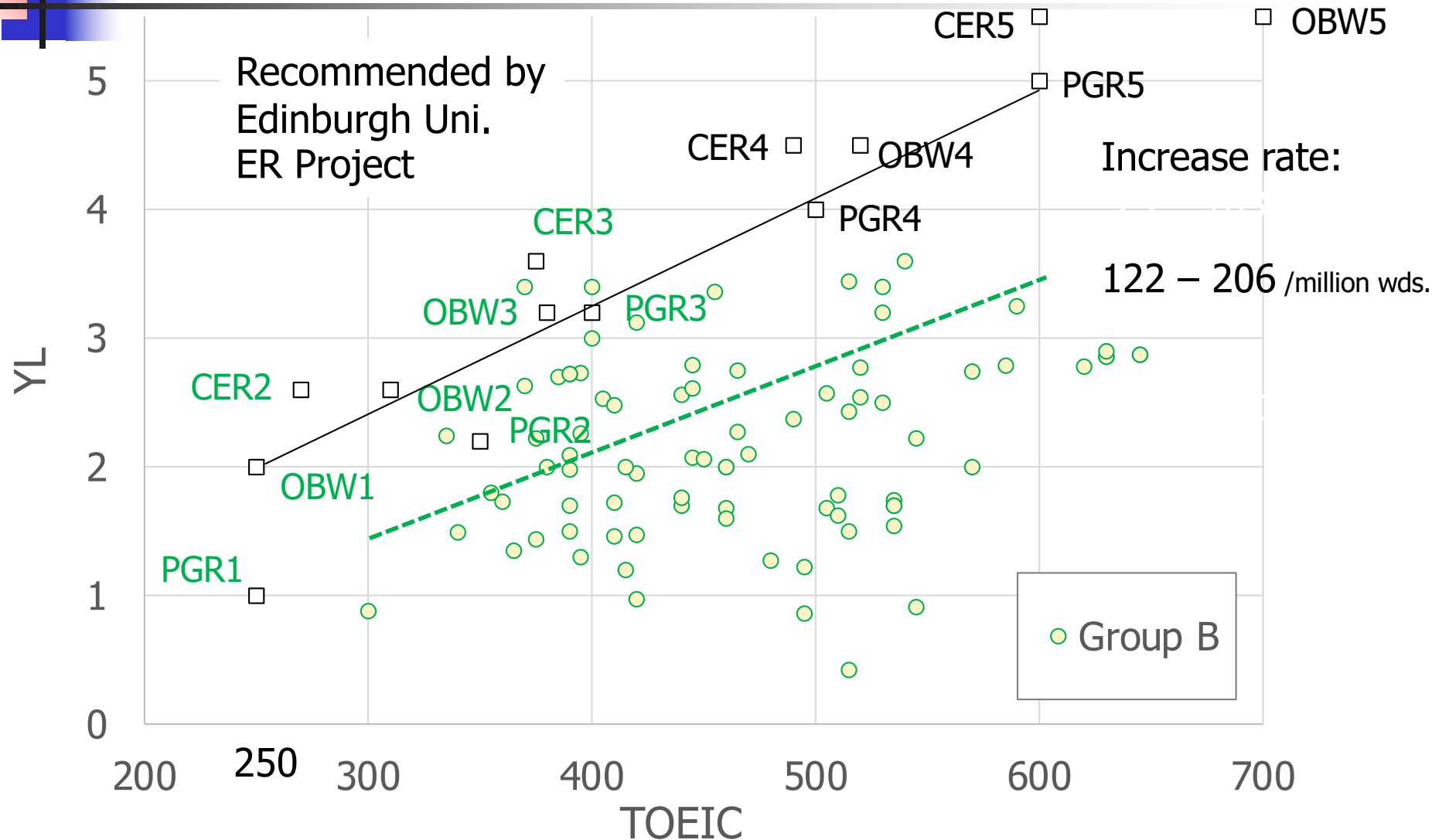
YL vs. TOEIC



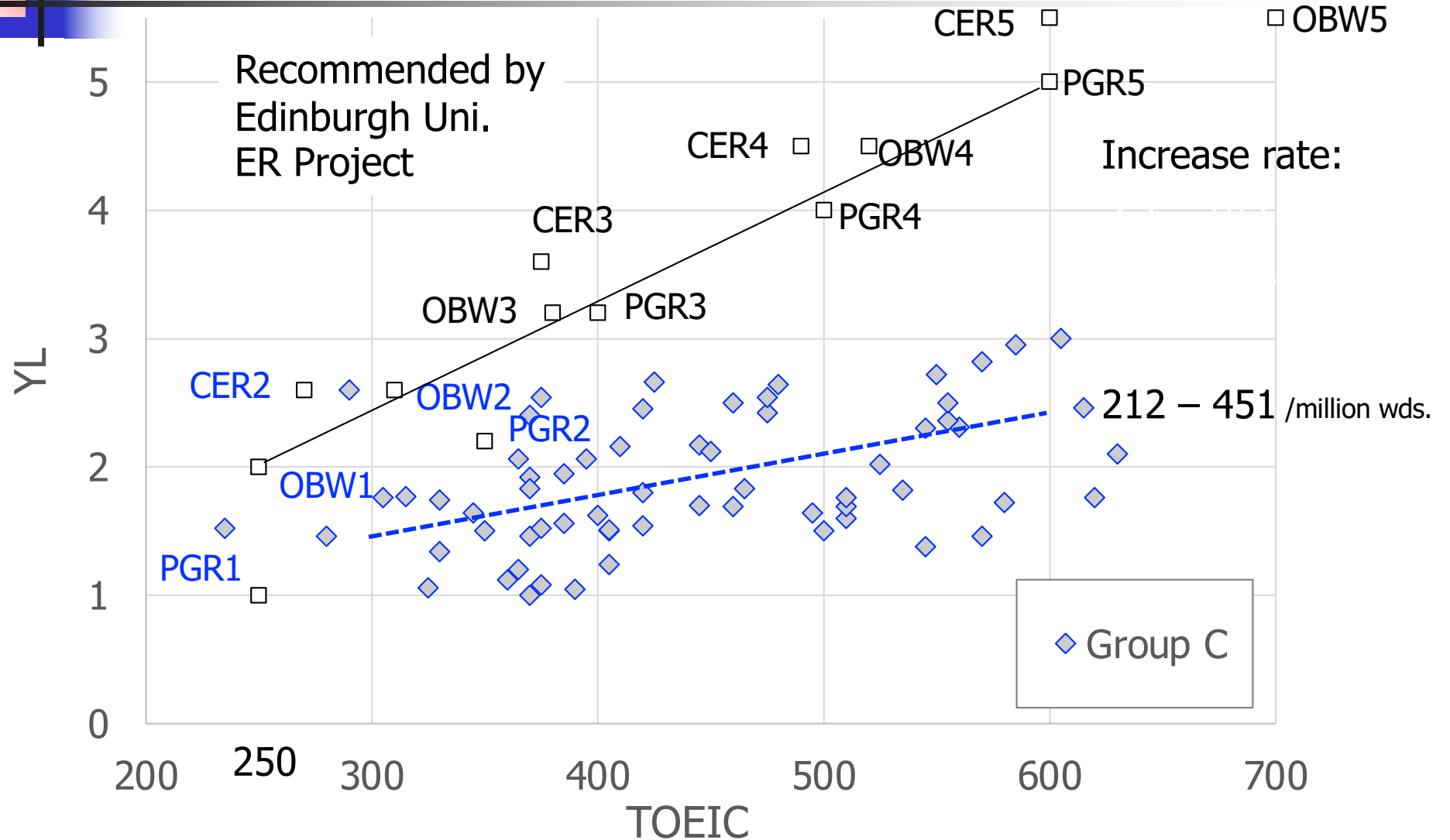
YL vs. TOEIC



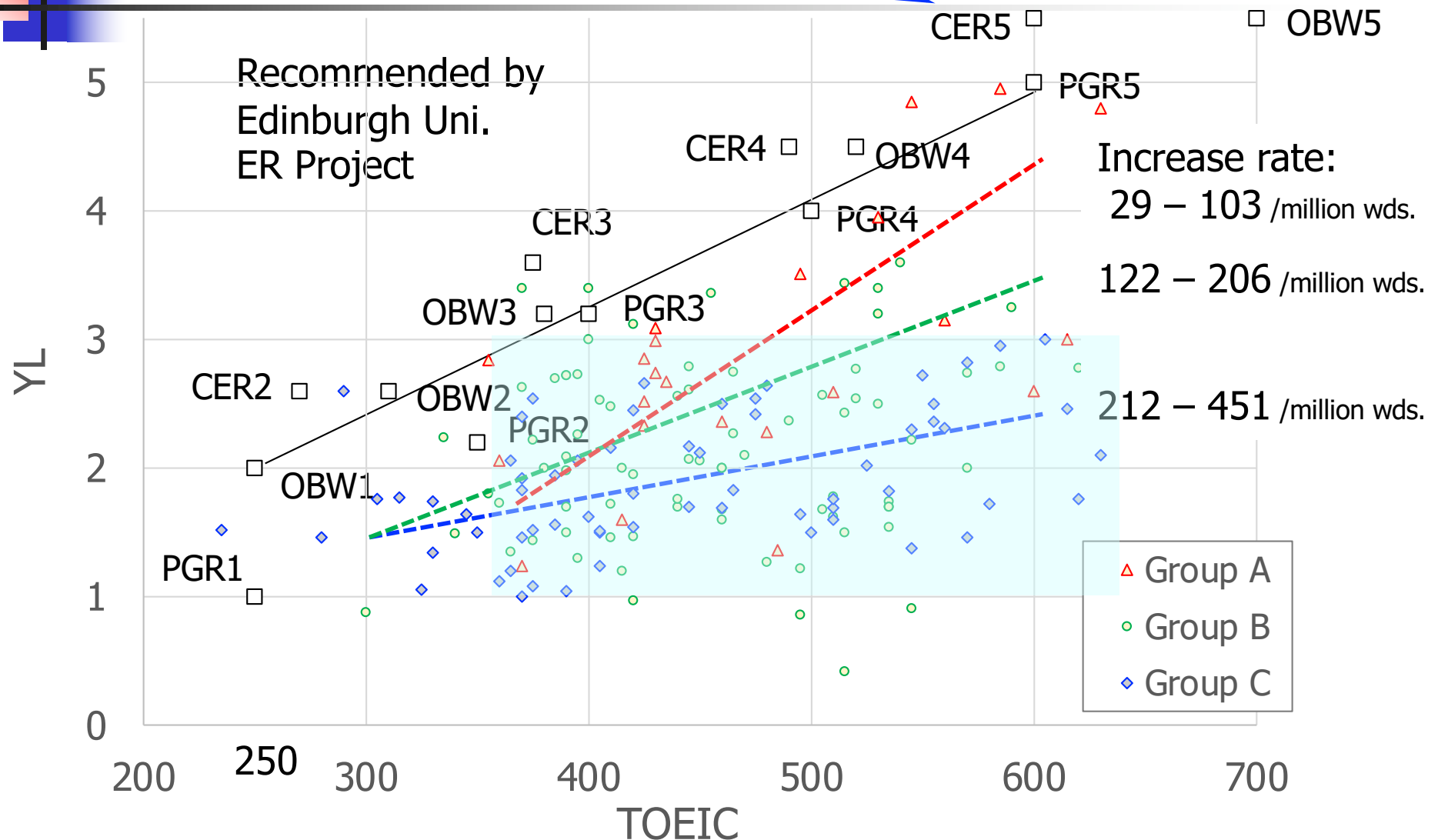
YL vs. TOEIC



YL vs. TOEIC



YL1 – 3 is recommended for CEFR A2 learners





Recommended YL

for Japanese EFL Learners (CEFR A2)

TOEIC 400 – 550

YL	Series	Head words	Text length
0.0 – 1.0	ORT1–9, Oxford Reading Tree Stage 1-9		1 – 1,600
0.8 – 0.9	PGR0, Pearson Readers Easystarts	200	700 – 1,400
1.0	CER0, Cambridge English Readers Starter	250	2,000 – 2,600
1.4	CER1, Cambridge English Readers Level 1	400	3,700 – 4,900
1.6 – 2.0	MMR2, Macmillan Readers Beginner Classics	600	5,900 – 10,700
2.0 – 2.4	OBW1, Oxford Bookworms Stage 1	400	4,600 – 7,300
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2.6 – 2.8	CER2, Cambridge English Readers Level 2	800	7,700 – 10,200
3.2 – 3.4	OBW3, Oxford Bookworms Stage 3	1,000	8,100 – 12,700
4.0 – 5.0	PGR4, Pearson Readers Level 4	1,700	11,000 – 33,000
5.5 – 6.0	CER5, Cambridge English Readers Level 5	2,800	17,000 – 39,000



Extensive Reading for Japanese elementary-level EFL Learners

- Successful ER programs for L2 and FL (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002)
 - Students read as much as possible
 - Elementary EFL learners need to read 1 – 6 million total words to achieve the CEFR B1 level (TOEIC 600).
- Reading material are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar
 - YL1 – 3 are recommended for CEFR A2 learners
 - YL0 – 2 are recommended for CEFR A1 or lower-level learners

Recommended YL

for Japanese EFL Learners (CEFR A1 or lower level)

TOEIC 400 or lower

YL	Series	Head words	Text length
0.0 – 1.0	ORT1–9, Oxford Reading Tree Stage 1-9		1 – 1,600
0.8 – 0.9	PGR0, Pearson Readers Easystarts	200	700 – 1,400
1.0	CER0, Cambridge English Readers Starter	250	2,000 – 2,600
1.4	CER1, Cambridge English Readers Level 1	400	3,700 – 4,900
1.6 – 2.0	MMR2, Macmillan Readers Beginner Classics	600	5,900 – 10,700
2.0 – 2.4	OBW1, Oxford Bookworms Stage 1	400	4,600 – 7,300
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3.2 – 3.4	OBW3, Oxford Bookworms Stage 3	1,000	8,100 – 12,700
4.0 – 5.0	PGR4, Pearson Readers Level 4	1,700	11,000 – 33,000
5.5 – 6.0	CER5, Cambridge English Readers Level 5	2,800	17,000 – 39,000



Temporal method & result (2)

Remedy for CEFR [A1](#) or lower-level learners

(Unmeasurable by the TOEIC)

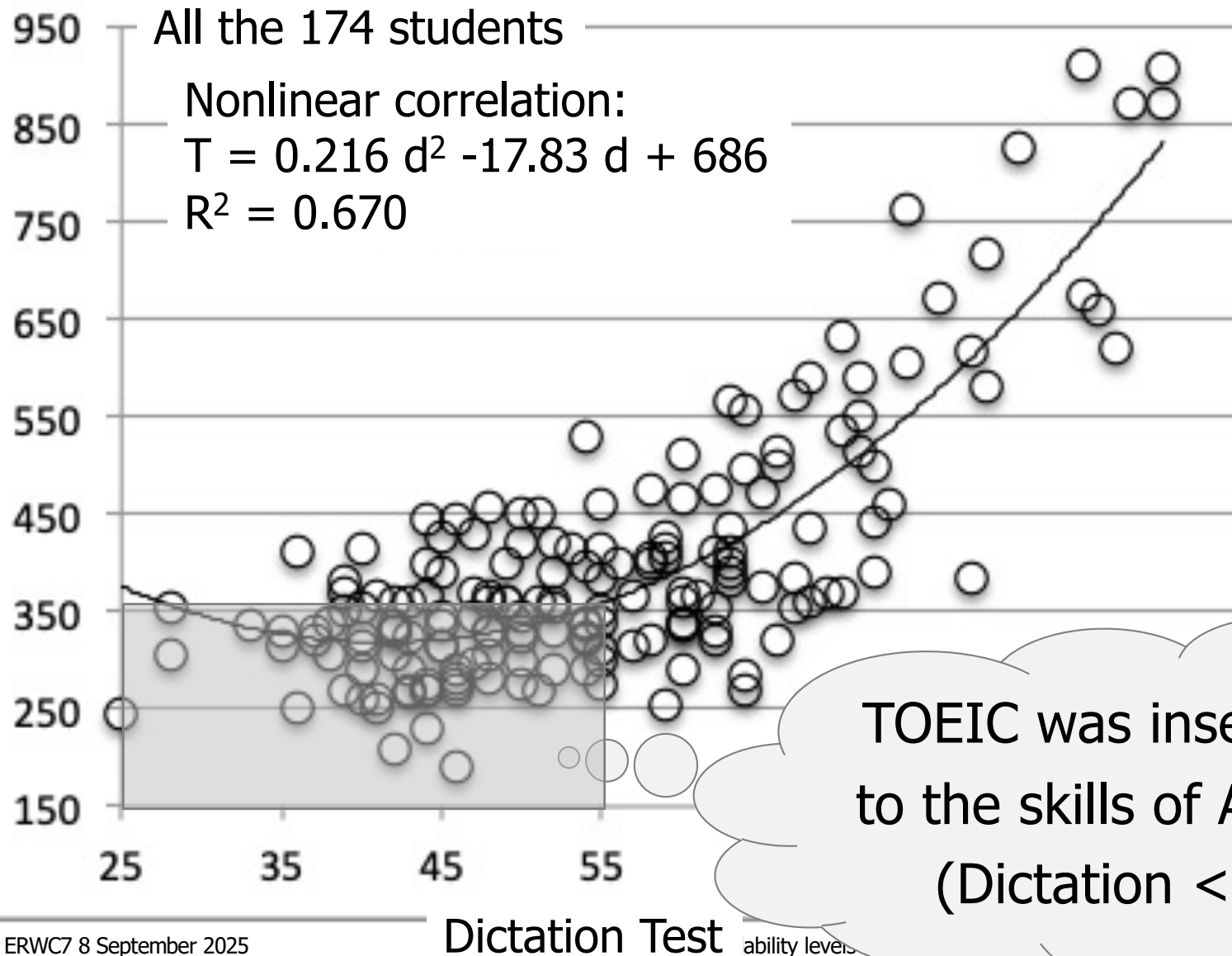


Remedy for CEFR A1 or lower-level learners

- TOEIC was insensitive to the skills of A1 or lower-level learners
- Dictation was the alternative measure we used

Dictation Test Vs. TOEIC

TOEIC



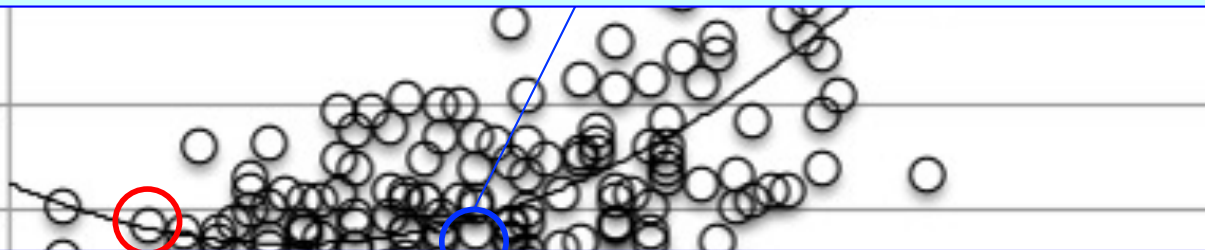
Dictation Test Vs. TOEIC

Student B : Dictation 54, TOEIC 340

My niece Mary has been living for a month now / I have a big garden in my house / but I can't take care of it because I recently broke a bone in my foot / when I fell down from a ladder / Every weekend you can find Mary in my garden / She will have on a hat and gloves / Also she will have either a garden fork / or a watering can in her hand / I'm so happy to have Mary living with me / And my garden is becoming more beautiful all the time.

TOE

350
450
550



My niece Mary has been living for a month now / I have a big garden in my house / but I can't take care of it because I recently broke a bone in my foot / when I fell down from a ladder / Every weekend you can find Mary in my garden / She will have on a hat and gloves / Also she will have either a garden fork / or a watering can in her hand / I'm so happy to have Mary living with me / And my garden is becoming more beautiful all the time.

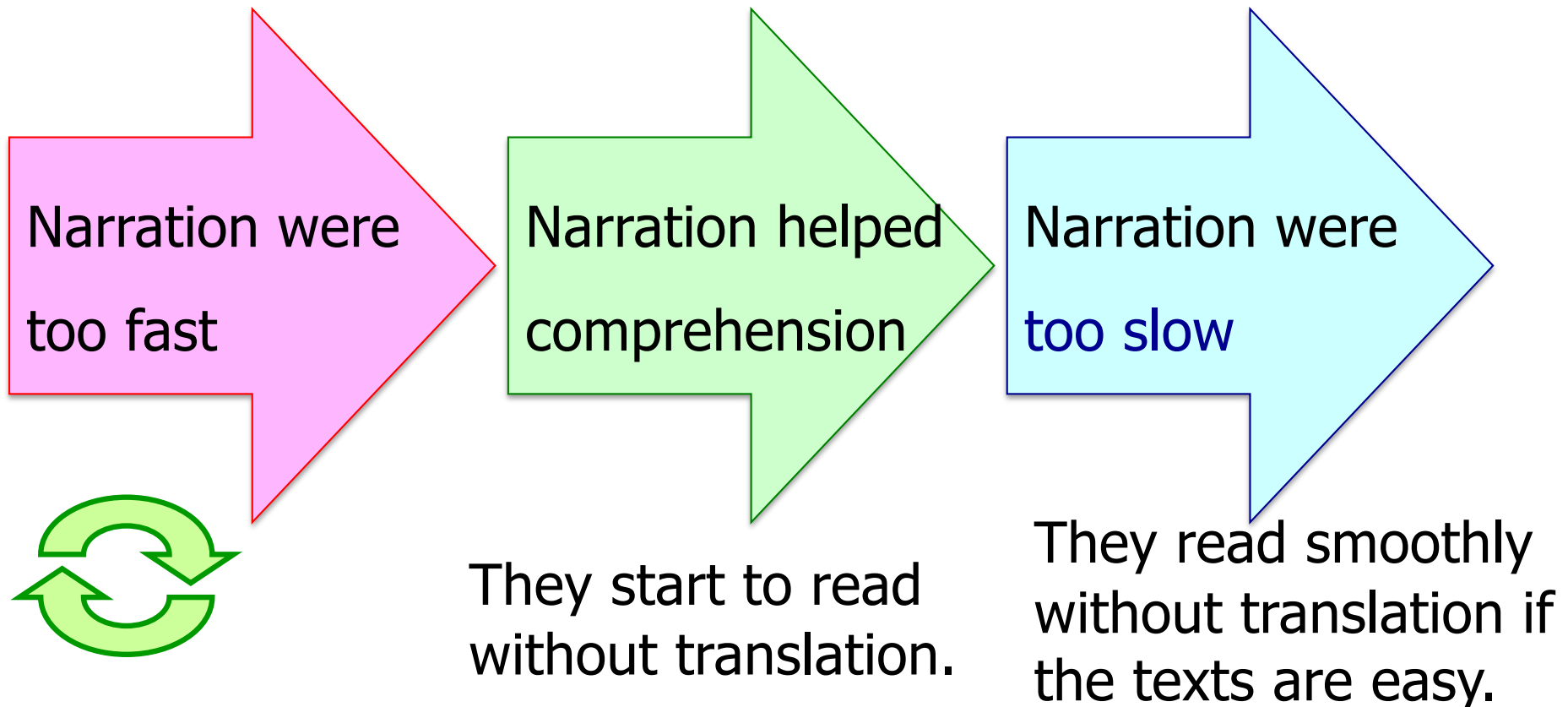


Remedy for CEFR A1 or lower-level learners

- TOEIC was insensitive to the skills of A1 or lower-level learners
- Dictation was the alternative measure we used
- Optimum YL is 0.0 – 1.8
- Listening to the narration while reading the text (**RWL**) seemed to work

How do the students change their perception of RWL?

As Japanese EFL learners read English texts by translating every word, their reading speed is very slow (< 80 WPM).



RWL with 20% faster narration speed but same YL level EFL learners

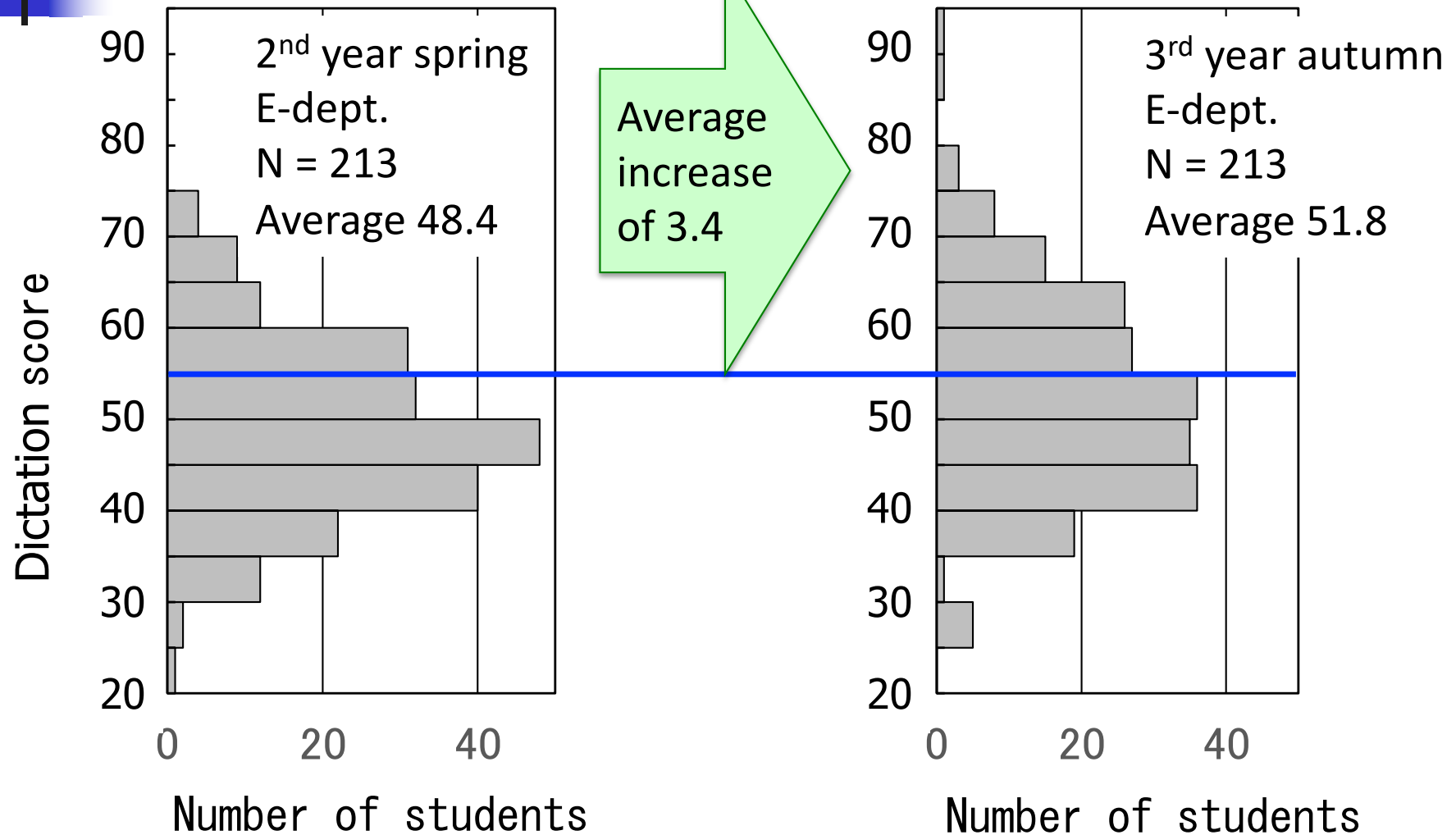


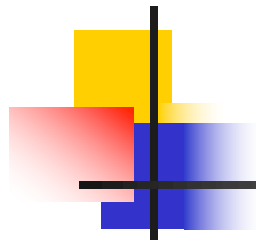
Typical Procedure of RWL

- Reading of ORT and other picture books
(0.1 – 0.2 million words)
- **Start RWL** with GR: MMR1, PGR0, OBW0
(YL0.8 – 1.0, 1,000 – 2,000 words, 80 – 100 WPM)
- RWL with longer texts: CER0, MMR2, PGR1
(YL1.2 – 1.4, 2,000 – 4,000, 100 – 130 WPM)
- RWL with increased narrating speed: RRR1, CER1, CPT1-3
(YL1.4 – 1.8, 4,000 – 6,000, 130 – 150 WPM)

Recommend RWL with the narrating speed up to 150 WPM before the reading of OBW1 (YL2.0)

Improvement in 1.5 years of ER





Extensive Reading for Japanese elementary-level EFL Learners

- Successful ER programs for L2 and FL (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002)
 - Students read as much as possible
 - Elementary EFL learners need to read 1 – 6 million total words to achieve the CEFR B1 level (TOEIC 600).
- Reading material are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar
 - YL1 – 3 is recommended for CEFR A2 learners
 - LWR with up to 150 WPM is recommended for CEFR A1 learners after reading plenty of picture books


References

- Day, R.R. & Bamford, J., Extensive reading in the second language classroom, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Nation, P., What Should Every EFL Teachers Know?, Compass Publishing.
- https://researchmap.jp/Nishizawa_Hitoshi

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