How to Conduct a 6-Year ER Program
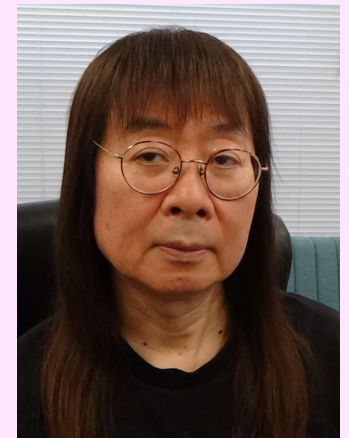
Ver. 1.00

ERWC7 in Hokkaido, Sep/7/2025

Akio FURUKAWA（古川昭夫）

**Founder of SEG
Co-Founder of SSS ER Study Group**

If you have any questions about our ER program,
please contact me at fakio@seg.co.jp.

1

Today's Topics

1 What brings a math teacher here
2 Our ER English program
   including reading logs of two students
3 How much our students read
4 The correlation between total amount of
   words read and TOEFL/Linguaskill test
   scores
5 How students progress through reading levels
6 Conclusion

What Brings a Math Teacher Here

  As soon as I entered university, I started my career as a math teacher at a juku. When I was at graduate school in 1981, I founded my own juku, SEG(Scientific Education Group) to teach math and science to junior and senior high school students. They come to SEG after school and during school holidays.

  Now, about 2,700 students study math at SEG, 2,100 English, 670 chemistry and 460 physics.

3

(cont'd)

I was interested in teaching math with a computer algebra system and was invited to *Teachers Teaching with Technology Meeting* in Ohio in 1995. Six Japanese math teachers were invited, and the teachers from abroad were asked to give short speeches in English. The Japanese teachers all gave speeches and were followed by a Swedish teacher. He said, "Please, rest assured. I will speak in 100% comprehensible English."

(cont'd)

He was so rude that we all got angry, but I must agree our speeches were indeed terrible. As I was the CEO of my own juku, I decided that we had to improve our English program so that none of our graduates would experience such humiliation. I studied a lot of methods of teaching English for 5 years. Finally I came to the conclusion that reading a lot of easy books might benefit Japanese students.

(cont'd)

I met **Mr. Kunihide Sakai** and started extensive reading myself. I started with very easy books and read a million words in three months. **In 2001**, Mr. Sakai and I founded the **SSS Extensive Reading Study Group**, and advocated for the **Start with Simple Stories** method under the slogan **"Just Read One Million Words!"** We created the **YL**(Yomiyasusa Level) and **SSS**(*Start with Simple Stories*) systems and SEG started teaching English through ER **in 2002.**

(cont'd)

In 2001, I also met Dr. Stephen Krashen and asked him if he thought 'i-1' input was useful for learners. He said yes, and I felt reassured that the SSS method would be successful. I also met Dr. Beniko Mason and went to observe a class at her uni. Her lesson was excellent but it was not an ER class. At that time, as far as I know, only Mr. Sakai's uni classes and those at SEG were taught entirely through ER. I observed and helped his uni classes for a year.

(cont'd)

Mr. Sakai and I both support

(1) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis,

(2) Start with Simple Stories method.

However, we have different opinions on

(3) S-to-S Interaction,

(4) Explicit Teaching,

(5) Intensive Reading.

Contrary to Mr. Sakai, I think (3)-(5) might also benefit the students in addition to ER.

Our program is based on all of the above.

Our ER English Program

1   Grade 7 to Grade 12

2   For 7th graders to 10th graders

   ER 80 min + OC 80 min

   For 11th graders ER 90min + OC 90 min

   For 12th graders ER 90min + UEEP 90min

   (UEEP=University Entrance Exam Preparation)

3 50 lessons in a year (except Grade 12)

   31 weekly lessons + 19 seasonal lessons

4 The average number of students

   in a class is 12.

Reading Log of Student A (1)

2019/03   0KW Start from ORT1

(Grade 7)   Basic class→Standard class
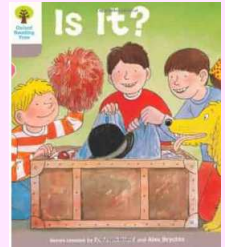
2020/02   164KW   ORT2, CYL1

(Grade 7)
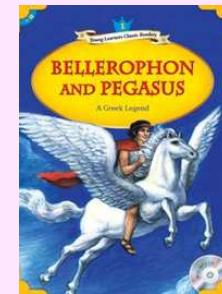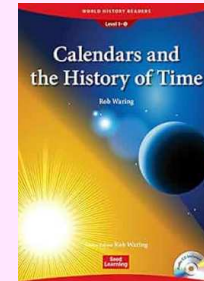
2020/08   470KW   WHR1

(Grade 8)   Standard class→Advanced class

2021/02   793KW   ODM0, PAR0

(Grade 8)

Reading Log of Student A (2)

2021/06 **1.30MW** Magic Tree House
(Grade 9)
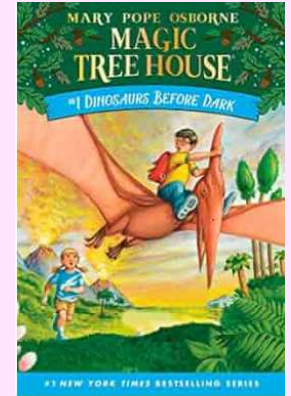
2022/02 **2.31MW** Mates Dates
(Grade 9)
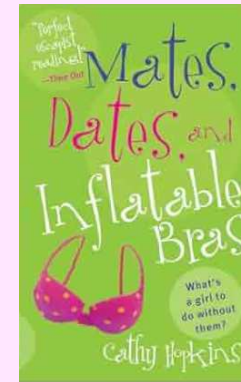
2022/06 **3.36MW** House of Night
(Grade 10)
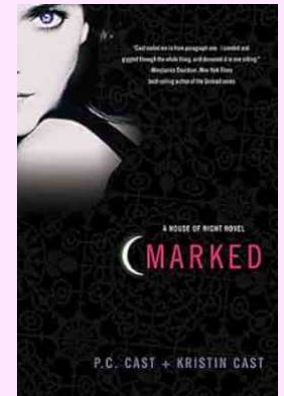
2023/02 **5.04MW** Tomorrow
(Grade 10)

13
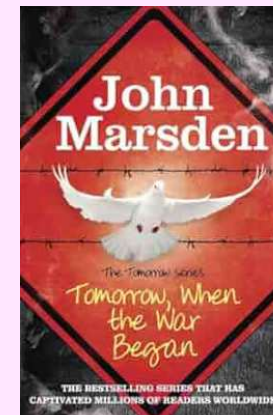
Reading Log of Student A (3)

2023/06 5.40MW The Love Hypothesis

(Grade 11)
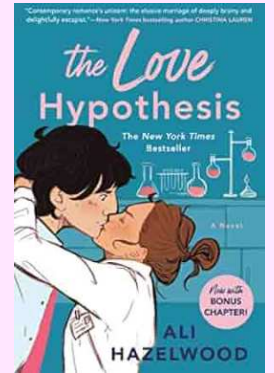
2024/02 7.31MW The Martian

(Grade 11)

2024/06 8.51MW Fourth Wing

(Grade 12)
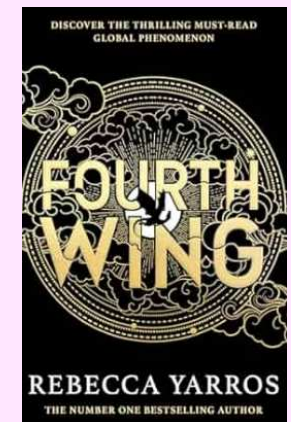
2024/12 9.42MW Iron Flame

Passed the EE for U of Tokyo

Reading Log of Student B (1)

2019/03   0KW Start from ORT1
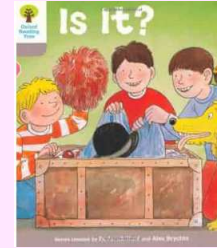
(Grade 7)   Basic class

2020/02   76KW   ORT2, LLL2

(Grade 7) Basic class→Standard Class

2020/08   120KW   ORT4

(Grade 8)
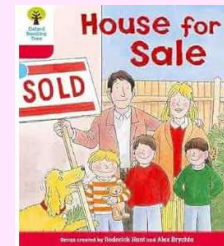
2021/02   237KW   FRL3

(Grade 8) Standard Class→Advanced Class

Reading Log of Student B (2)

2021/06 349KW YER2, PAR0
(Grade 9)

2022/02 474KW ODM1
(Grade 9)

2022/06 667KW OBW1, PAR2
(Grade 10)

2023/02 844KW CER2, DRM
(Grade 10)
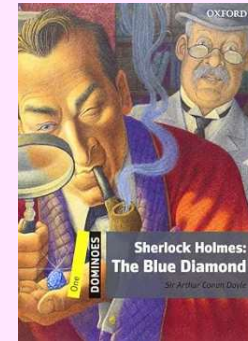
Reading Log of Student B (3)

2023/06   950KW   A to Z Mysteries

(Grade 11)
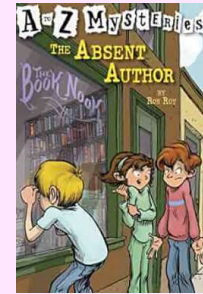
2024/02   1.10MW   A. Christie(GR)

(Grade 11)

2024/06   1.48MW   A. Christie(QR)

(Grade 12) 2024/12   1.68MW

Where the Crawdads Sing

Passed the EE for U of Tokyo

17
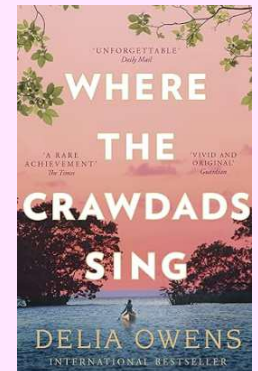
Three Levels of Classes

Each grade has classes in 3 levels, basic, standard, and advanced. The numbers of students in each level in April are as follows:

		Basic	Standard	Advanced	TOTAL
AY 2019	Grade 7	81	160	73	314
AY 2020	Grade 8	79	126	93	298
AY 2021	Grade 9	78	117	123	318
AY 2022	Grade 10	103	156	135	394
AY 2023	Grade 11	67	134	145	346
AY 2024	Grade 12	43	104	130	277

Our academic year starts in March and ends in February.

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Our Lesson Descriptions (1)

Grade 7

40 min: **ORT Assigned Reading** + **Quiz**
  (with explanations in basic and standard classes)

25 min: **Individual Guided Reading**

 5 min: **Record, Return, Borrow**

10 min: **Phonics + Vocabulary**

20 min: **Break**

80 min: **Oral Communication & Grammar**
       (conducted by native teachers
       using **TPRS** and **MovieTalk**)

Individual Guided Reading

We use the **Individual Guided Reading** method.

In our method, ER teachers
   1) observe how Ss are reading in class
   2) track how the Ss feel about what they read
      by reading their reading log notebooks
   3) select books suitable for each student

Teachers also ask Ss what kind of books they want to read in order to select their books.

TPRS method

In our **Oral Communication classes(Grades 7 and 8), TPRS(Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling)** is the primary method.

TPRS was developed by Blaine Ray, a high school Spanish teacher in California, during the 1990s. It is also based on Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis.

Our Lesson Descriptions (2)

Grade 8 to Grade 10

 5 min: Writing (grammar-based translation)

65 min: Individual Guided Reading

10 min: Listening or Shadowing

20 min: Break

80 min: Oral Communication & Grammar

       (conducted by native teachers)

Our Lesson Descriptions (3)

Grade 11

 5 min: Writing

75 min: **Individual Guided Reading**

10 min: Listening from past entrance exams

20 min: Break

90 min: **Oral Communication and Intensive Reading including free discussion and essay writing**

＊We also have UEEP classes for 11th graders.

Our Lesson Descriptions (4)

Grade 12

60 min: **Individual Free Volunteer Reading**

10 min: Listening from past entrance exams

10 min: Shadowing and vocabulary check

10 min: Solving grammar problems from past
entrance exams

20 min: Break

90 min: Uni Entrance Exam Preparation
Lecture or practice test
(conducted by Japanese teachers)

Our Staff

1   ER full-time teachers **5**

      ER contract-based teachers **46**

      ER assistant teachers **54**

2   OC full-time teachers **15**

      OC contract-based teachers **6**

3   Japanese teachers for UEEP **6**

4   Office staff   full-timers **6**

               part-timers **6**

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Why Only 5 ER Full-Timers?

It is because there are almost no teachers who have experience teaching English through ER.

Most of our assistant ER teachers are uni students who took ER classes at SEG. It takes at least one year for an assistant teacher to be able to teach ER classes on their own.

Number of Classes

N of Cls	2006	2011	2016	2021	2023	2025
Grade 7	5	24	26	32	28	31
Grade 8	2	29	26	29	31	32
Grade 9	3	19	24	25	29	28
Grade 10	5	19	25	26	40	37
Grade 11	1	12	21	22	26	27
Grade 12		6	13	14	16	17
Total	16	109	135	148	170	172
Av NS	9.8	9.4	11.8	12.0	12.0	12.1

Number of Students

N of S	2006	2011	2016	2021	2023	2025
Grade 7	56	209	276	346	302	327
Grade 8	14	261	280	324	334	370
Grade 9	33	181	265	318	371	327
Grade 10	50	183	292	316	460	438
Grade 11	4	112	212	290	344	379
Grade 12		77	138	184	230	287
Total	157	1023	1463	1778	2041	2128

In 2002, we had only 30 students in our ER program.

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Our Budget for Books

(1) The tuition fee for a one year program is about **JPY364K, or USD2.5K, per student**, so our annual income is around **JPY760M, or USD5.3M**. (USD1=JPY145)

(2) We spent **JPY18M, or USD124K, or 2.3% of our total income**, on buying books for ER last year. This allowed us to buy **10K books**. Last year, 2K books were lost, and 3K books were donated to other schools.

Our Principles for Extensive Reading

(1) Start with Simple Stories

Most students start reading from YL0.1-0.5 books.

(2) Teachers choose appropriate books for each student

Different from free volunteer reading.

(3) A diverse selection of books.

To ensure (1)&(2), we have 600K books.

Our Rules for Extensive Reading

(1) **Don't translate English into Japanese**

(2) **Read at an 80-90% level of understanding**

(3) **Guess the unknown words**

instead of consulting a dictionary

(4) **Read for an hour in every lesson**

(5) **Read for at least an hour as homework**

every week if possible

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How Much Students Have Read

All the students enrolled in the ER program at the time.

Grade	Y.M	Ave(K)	Max(K)	Min(K)	N	-0.5M	0.5-1M	1-2M	2M-
12	24.12	**1,205**	9,224	31	232	51	73	70	38
11	24.02	**916**	7,314	27	299	119	84	61	35
10	23.02	**682**	5,040	30	354	173	104	55	16
9	22.02	**516**	6,407	6	316	199	78	32	7
8	21.02	**288**	2,917	4	286	253	26	6	1
7	20.02	**123**	1,199	1	317	308	8	1	0

K means 1,000 words and M means 1,000,000 words.

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Drop in the Max Word Count Between Grades 9 and 10

At many jukus, students can join a class and leave at any time.
At the end of Grade 9, two top readers quit our program.
So the student who read 5,040KW at the end of Grade 10 was the third-place reader who read 3,360KW at the end of Grade 9.

How Much Students Have Read

Students who did ER for more than 3 years

Grade	Y.M	Ave(K)	Max(K)	Min(K)	N	-0.5M	0.5-1M	1-2M	2M-
12	24.12	**1,677**	9,224	127	115	7	26	48	34
11	24.02	**1,380**	7,314	45	138	12	48	48	30
10	23.02	**1,052**	5,040	81	153	25	71	45	12

K means 1,000 words and M means 1,000,000 words.

TOEFL(ITP) Scores and the Total Amount of Words Ss Read

TOEFL TOTAL
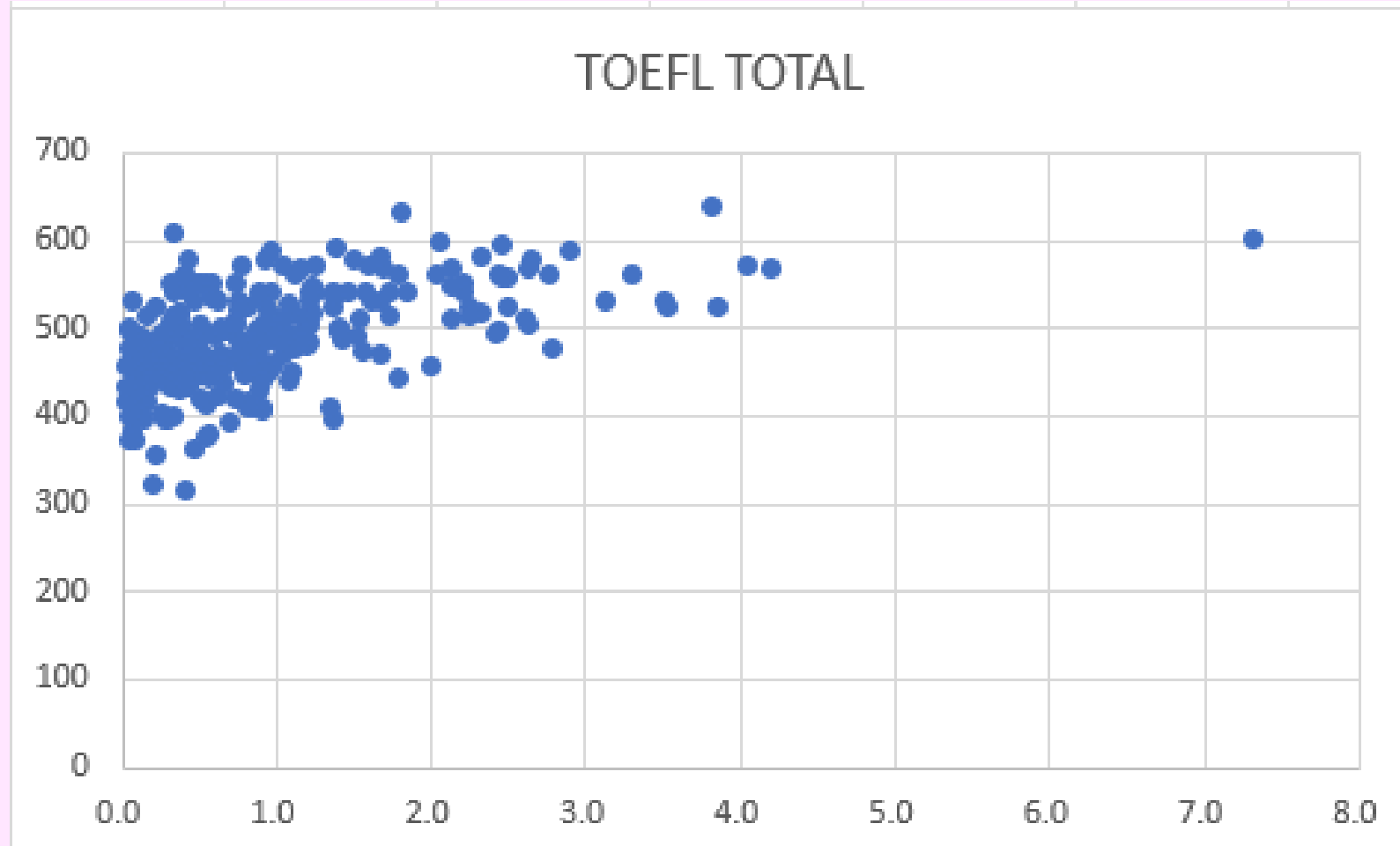
x-axis: **Million Words**   *y*-axis: **TOEFL ITP Score**
N=287, r=0.54, Ave=487, 11th Graders in January of 2024.

31
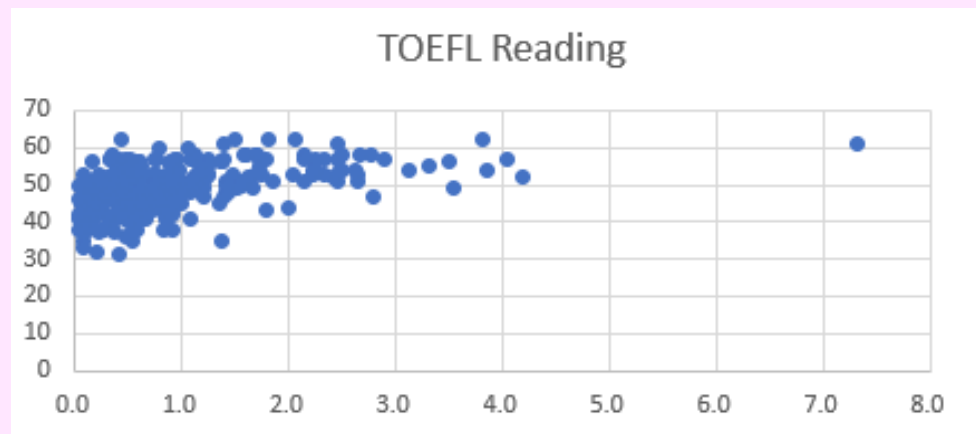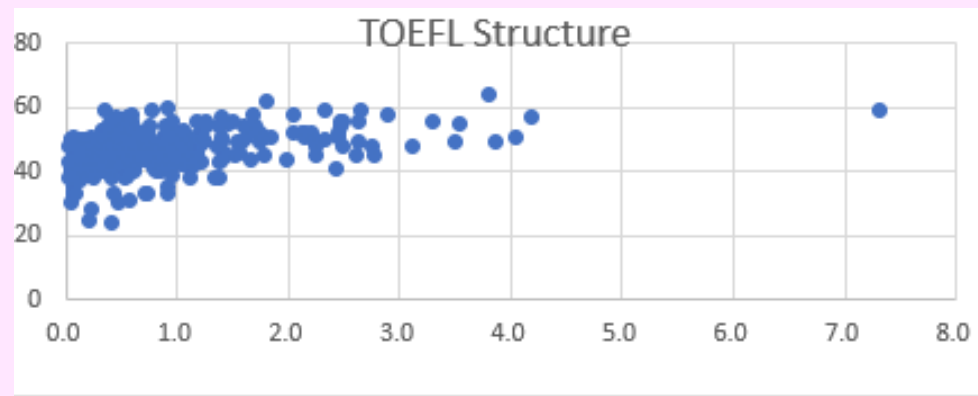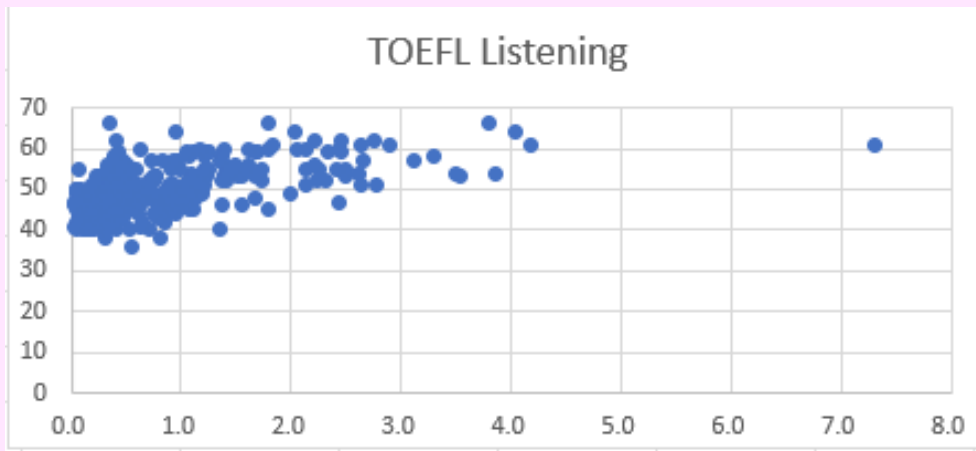
Listening Section
Ave=49.9
r=0.58

Structure Section
Ave=46.8
r=0.41

Reading Section
Ave=49.8
r=0.46

x-axis: **Million Words**   *y*-axis: **TOEFL ITP Deviation Value**

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Why the Correlation between Listening and WC Is Relatively Strong

The section score - WC correlations coefficients are as follows:

   Listening - WC: r=0.58
   Reading   - WC: r=0.46
   Structure - WC: r=0.41

In the listening section, the English is relatively easy, so the correlation with WC is strong.

The weak correlation between Structure(Grammar) and WC suggests explicit grammar learning might be necessary to get a high score on a TOEFL ITP test and, possibly, a university entrance exam.

Cambridge Test Scores and the Total Amount of Words Ss Read

Linguaskill Total Score
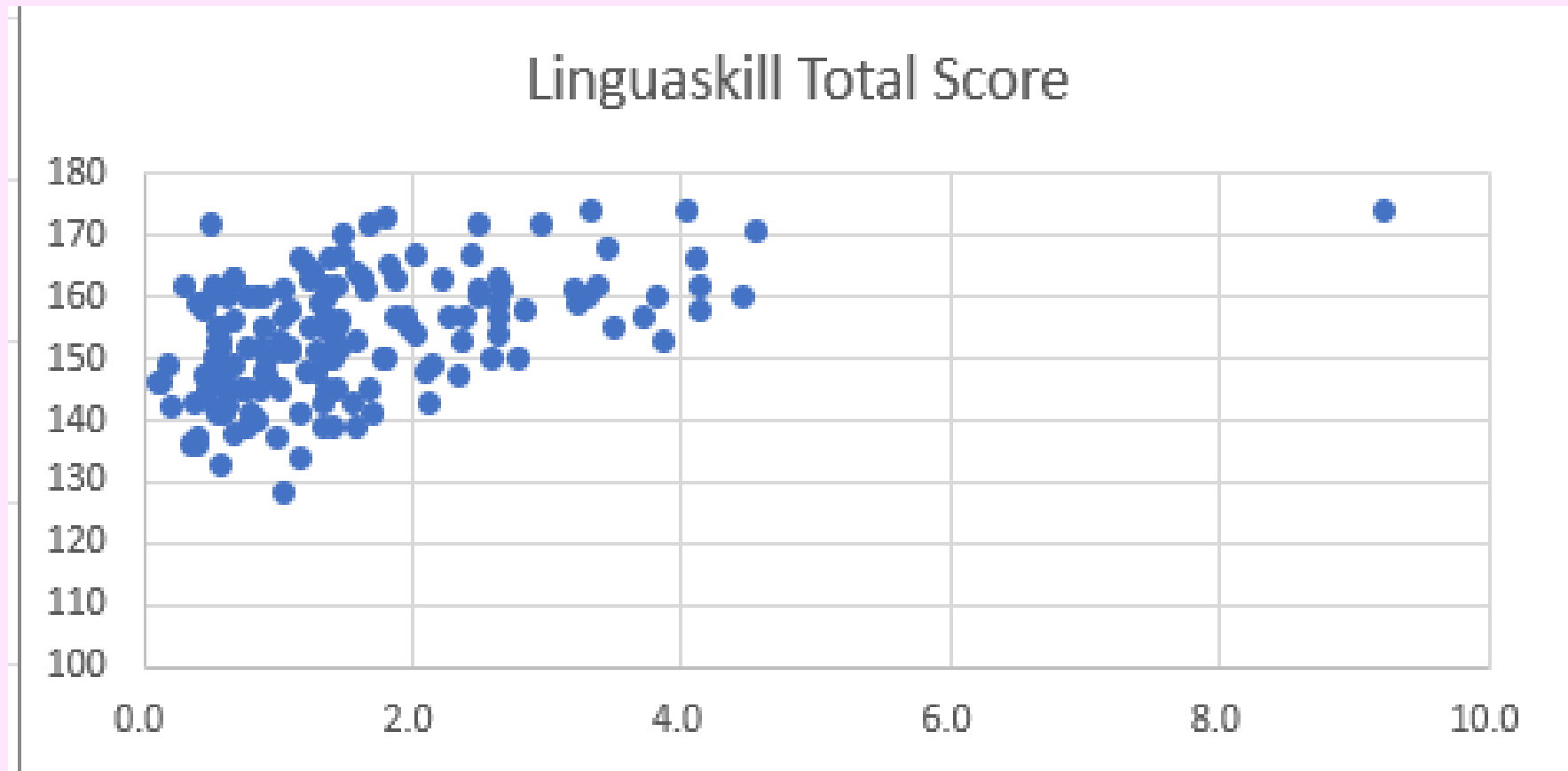
x-axis: Million Words   *y*-axis: Cambridge Linguaskill Score
N=152, r=0.47, Ave=154, 11th Graders in November of 2023.
C1:180, B2:160-179, B1:140-159, A2:120-139, A1:100-119

33
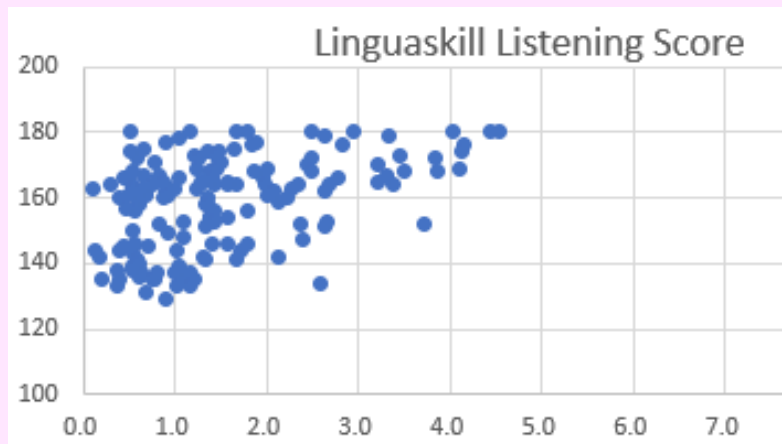
Listening: Ave=158, r=0.43
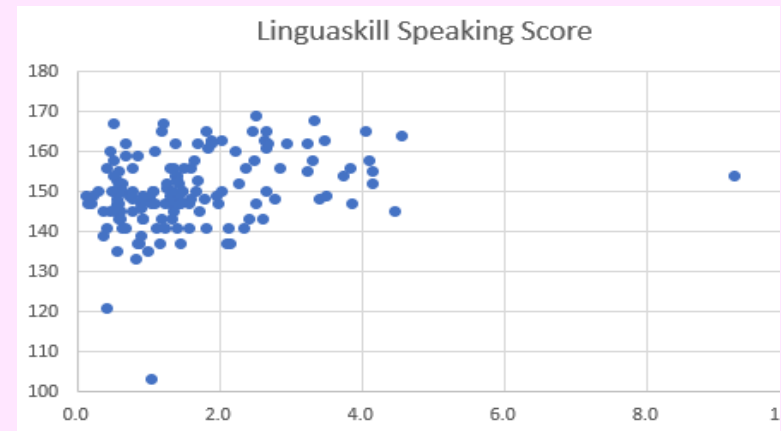
Speaking: Ave=150, r=0.31
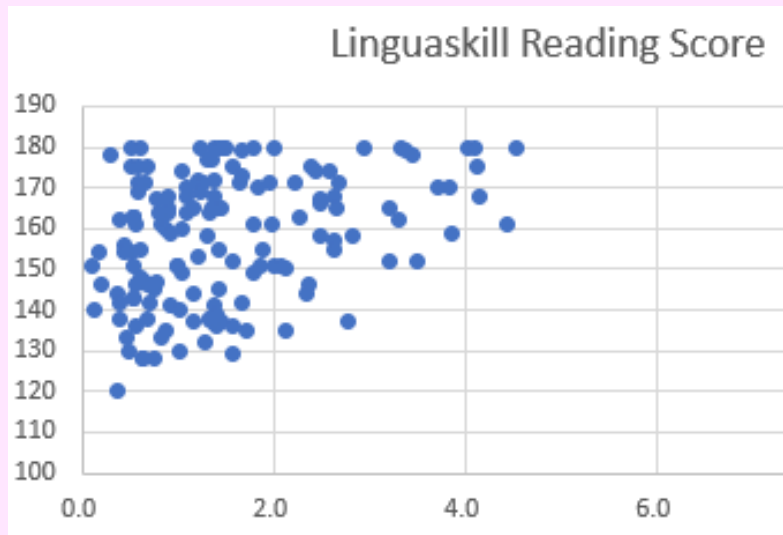
Reading: Ave=148, r=0.32
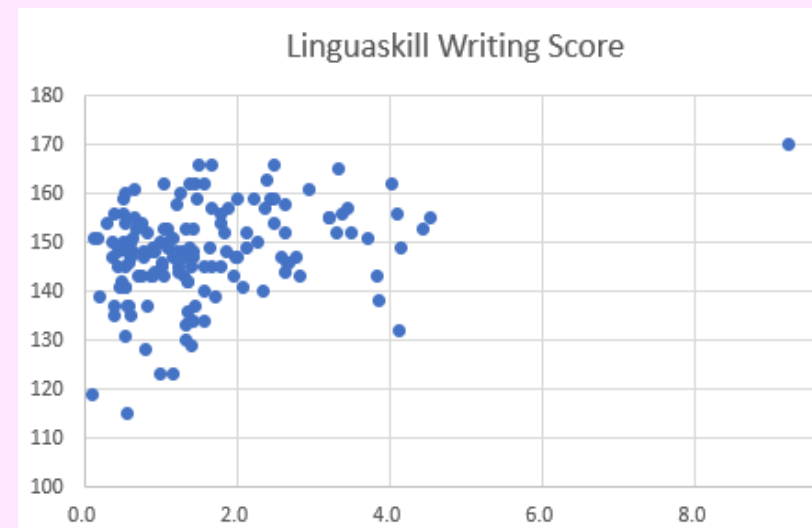
Writing: Ave=138, r=0.32

x-axis: Million Words   *y*-axis: Cambridge Linguaskill Score

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Three Stages in Our ER Program

Stage 1 **(takes 0.5 to 3 years)**
   From the beginning to reaching the level of being able to read OBW1
Stage 2 **(takes 1 to 2 years)**
   Advancing YL2.0 to YL4.0 or further
Stage 3 **(usually takes 1 year)**
   Advancing YL4.0 to YL7.0

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Stage 1 (YL≦1.8)

Grade 7

Advanced Class starts from YL0.2

Kipper wanted a party.

6 months

Scuttor DOMINOES
Sinbad
Retold by Janet Hardy-Gould
OXFORD

10 months

CAMBRIDGE
Help!
PHILIP PROWSE
WITH DOWNLOADABLE AUDIO

World's Greatest Detective!
Nate The Great
by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat
illustrated by Marc Simont
ACTIVITIES INSIDE!
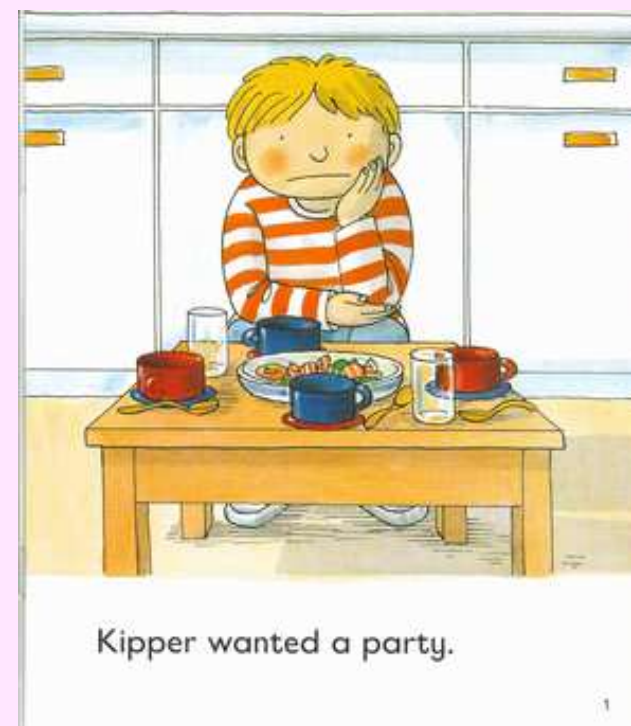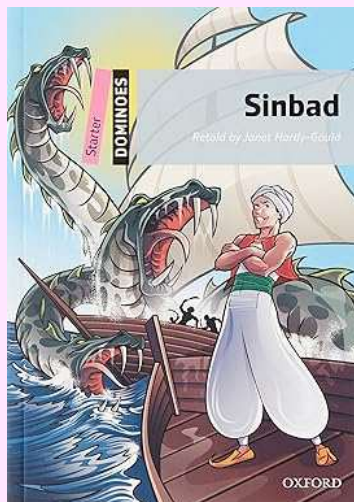
Stage 1 (YL≦1.8)

Grade 7
Basic/Standard Class starts from YL0.1

Is it Kipper?

6 months
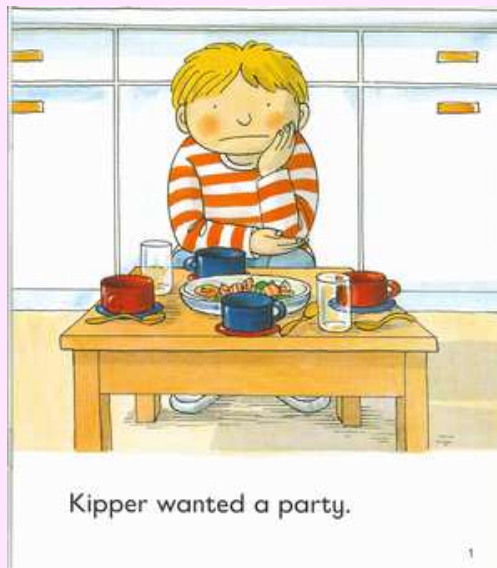
Kipper wanted a party.

1 year

"Hello, Sarah, I'm Mrs. Hayes," says a woman.
"How do you do, Mrs. Hayes?" says Sarah.
Mrs. Hayes has a café. The café's name is The Lagoon.
Sarah starts work at The Lagoon today.

Stage 1 (YL≦1.8)

Books for Stage 1

Springboard Connect
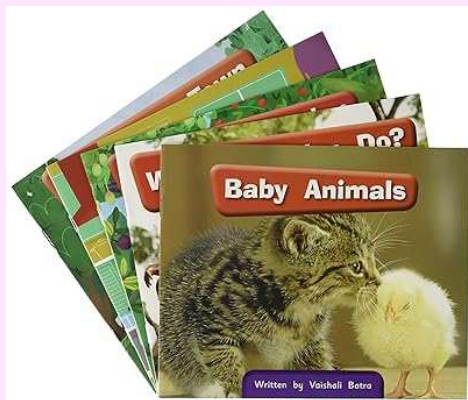
Magic Adventures

Henry and Mudge
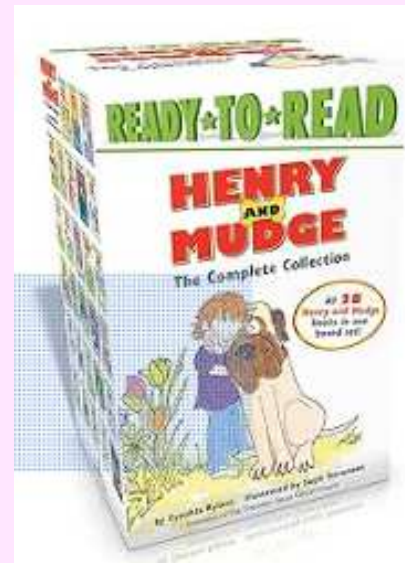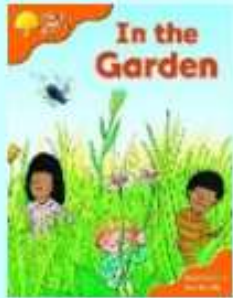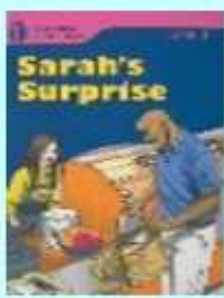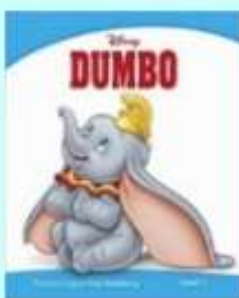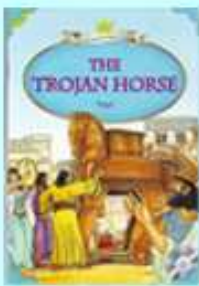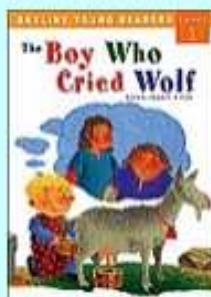
Cambridge English Readers
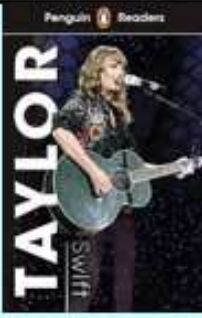
Books for Stage 1 (≦YL0.6, ≦30KW)

ORT1-5	BBL1-3	LSR1-3	CTP1-3	ORTFF	ORTS
ORT FP	TTR1-3	SPBC	CPP1-4	Wishy	SSB
EER	Learn-About	ORS1-3	ORI0-1	RA1-3	ICR0

39
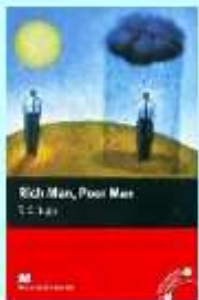
Books for Stage 1 (YL0.6-1.4, 30-100KW)

In the Garden	Sarah's Surprise	DUMBO		MAGIC ADVENTURES	VERA The Alien Hunter
ORT6-9	FRL1-7	DEK1-3	YER1-2	MGA1-3	Vera1-3
SEASON	THE TROJAN HORSE	Look!	The Boy Who Cried Wolf	Cake Time	HARE TORTOISE
AWA	CYL1-3	MME	SYR1-3	RP4-10	EST1-6
FROGGY GETS DRESSED	LITTLE BEAR	We All Fall for Apples	Winnie and Wilbur WINNIE THE WITCH		Curious George
Froggy	ICR1	SCR0-1	WW	SIR1-2	CG

Books for Stage 1 (YL0.8-1.8, 100-300KW)

MMR1	OBW0	PER0	YER3-4	ODM0	LSR
EIR1-4	CER0	FXR0	HMLR0-1	RPR	SAD1-3
BCE1-4	LBR 0-3	PR0-1	PAR0-1	BBL4-9	RTR2

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Books for Stage 1 (YL0.8-1.8, 100-300KW)

FF11-15	PES1-4	JC	Sarin	ICR2	Aii
DSN	PER1	NTG	MPT	IAR	UYR1-2
MMR2-	CPT1-3	FXR1	CER1	RRR1	ODM1

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Do NOT Raise the Level Too Fast

Have students read

i–1, i, i+1 simultaneously or alternately

where

i–1: a level students can read very easily

i: a level students can read easily

i+1: a challenging level

For beginners, we recommend the
following ratio, i–1 : i : i+1 = 3 : 2 : 1

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Raise the Level Gradually
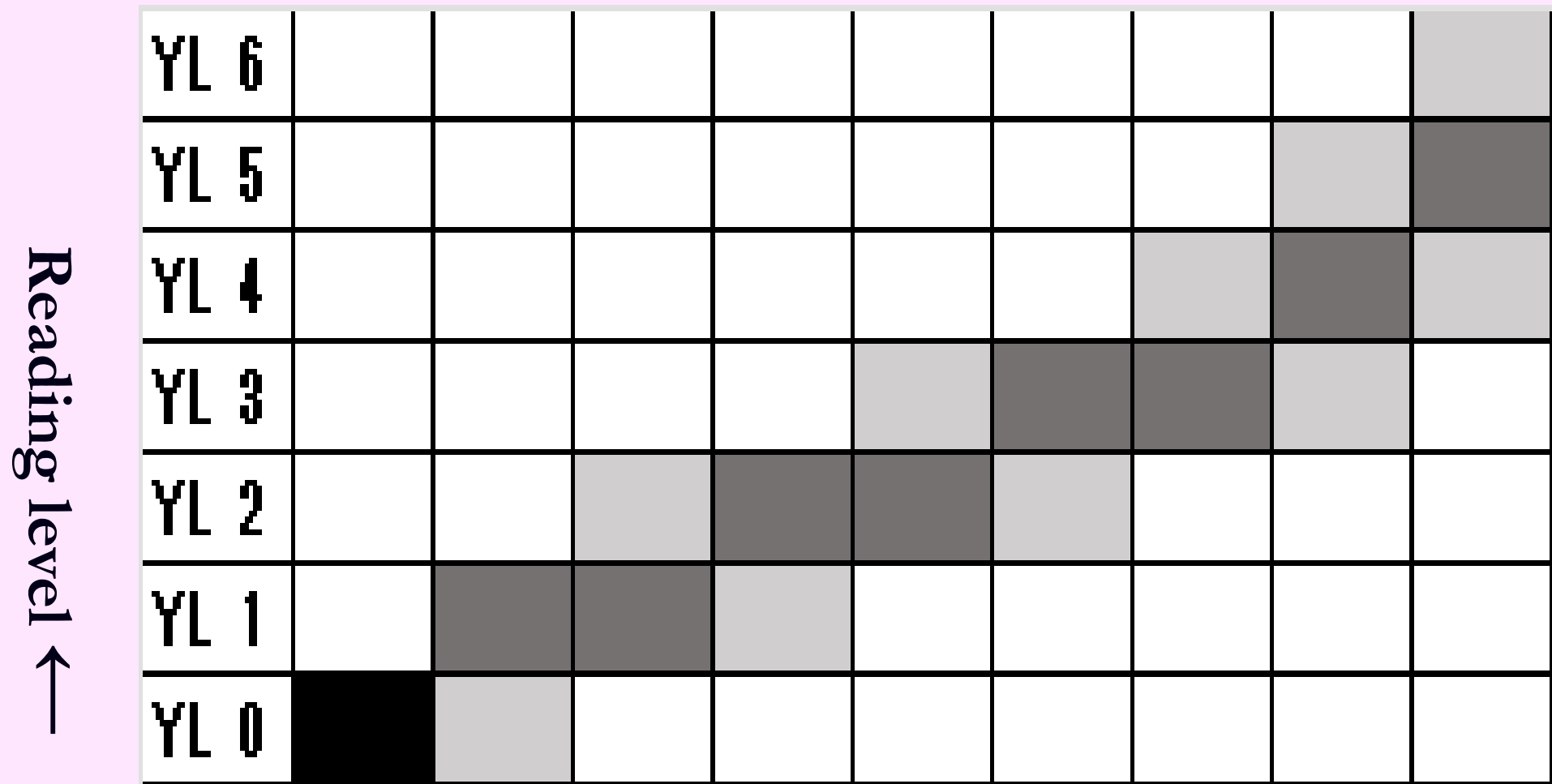
Reading level →

→ Total amount of words a student reads

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Our Guided ER

Raise the level   Lower the level

Read widely ⟷ Read deeply
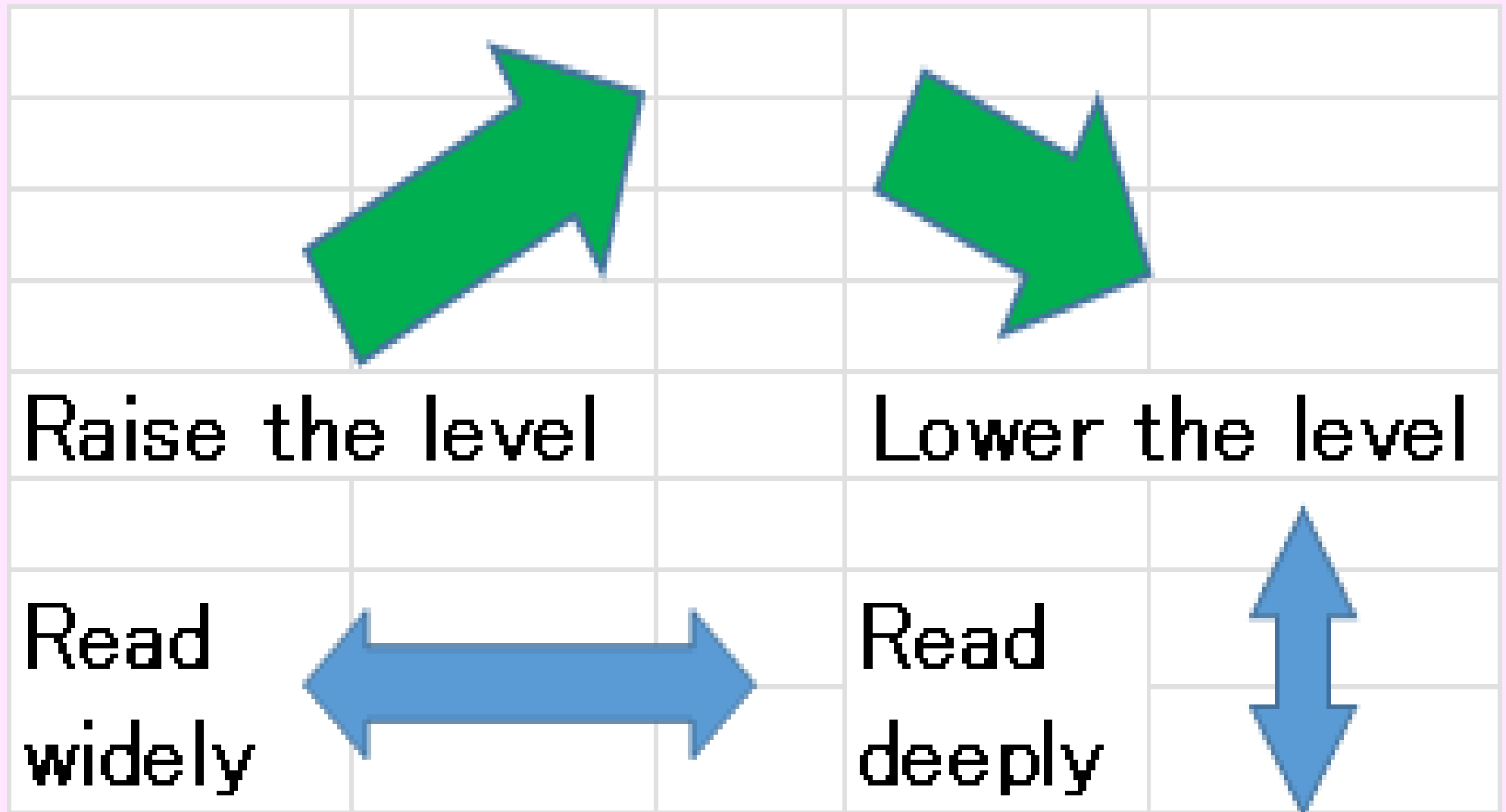
Advice to ER teachers

Sometimes, teachers need to advise their students to lower their reading level when they are struggling with reading books that are too difficult, or are really tired, or have personal problems.

When a student loses focus, an effective way to change their mood is to have them read a good picture book or a short graphic novel.

45a

A Wide Variety of Books is Essential

Graded Readers are easy to read, but the total number of **GR** is not enough for our program.

In addition to **GR**, we need books for children and young adults. The YL (yomiyasusa level) system makes it possible to level and list the word counts for both **GR** and authentic books.

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YLs for Major GR

	OBW	PER	CER	PR	MMR	BCT	HBR	BAR
Starter	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.0				
Level 1	2.0	1.0	1.4	1.4	0.8	2.0	1.6	1.4
Level 2	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.0
Level 3	3.2	3.2	3.6	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.4	2.5
Level 4	3.8	4.0	4.5	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.0	3.0
Level 5	4.5	5.0	5.5	3.8	3.6	4.5	4.0	4.0
Level 6	5.5	6.0	6.0	4.2	4.5	5.5		4.5

Each YL is determined by the difficulty of grammar and vocabulary and the total length of each book.

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YLs for Major Books

	YL	Word count
Nate the Great #1	1.2-1.4	1,585
Cam Jansen #1	2.2-2.6	4,753
Magic Tree House	2.4-2.8	4,750
Dragon Masters #1	2.5-3.0	6,016
A to Z Mysteries #1	3.0-3.5	8,517
The Boy in the Dress	4.0-4.5	22,585
Cupcake Diaries #1	4.0-4.5	24,831
Chocolate Factory	4.5-5.5	29,743
Darren Shan #1	5.0-6.0	48,726
Harry Potter #1	6.0-7.0	77,325
One of Us is Lying	6.5-7.0	91,844
Love Hypothesis	6.5-7.0	105,000

Each YL is determined by the difficulty of vocabulary and the total length of each book.

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Important Points for Beginners

(1) High level of comprehension and reading volume(=total amount of reading done) are both important. We believe from our experience that:

the growth of English proficiency

is proportional to

$$(\text{Reading Volume}) \times LC^4$$

So, students should read a lot at an 80-90% LC=Level of Comprehension.

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(Reading Volume) $\times$ LC^4

It implies reading **10,000 words at a 50% LC(Level of Comprehension)**

is equivalent to **625 words at a 100% LC,**

reading **10,000 words at an 80% LC**

is equivalent to **4,096 words at a 100% LC.**

I recommend you to have your students read **at an 80% LC.**

Important Points for Beginners

(2) In order to be able to read a book with a high level of comprehension, reading the same book **two or three times** (listening, shadowing and reading aloud) is recommended.

(3) Raise the level slowly and carefully.

We set **ORT3** as the goal for our basic and standard classes at the end of **Grade 7**.

Stage 2 (YL2.0-4.0)

Starts from
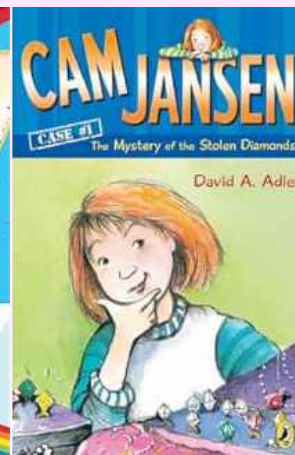
(**2.0**, 5440)   (**2.0**, 4082)   (**2.2** 4753)   (**2.5**, 6016)

Ends at
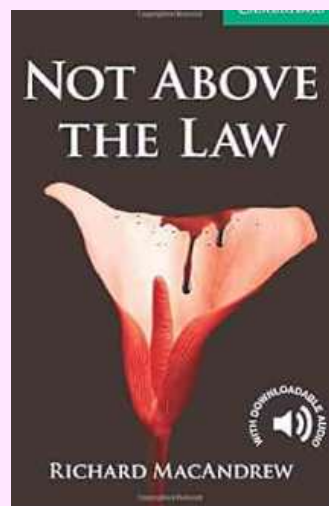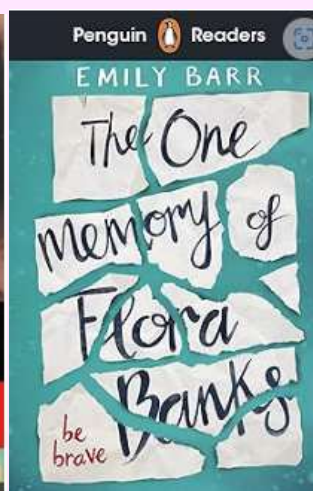
(**3.6**, 15198)   (**3.6**, 20154)   (**3.8**, 17645)   (**3.5**, 15596)
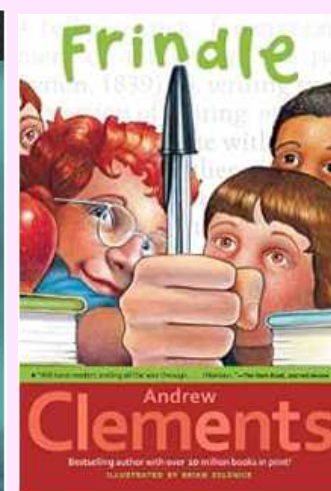
Books for Stage 2 (YL1.8-2.8, 200-700KW)

OBW1-2	WHR1-4	HLR1-3	ODM2	CER2	BCGA0-2
EGR1-2	SIR3-5	ICR 3-4	CSC	NHK	Charo
RBM	CJM	JBJ	DRM	MTH	FKS

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Books for Stage 2 (YL2.4-4.0, 0.5-1.5MW)

OBW2-3	CER2-3	PER2-3	PAR2-3	BCT2-4	BAR2-4
MMR3-4	Mercy	MRP	PIB	Bad Guys	PR2-5
BAR2-4	CUP	Buddy Files	IVB	GPN	GPN

Graphic Novels for Stage 2 (YL3.5-4.0)
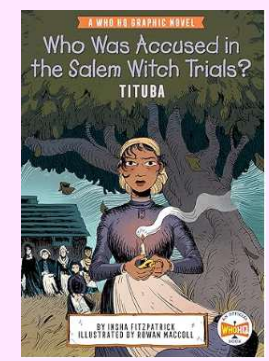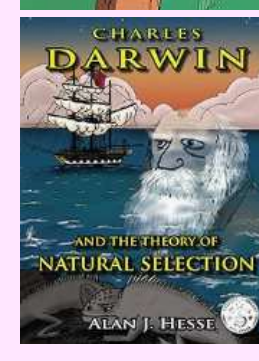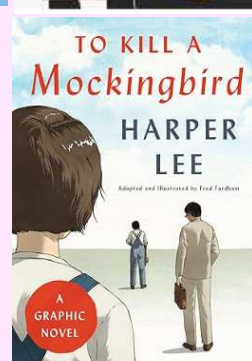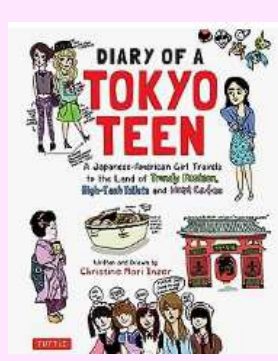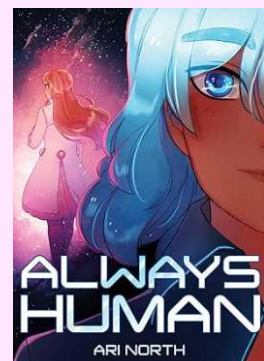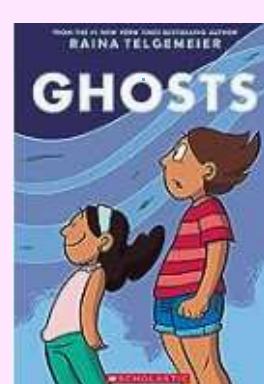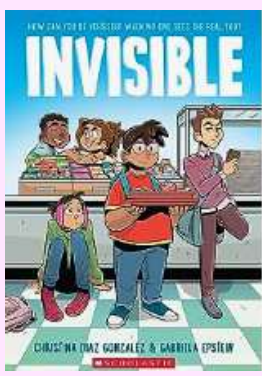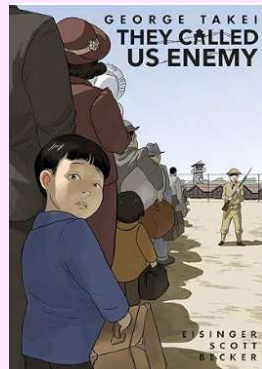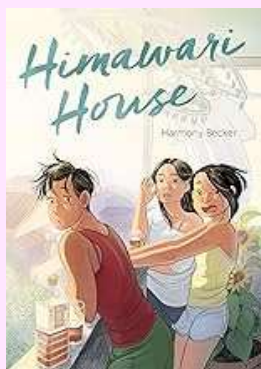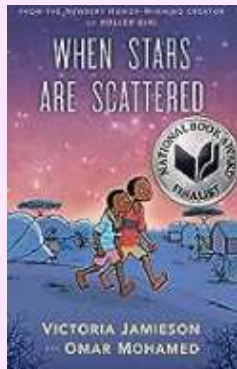
Japanese Manga for Stage 2 (YL3.5-4.0)

Important Points
for Stage 2 Students

(1) **Stop listening to the audio** when the students can read more fluently than the audio.

(2) Choose i-1, i, i+1 books.

(3) **Raise the level very carefully.**

   Some students only need one year to progress from Stage 2 to Stage 3, but some students need 2 or 3 years to reach Stage 3. When they are ready, choose a book like *Charlie and the Cholate Factory* to challenge the students.

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Stage 3 (YL 3.5-7.0)

Starts from
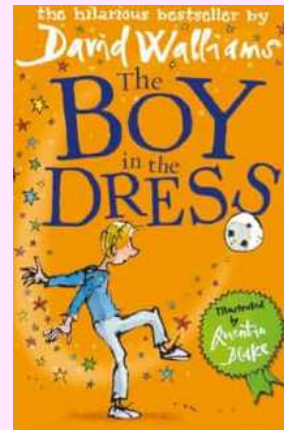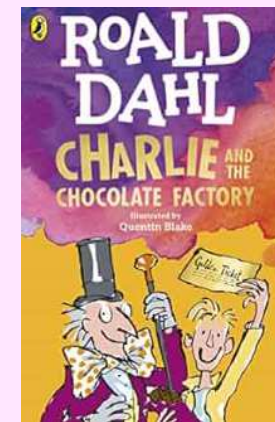
(**4.5**, 20497)   (**4.0**, 22586)   (**4.0**, 24831)   (**4.5**, 29743)

Ends at
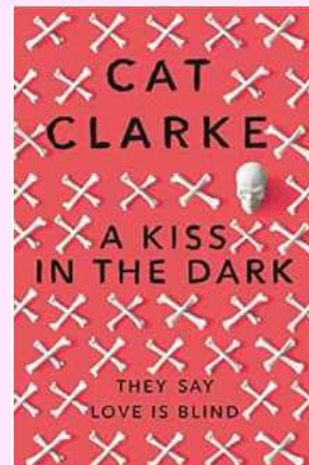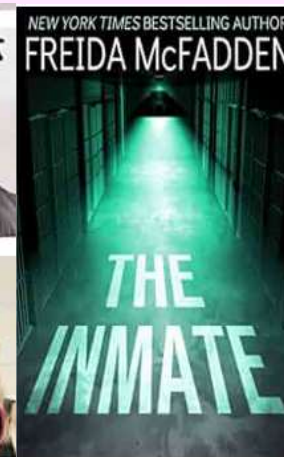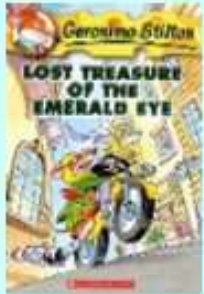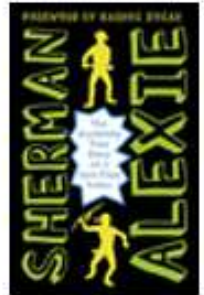
(**6.0**, 70000)   (**6.5**, 91844)   (**6.5**, 75000)   (**6.5** 103029)
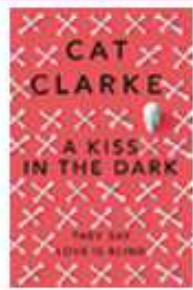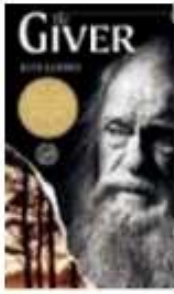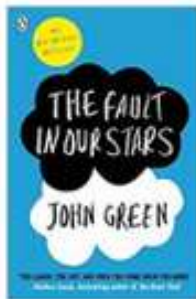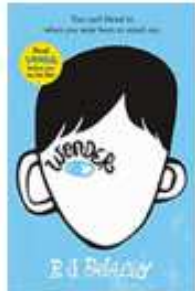
Books for Stage 3 (YL3.5-5.5, 1.5M-2.5M)

CER4	OBW4-6	PER 4-5	MMR 5-6	Dahl	Kuipers
Geronimo	Who	Clements	Paddington	Walliams	Sachar
Alex Rider	Alexie	Cabot	CCD	Deltora	SHC

Books for Stage 3 (YL4.5-6.5, 2.0M-)

Forget to Remember	Cry Freedom		ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	LOUIS SACHAR HOLES	CAT CLARKE A KISS IN THE DARK
CER 5-6	**OBW6**	**PER6**	**PR6-7**	**Sachar**	**Clarke**
DARREN SHAN Cirque du Freak	James Patterson Bloody Valentine	KONOSUBA WONDERFUL WORLD	GIVER	Cathy Hopkins Mates, Dates &	WarHorse
Darren Shan	**Quick Reads**	**Konosuba**	**Lowry**	**Mates Dates**	**Morpurgo**
ERAGON Christopher Paolini	THE FAULT IN OUR STARS JOHN GREEN	SARAH DESSEN Just listen	Agatha Christie EVIL UNDER THE SUN	WARRIORS ERIN HUNTER	wonder R.J. Palacio
Eragon	**Green**	**Dessen**	**Christie**	**Warriors**	**Palacio**

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Books for Stage 3 (YL4.5-6.5, 2.0M-)

Harry Potter	Yang	Cherub	Twilight	Rascal	Cast
Levithan	McManus	Sepetys	GGG	Tomorrow	Math Girls
Orwell	Hoover	McFadden	Ishiguro	Klein	Sheldon

Important Points for Stage 3 Students

(1) Choose books related to students' desired major in university.

(2) Choose young adult novels which are written for high school students.

(3) Choose easy books when students have little time to read or are really tired.

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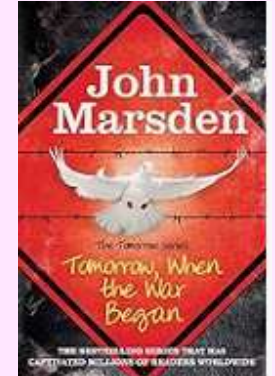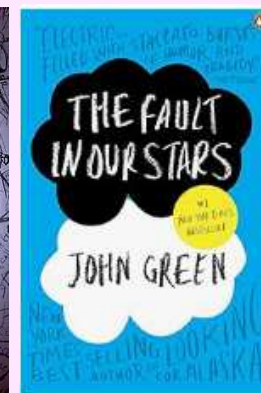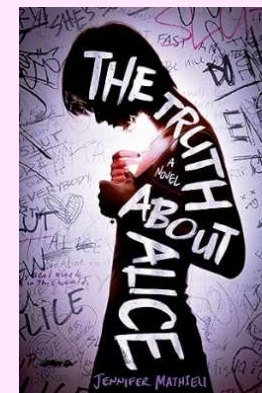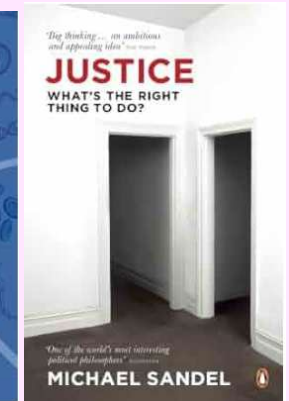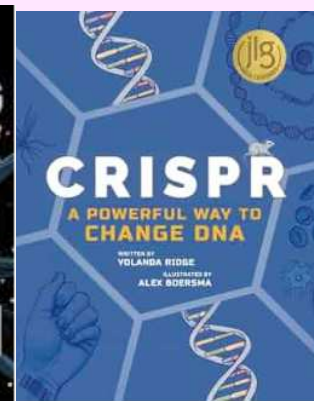
Three Merits of ER

(1) Students can improve their English skills **at their own pace** through ER.

(2) Students acquire **diverse knowledge** through reading.

(3) Reading books **develops students' empathy**, which is one of the most important skills required by modern society.

Conclusion

It usually takes two or three years to reach YL2 with no prior English experience. However, our experience shows that after reaching YL2, students can reach YL4 or higher within a relatively short period of time.

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If you are interested in our OC program,
contact Mr. Mark Koopman at
mkoopman12@gmail.com.