



Do Japanese EFL language learners
prefer graded readers or
non-graded readers?

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The Present Study

- The present study explores Japanese EFL language learners' preferences of extensive reading books in **the period of more than two years: graded readers or non-graded readers.**

Who we are?

- ER since 2010 (Kyoto, Korea, Dubai, Taiwan)
- University
- Local Library
- One million words per year
- Two years or more
- Life long ER



JAPAN TRAVEL



Meow ~



Push!

Push!

Push!

Hahaha!





You must have dignity.







The Present Study

- The present study explores Japanese EFL language learners' preferences of extensive reading books in **the period of more than two years:**
graded readers or non-graded readers.

The background of the slide features a close-up, slightly blurred image of an open book. A hand is visible, turning a page. The colors are warm, with shades of orange, red, and yellow. The text 'Work in progress' is overlaid in the top right corner in a white, sans-serif font.

Work in progress

- qualitative research explores:
how GR and non-GR books influence Japanese EFL
language learners reading motivation.

The Participants

- 4 University Students
- Practiced ER for two years or more
 - Why?
 - ① two million words or more
 - ② Reached the level of reading 600L to 900L or more
 - ③ Reached the length of book with 50,000 words or more

The Data

- Open ended questionnaire
- Reading logs
- Interviews

Summary of the Results

- Had negative reading experiences with GR in high school
- Had no or not much experience of ER until university
- Read only English textbooks, testing materials such as TOEIC or other English tests, and some GR books

What do Japanese learners believe is “reading”?

Tendency of Japanese English learners’ reading experience

- They have never read both GR and non-GR books in a parallel way
- They do not understand well the difference between GR and non-GR
- They think reading materials in English means GR or English texts for reading comprehension test

Japanese students reading experience

- Japanese students read mainly:
 1. School text books
 2. Reading materials for entrance exams
 3. Reading materials for some English qualification tests

e.g. Junior high school textbooks 100~300 words

High school entrance exams: 274~493words

University entrance exams: 143 ~ 797 words

Reading for Japanese learners

- They do not think it necessary to read levelled readers because these books are too easy and childish
- They tend to read higher level books and cannot understand them well
- **They think it is natural to use a dictionary to check the meaning while reading.**
 - Japanese English learners should be encouraged to read more non GR materials including levelled readers.

The background features a stack of books with a color gradient from red at the top to white at the bottom. The text 'CASE 1-MS' is overlaid on the white portion of the image.

CASE 1-MS

- “I didn’t enjoy ER when I experienced first. When I entered high school our teachers made us read one GR book during the long vacation, which means one book in summer and one book in spring for three years. I ended up reading 8 books in 3 years. They say those books are for beginners but for me they were so long and so difficult. The length of each book was 6,230 ~ 19,330. They were just too long for me...”

Case 1-MS

“Now I can read a book with the length of 100, 000 words or more, I don’t have a negative feeling towards ER. What was good about my ER experience in University was I levelled up gradually starting from reading truly easy books and they were never too long. Thanks to such ER, I got rid of negative feelings toward reading something long.”

The background features a stack of books with a warm color gradient from yellow to red. A semi-transparent white horizontal band is positioned across the middle. The text 'CASE 2-SK' is printed in bold black font on the white band.

CASE 2-SK

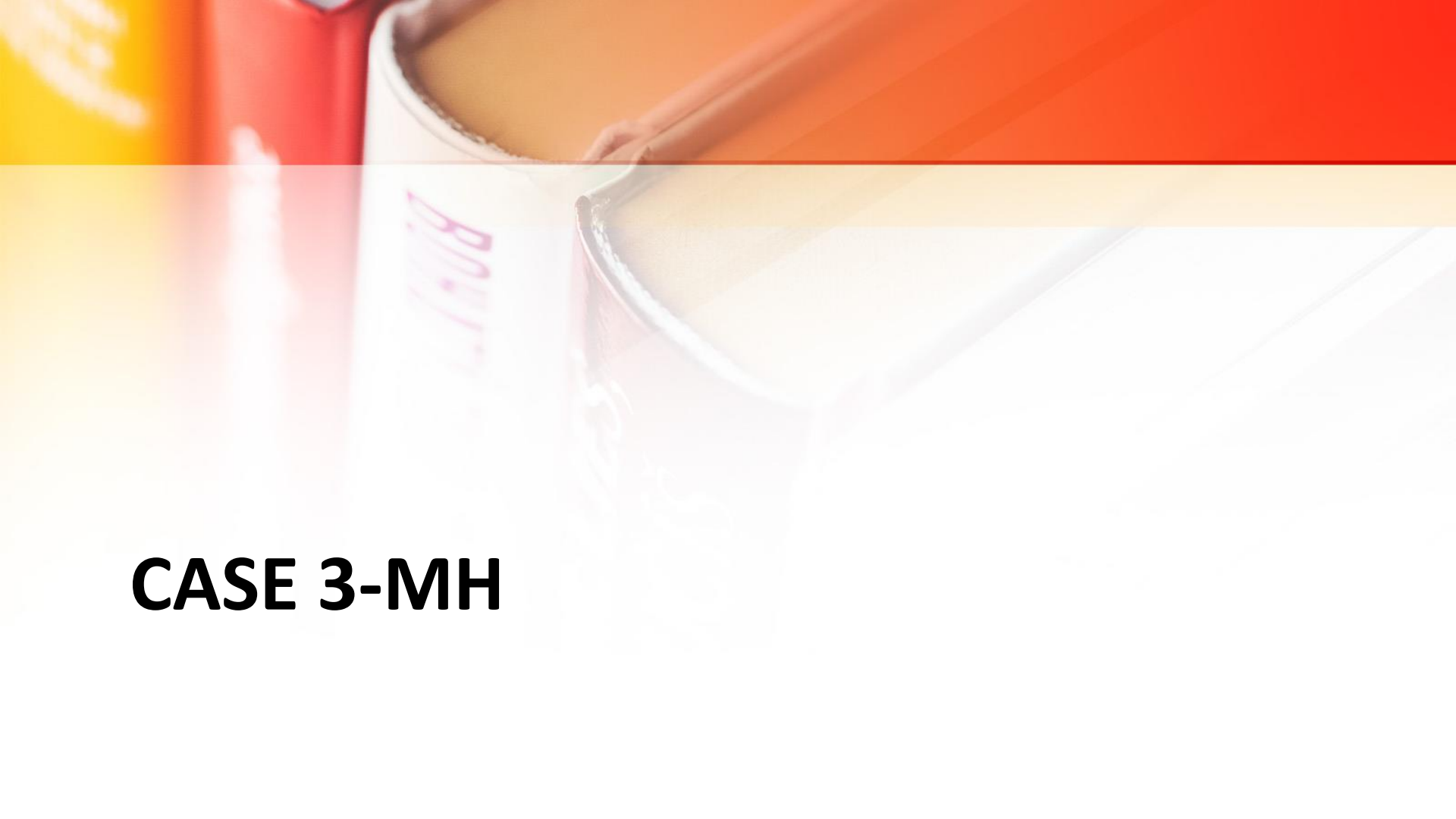
Case 2-KS

“What I read as ER was mainly GR at first. When I started ER in university, which makes 80% of the books I read was GR. Because of that I didn’t find ER interesting and it was difficult to continue ER.”

Case 2-KS

“Compared to GR, (through reading non GR books) I could get into the characters feelings. Plus I felt I can understand cultures of English speaking countries more easily.”

“When I came across Nicola Yoon or Jacqueline Wilson, who are best selling authors, I started to read non-GR books and finally I found ER truly enjoyable!”

The background features a stack of books with a warm color gradient from yellow to red. A semi-transparent white horizontal band is positioned across the middle of the image. The text 'CASE 3-MH' is printed in bold black font on the white band.

CASE 3-MH

Case 3-HM

“In the first grade in university, I read ORT from the beginning. I read all the books, even the ones with 50 words or so per book. Just as Japanese people know the story of Momotaro, everyone knew ORT in England, it was very useful when I studied abroad. I was able to talk to the children of my host family and also to local students at the school where I studied abroad, using books as a topic.”

A background image showing a person's hands holding a white mug filled with coffee. The person is reading a book, with the pages visible. The scene is set against a warm, orange-toned background. The text 'Case 3-MH' is overlaid in the top right corner.

Case 3-MH

“During the Golden Week holidays of my sophomore year of college, I started reading Harry Potter and found it so interesting that I spent almost the entire day reading the book. I was impressed by the way the books were written, and I also felt that there were some difficult expressions to translate into Japanese and they were easier to understand in the original English version ... I just enjoyed reading a lot of books.”

The background features a stack of books with a color gradient from red at the top to orange and then yellow at the bottom. The books are slightly out of focus, with the spines and pages visible. A semi-transparent white horizontal band is positioned across the middle of the image.

CASE 4-RH

Case 4-RH

“I had only read a few books in Japanese before entering university, and I thought there was no way I could read books in English.”

“In the freshman year in university, I started with easy books for young children such as the "SpongeBob" series (YLO.9-1.4, about 500 words) and “Curious George" series. I would go to the library with friends and look for such easy books and read them.”

The background of the slide features a close-up, slightly blurred image of a person's hands holding an open book. A bright red bookmark is visible on the left page. The overall color palette is warm, with shades of orange, red, and yellow. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white and yellow gradient box.

Case 4-RH

“When I started reading widely, I was surprised to find out that I could read books too. By reading books in English, I spent more time with English and improved my English, especially my reading skills. I also enjoyed talking about my impressions of books with teachers and friends, which helped me to keep my motivation high.”

Our focus, our dream

- Continuing ER for two years or more
- Supporting Life long learning
- Reaching advanced level

⇒ Children's literature

YA

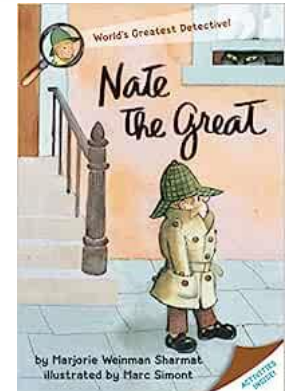
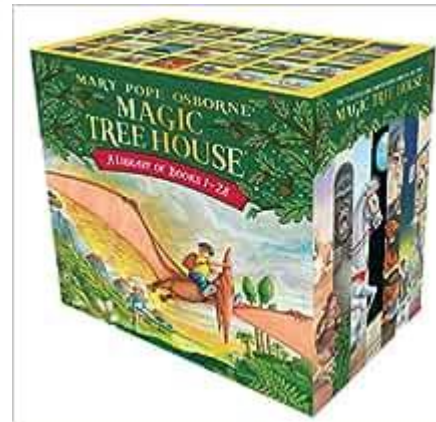
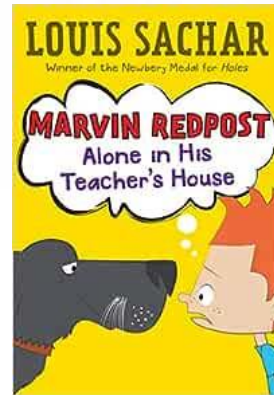
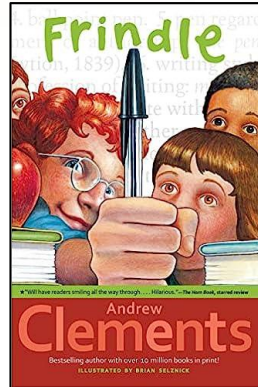
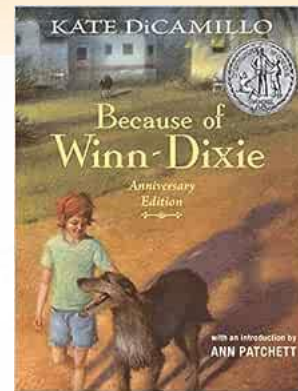
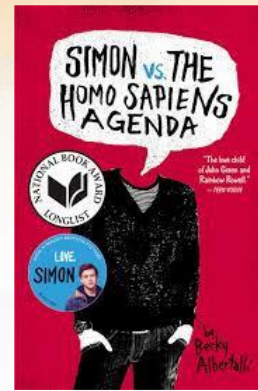
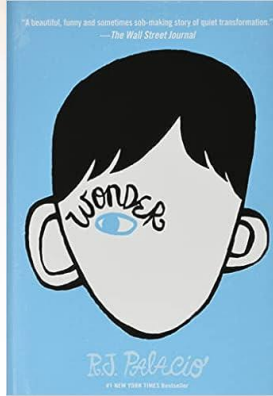
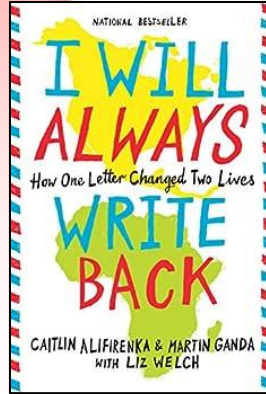
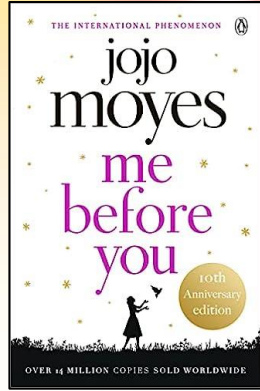
Any genre

Length
50,000 or
more


Popular Books among our students

- Me Before You / by Jojo Moyes HL810L 123,360 words
- I Will Always Write Back: How One Letter Changed Two Lives /by Martin Ganda , Caitlin Alifirenka 790L 82,879 words
- Wonder/by R. J. Palacio 790L 73,053 words
- Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda/by Becky Albertalli HL640L 60965 words
- Everything, Everything /by Nicola Yoon HL610L 47592 words
- Because of Winn/by Dixie Kate DiCamillo 670L 22123 words
- Frindle /by Andrew Clements (1998) 830L 16232 words
- Life on the Refrigerator Door/by Alice Kuipers 530L 10651 words

Popular Books among our students



Lexile(2018)

TYPICAL READER MEASURES BY GRADE		
GRADE	LEXILE READER MEASURES	
1	BR120L to 295L	
2	170L to 545L	
3	415L to 760L	
4	635L to 950L	
5	770L to 1080L	
	6	855L to 1165L
	7	925L to 1235L
	8	985L to 1295L
	9	1040L to 1350L
	10	1085L to 1400L
	11 & 12	1130L to 1440L

What Is a Lexile Level?

A popular method used by schools to measure a student reader's ability is Lexile level or a Lexile Measure. A Lexile measure is a valuable tool for teachers, parents, and students. It serves two unique functions: it is the measure of how difficult a text is OR a student's reading ability level. The Lexile Framework was developed by MetaMetrics®, an educational assessment and research team, funded originally by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Scholastic (2023) <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/reading-resources/book-selection-tips/lexile-levels-made-easy.html>

年齢	日本	オーストラリア	イギリス	アメリカ
	4月 - 3月	1月 - 12月	9月 - 8月	9月 - 8月
3-4	幼稚園	Kindergarten	Nursery	Nursery
4-5	幼稚園	Kindergarten	Reception	Pre-K
5-6	幼稚園	Prep Year	Year 1	Kindergarten
6-7	小学校 1年	Year 1	Year 2	Grade 1
7-8	小学校 2年	Year 2	Year 3	Grade 2
8-9	小学校 3年	Year 3	Year 4	Grade 3
9-10	小学校 4年	Year 4	Year 5	Grade 4
10-11	小学校 5年	Year 5	Year 6	Grade 5
11-12	小学校 6年	Year 6	Year 7	Grade 6
12-13	中学校 1年	Year 7	Year 8	Grade 7
13-14	中学校 2年	Year 8	Year 9	Grade 8
14-15	中学校 3年	Year 9	Year 10	Grade 9
15-16	高校 1年	Year 10	Year 11	Grade 10
16-17	高校 2年	Year 11	Year 12	Grade 11
17-18	高校 3年	Year 12	Year 13	Grade 12



Lexile(2018)

- When a text's measure matches a reader's measure, there is an expected **75 percent comprehension rate**.
- For example, a reader with a Lexile measure of 1000L is expected to comprehend approximately **75 percent of a 1000L book**.
- At a 75 percent comprehension rate, **readers should not be frustrated by the text's difficulty**, but should encounter new vocabulary and sentence structures that promote reading growth.

**For L2
Learners
too??**

Nation(2006)

- With a text coverage of 80% (that is, 20 out of every 100 words [1 in 5] were nonsense words), no one gained adequate comprehension.
- With a text coverage of 90%, a small minority gained adequate comprehension.
- With a text coverage of 95% (1 unknown word in 20), a few more gained adequate comprehension, but they were still a small minority.

Nation(2006)

- At 100% coverage, most gained adequate comprehension.
- ...98% text coverage (1 unknown word in 50) would be needed for most learners to gain adequate comprehension.



Carver's (1994) findings with native speakers

Carver(1994)

When the material being read is **relatively easy**, then **close to 0% of the words will be unknown**, ...when the material is relatively hard then around 2% or more of the words will be unknown, ... and when the difficulty level of the material is approximately equal to the ability level of the individual, then around 1% of the words will be unknown.

(p. 432)

Nation (2006)

- As Carver indicates, even 98% coverage does not make comprehension easy.
- Kurnia (2003), working with a non-fiction text, found that few L2 learners gained adequate comprehension with 98% coverage.

The background of the slide features a close-up, slightly blurred image of a person's hands holding an open book. A prominent red bookmark is visible on the left page. The overall color palette is warm, with shades of orange, red, and yellow, creating a soft, focused atmosphere on the act of reading.

Interpretations

- High schools in Japan use too advanced GR as a reading assignment during long vacations
- Students tend to have an unsuccessful reading experience finding numerous unknown words, which makes it hard for them to read fluently.
- They end up having negative images toward GR or even “reading a book.”

Interpretations

- Necessity of :
 - ① levelled readers
 - ② Parallel reading
 - ③ Variety of books including children's literature and YA

The background of the slide features a stack of books on the left side, with a yellow spine and a red spine visible. To the right, there is a white mug with a brown sleeve that has the word 'Starbucks' written on it in white cursive. The entire background is slightly blurred and has a soft, warm glow.

Conclusion

- GR books are great
- However, not only GR books:
 1. Levelled readers
 2. Non GR books

References

- Carver, R.P. (1994). Percentage of unknown vocabulary words in text as a function of the relative difficulty of the text: Implications for instruction. *Journal of Reading Behavior* 26(4), 413–437.
- Nation, I. (2006). How large a vocabulary is needed for reading and listening?. *Canadian modern language review*, 63(1), 59-82.

A stack of books is shown from a low angle, with the spines of several books visible. The books have various colors, including red, yellow, and white. A semi-transparent red and yellow horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image. The text "Thank you very much for coming!" is written in white on the red band, and the email address "satomishibata@kinjo-u.ac.jp" is written in black on the yellow band.

Thank you very much for coming!

satomishibata@kinjo-u.ac.jp