

# Using the Moodle Reader Module to Facilitate an Extensive Reading Program

Wayne Pennington

## Introduction

Early attempts to incorporate Extensive Reading as a teaching technique can be traced back to the early part of the twentieth century (Handschin, 1919, Hagbolt, 1925, Bond, 1926, Coleman 1930, and others). Later in the 1940s, Extensive Reading versus intensive reading became a popular area of study (Anthony, 1983, Moore, 1943). But these studies were not studies in dedicated programs for Extensive Reading; rather they were in tandem with other programs such as intensive reading, grammar studies and vocabulary building. It was not until much later, in the 1980s that Extensive Reading using graded readers began to draw much attention (Bamford, 1984).

Full-fledged Extensive Reading programs made their first appearances in the 1980s and have evolved into many different formats over the past 20 years. I have watched this evolution with much interest as I have long been an advocate of the concept of Extensive Reading. However, although I have used Extensive Reading as a supplementary part of many of my classes over the years, I have not previously had the confidence or the resources necessary to undertake a class dedicated solely to Extensive Reading. The limiting characteristics of such a program have previously deterred me from a full-scale commitment. But technology has provided a workaround. Proliferation of the personal computer, high speed internet connections and the advent of the Learning Management System (LMS) known as Moodle and especially a module for Moodle known as the Moodle Reader Module have made this full-scale commitment feasible. In this note I will describe the Extensive Reading program that I set up in the first semester of the school year 2010 using the Moodle Reader Module.

First it will be necessary to clarify what Extensive Reading is and give a description of what the Moodle Reader Module is like. One of the most commonly accepted descriptions for Extensive Reading programs was given by Richard Day and Julian Bamford (1998; 7-8). These characteristics for successful Extensive Reading programs are given as follows:

1. *Students read as much as possible*, perhaps in and definitely out of the classroom.

2. *A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available* so as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways.
3. *Students select what they want to read* and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them.
4. *The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.* These purposes are determined by the nature of the material and the interests of the student.
5. *Reading is its own reward.* There are few or no follow-up exercises after reading.
6. *Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students* in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up words makes fluent reading difficult.
7. *Reading is individual and silent,* at the student's own pace, and, outside class, done when and where the student chooses.
8. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower as students read books and other material they find easily understandable.
9. *Teachers orient students to the goals of the program, explain the methodology, keep track* of what each student reads, and guide students in getting the most out of the program.
10. *The teacher is a role model of a reader for students--an active member of the classroom reading community, demonstrating what it means to be a reader and the rewards of being a reader.*

The Moodle Reader is a module for Moodle created and maintained by Thomas Robb for the purpose of providing “quizzes on over 900 graded readers and books for young readers, so that teachers can have a simple way to assess their students' work. All quizzes are randomized with a time-limit for their completion which allows students to take the quizzes open-book, even at home, while minimizing the possibility of cheating.” The Moodle Reader is a freeware open source module and can be downloaded from Moodle.org, however, access to the quiz database is restricted to those with an account on MoodleReader.org who have permission from the owner to download quizzes.

### **My Program**

Using the Moodle Reader Module, I set up a program which allows an unlimited number of students to read a reasonable number of graded readers during a two-year

(four-semester) course of study.

## Characteristics of my Program

### Materials

The reading materials were limited to popular graded readers and specifically those for which quizzes were available through the Moodle Reader Module. Students could choose freely from among the books available at their level and they could stop reading a particular book at any time they found it to be uninteresting. In addition, they could try one book each from the next higher and next lower levels.

### Reader Levels

We started out with Levels 0 through 9 as shown in the chart below. We presently have added a tenth level and many more publishers (Appendix 1). Thanks to the many quiz contributors, the Moodle Reader quiz database keeps growing and as it does, so does our library.

**Level Chart for April 2010**

Kyoai Extensive Reading Program			Level Chart	
Level 0	Penguin Readers Easystarts	Penguin Youth Readers Level 1 & 2		Cengage Foundation Series-Levels 1,2,3
Level 1	Penguin Active Readers – Easystarts	Penguin Youth Readers Level 3 & 4	Macmillan Starter	Cengage Foundation Series- Levels 4 & 5
Level 2	Penguin Readers Level 1		Macmillan Beginner	Cengage Foundation Series-Levels 6 & 7
Level 3	Penguin Readers Level 2	Oxford Bookworms Starter		Cambridge Starter
Level 4		Oxford Bookworms Stage 1		Cambridge Level 1
Level 5	Penguin Readers Level 3	Oxford Bookworms Stage 2	Macmillan Elementary	Cambridge Level 2
	Penguin Active Readers - Level 3			
Level 6		Oxford Bookworms Stage 3		
Level 7	Penguin Readers Level 4	Oxford Bookworms Stage 4	Macmillan Pre-Int.	Cambridge Level 3
Level 8	Penguin Readers Level 5	Oxford Bookworms Stage 5		
Level 9		Oxford Bookworms Stage 6		

### Initial Reading Levels

In order to get the students reading as soon as possible, initial reading levels were

set by the instructor. These were only initial and temporary in nature and students were permitted to change their levels either up or down, at any time during the course. They could also request a “freeze of levels which entails that they not get promoted until they request it.

- Student’s initial reading levels were set by the teacher based on individual TOEIC scores (in conjunction with their listening scores.)

Reading score	ER Level
0-49	Level 0
50-99	Level 1
100-149	Level 2
150-199	Level 3
200-249	Level 4
250-	Level 5
Note: If your listening score is more than 100 points higher than your reading score then you can add 1 level to the above.	

### Points and scheduling

- Points were given for each book.
  - Higher levels got more points

Levels	Points/book
Levels 0, 1	2.8
Levels 2-4	3.33
Levels 5-7	4.11
Levels 8-9	5.38

- The program allowed students to take a test every 3 days (adjustable)
- In order to get a perfect score for the course, upper level students needed to read at least one book a week, lower level students needed to read more, one every three or four days.

### The Quizzes

The Moodle Reader quiz database contains questions of the following types: True and False T/F, Multiple Choice M/C and ordering. When a student requests a quiz, the

Reader Module randomly generates a ten question quiz from the questions in the database. In this way, no two quizzes are exactly the same. The quizzes are available on-line 24/7 to any student with internet access and an account on Pennington Moodle.

A student may take only one quiz on any one book. Passed quizzes get the full mark. Failed quizzes get no points and the student has to wait 3 days to take the next quiz. The Passing mark for a quiz is 60. (Adjustable) and each quiz has a timer which limits the quiz taking time to 15 minutes. (Adjustable)

### Results

I had two classes, Extensive Reading 1 and three. Both classes were conducted identically. ER1 consisted of 34 students, freshmen and above, whereas ER3 consisted of 46 students, second year and above. The completion rate for ER1 was 79% and for ER4 was 67%. Student grades were as follows: ER1: S=10; A=9; B=4; C=3; D=2; F=5; ER3: S=14; A=6; B=4; C=6; D=12; F=3. (Grading Scale: S=90-100; A=80-89; B=70-79; C=60-69; D=below 59; F=insufficient attendance.)

An evaluation of the program based on the 1998 criteria of Day and Bamford revealed the following:

#### Checklist based on Day and Bamford

✓	1. <i>Students read as much as possible</i>
✓	2. <i>A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available</i>
✓	3. <i>Students select what they want to read and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them.</i>
✗	4. <i>The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.</i>
✗	5. <i>Reading is its own reward. There are few or no follow-up exercises after reading.</i>
✓	6. <i>Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar.</i>
✓	7. <i>Reading is individual and silent, at the student's own pace, and, outside class, done when and where the student chooses.</i>
?	8. <i>Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower as students read books and other material they find easily understandable.</i>
✓	9. <i>Teachers orient students to the goals of the program, explain the methodology,</i>
✓	9. <i>Teachers keep track of what each student reads, and guide students in getting the most out of the program.</i>
✓	10. <i>The teacher is a role model of a reader for students</i>
Legend: ✓ accomplished well, ✓ partially accomplished, ✗ not at all, ? not evaluated	

1. *Students read as much as possible, perhaps in and definitely out of the classroom.*

Students at all levels were required to read “extensively,” at least one book per week, to get the full mark for the class. To pass the course, students had to read 60% of the total requirement.

2. *A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available so as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways.*

In our program, only graded materials were used as reading materials. And although there was great variety in types of books made available to students, there was not a great variety in the types of reading materials available for the students.

3. *Students select what they want to read and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them.*

Students had complete freedom to select what they wanted to read from among whatever books were available at their levels. And they always have the freedom to stop reading an uninteresting book at any time.

4. *The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding. These purposes are determined by the nature of the material and the interests of the student.*

Although I hope that my students are getting great pleasure, gaining information and general understanding from their reading, I fear that most of them are reading for other purposes. The most likely possibilities are for getting credit for the class or improvement of their reading ability for the sake of getting a higher reading score on the TOEIC test.

5. *Reading is its own reward. There are few or no follow-up exercises after reading.*

I’m afraid that this is also difficult to maintain in our present setting. Unfortunately it is necessary to confirm whether or not the students have actually read their books and understood them.

6. *Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up words makes fluent reading difficult.*

The graded readers are well controlled in these areas and there is very little need to look up words in the dictionary.

7. *Reading is individual and silent, at the student's own pace, and, outside class, done when and where the student chooses.*

Yes, these criteria were adhered to strictly. Furthermore, most class time was also allocated to individual and silent reading.

8. *Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower as students read books and other material they find easily understandable.*

Although one may assume that as students read more and more their reading speed will automatically increase. However, in these classes there was no attempt to measure reading speed.

9. *Teachers orient students to the goals of the program, explain the methodology, keep track of what each student reads, and guide students in getting the most out of the program.*

Yes, these were kept very well although keeping track of what the students read was done by the Moodle Reader rather than by the teacher.

10. *The teacher is a role model of a reader for students--an active member of the classroom reading community, demonstrating what it means to be a reader and the rewards of being a reader.*

As much as possible the teacher read with the students but much of the class time was needed to resolve problems encountered by the students. These problems will be discussed in the next section.

### **Problems encountered**

A few minor problems were encountered in the implementation of this program. Although we have more than 600 graded readers in our library not all of them have tests in the Moodle Reader Module. Furthermore, we do not have books for many of the tests which are available in the Moodle Reader Module. Much of the first semester was spent in ordering new books and re-cataloging our old books. I had not anticipated that so many of our students would be at level 4 and level 5 so there was a temporary shortage of materials at these levels. However, we now have sufficient numbers of books at all levels.

Another problem I encountered was with my lack of familiarity with the Moodle Reader Module itself. It took several attempts to fully implement all of the features the

Moodle Reader was capable of performing. I had some temporary difficulty with reassigning new levels to the students and to the books themselves. There were also some quizzes that did not open properly. That is, they did not open at all or in some cases the quizzes' questions were wrong. These were immediately dealt with by the Moodle Reader Module owner and administrator, Thomas Robb. I had to learn how to delete old quizzes and import new ones and in some cases repair the ones with very simple problems.

There was an occasional glitch in the system such as a freeze-up of the computer or the browser which had to be dealt with. In this case the computer very often marked a quiz as done when the quiz had not yet opened in the browser. This required deleting quiz attempts and resetting the module so that the student could finally open the quiz.

Lastly, there were student problems to deal with. Many students read books at the wrong level; some read books with the correct title but published by a different publisher and therefore were at the wrong level. Others simply read books which did not have a quiz in the Moodle Reader.

However, even considering all of these minor difficulties, the program proceeded well and the second semester got off to a much smoother start.

## **Conclusion**

Although there were a few minor problems to be dealt with during the course of the program, this first attempt at a full-fledged Extensive Reading program using the Moodle Reader Module was a complete success. Comparing this program with the criteria set out by Day and Bamford, this program was able to achieve the following goals: students were able to read as much as possible in the course of the program, the reading materials were well within the reader's grammatical and vocabulary competence, the material was varied in subject matter and character, students were able to choose which books they would read, students were not compelled to finish uninteresting materials, reading was done individually and silently, and the teacher gave students full orientation into the goals of the program explaining the ideas and methodology. And the Moodle Reader kept careful records of what had been read and the results of the quizzes on that reading material. In total, this program fulfilled more than 80% of the original criteria and can be considered an effective Extensive Reading program. Additionally, students indicated that they enjoyed books that they read and were able to complete successfully. One final point, 30 of the 34 students from ER1 continued to ER2, and 31 of the 46 students from ER3 continued to ER4. This can be construed as further indication of student interest.



## References

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## Appendix

Level Chart for Fall 2010

<b>Level 0</b>	Penguin Readers-Easystarts; Penguin Young Readers-Level 1 & 2; Sunshine Readers-Levels 1, 2 & 3; Cengage Foundation Series-Levels 1,2,3
<b>Level 1</b>	Penguin Young Readers-Level 3 & 4; Penguin Active Readers-Easystarts; Sunshine Readers Levels 4 & 5; Macmillan-Starter; Cengage Foundation Series-Levels 4 & 5
<b>Level 2</b>	Penguin Readers-Level 1; Penguin Active Readers-Level 1; Scholastic Hello-Level 2; Macmillan-Beginner; Cengage Foundation Series-Levels 6 & 7; Cengage Footprints-800; Magic Treehouse Level 2
<b>Level 3</b>	Penguin Readers-Level 2; Penguin Active Readers-Level 2; Oxford (ALL)-Starter; Macmillan New Wave-Level 2; Step into Reading-Level 4; Puffin-Level 3; Cengage Footprints-1000; Cambridge-Starter; Compass Classics-Level 1; Zack Files-Level 3; A-Z Mysteries-Level 3; Marvin-Level 3; Helbling-Level 1; Yohan Ladder-Level 1; Youth Lit-Level 3
<b>Level 4</b>	Oxford (ALL) Stage 1; Macmillan New Wave Level 3; Step into Reading Level 5; Cengage Footprints 1300; Cambridge Level 1; Compass Classics Level 2; Teen Readers Level 1; Easy Reading A; Helbling Level 2; Yohan Ladder Level 2; Youth Lit Level 4
<b>Level 5</b>	Oxford (ALL)-Stage 3; Cengage Page Turners-Level 8; Cengage Footprints-1900; Compass Classics-Level 4; Teen Readers-Level 3; Easy Reading-B; Helbling-Level 4; Yohan Ladder-Level 4;
<b>Level 6</b>	Oxford (ALL)-Stage 3; Cengage Page Turners-Level 8; Cengage Footprints-1900; Compass Classics-Level 4; Teen Readers-Level 3; Easy Reading-B; Helbling -Level 4; Yohan Ladder-Level 4;
<b>Level 7</b>	Penguin Readers-Level 4; Oxford (ALL)-Stage 4; Macmillan-Pre-Intermediate; New Wave-Level 5; Cambridge-Level 3; Compass Classics-Level 5; Youth Lit-Babysitters-Blyton-Blume; Easy Reading-C; Youth Lit-Level 7
<b>Level 8</b>	Penguin Readers-Level 5; Oxford (ALL)-Stage 5; Cengage Footprints-2200/2600; Compass Classics-Level 6; Youth Lit-Hardy Boys-Nancy Drew; Youth Lit-Level 8
<b>Level 9</b>	Oxford (ALL)-Stage 6; Cengage Footprints-3000; Cambridge-Level 6; Youth Lit Level 9
<b>Level 10</b>	Youth Lit - Level 10

## 要旨

### ムードルリーダーモジュールによる多読プログラム

ペニンントン・ウェイン

最近の英語プログラムには多読を取り入れたプログラムが増えてきましたが、多読プログラムを設置して管理するのに多くの時間を必要とすることが、その普及の妨げとなっています。ムードルリーダーモジュールを用いると多読プログラムの管理の負担が軽減され、かなり大きなグループでプログラムを実施することが可能になります。このノートでは2010年度の前期に本校で始まった多読プログラムを説明します。このプログラムは **Richard Day** と **Julian Bamford** が1998年に発表した、効果的な多読プログラムのガイドラインをベースにしたものです。**Thomas Robb** が作った **Moodle Reader Module** を使用し、一人の教員が2クラス、80名の学生の日常的な管理を行うことができました。このノートで、そのプログラムの詳細を述べるとともにプログラムの良い点と問題点を説明します。