# Who killed Extensive Reading?

## ——Round up the usual suspects——

Mark BRIERLEY

This paper explores William Grabe's question "Why isn't everyone doing it?" addressed to the Extensive Reading World Congress in Kyoto, September 2011. With the assumption that reading extensively has been a traditional mainstay of foreign language learning, rather than a recent innovation, this paper begins a search for the reasons why extensive reading is not an indispensible part of every language programme.

## 1. Introduction

Whether in the first language or a second language, reading extensively has been considered a *sine qua non* for attaining language proficiency, at least since the widespread availability of printed texts in the late middle ages. In the first language, literacy is an unquestioned goal of education, and reading is both condition for, and consequence of literacy. Children who read more do better in school, and areas with few books and libraries have low academic achievements. For the convert, Extensive Reading is an obvious part of a language learner's diet; as obvious and important as doing sums for students of arithmetic, practicing scales to a musician, or driving a car to a learner driver.

However, in the latter half of the twentieth century, reading appears to have been falling from foreign language curricula. Where reading courses appear, they often emphasize intensive reading and a skills-based approach, and extensive reading may even be explicitly excluded from their curricula.

This paper explores language teaching, the study of linguistics and literature for a cause of the decline.

## 2. The fall and rise of Extensive Reading

Increasing numbers of publishers are producing series of graded readers, tailored to learners with limited sight vocabularies and suitable for comprehensible input. Extensive reading programmes are appearing at every level of Education in Japan, and libraries of graded readers

are increasing and growing, both within conventional school or university libraries and in Foreign Language resource centres or private collections directly controlled by teachers.

The term "Extensive Reading" was first mentioned by Harold Palmer in 1917 (cited in Bamford & Day, 1997) in contrast to the Intensive Reading of short texts dense with unfamiliar vocabulary and complex grammar. In the 1920s, Michael West began producing graded readers—series of books specifically written within the vocabulary range of L2 (second or foreign language) learners at various levels (Bowler & Parminter, 2011).

However, we should probably see the term Extensive Reading as a neologism; language learners were certainly reading before this, as we see from Natsume Soseki's advice (1906)「辞書を引かないで無茶苦茶に英書を沢山読むがよい」 "read as much as you can whatever English you can find, without using a dictionary" (author's translation). Soseki was probably not the first, and certainly not the last person to give this advice, and learners of foreign language have long been advised to read children's books.

That this advice was necessary, and that Palmer felt the need for giving a name to ER suggests that reading has not always been practiced, as we see from this observation by Dupuy, Tse and Cook: "For the most part, students have only been exposed to intensive reading of short excerpts or passages in their ESL classes and tend to believe that this is the only way to read in a second language" (1996, p. 10).

Stephen Krashen (2004) gives two possible reasons why teachers choose a skills-based approach over comprehensible input, which would also explain why extensive reading is not being adopted. These are the Ruthless Capitalist Argument: that researchers have vested financial interests in publishing text books dedicated to explicit teaching of discrete skills; and the Grammar-lover Argument: that researchers find grammar fascinating, and are often unaware that this puts them in a tiny minority to which most language students do not belong.

Grabe (2011) gives nine reasons why ER is not being done by every teacher:

1. Financial costs and perceptions with extensive reading being a "time" cost

There are not enough books in the library, not enough good reading materials to choose from, not enough time for students to read in class, and not enough time for advocates to persuade colleagues and administrators of the importance of ER.

2. The perception that extensive reading is not important

ER entails practice in fluent reading, which may not help in reading tests where passages are short and there is not specific time constraint for reading.

3. A lack of awareness of the importance of implicit learning for reading development.

4. L2 curricula are not designed to produce advanced L2 readers

L2 curricula usually focus on grammatical knowledge, vocabulary learning or communicative competence. Reading is not a goal, but just a means to support these other goals.

5. Problems with research on extensive reading

Research is limited and not well correlated. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research

privileges explicit learning rather than implicit learning.

6. Problems with implementation of extensive reading

It is difficult to maintain accountability for students actually reading the amount claimed.

7. Problems with consistent research methodologies for ER studies

8. Lack of teacher support

9. Problems with effective teacher development and teacher training

      Some of these are practical, logistic issues. The rest can be divided into three broad areas:

1. Research

There is insufficient research on ER, both in quantity and quality. In terms of proving that ER is an effective methodology for language learning, the jury is still out. It is relatively straightforward to test whether explicit teaching has led to a gain in discrete knowledge or ability. Indeed, most language tests set out to measure discrete language items and skills. On the other hand, the kind of holistic gains suggested by ER advocates are more difficult to measure, and it is more difficult to isolate ER from other language activities that learners inevitably engage in. This may contribute to the problems with existing research and the lack of research on ER, discouraging scholars from researching ER.

2. Books

Providing a wide range of genres at different levels is a logistical problem. The quality of books for ER, on the other hand, may affect the perceptions of teachers of ER as a whole. If teachers and curriculum developers have a low perception of graded readers, then a necessary condition for graded reading will not be met.

3. Goals

Recent trends towards communicative teaching seem to exclude reading, and often ER does not satisfy the short-term goals of language courses, which lack the long-term sustained reading that advocates of ER believe is necessary for results. As suggested above, language tests seek to measure discrete language items, and any courses aimed at language tests may be more efficient if those discrete language items are taught explicitly, along with test-taking strategies. According to Grabe (2011), even "when reading is the explicitly stated goal, the goal is often slow accurate reading of short texts for basic comprehension. The assumption is that fluent reading will develop later, on its own."

      These three points are underpinned by views of language, and specifically of the language-learning process. We will next explore where these views of language come from.

## 3. The study of English

For at least a century, "English" as an academic subject has been divided into the study of language and literature. In an academic context, where much formal language teaching takes place, those who are "good" at English are likely to study more, and studying more will lead

them to higher levels of education. Put the other way around, those who are suited to higher levels of education will be considered "good" at English. Especially within a university context, English teachers are likely to have studied either linguistics or literature for several years, so it may be reasonable to consider our question from the perspectives of literature and linguistics, as these are the likely fields of those in charge of curricula and classrooms.

## 4. English Literature

"For some readers, the very word literature brings to mind dusty, difficult books stacked in a rarely frequented corner of the library. Typically, in an EFL/ESL context, literature is associated with advanced university students or other high level adults" (Brown, 2004).

As Krashen and Terrell point out in *The Natural Approach* (1984), the formal teaching of foreign language is a relatively recent concept. Language proficiency has traditionally been picked up through language use. This has either been aural, through studying or working with speakers of other languages, or through literature. Literature in Europe has been studied since at least medieval times, for example in Dante's analysis of poetry in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* written at the beginning of the 14th Century (1996). The University of Edinburgh claims the oldest department of English literature in the world with courses in "rhetoric and belles lettres" from the middle of the 18th Century.

According to Terry Eagleton (1983), literature studies in England began in earnest in the nineteenth century, first in Mechanics' Institutes, working men's colleges and lecture circuits, and later in universities, but then first as a subject suitable for women. Eagleton cites Matthew Arnold's aim of Hellenizing the middle classes, no longer with the classics, but with home-made literature. He cites a study of English literature in 1891 that the people "need political culture, instruction, that is to say, in what pertains to their relation to the state, to their duties as citizens" (p. 25).

In an overview of twentieth century literary theory, Eagleton describes the focus of New Criticism on poetry, rather than the Great Novels dealt with from the nineteenth century. I.A. Richards claimed poetry "is capable of saving us; it is a perfectly possible means of overcoming chaos" (cited in Eagleton, 1983: 45) referring to the upheaval of scientific discovery and industrial society on the human psyche. Poetry, Eagleton somewhat cynically suggests, appealed to academics as it was much easier to cover a brief poem with a large class of students than to cover an entire novel. Richards later collaborated with C.K. Ogden to develop Basic English, with an 850-word vocabulary and the noble aim of making the English language more accessible to non-native speakers. His emphasis on poetry and F.R. Leavis's Close Reading, on the other hand, if taken into the foreign language context are immediately at odds with the fluent reading of narrative that is a mainstay of ER.

Eagleton also highlights a trend away from studying the meaning and content of literature, heralded by Formalism, which was "essentially the application of linguistics to the

study of literature; and because the linguistics in question were of a formal kind, concerned with the structures of language rather than with what one might actually say, the Formalists passed over the analysis of literary 'content' (where one might always be tempted into psychology or sociology) for the study of literary form." (1983: 3) Eagleton suggests that it was convenient for the New Criticism from the 1930s to 1960s to look at literature without considering content, as it allowed intellectuals to avoid risking their careers by delving into politics during the Cold War.

## 5. The Japanese university context

We may, of course, be looking in the wrong place to answer our question. Rather than the Anglophonic study of Literature, English as a Foreign Language is mostly studied outside the Anglosphere where the traditions within the fields of literature and linguistics are different. The explicit teaching of English Literature also has a long history in the colonies of the British Empire, where it was taught as a way of extolling the virtues of British culture, to be held up as a beacon to guide the natives. Texts with high morality were considered suitable for this goal and we can view English literature as a kind of cultural imperialism. We may hypothesize that countries took a dim view of this subject as they became independent and no longer wanted to read what their former masters had to say. Japan, of course, has never been a colony, and later in this paper we will explore the history of English in this country.

In a foreign language context, contrary to Formalism or the New Criticism, the point of studying foreign literature may be precisely to study the content, and more generally the culture from which it comes. In this case, while the language itself could, and should be a vehicle, in fact the goal can be met more quickly and effectively by reading a translation. It is something of a cliché to mention students of English literature who have never read a book in English. I recently saw a student reading a Japanese version of Wuthering Heights, because he had to write a paper on it. I asked how much he read in English and he said perhaps two books a year. This is unlikely to surprise anyone with experience of foreign literature education in any country, but it should be a shock that a student of English literature is only reading eight books in that language over a four-year university career.

Brierley and Ruzicka (2006) found in a survey of 270 students from various faculties that almost half had not read a whole book in English in at least six years of education before entering the University. This survey included a small group of English linguistics and English literature majors (around 27), who had read more, although even within this group, around 30% had not read a book in English before joining the university. The population as a whole seemed ambivalent to reading in English, 30% expressing dislike or strong dislike, 28% expressing liking or strongly liking reading, and 42% neither liking nor disliking it. The English majors were more enthusiastic; even so, only half (54%) of this small sample of students who had devoted four years of their lives to the study of English expressed a liking

for reading it, while a third were on the fence and 12% expressed some degree of disliking.

## 6. Linguistics

English Linguistics seems to be a more recent field than literature. Both the University of Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania claim to have the oldest linguistics department in the United States, giving the mid-1930s and 1947 respectively. Either date is two centuries later than 1740, when the University of Pennsylvania was founded. The School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London claims the oldest linguistics department of any British University in 1916.

From a western perspective, the history of linguistics goes back to Sanskrit scholars of the 8th Century BC. Panini (c. 520 – 460 BC) wrote 4,000 rules in a generative grammar of Sanskrit. Three centuries later Patanjali (c. 150 BC) was still actively criticizing Panini. Among the Greeks, Apollonius Dyscolus wrote more than thirty treatises, including works on syntax, semantics, morphology, prosody, orthography, and dialectology. Among the Romans, Aelius Donatus (4th Century) produced *Ars Grammatica,* a Latin grammar that was used in schools through the Middle Ages, when Latin was the dominant language of letters. Dante also covers some linguistic ideas in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, including dialectology and making observations about the evolution of spoken languages. The essay also extols the virtues of vernacular languages over Latin.

Sir William Jones (1746–1794) discovered the single family of Indo-European languages, starting Comparative Linguistics. In the European tradition, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) began modern structural linguistics, searching for synchronic explanations of language form, rather than looking for answers in the history of language. In the twentieth century, Edward Sapir (1884–1939) began American Structural Linguistics within the field of Anthropology, partly driven by the work of missionaries grappling with different cultures and languages. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis holds that languages affect human cognition, and comes from a perspective that languages are fundamentally different to each other, and are products of the culture from which they come: "No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached." (Edward Sapir, 1929). This echoed Wilhelm von Humboldt, who said in 1820: "The diversity of languages is not a diversity of signs and sounds but a diversity of views of the world." These ideas were challenged by the ideas of Noam Chomsky, who hypothesised a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) and Universal Grammar (UG), suggesting a view of language as a system independent of culture and immune to content. His transformational models of linguistics are in turn challenged by M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

While different views of language compete in academia and within the classroom, we

can also try to accept all of them as alternative views of the same complex reality. Scott Thornbury (2009) highlights seven ways of looking at grammar: as rules; as structures; as mathematics; as algorithms; as texture; as collocation and as an emergent phenomenon. We can take a cognitive view of language, deciding it is the way it is because of the way we think; we can take a functional view, assuming that language is the way it is because of what it has to do; or we can take an emergent view, and believe that language is the way it is because of the way it has been used.

## 7. Fashions in LA

As we can see above in the disagreement as to whether the mid-1930s came before 1947, the field of linguistics is not without contentions. Within the English-speaking world, The United States has a different tradition to Britain, which in turn is different to continental Europe. An interesting scene is now set for the field of Language Acquisition (LA) as varying models of acquisition vie for dominance in academic discussions, as brain research increasingly reveals how language is processed, and as computers become better equipped to investigate ever larger corpora of language.

However, Grabe (2011) notes with despair that there was only one reference to reading in hundreds of pages of a recent volume on Second Language Acquisition. As far as the field of language acquisition is concerned, "we don't exist"; not just Extensive Reading but any kind of reading. Whether intensive or extensive, reading is evidently not very interesting.

Along with the ebb and flow of linguistic models, there is a cycle of language teaching methodologies as educators try one thing, find it doesn't work so well, discredit it, then try something else, which in turn will inevitably be found to be lacking. Over the 20th century, this swung from the Direct Approach towards Audio-lingualism, then back to the Natural Approach, the Communicative Method and Task Based Learning. In very crude terms, and making no apologies for generalizing what varies between teachers and educational establishments and among countries, there is a swing between direct teaching: attempting to replicate the way languages are traditionally picked up; and indirect teaching: where students are explicitly taught about the language. In other words, the pendulum is going back and forth between teaching *in* the language and teaching *of* the language. David Hill (2011) predicts a swing back towards a focus on texts, as the Communicative Method has failed to deliver what it promised.

Grammar translation was prevalent in the 18th and 19th Century, when the prescribed grammar of English was often based on Latin grammar. Krashen and Terrell (1983) describe "traditional" language teaching having taken place before that, whereby languages are "picked up" through use. Any kind of formal language teaching is, in this definition, non-traditional. The Direct Method developed in Germany and France around 1900. This approach used the

target language only, and employed realia so that students were engaged in authentic language activities. Audio-lingualism became popular in the US from the 1940s, inspired by a chronic lack of military and diplomatic personnel with foreign language skills during World War II. The approach involved explicit teaching of grammar, followed by extensive drilling. In arguing against Audio-lingualism, and B.F. Skinner's behaviourism that was its theoretical foundation, Chomsky opined: "Language is not a habit structure. Ordinary linguistic behaviour characteristically involves innovation, formation of new sentences and patterns in accordance with rules of great abstractness and intricacy" (1966: 153).

## 8. English in Japan

In Japan, regular contact with Europeans began in 1673 with the establishment of a Dutch trading post at Dejima. In 1808 the Shogunate began explicit policies to translate European geographical works, enlisting Baba Sanjuro (1787-1822) and other Japanese Dutch scholars. In the same year, a British ship had entered a Japanese port disguised as a Dutch ship, highlighting the need to study, not just Dutch, but other European languages such as English, French and Russian. An official translation office was opened in 1811 and in 1854 the Institute for Western Learning *Yogakusho* 洋学所 began. During this period, because contact with foreigners was banned, access to European culture was primarily through books (Koscielecki, 2000).

Of course the study of foreign language in Japan is much older. The Japanese writing systems originated from China, and Chinese texts have been coming into Japan since then. According to Fisher, "'traditional' Japanese culture was, uniquely, founded upon reading as politics, religion and vocabulary were absorbed, not through the medium of spoken language, but through Chinese texts" (2003: 123). Hino (1988) traces the dominant *yaku-doku* (grammar translation) 訳読 back to the study of Chinese of the Heian period [794-1192]. In this methodology, the purpose of reading is to absorb information, then translate it into Japanese, with the ultimate aim that such information may be used by the wider Japanese population. Language is not a means of communication, but a vehicle for information, travelling in one direction from the foreign country into Japan. In this way, the reading of Chinese classical writings has influenced the Japanese approach to the study of various subjects, including languages, and is still in evidence in the teaching of English into the 21st Century.

From the middle of the 19th Century, *wakon yosai* 和魂洋才 (Japanese spirit and Western technology) came to the fore in contrast to the older adage of *wakonkansai* 和魂漢才 (Japanese spirit and Chinese technology). Translation was regulated by government institutions and decrees, especially focusing on importing scientific, technological and military information. The 製錬所 translation workshops began among the Satsuma han in 1851 and the Saga han in 1852, with students sent to Europe and America from the 1860s. One of these was Yukichi Fukuzawa, who observed in 1899 that "As certain as day, English was to be the

most useful language of the future." (cited in Stanlaw, 1992) Fukuzawa also "realized that a man would have to be able to read and converse in English to be recognized as a scholar in Western subjects."

In 1865 the first English language school was established, and in 1875 it was felt that British experts were needed by the Military Training Centre, to meet "in all spheres the needs of public bodies and private firms" by "learning from England". In the same year, the first School of Commerce was set up with the help of the American, Professor Whitney. At this early stage in the 1870s and 1880s, rather than English being taught, English was the medium for teaching, at *Yobiko* 予備門 and middle high schools, and at Kaisei gakko 開成学校 Now Tokyo Daigaku, where all subjects were taught in a foreign language by foreign teachers.

Mori Arinori, the first Minister of Education went even further, proposing that English become the national language, claiming: "Our meagre language, which can never be of any use outside of our islands, is doomed to yield to the domination of the English tongue, especially when the power of steam and electricity shall have pervaded the land." This view of the importance of English went in to the early 20$^{th}$ century and in 1931, lexicographer Sanki Ichikawa claimed "The influence of foreign languages—especially English—on Japanese is of such importance that probably not only words and expressions will continue to be borrowed in greater numbers, but even the structure and grammar of the Japanese language will be considerably modified."

Even into the 1970s and 1980s, with the rapid growth of Japanese business corporations overseas, English was not so much considered as a tool for international communication, and notions of "native" and "non-native" speakers were irrelevant; the purpose was to "collect and analyze written information about worldwide technological and economic developments relevant to their companies' business" (Holden, 1990, cited in Koscielecki, 2000). "In Japan, where knowledge and information are regarded as natural resources or raw material, English possesses a unique role as a vehicle or mediator of such resources" (Maher, 1986, cited in Koscielecki, 2000).

Literature seems to play little part in this story, although we can imagine scholars carefully reading English books for clues about the culture they come from. We can perhaps put a starting date on the explicit study of English literature in Japan at 1900, when Natsume Soseki was sent to London as Japan's first English literary scholar. The English Literary Society of Japan (ELSJ) was founded in 1917 by Sanki Ichikawa, who also worked with Harold Palmer, founder of the Institute for Research in English Teaching (1923), now the Institute for Research in Language Teaching, which has shaped English teaching in Japan. Palmer continued the work of Michael West developing more graded readers in Japan from 1932.

It is natural that an important goal of the ELSJ and its members is to translate English works into Japanese, for wider consumption of the contents. In the historical perspective introduced above, it seems that Japan has a voracious appetite for information on foreign

cultures, but at the same time a requirement for the kinds of texts that will be very challenging for the average student, and a methodical and meticulous approach that will deny fluency. A fuller consideration of the status of ER in Japan requires a deeper analysis of Japanese literary theory that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this brief exploration.

## 9. Why isn't everyone doing it?

Below are three possible reasons why teachers do not do ER, from the perspectives of Literature and Linguistics.

### 9.1. Marginalization of Literature

While balanced study is important, the real world is filled with tough choices, and the current climate is one where education must deliver tangible goals. A split into Linguistics and Literature makes possible, perhaps inevitable, a choice between the two, and if a choice must be made between Linguistics and Literature, Linguistics is likely to be chosen. Ostensibly, Linguistics teaches how language works, and provides learners with the tools necessary to use the language. Literature, on the other hand, appears to be the study of books by dead foreigners, and is therefore much less urgent. In fact, exactly the opposite may be the case, and if a broad view is taken of literature with a small "l", language learner literature is included and implicit study of language is invoked, the study of literature may lead to much greater proficiency gains in language use than simply studying arcane features of language, likely in the students' first language due to the complexity of Linguistics. Better still, of course is some balance of the two.

### 9.2. Language as code

Within Linguistics, the study of language has seen a shift from the context of culture and the history and evolution of words to a search for synchronic universals, and the perception of language as code. Already the study of linguistics requires the student to look not so much at meanings, but at how those meanings are produced. The view of language as code takes this one step further and suggests that the meanings are irrelevant to understanding of how language works. ER, on the other hand, requires that we focus on meaning and content, engaging in stories and becoming involved in the world within the words, and not take too much notice of the words themselves or the grammar that links them.

### 9.3. Graded readers are not Literature

While the field of Literature is being challenged by Linguistics, the study of Literature itself may not lend itself to Extensive Reading. Even when Literature is studied, it is not limited to books; poetry and movies have become English Literature texts, where there is little scope for Extensive Reading. Even when lengthy narrative texts are chosen, they are likely to be exemplary works, targeted at native readers, from the short list of Literature with a capital "L". These are likely to be difficult, both in terms of content and language. Eagleton (1983) cites Roman Jakobson; that literature is "organised violence committed on ordinary speech" (p 4).

This suggests a conflict with the teaching of a language, where ordinary speech is the target of learning rather than of abuse. For students of English as a foreign language, with small vocabularies and even smaller sight vocabularies, any study of such texts is likely to be painstakingly slow and reading will be far from extensive.

Graded Readers are unlikely to warrant the capital "L" of Literature, and may not even be considered as literature with a small "l". These are exactly the kinds of books that students must read, in large quantities, if ER is to deliver the gains in fluency and acquisition that it promises. But while for some language students, reading books is neglected in favour of teaching about language, teachers who do expose their students to books may not feel the kinds of simplified books that are accessible to their students are worthy, compared with so-called authentic literature. The distinction between graded readers and "authentic" literature, and the implication that graded readers are not authentic is widespread. Brierley (2010) shows feedback from some teachers calling for students to get more credit for reading more difficult books, or academic papers. Students and teachers have questioned some starter-level graded reader series: "But, they're only comics". Roger Ebert's blog post (2011) is an example of a native speaker horrified by an adaptation of *the Great Gatsby*. This fits in with Eagleton's suggestion that Literature is a kind of new religion; its texts are sacraments and performing any changes amounts to blasphemy or defamation.

This designation of graded readers as inauthentic seems flawed. If "authentic" means "written for a specific audience", then all writing is authentic. If grading makes a piece of writing inauthentic, then we should consider that all published writing is to some extent graded. All writing is written at some level of difficulty or carefully edited as authors and editors chose and revise vocabulary and grammar to set the text to satisfy a particular audience, and different media and genres are characterized by different levels of difficulty. Of course children's literature has long been written within a limited linguistic range; are we to question the authenticity of *Alice in Wonderland* or the stories of Dr. Seuss?

There is a long history of revised writing and many works that are considered "original" are in fact revised editions. According to Bob Owens, in 18$^{th}$ century Britain, when the English novel was born, simplified versions of texts were routinely produced for adults with varying levels of literacy (Bragg, 2011). Abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass wrote three different versions of his autobiography between 1845 and 1881, each time at a different level for a different audience. Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* were all originally written for adult audiences but have since become staples of children's literature.

Perhaps the problem is not so much whether a book is "authentic", but just a prejudice against language learners who are not considered a worthy audience. The important question is not whether a book is real or authentic but whether it is good or not. Certainly many graded readers are unfavourably appraised by students, although many are excellent and highly rated.

Prejudices about what is, and what is not, literature are not limited to graded readers. When John Steinbeck won the Nobel prize in 1962, the New York Times said this: "The Swedes have made a serious error by giving the prize to a writer whose limited talent is in his best books watered down by 10th-rate philosophizing." In his acceptance speech in Stockholm, Steinbeck replied to these critics: "Literature is not a game for the cloistered elect. Literature is as old as speech. It grew out of human need for it and it has not changed except to become more needed."

## 10. Conclusion

If we are to believe the intuitive simplicity of Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, then provided the content is at a suitable level and of interest to the reader, any teaching of any content in the English medium will yield gains in language proficiency. While the field of Second Language Acquisition seems to sit within the field of Linguistics, the study of language learning is perhaps more at home in sociology or psychology than in literature or linguistics, or indeed in any subject where a teacher can use the target language to engage the students.

The challenge remains to produce literature for students. Here I use the word "literature" in its broadest sense although some of these works should deserve a capital "L", whether now or in the future. As the population of second language English speakers already outnumbers native speakers, hopefully literature studies can continue to reach out beyond privileging elites, and join the battle for English literacy beyond native speakers.

If an answer can be given to the question in the title, it is perhaps that nobody killed ER, it has just been neglected in favour of newer, sexier, more interesting things than simply getting students to read.

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(Associate Professor, School of General Education, Shinshu Univercity)