A Case Study of the Impact of Online Extensive Reading on the L2 Reading Motivation, Habits, and Linguistic Abilities of Advanced L2 English Learners

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Abstract

This mixed-methods case study examines how an online extensive reading project impacted the 11 participants' motivation, habits, and linguistic abilities regarding L2 English reading. The participants engaged in extensive reading for one year on Xreading (an online extensive reading website). They were all female Japanese nationals aged between 30 and 65 whose L1 was Japanese. Previous studies have reported the benefits of extensive reading for elementary/intermediate learners, but have not fully looked at outcomes for learners at higher levels. This study's findings suggest that extensive reading is equally beneficial for those above the intermediate level. Throughout this project, the participants accessed graded readers on Xreading, and quickly established reading habits in English, transforming from reluctant to engaged, avid L2 readers. The qualitative data obtained from interviews, journals, and records on Xreading revealed the sources of the participants' positive changes to be: how engaging and easy to comprehend the graded readers were, a sense of commitment to the project, consistent support from the researcher, and the Xreading's useful functions. Additionally, the participants' vocabulary sizes and reading rates, increased significantly (vocabulary size gains, $p < .0005$ and reading rate gains, $p < .05$) in parallel to the substantial amount of reading they were doing.

Keywords: advanced foreign language readers, extensive reading, graded readers (GRs), reading motivation, reading habits, reading rate, vocabulary size, Xreading, online reading, online extensive reading, post-school adult second language learners, qualitative data

For more than four decades, extensive reading (ER) has been actively researched as an effective L2 reading instructional approach that increases learners' reading abilities and motivation (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009). However, research in this field has been fragmented (Nation & Waring, 2020), disproportionately targeting particular demographics such as L2 English learners, Asian learners, tertiary learners, and elementary/intermediate learners. "We cannot hope to have much to say about extensive reading" with such wide gaps in the research limiting our understanding (Nation & Waring, 2020, p. 139). The aim of this study is to fill some of these gaps by examining ER's effects on 11 post-tertiary advanced learners: an under-researched population. Uden et al (2014) ranked their participants whose vocabulary sizes ranged from 4,700 word families (hereafter, WF) to 6,000 WF as upper-intermediate. In keeping with this, the

current participants were categorized as advanced since the average of their original vocabulary sizes were 7,081 WF. The 11 participants were all Japanese women between the ages of 30 and 65 who lived in either Japan or New Zealand.

This study also makes a contribution to the newer online ER research field. Recent relevant studies (Bui & Macalister, 2021; Sun, 2021; Zhou & Day, 2021) have reported that the benefits of online ER include increasing reading rate, enhanced motivation, and easy access to digital materials. The present study contributes to our understanding through data gained from the participants' journals, records on Xreading (an online ER website, https://xreading.com/), interview comments, and responses to two surveys. These longitudinal qualitative analyses are unique in the ER research field, which lacks qualitative studies. Furthermore, this study's quantitative data suggest that there are benefits to long-term online ER when it comes to the vocabulary and reading rates of even advanced learners, who have less room for growth compared to elementary/intermediate learners.

The findings obtained from this study shed light on the role played by ER in post-tertiary language learning, as well as in L2 language geragogy (i.e., the education of older individuals). They also support the virtues of online ER for circumstances that require online language education.

Literature Review

L2 ER Research

The ER research field, especially that focusing on L2 English, has been thriving for more than four decades. There are now over 600 studies compiled in the ER Bibliography (the Extensive Reading Foundation, 2023, https://erfoundation.org/wordpress/bibliography/) that suggest that ER has positive effects on skill levels across various areas. To begin with, numerous studies (e.g., Boutorwick et al, 2019; Nation, 2015; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Webb & Chang, 2015) have reported its positive effects on vocabulary development. For example, Boutorwick et al's (2019) findings supported that both ER-only and ER-plus-post-reading-activities facilitated the growth of word association knowledge. Webb and Chang's (2015) experimental ER group obtained almost 5 times the vocabulary gains from audio-assisted ER over 13 weeks of the control group, who received form-focus instruction. ER's clear benefits on reading fluency are also supported by many studies (e.g., Beglar et al, 2012; Huffman, 2014; McLean & Rouault, 2017). Beglar et al's (2012) study is significant in that it reported that a larger amount of reading and reading of GRs in particular (materials written with lexical and syntactic control), led to larger gains in fluency development.

McLean and Rouault (2017) compared the reading rate gains between the ER group and the intensive reading (IR) group over an academic year and found that the former group's gains were about six times more and such gains were not at the expense of comprehension. Although the findings are not as striking as in the case of reading fluency (Nation & Waring, 2020), enhanced reading comprehension has been reported by studies including Bell (2001), Robb and Kano (2013), and de Morgado (2009). Bell (2001) found that the ER group's gains in reading

comprehension were larger than those of the IR group on cloze tests, true/false tests, and multiple-choice tests. De Morgado's (2009) qualitative data revealed that those in the ER group perceived that ER assisted them in building their reading comprehension, vocabulary, reading skills, and confidence. Similarly, the positive effects created by ER on other skill areas have been presented by many studies (grammar knowledge: Aka, 2019; Mason, 2006; McLean, 2013, reading abilities: de Lozier, 2019; Hien & Vy, 2022; Niwa, 2019; Takase, 2009, and writing: Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Mermelstein, 2015; Park, 2016).

The results of two meta-analysis studies, one by Jeon and Day (2016, analyzing 49 studies) and one by Nakanishi (2015, analyzing 34 studies), reflect small-to-medium effect sizes (i.e., $d = 0.57$ and $d = 0.46$ for experimental-control group contrast, and $d = 0.79$ and $d = 0.71$ for pre-post contrast, respectively), further supporting that ER facilitates L2 reading development. Having reviewed numerous ER studies, Grabe (2009) has similarly concluded that the core aspect of ER, which is regular "greater amounts of reading" (p. 322) of level-appropriate texts, enables L2 readers to read fluently and improve their overall reading abilities.

ER's strengths have been found to lie in enhancing confidence and motivation to read in L2 readers (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Bamford & Day, 1998; Birketveit et al., 2018; Leather & Uden, 2021; Mikami, 2017; Puripunyavanich, 2021; Ro, 2013, 2018; Takase, 2009). The circumstances of Al-Homoud and Schmitt's (2009) study were less than optimal for ER implementation due to obstacles such as the students' linguistic weaknesses, the short course duration, and the lack of environmental support for pleasure reading. Nevertheless, those in their ER group reported more positive attitudes toward L2 reading as well as L2 learning *per se* than those in their IR group. Takase (2009) observed that the very easy materials used in her ER practice alleviated her participants' affective obstacles and helped them to discard their habits of translating into their L1s.

The other aspects of L2 learning that were positively influenced include learner autonomy (Judge, 2011; Krulatz & Duggan, 2018; Lee & Ro, 2020) and collaboration between learners (Benson, 2014; Jacobs & Chau, 2021; Ro, 2018). Moreover, the increased level of engagement promoted by the simplified texts used in ER, particularly the GRs, has been supported by several studies (Claridge, 2005; Day & Bamford, 1998; Nation & Waring, 2020; Tabata-Sandom, 2013; Yang et al., 2021). Claridge (2005) compared two simplified excerpts from GRs to their original passages (not in absolute terms, but in terms of the respective readers) and concluded that well-written GRs could serve as 'authentic' English to their target readers.

The Fragmented Nature of the Field

Despite the amount of rigorous research having been done into ER, it is not currently practiced as much as many of its proponents expected (Nakanishi, 2015). One reason for this is the widely held views of many learners and administrators that the reading conducted during ER sessions is not worthy of class time (Macalister, 2010a). Another reason is that teachers become overwhelmed by various obstacles when they do attempt to implement ER. Renandya et al. (2021) outline some of the common concerns raised by teachers regarding ER implementation. These include there being a lack of resources, time, knowledge regarding ER, support from administrators, and student enthusiasm for ER. Furthermore, the public-examination-oriented L2

instructions in some countries (Huang, 2015; Rind & Mari, 2019; Ro, 2013) appear to be incompatible with ER in many students' and stakeholders' eyes.

In addition to these issues, the fragmented nature of the ER research field is itself partly responsible for ER being under-practiced. Some areas have been well examined, while other areas are under-researched. For example, many of the current studies have investigated similar things: the effects of ER on learners who learn L2 English in foreign language environments, on learners who belong to tertiary institutions, and on learners who are at the elementary/intermediate levels.

The current study fills some of these gaps by examining the effects of ER on 11 participants who are advanced and post-tertiary adult learners. This study considers it important to examine whether even advanced learners can make linguistic gains from ER, most of the materials of which are lexically and syntactically simplified. So far in the field Nation and Waring (2020) have claimed that lower-level learners have more opportunities to make linguistic gains during ER than advanced learners as they encounter more unknown linguistic items. Uden et al (2014) concluded that motivated advanced learners can try to read carefully selected unsimplified texts.

The current study's participants are post-tertiary adult learners, similar to those in Cho and Krashen's (1994, 1995a, 1995b) studies. Those studies investigated the effects of reading easy stories on adult learners of English as a second language. They found that the participants, women in their 20s and 30s, who started reading from the second-grade level Sweet Valley Kids series presented great gains in vocabulary and English proficiency. They had not had many opportunities to read for pleasure in English previously, despite having studied English in their home countries (Korea and Spain) and having lived in America for several years. The researchers attributed their participants' enhanced motivation and reading abilities to reading interesting and comprehensible texts. Ro (2013) also noted decreased anxiety and enhanced motivation in an unmotivated L2 English adult learner who conducted ER over an eight-week period. His sole participant received grammar-translation English instruction in her home country (Korea), as did the participants in Cho and Krashen's (1994, 1995a, 1995b) studies and the current study. In the case of Ro's participant, ER sessions were her first opportunity to read English texts for pleasure.

The current study aims to add to the findings regarding the effects of ER by focusing on under-researched adult learners and examining the sources of such learners' motivational, habitual, and linguistic changes during ER. In investigating and breaking down different motivational sources, this study refers to Day and Bamford's (1998) four variables that influence motivation to read L2s: 'Materials', 'L2 reading ability', 'L2 reading attitudes', and 'Sociocultural environment'. This study also follows de Burgh-Hirabe and Feryok (2013) and Kirchhoff's (2013) approach of studying the interaction between discrete ER actions and the whole ER practice.

Another contribution this study strives to make is to deepen the field's understanding of the benefits of online ER. Although some recent studies (Bui & Macalister, 2021; de Lozier, 2019; Puripunyavanich, 2021; Sun, 2021; Zhou & Day, 2021) have reported on the benefits of online ER, focusing on easy access to abundant digital GRs, this area of research is still very much in the beginning stages. An example of just one of the issues that need to be investigated further is

how negative factors such as eye-fatigue and insufficient experience in IT impact users of online ER websites. This is crucial given that online language education is expected to play a pivotal role in the coming years. The current participants conducted ER for one year, using Xreading. ER researchers want to know whether older learners, who are not as experienced as younger learners in using digital tools, can still benefit from online resources such as Xreading, and if so by how much.

Taking a mixed-methods case study approach to fill the aforementioned gaps, this study addresses the following research questions (RQs):

> RQ1. How did a one-year online ER project influence the participants' linguistic abilities with regard to L2 reading?

> RQ2. How did a one-year online ER project impact the participants' L2 reading motivation and habits?

> RQ3. What were the sources of the changes or lack thereof?

Methodology

Participants

The researcher recruited participants via Facebook groups and a local book club, and ultimately 11 candidates participated in the study. They were all Japanese women. Seven of them lived in New Zealand, and four lived in Japan. They engaged in online ER for one year. The participants (P) will be referred to as P followed by their individual numbers hereafter. As Table 1 indicates, the participants all had tertiary education qualifications in L1 (Japanese), and many were avid L1 readers. Most participants had relatively large L2 vocabulary sizes and thus fell into the advanced L2 learner category. Nevertheless, only three (P6, P8, and P10) said they liked reading in English, and only two read in English regularly. Their pre-project interview comments reveal that they tended to read unsimplified texts and the difficulty of these texts decreased their motivation to read in English. However, they were motivated to take part in the study because they did want to overcome their stagnant L2 reading practices.

Table 1
Participants' Background Profile

Participant	Age	Country of residence	Last formal English Study	Regularly read in English	Like reading in English	Avid or average reader in Japanese	Pre-project vocabulary size
P1	40+	NZ	Liberal arts	No	?*	Avid	8,000
P2	60	NZ	A post-graduate course	No	No	Average	7,100
P3	50+	NZ	Liberal arts	No	?	Avid	7,600

P4	30+	NZ	English school in NZ	A little	Not totally	Avid	6,200
P5	40+	NZ	Liberal arts	No	No	Very avid	5,100
P6	50+	NZ	Liberal arts	Yes	Yes	Very avid	10,600
P7	60	NZ	Liberal arts	No	?	Avid	7,800
P8	50+	Japan	Liberal arts	Seasonally	Yes	Avid	8,000
P9	40	Japan	Liberal arts	No	No	Avid	5,800
P10	50+	Japan	English major at university	Yes	Yes	Avid	6,200
P11	50	Japan	English major at university	No	?	Avid	5,500

Note. '?' means the participants neither liked nor disliked reading in English.

Data Collection Methods

Pre-/post-project interviews. All interviews were conducted in Japanese. During the pre-/post-project interviews the participants completed the exact same tasks, with the exception of one additional task being completed during the post-project interview. These are set out below: (1) Answer questions regarding L2 reading (see Appendix A); (2) Conduct a metaphor elicitation task (not reported in this paper); (3) Complete a vocabulary size test and a speed-reading task; (4) Complete a questionnaire; (5) Submit answers from a short survey (completed during post-project interview only). In the post-project interview, the researcher also asked questions regarding entries in participants' journals, comments given in other interviews, and their records on Xreading.

The researcher measured the participants' vocabulary sizes during the pre-/post-project interviews using *VocabularySize.com* (https://my.vocabularysize.com/). *VocabularySize.com* was chosen because it is based on Paul Nation's Vocabulary Size Test, which is empirically supported (e.g., Beglar, 2010) and widely used in L2 vocabulary research. For measuring reading rates, two speed-reading articles were used in conjunction with ten multiple-choice questions. These instruments were developed by Millett (2017). The researcher chose speed-reading materials of this type because numerous studies have used them and substantiated their high efficacy (Chung & Nation, 2006; Macalister, 2008, 2010b; Tran, 2012).

Participants also completed the same questionnaire at the pre-/post-project stages (see Appendix B). The researcher used the same items (with slight modifications) used in the questionnaire constructed by Ro (2013, p. 231), which is based on the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale by Saito et al. (1999) and the Motivational Questionnaire (Reading in English) by Takase (2007). The participants were asked to rate statements contained in the questionnaire from '1. Strongly agree' to '5. Strongly disagree'. The questionnaire investigated the participants' anxieties,

motivations, and confidence in L2 English reading. In the post-project phase, the participants emailed answers to another short survey enquiring about their experiences of online ER.

Journals and other interviews. In addition to the pre-/post-project interviews, each participant was invited to four other interviews. The researcher asked the participants to keep journals either on their PCs or on paper in which they were encouraged to write anything they wanted regarding their experiences of online ER. The journal entries formed the basis of questions the researcher asked as part of the interviews during and after the project. The researcher asked participants to email their digital journals or images of their hand-written journals before each interview so she could detect comments of interest and delve into them during the interviews.

ER on Xreading. Xreading, the online ER website used for this project, offers more than 1,500[1] digital GRs. Xreading records numerous data, including words read, reading/listening time, and quiz[2] success rates, all of which enables learners themselves and teachers to monitor individual reading progress closely. Based on Nation's (2014) findings, the researcher advised the participants to read for approximately 15 minutes most days. She provided a supportive environment through frequent, individualized email correspondence. She sent 53 weekly newsletters from January 12, 2021 to January 22, 2022 (see Appendix C for a newsletter example). Each newsletter recommended books and offered the researcher's own reviews. The weekly newsletters were typically sent individually, with comments tailored to each participant after the researcher had examined each participant's current ER state on Xreading (e.g., "You've reached 500,000 words! Awesome!"). The researcher conducted ER herself using Xreading to share the ups and downs of the journey.

Case study with strong ecological validity. Although statistically significant gains are reported below, the researcher does not claim they are solely the result of ER. Rather, the researcher suggests that this mixed methods study has strong ecological validity in that it examines how online ER can impact advanced, mature L2 English learners in everyday life, where they are surrounded by numerous moderating/extraneous variables. Including a qualitative orientation was initially encouraged three decades ago by Miles and Huberman (1994), who viewed this type of research practice as being characterized by "hybrid vigour," claiming that "quantitative and qualitative inquiry can support and inform each other. Narratives and variable-driven analyses need to interpenetrate and inform each other" (p. 310). Furthermore, this study uses the advantages given to it by virtue of it being a case study with multiple participants: the potential to compare and contrast participants' behaviors over a long duration of time in their unique context (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Nation and Waring (2020) also suggest that case study research can reveal learners' complex attitudes and motivations toward ER.

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[1] Xreading now provides around 1,800 digital books, most of which are GRs, along with a few dozen Mid-frequency Readers.

[2] Each quiz on Xreading has five four-option, multiple-choice questions that assess readers' general understanding of the content of books read.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analyses

To answer research questions 1 and 2, a paired *t*-test was used to compare pre-/post-vocabulary sizes and pre-/post-reading rates. Vocabulary size was measured in WF, and reading rates were measured in standard words per minute (SWPM hereafter, Kramer & McLean, 2019). As the current sample size was small, effect sizes were calculated for the vocabulary size and reading rate gains. This is because *p*-values, while showing whether an effect exists, do not reveal the size of the effect (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012), and also get affected by the sample sizes (Wei et al., 2019). A paired *t*-test was also used to analyze the responses given for the pre-/post-project questionnaire surveys.

Qualitative Analyses

To answer research question 3, the interview transcripts and journal comments of interest were analyzed following Miles and Huberman's (1994) content analysis procedures. This was done by the researcher and a research assistant with a L2 pedagogy background, both independently and iteratively. The researcher and the research assistant discussed discrepancies until agreements were reached. Since the researcher examined the participants' journals for comments of interest following research norms and her research interests prior to the later analysis stage, the qualitative analysis process was both deductive and inductive.

Findings

RQ1: How did a one-year online ER project influence the participants' linguistic abilities with regard to L2 reading?

The participants' vocabulary sizes increased significantly from the pre-project average of 7,081WF to the post-project average of 8,481WF ($t = 5.07$, $p < .0005$, df = 10, $d = 1.04$, see Appendix D for descriptive statistics of the vocabulary sizes). Their reading rates also increased significantly from the pre-project average of 123.8 SWPM to the post-project average of 153.2 SWPM ($t = 3.31$, $p < .05$, df = 10, $d = 0.85$), which implies that their reading fluency increased. These two effect sizes ($d = 1.04$ and $d = 0.85$) are medium and small-to-medium, respectively, according to Plonsky and Oswald (2014). The quantitative data answer RQ1, with the participants' vocabulary size and their reading rate gains suggesting that a one-year online ER project significantly improved their linguistic abilities with regard to L2 reading in terms of vocabulary growth and reading fluency.

RQ2: How did a one-year online ER project impact the participants' L2 reading motivation and habits?

This question was answered using the data from the Pre-/Post-Project Questionnaire Responses and Xreading.com's reading records.

Table 2 below outlines the other type of quantitative data, the participants' pre-/post-project questionnaire responses. Overall, the participants agreed more strongly with the first two statements and disagreed more strongly with the latter five statements when comparing the pre-project responses to the post-project responses. The most noteworthy change from the pre-/post-project questionnaire responses is that the participants' sense of being overwhelmed by English texts reduced significantly (this change largely came from the comprehensibility of GRs). They also became less anxious about unknown items contained in texts and read more for pleasure than for instrumental purposes. This quantitative data indicate that the one-year online ER project made the participants significantly more relaxed L2 readers who relished the joy of reading in their target language. In short, following their one-year online ER experience the participants became motivated enough as L2 readers to say that reading in English was a hobby and demonstrated significantly increased confidence levels.

Table 2
The Changes of the Participants' Questionnaire Responses

Direction	Statements	Average		*p*-value
		Pre	Post	
agreement	Reading English is my hobby.	3.73	2.55	$p < .05$
	I like reading English books.	3.27	2.0	$p < .05$
disagreement	I get overwhelmed when seeing English texts.	1.91	3.91	$p < .005$
	I get anxious when encountering unfamiliar grammar when reading English.	2.64	3.91	$p < .05$
	I feel stressed when I'm unable to understand all the words in a text.	4.1	4.8	$p < .05$
	I am not confident at reading in English.	2.37	3.67	$p < .05$
	I practice reading in English in order to obtain a better career in the future.	2.37	3.82	$p < .05$

Note. 1 indicates "Strongly agree" and 5 indicates "Strongly disagree" in the questionnaire. Therefore, the smaller the average is, the more strongly the participants agreed with a statement.

Table 3 below provides the participants' records, as available on Xreading. The participants read 1,146,821 words on average over a year, but the individual reading amounts differed widely. Six participants (P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P9) read over one million words each during the project, while others read significantly less. The participants' listening times differed widely, too. While P8 did not read as much as the aforementioned six participants, she recorded much longer listening time than the average of 41.7 hours. She often mentioned that she enjoyed listening to audio files while reading rather than only reading. The participants' comprehension of GRs was consistently high, with an average of 91.4.

Table 3
The Participants' Xreading Records

Participant	Books passed	Words read	Reading time	Listening time	Quizzes passed	Quiz success average
P1	115*	524,179	74:46:45	38:50:40	114	94.4
P2	186	1,504,663	218:38:05	141:58:55	186	81.5
P3	139	798,813	117:36:15	20:22:45	139	94.9
P4	560**	1,284,255	152:59:30	6:18:15	559	95.2
P5	206	2,150,492	205:43:55	3:41:15	206	94.6
P6	296	1,859,985	202:09:15	0:29:20	296	93.3
P7	220	1,429,773	168:34:25	61:52:10	220	88.7
P8	219	974,601	128:13:16	109:22:06	219	96
P9	458	1,333,151	145:12:45	71:07:00	458	94
P10	222	558,361	74:49:20	3:39:50	222	86.8
P11	38	196,753	36:23:40	0:34:20	38	86.3

Note. */** The two 'Books passed' numbers are different from those of 'Quizzes passed.' In the default setting of Xreading, quizzes must be passed for completed books to be included in the 'Books passed' figure. That means 'Books passed' and 'Quizzes passed' should be equal numbers. However, in the current study, the participants were allowed to ask the researcher to manually include completed books in the 'Books passed' figure without taking quizzes. That is because the researcher did not want quizzes to stop the participants from reading long books after receiving feedback that they could not remember the content of long books very well for quizzes. P1 and P4 each read one book each that was included in their 'Books passed' records despite not taking the quizzes for said books.

Figure 1 below illustrates the changing pattern of the average words read during every 30-day cycle. Eleven 30-day-cycles are presented in the figure (as well as in Figure 2). The first two weeks and the last two weeks (the time periods after the pre-/post-project interviews) are not included in Figure 1 (or in Figure 2) as the participants may not have established regularly reading on Xreading yet or the post-project interviews may have given them a sense of task completion[3]. Figure 1 indicates that the participants read more during the beginning and the end of the analyzed duration than during the middle time periods.

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[3] The participants were able to use their Xreading accounts for more than a month after the post-project interviews.
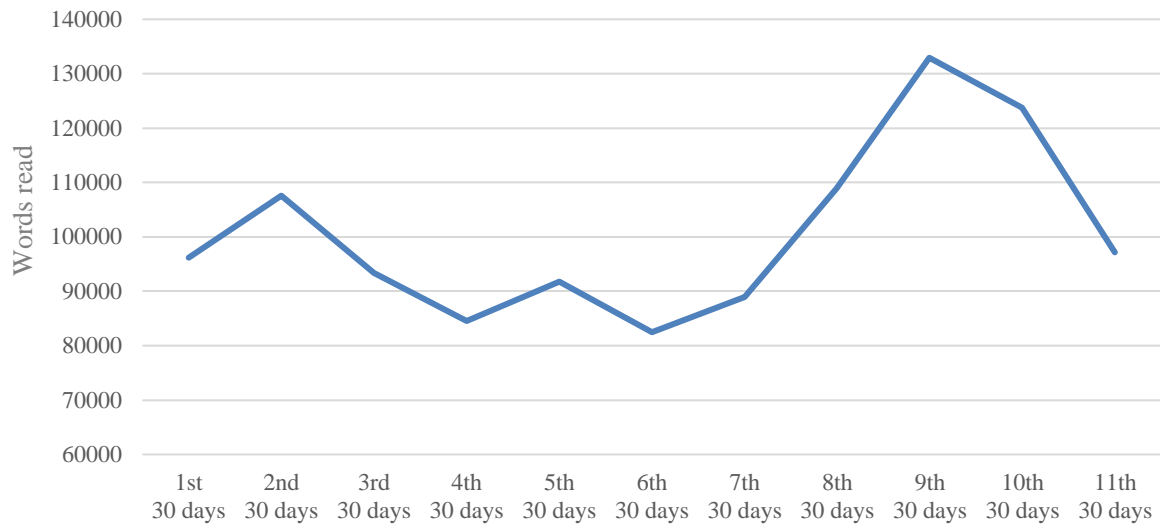
Figure 1
The Average Amount Read in Every 30-day Cycle

Figure 2 presents trends in the average book levels read across every 30-day cycle. The participants started reading easy books (e.g., level 5), but quickly increased to levels 8 and 9, and maintained this until the end. Some participants read and enjoyed even higher levels (the highest being level 15). However, they seem to have explored various levels rather than staying with upper-level books, despite their high proficiency (as indicated by their original vocabulary size).
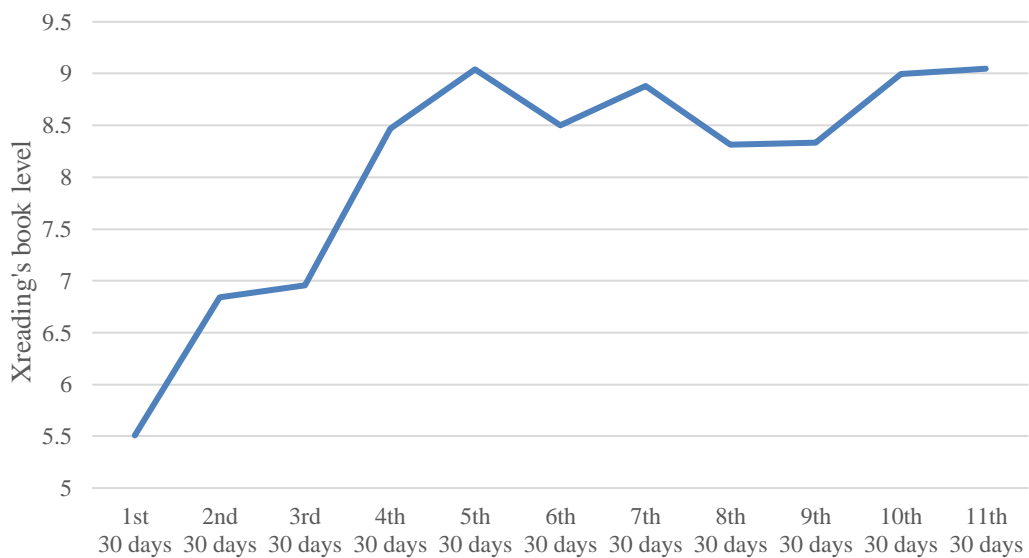
Figure 2
Trends in the Average Book Levels Read Across Every 30-day Cycle

Xreading's records indicate that overall, while there were some big individual differences and some mid-term sluggishness, the participants engaged in a large amount of reading and preferred mid-range levels such as eight and nine to higher levels. This finding may offer an answer to RQ2 in regards to the participants' habit changes. That is, their L2 reading habits changed from 'being discouraged by difficult English texts and thus not reading much' prior to the project to 'enjoying GRs that were very easy and subsequently reading extensively' during the project.

RQ3: What were the sources of the changes or lack thereof?

The following qualitative findings not only address RQ3, but also offer more answers to RQ1 and RQ2 that reinforce the quantitative findings and their interpretations.

Findings from interview comments and journal comments of interest were used to answer this research question. In the following sections, italics are used for the names of GRs specified by the participants. Information on the GRs is provided in Appendix E. Furthermore, information about some participants' favorite authors and series are given in Appendix F. All the interview comments and journal comments of interest cited below are translated from the originals given in Japanese.

Comprehensibility of GRs and 'flow' coming from longer GRs. Nine participants either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt overwhelmed when looking at English texts in the pre-project questionnaire. Furthermore, in the pre-project interviews, most participants commented that they would like to overcome their long-held psychological barrier toward English reading. P5 stated in her pre-project interview: "I deeply love reading in Japanese, but I'm so reluctant to read in English. I want to overcome the psychological barrier". This feeling of being overwhelmed by English texts despite their large starting vocabulary sizes was significantly reduced throughout the project, as the participants' questionnaire responses indicate (see Table 2). The qualitative data reveals the comprehensibility of GRs was one reason for this change. As P3 commented: "I can definitely read (GRs) fluently. I don't find it difficult at all and I can keep reading comfortably" (1st interview). The comprehensibility of GRs enabled the participants to have "the reward of success" (Nation & Waring, 2020, p. 98) right from the early stages, as P4 described:

> During the first several days I still felt anxious reading (English), but I soon found myself enjoying the content of the books… I experienced being able to read to the end (of books) many times. I felt like these were successful experiences. Then I started thinking, "This is great!" (1st interview).

The reward of success not only gave the participants a sense of being able to read in English, but also promoted a 'joy of reading'. An example of this was provided by P1: "*Culture Shock in Japan* was my breakthrough on Xreading! … I was so happy to find that I was able to laugh when reading an English book!" (1st interview). P7 explained why the comprehensibility of GRs led to a joy of reading:

> I read O. Henry's novel, *The Gift of Magi*. Its storyline developed smoothly, and it was very easy to read and understand. I was able to imagine the drama and the feelings within the simple vocabulary (February 24th journal).

P7 also said in her second interview that when she encounters difficult English vocabulary, her brain goes blank and is unable to input her feelings into the story.

As the project progressed into the 4th and 5th months, and the participants started reading upper level, longer books (see Figure 2), they found these more intriguing and often experienced 'flow.' According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), when a person engages in a task, if her/his abilities and the challenges created by the task match, 'flow' can occur. Among several phenomena created by 'flow' are the losing of a sense of time and self-consciousness. Many participants mentioned that they lost a sense of time while reading. After P5 read her first 20,000-word book (*Different Seas*), she wrote in her May 31st journal, "When a story is interesting, one hour feels like a second, even if it's in English". P2 wrote, "Today's book, *A Dangerous Weekend*, was more than 10,000 words. But its storyline was so interesting that I read it in one go" (August 31st journal). The participants sometimes cried over compelling stories. P6 wrote in her August 9th journal: "I finished reading *Two Lives* on Monday. I shed tears for the first time while reading on Xreading". Greta Gorsuch's matter-of-fact but engaging sentences grabbed many participants' hearts, as P3 described:

> My favorite Japanese authors' books take me to the worlds described in them, providing me with a sense of peace. I've found that English books can give me the same experience… Dry American landscapes appear in front of my eyes from Greta's books. This is a new experience added to my inner world (post-project interview).

Like P3 and P6, other participants also started finding their favorite authors/series in the 3rd and 4th months. For example, Denise Kirby and Margaret Johnson were liked by P5; Antoinette Moses, Frank Brennan, and Greta Gorsuch were liked by P3, P8, and P11 (and the researcher); and the immigrant stories in *The Hopes and Dreams Series* were enjoyed by P9 (and the researcher). Their L2 English reading started to become intrinsically-motivation-oriented, like their L1 Japanese reading. That is, they started enjoying the act of L2 English reading in and of itself, rather than for any external rewards it might offer. When the researcher asked the participants in the post-project interviews whether they read English texts for learning or for pleasure, all of them confirmed that they read for pleasure. P4 said, "I read (in English) not to study, but as a hobby". P10 similarly said, "(Reading in English) has become 'real' reading for me, not study that I dislike doing".

'Soft enforcement' from a sense of commitment to the project and consistent support from the researcher. The preceding sections report that intrinsic motivation played a major role in the participants' engagement with L2 reading. However, participants also pointed out that 'a sense of commitment to the project' and 'consistent support from the researcher' were other important factors in their motivation to regularly conduct ER.

P6 described 'a sense of commitment to the project' by saying, "Reading for 15 minutes every day is the contract, although that is an exaggeration. But I'm committed. If I break it, that shows my weakness and I'll feel sorry" (1st interview). As responsible adults, the participants' 'sense of commitment to the project' seemed to make them strive to routinise online ER. P3 said, "I've been given this opportunity… so I need to respond to it. I need to routinise (English reading) properly, and not forget to do it" (1st interview). Xreading became a natural part of most

participants' daily lives around the 2nd or 3rd month: "When I was attending an ER class where I read paper books, I didn't read for a short time every day like this. So, I was worried about whether or not I would continue with it. But I've been able to continue it as a daily routine" (P8, 2nd interview).

Sending weekly recommendations of books to the participants was a motivational factor for the researcher's own ER practice. Many participants relied on these recommendations, and Xreading's records supported that her suggestions were widely taken up. Participants' feedback implied that these weekly newsletters sent every Wednesday, along with individually tailored encouragement, were also a strong motivational factor for them and kept them on track. This support, along with 'a sense of commitment to the project', created 'soft enforcement', as perfectly described by P10 and P11: "Soft enforcement leads to continuation. The weekly email sent by you (the researcher) is a great reminder" (P10's email sent on June 9th, 2021).

P9 described this 'soft enforcement' from a different perspective. She emphasized 'the importance of the community', claiming that "ER itself is an individual act. However, in order to keep doing it every day, interaction with others is important" (3rd interview). She said that the weekly emails, interviews with the researcher, and interaction with another participant who was her colleague made her feel that there were people who cared about her ER. The researcher also strove to indirectly connect the participants by sharing the group's overall progress and the participants' ups and downs in weekly newsletters.

Learning from ER. All the participants' pre-project vocabulary sizes were above the level of the GRs available on Xreading. However, being classified as being at a particular vocabulary size does not mean that an individual is aware of every word that is used in texts at that level. Thus, the participants still encountered unknown words during their online ER. At the beginning of the project, the researcher encouraged the participants to choose a book with an almost completely familiar vocabulary, so that a dictionary would not be necessary. Nevertheless, some participants initially took notes of words that they did not know after reading a book. This did not last long however, as they soon started reading books without worrying about unknown vocabulary too much. Incidental vocabulary learning can be defined as vocabulary learning that occurs during reading when learners do not have the intention to learn vocabulary, but rather are focusing on enjoying the content of a text. The participants' interview comments and journals indicate that the easiness of the GRs enabled them to guess the meaning of unknown words and, consequently, incidentally learn them while reading. They also deepened their existing vocabulary knowledge and/or regained vocabulary knowledge they had long forgotten, as indicated by the following comments:

> P1: It was good to confirm the meaning of 'afford' and 'impatiently', as I kept forgetting, although I had seen them many times previously (September 11th journal).
> P7: I feel things (vocabulary knowledge) have come back. It's like a bit of oil has been poured into rusty parts of my knowledge (1st interview).
> P8: I realized 'garden can be a verb!' I'm making small discoveries from these easy books, which is fun… I can see different sides of familiar words, which enables me to understand words three-dimensionally (1st interview).

The comprehensibility of GRs also led to incidental collocation/colligation learning as described by P3:

> I learned not only meanings of verbs, but also prepositions used with them and surrounding structures. I learned how they are used. I discovered how easy words are combined in ways that I was previously unaware of (4th interview).

This incidental learning occurring during the project increased many participants' motivation to improve their general English proficiency, which may have been one of their sources of motivation to keep reading.

The authenticity of GRs. While the aforementioned motivation to improve general English proficiency was experienced by many participants, one L2 user who participated in the project for the first three months and withdrew from the project felt that ER using GRs failed in this respect. She wanted to acquire expressions sophisticated enough to use in the grant applications she had to write in her part-time work. Although she read the most for the first three months (596,677 words), she discontinued her participation at this point. She outlined her disappointments with GRs in her second interview:

> I wish there had been more books that strove to choose words (that made the text feel more natural) … (The English in GRs) isn't the written English used in business letters. Also, I didn't learn many new words, so I didn't achieve much.

She described the English in GRs as "unnatural" and "choppy" (in her 1st interview).

Conversely, P6, who had an equally large vocabulary size, commented that "difficult words don't necessarily create beautiful sentences. (GRs) are good as I'm able to enjoy their contents" (2nd interview). She often said that she did not read in English to improve her proficiency, but simply liked reading, English or Japanese. While the aforementioned L2 user's remarks remind us of the limitations of GRs, especially for extrinsically-motivated advanced learners, P6's reflection provides us with a view that GRs do have a role to play in advanced learners' L2 reading when they are intrinsically motivated.

Discussion around the pros and cons of simplified texts often centers around the perceived authenticity of such texts (authenticity debates). To address this, the researcher carefully examined the participants' attitudes toward GRs. She found that many participants wholeheartedly welcomed GRs due to their comprehensibility. The fact that their preferred book levels stayed around 8 and 9 rather than moving higher levels supported this finding (see Figure 2). P2 said, "I think it's totally fine if books are easy. It's better for us to start enjoying reading in English from easy books" (2nd interview). P5 similarly enjoyed an easy level 5 book (*The Bookshop*), commenting, "even if it was level 5, I enjoyed it!... I was totally absorbed in the story" (March 2nd journal).

Other participants overcame their initial prejudice toward books written specifically for language learners and developed a discerning but positive view of them. That is to say, after having read numerous GRs on Xreading, they realized that although GRs are written for learners in simple

English, there are many that are well-written. With such flexible attitudes, and urged on by the 'soft enforcement' mentioned above, the participants kept reading despite occasional disappointments with some GRs being 'poorly-written' in their eyes. For example, P9 commented that "*The Thief* was too predictable" (3rd interview), and P11 found "*Heidi* … disappointing because its storyline wasn't expanded upon enough, and the descriptions were simple" (3rd interview). On the other hand, P8 supported the virtues of GRs' as 'authentic' texts with this comment: "It's amazing that the author wrote this mature story (*The Choice*) at this level (level 7). It definitely makes me want to find out what is going to happen next!" (January 29th journal). This is an example of a GR providing an advanced L2 learner with an 'authentic' reading experience (Widdowson, 1979).

Xreading's useful features and time availability. Xreading's features also supported participants' motivation to read. Overall, it was found that easy access to GRs made regular reading easier. Although many of the participants were not as experienced as those of a younger generation at using digital tools, they did not encounter technical problems thanks to the intuitive nature of Xreading. They did not experience eye-fatigue either, as they were able to change the size of fonts. Features of Xreading are listed below according to their 'usefulness ranking' as voted by the participants in the post-project survey: (1) The abundance of GRs; (2) Book searching tools; (3) Audio files; (4) Performance monitoring features; and (5)Font-size adjustment feature.

Some participants enjoyed setting and achieving goals using features such as 'words read' and 'quiz success rate' (P1, P2, P4, & P5), whereas others did not pay much attention to these (P6 & P8).

One moderating/extraneous variable, time availability, differed between the participants and this may have affected the outcome of their ER practice more than their country of residence. As reported above, seven of the participants lived in New Zealand (Auckland), a second language environment. The impact of such an environment is an important but under-researched area. However, this study found that this impact seemed to be weakened by the fact that the project was conducted in 2021, when Auckland was under the strictest COVID-19 lockdown of all OECD countries for more than three months.

The seven participants in Auckland confined themselves at home or within a small circle even after the lockdown and therefore did not receive as much naturally occurring L2 English input as they normally would. Five of those who read more than one million words were living in Auckland, which may suggest that time availability played a stronger role in influencing participants to read than second language environments in this particular case. In addition to the imposed lockdown life, four of the five participants who read more than one million words (P2, P5, P6, & P7) were homemakers without young children and thus, they had a lot of time at their discretion. They reiterated that having ER was timely because it gave them something to do daily. On the other hand, those living in Japan had jobs and needed to make an effort to find time for online ER. For example, P11, having limited free time due to her work and family matters, "noticed that smartphones are waterproof and decided to read in the bathtub" (April 4th journal). The availability of time likely influenced each participant's L2 reading practice either positively or negatively.

The qualitative findings reported above deepen the quantitative findings and infer the answers to RQ3. Specifically, the participants' interview comments and journal comments of interests reveal that incidental vocabulary learning occurred due to the comprehensibility of GRs, which probably led to the participants' vocabulary gains. Furthermore, looking beyond just comprehensibility, it was how intriguing the GRs seemed to be that enabled the participants to read more fluently, as they were engaged in the content and forgetting about time due to 'flow' moments. The qualitative data obtained suggest that sources of their motivational and habitual changes also came from 'soft-enforcement' and Xreading's useful features.

Figure 3 below indicates how the participants transformed from being unconfident L2 readers to engaged, avid L2 readers during the project, supported by five positive sources. The first four positive sources align with four variables that influence motivation to read in L2s proposed by Day and Bamford (1998, 'Materials', 'L2 reading ability', 'L2 reading attitudes', and 'Sociocultural environment'). The succeeding section provides discussion regarding Figure 3.
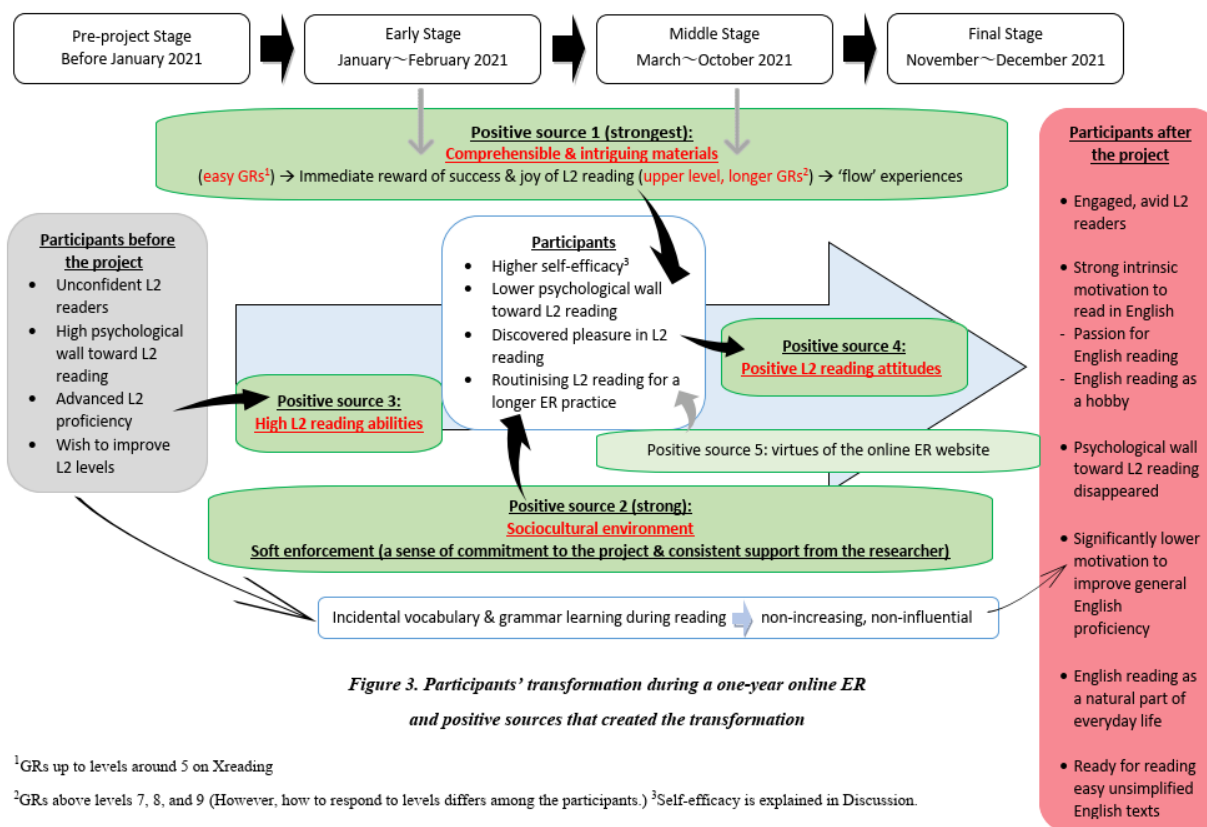
Figure 3. Participants' transformation during a one-year online ER and positive sources that created the transformation

[1]GRs up to levels around 5 on Xreading

[2]GRs above levels 7, 8, and 9 (However, how to respond to levels differs among the participants.) [3]Self-efficacy is explained in Discussion.

Discussion

This study investigates how a one-year online ER project influenced the participants' motivation, habits, and linguistic abilities with regard to L2 English reading. It also examines what sources created changes or lack thereof. First, in terms of linguistic gains, the participants' vocabulary

sizes and reading rates increased significantly, with effect sizes of $d = 1.04$ and $d = 0.85$ respectively. These are medium and small-to-medium, according to Plonsky and Oswald (2014).

Pigada and Schmidt (2006) claim that large quantities of reading results in the best vocabulary learning. This is in keeping with the participants' comments, which suggest they did in fact encounter unknown vocabulary during their reading of simplified texts, despite their originally large vocabulary sizes. Large quantities of reading also leads to larger reading rate gains (Beglar et al., 2012). The participants read 1,146,821 words on average, which is a considerable number, and exceeds what participants in other long-term ER projects have read. For example, the elementary-level students in a study by Nishizawa et al. (2010) read a median of 690,000 words over four years. Therefore, it appears that the significant vocabulary size and reading rate gains experienced by the current participants came largely from prolific reading.

Furthermore, because the participants did not encounter many unknown items in lower-level GRs due to their originally large vocabulary sizes, reading them served as an effective fluency development activity (called "Easy ER" by Nation & Macalister, 2021, p. 78) and increased their reading rates significantly.

Secondly, the participants made remarkable changes in their L2 reading habits. Participants who did not read in English regularly before the project established L2 English reading habits soon after the project started. Two factors, namely 'the comprehensibility and intriguingness of GRs' and the 'soft enforcement created by a sense of commitment to the project and consistent support from the researcher', created these positive habitual changes, interwoven with motivational changes. 'The comprehensibility and intriguingness of GRs' are relevant to intrinsic motivation, as it lowered the participants' psychological barriers around English reading, and they experienced the reward of success. Similar to the contexts of the participants in the studies of Cho and Krashen (1994, 1995a, 1995b) and Ro (2013), the current participants' formal English education did not give them opportunities to read comprehensible, interesting texts and nurture habits to read for pleasure. Their formal education had a strong accuracy orientation. Therefore, they may have not ever experienced the reward of success in L2 English reading before they participated in this study.

The importance of the reward of success in motivation to read L2 texts is supported by various studies (de Burgh-Hirabe & Feryok, 2013; Judge, 2011; Nation & Waring, 2020). Self-efficacy is explained by Bandura (1977) as believing "in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3) and is an important mental aspect of L2 learning. Having numerous rewards of success in this project led to the participants' enhanced self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, in the third and fourth months, the participants started experiencing 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) with longer, upper-level GRs they found to be more intriguing. At this point, they read for pleasure, with confidence, and found favorite authors as they did in their L1 reading. The changes in their responses to the questionnaire surveys infer these positive changes as statistically significant (see Table 2).

It is, however, valid to question whether these intrinsic motivations were fully sufficient for the participants to engage in a long-term ER project. Kirchhoff (2013) has reported that having more flow-like experiences did not necessarily result in more reading time and claimed that various

factors influenced motivation to keep reading at L2. de Burgh-Hirabe and Feryok (2013) indicate that learners evaluate specific ER actions after reading. When the current participants experienced 'flow' from engaging GRs, and noted incidental learning occurrences as reported above, they obtained positive post-actional evaluations that led to further ER actions. However, they occasionally came across disappointing GRs and some of them struggled with circumstances such as time constraints. It was 'soft enforcement' that kept the participants on track when such occasional obstacles occurred. Day and Bamford (1998) claim that four factors influence L2 learners' motivation to read: 'Materials', 'L2 reading abilities', 'L2 reading attitudes', and 'Sociocultural environment'.

The current project addressed all these factors: the use of GRs ('Materials'), the participants' high proficiency ('L2 reading abilities'), their lowered psychological barriers toward L2 reading ('L2 reading attitudes'), and 'soft enforcement' ('Sociocultural environment'). Day and Bamford (1998) suggest that 'Sociocultural environment' is less influential than 'Materials' and 'L2 reading attitudes'. However, 'a sense of commitment to the project' and 'consistent support from the researcher' played a pivotal role in the participants' long-term ER practice in the current study. These factors enabled them to routinise ER and feel that it was supported by the digital ER community created by the researcher. The 'soft enforcement' created by the unique sociocultural environment of this study was also important because the participants did not have other external incentives or enforcers like young learners belonging to educational institutions.

This interpretation aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of social constructivism. Social constructivism posits that interpersonal interaction between peers in a small group context facilitates cooperative learning. In the current study, the researcher connected the participants indirectly through reporting the members' engagements in ER and their ups and downs during the project in weekly newsletters, which may have been conducive to their indirect and digital cooperative learning experiences.

Lastly, easy access to the abundance of GRs on Xreading also rendered routinization of online ER more accomplishable, with the participants rating it as the most useful Xreading feature. Similar recent studies (e.g., Zhou & Day, 2021) also support the virtues of Xreading.

As a result of all the facilitative factors discussed above, this project seems to have created a meaningful learning opportunity in which many participants transformed from reluctant L2 readers to engaged, avid L2 readers.

Conclusion

This study suggests that ER benefits not only elementary/intermediate learners, but also advanced learners. Significantly and most notably, 11 advanced L2 English learners who lacked opportunities to read for pleasure in their target language during formal education experienced pleasurable L2 reading many times as a result of having access to comprehensible GRs. Numerous, well-written GRs gave them authentic reading experiences. The participants, all being post-tertiary adult learners, did not have specific utilitarian purposes or extrinsic incentives like young learners in the mainstream educational system. However, a sense of commitment to

the project and consistent support from the researcher functioned as soft enforcement. The supportive sociocultural environment, despite it being digital only, enabled the participants to keep reading in English enthusiastically for a year. Easy access to more than 1,500 GRs available on Xreading made such efforts accomplishable. At the end of the project, most participants were able to call L2 English reading 'a hobby'. This study sheds light on the unexplored potential of online ER in an era where life-long language education is vital, and online language education is strongly called for.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Studies

When GRs are far too easy for learners, they may appear 'poorly-written' to learners. The above criticism of *The Thief* and *Heidi* may not necessarily be due to their inherent textual quality, but due to the mismatch of their levels to the participants.

In exploring the unique needs of geragogy, Findsen and Formosa (2011) reported that an increasing number of older learners are familiarizing themselves with IT technology. The current study reported that participants who were in their 60s did not encounter technical issues when using Xreading, but rather enjoyed their easy access to digital GRs on the website. On the other hand, Takase (n.d.) reported her L2 English participants' successes in her on-going ER case study (since 2016) where she used hard copy GRs. One 87-year-old participant had read more than 200 books over the past five years. As a tentative conclusion, Takase (n.d.) proposed that ER could be added to the list of activities for enjoyment and for preventing/delaying the onset of dementia for senior citizens. The findings of the current study and Takase's (n.d.) case study hint at the potential of ER, reading on-screen or reading in print, in the L2 geragogy.

On April 14, 2022, P5 reported to the researcher that she found three sets of GRs (e.g., *"A" is for Alibi*) and their originals at a public library. She read one of the GRs and understood its storyline, and then proceeded to read the original. She described her experience as joyful, saying that: "I never imagined one day I could read a thick original English paperback!" This implies that if public and university libraries considered investing in GRs, along with their originals, they would contribute to encouraging proficient L2 learners to do the same as P5.

This study was limited in that the participants were self-selected and probably inherently held high motivation to improve in L2 reading, which may have maximized the power of the aforementioned positive factors. Therefore, we do not know the impact of online ER on reluctant adult L2 learners. This would be another useful future research agenda. Future studies could examine whether adult L2 learners can exert agency in self-directed ER when they do not receive support from a facilitator. Future studies could also investigate whether adult L2 learners with lower-proficiency are able to engage in ER to the same extent as the current, proficient participants.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A

The Questions Asked at the Pre-project and Post-project Interviews (translated from Japanese)

1. How long have you lived in an English-speaking country?
2. Do you like reading in Japanese? How much do you regularly read in Japanese?
3. Do you like reading in English? How much do you regularly read in English?
4. Have you done anything to improve your L2 English reading abilities? If so, what? Was it effective?
5. Your interest in this project implies you have an interest in ER. Why do you have this interest?
6. Why do you want to improve your L2 English reading abilities as well as your speaking and listening abilities?
7. When do you find your L2 English reading abilities are not sufficient?
8. What are the difficult factors of L2 English reading?
9. What is your goal for L2 English reading?
10. Please use a metaphor to complete the following sentence. Also, please explain why you have chosen the metaphor: 'English reading for me is (a metaphor)'.

Appendix B

Questionnaire Items

The researcher used the same items with slight modifications used in the questionnaire constructed by Ro (2013, p. 231), which is based on the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale by Saito et al (1999) and the Motivational Questionnaire (Reading in English) by Takase (2007).

Japanese Items That Were Used in the Project

各質問に、（1）大いに賛成、（2）賛成、（3）賛成でも反対でもない、（4）反対、（5）大いに反対のいずれかでお答えください。インスピレーションでお答えください。

パート I. 英語の読みへの不安についてのアンケート
1.　英語を読んでいて、理解できているかどうか自信がない時不安になる。
2.　英語を読んでいて、単語はわかるのに著者の言いたいことが十分にわからないことがよくある。
3.　英語を読んでいて、こんがらがってしまって、何を読んでいるのかわからなくなることがある。
4.　英語のページを目の前にすると圧倒される。
5.　英語を読んでいて、内容になじみがないと緊張する。

6.　英語を読んでいて、わからない文法がある度に不安になる。
7.　英語を読んでいて、全部の言葉がわからないと不安になる、困惑してしまう。
8.　英語を読んでいて、発音できない言葉に出くわした時はうっとうしい。
9.　英語でわからない単語を飛ばした場合は、読んでいたことを思い出すのが困難。
10.　英語を読むためには新しい単語をすべて覚えなければならないのかなと心配だ。
11.　英語を読むことに自信がない。
12.　慣れてきても、まだ英語を読むことは難しい。
13.　英語を声に出して読むのはとても苦手だ。
14.　今までに到達した現在の英語を読む力に満足していない。
15.　英語の文章を読むためには英語の歴史と文化をしっかりと知る必要がある。

パート II．英語の読みへのモチベーションについてのアンケート

1.　英語の勉強の中で、読むことが一番好きだ。
2.　英語を読むのは私の趣味だ。
3.　英語の本を読むのが好きだ。
4.　英語の本を読むことで、英文学の理解の助けになる。
5.　将来より良い仕事につきたいので、英語の読みを勉強している。
6.　読み書きの力をあげるために英語の本を読んでいる。
7.　知識を広めるために英語の本を読んでいる。
8.　英語の本を読むことで私の考えが広がる。
9.　英語圏のことをもっと知りたいので英語の本を読んでいる。
10.　もっと速く読めるように英語の本を読んでいる。
11.　もっといい読み手になりたい。
12.　英語を読んでいるときは邪魔されたくない。
13.　精読より多読の方が好きだ。
14.　（英語では）読みの方が話すことより大切だ。
15.　英語を読む方が聞くより好きだ。

English Translation of the Questionnaire Items

The following 15 questions ask you how you feel about reading in English. Please choose an answer from
(1) Strongly agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Disagree, or (5) Strongly disagree.
Please go with your gut instinct when answering.

Part I: Questionnaire regarding anxiety towards reading English

1. I get anxious when I'm not sure whether I understand what I am reading in English.
2. When reading English, I often understand the words but still can't understand what the author is trying
   to say.
3. When I'm reading English, I get so confused I can't remember what I'm reading.
4. I get overwhelmed when seeing English texts.
5. I am nervous when I am reading English and I am not familiar with the topic.

6. I get anxious when encountering unfamiliar grammar when reading English.
7. I feel stressed when I'm unable to understand all the words in a text.
8. It bothers me when I encounter words I can't pronounce while reading English.
9. When I skip words I don't understand, it is hard to remember what I have read.
10. It stresses me out thinking about all the new words I have to know in order to read English.
11. I am not confident at reading in English.
12. Even though I have gotten used to it, reading English is still difficult.
13. I am very poor at reading English aloud.
14. I am not satisfied with the level of reading ability that I have achieved so far in English.
15. I have to know a great deal about the history and culture of the English-speaking world in order to read English texts.

Part II: Questionnaire about motivation towards reading English
1. Of all English studies, I like reading best.
2. Reading English is my hobby.
3. I like reading English books.
4. Reading English books helps me to understand English literature.
5. I practice reading in order to obtain a better career in the future.
6. I am reading English books to develop my literacy skills.
7. I am reading English books to widen my knowledge.
8. Reading English books will broaden my view.
9. I am reading English books because I want to know more about the English-speaking world.
10. I am reading English books to become a faster reader.
11. I want to be a better reader.
12. I don't want to be disturbed while reading English.
13. I like extensive reading better than intensive reading.
14. Reading is more important than speaking.
15. I like reading English better than listening to it.

Appendix C

An Example of the Weekly Newsletter

The following is a weekly newsletter sent on October 12, 2021 (2 pages).

The use of the images of the four books' title covers are kindly permitted by Paul Goldberg, Founder of Xreading.

Appendix D

Descriptive Statistics for Vocabulary Sizes of Participants

Vocabulary size	Mean (*SD*)	Min	Max	Kurtosis	Skewness
Pre	7081.82 (*1564.49*)	5100	10600	1.36	0.97
Post	8481.82 (*1121.44*)	7000	10300	-1.1	0.21

Appendix E

A List of GRs Mentioned in the Article

Book title	Author	Publisher/Series title
Culture Shock in Japan	Andy Boon (9)*	HALICO Pocket Readers
The Gift of Magi	Original author: O. Henry (9)	Compass Young Learners Classic Readers
Different Seas	N/A (10)	I Talk You Talk Press
A Dangerous Weekend	N/A (10)	I Talk You Talk Press
Two Lives	Helen Naylor (9)	Cambridge English Readers
The Bookshop	Denise Kirby (5)	ILTS Robin Readers
Heidi	Original author: Johanna Sypri (7)	Compass Young Learners Classic Readers
The Thief	Kelley Townley (3)	Foxton Readers
The Choice	Sue Leather (7)	Cengage – Page Turners
"A" is for Alibi	Sue Grafton (N/A)	Macmillan Readers

Note. *****The numbers in brackets indicate Xreading levels.

Appendix F

Data Collected About Some Participants' Favorite Authors and Series

Author/The series' name	Example books' titles	Publisher/Series title
Antoinette Moses	*A new home for Socks* (4) *Jojo's story* (6)	Helbling Readers Cambridge English Readers
Denis Kirby	*The Bookshop* (5) *Body on the rocks* (10)	ILTS Robin Readers ILTS Robin Readers
Frank Brennan	*Jam* (9) *Windows of the mind* (13)	Helbling Readers Cambridge English Readers
Greta Gorsuch	*The visitors* (10) *Summer in Cimarron & Lunch at the Dixie Diner* (10)	Wayzgoose Press Wayzgoose Press

Margaret Johnson	*Best friends* (7)	Cengage – Page Turners
	Nature (8)	Cengage – Page Turners
The Hopes and Dreams Series	*The family from Vietnam* (8)	Prolingua
	Sent away: Japanese-Americans (8)	

Note. The numbers in brackets indicate Xreading levels.

About the Author

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