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Tadoku: Extensive Reading in Japanese

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Introduction

My Instructional Development project is **Tadoku 多読** that translates as **Extensive Reading (ER)** for Japanese language education. Tadoku or ER refers to “many readings” “reading a lot,” the idea of which in foreign/second language teaching has been practiced and theorized since 1950 in the US and Europe. In Japan, ER classes and promotional events, such as workshops and presentations for instructors, are sponsored by a Non-profit organization “Tagengo Tadoku” or “Tadoku Supporters.” This organization was established in 2002 by Japanese educators who originally explored effective reading methods in English language education. Tadoku Supporters later developed ER methods in Japanese.

I attended one of their organized workshops and observed a class in Japan to learn how to create a new ER Japanese class here at WMU. Instructional Development Travel Fund (IDTG), Discovery and Dissemination Award (CDDA), and Department of World Languages and Literatures supported my travel to Japan. Waldo Library has also supported my project through developing the collection for Japanese ER materials within the library.

Four Golden Rules for ER

There are **Four Golden Rules** for ER in foreign/second language. An ER class instructor introduces the rules to the class participants in the beginning of the class. They are:

- 1. Start from scratch**
Read easy books you can enjoy without translating. That way, you will understand better and so you will read more.
- 2. Don't use your dictionary**
Don't use your dictionary when you come across words you don't know. Guess the meaning from the pictures and/or the story.
- 3. Skip over difficult words, phrases and passages**
If guessing doesn't work, skip over that word, phrase or passage and go on reading. You can often enjoy the book without understanding every small detail.
- 4. When the going gets tough, quit the book and pick up another**
The going gets tough when the book is not suitable for your level or your interest. Simply throw the book away and start reading something else.

Following these rules, students start reading a lot of easy books that they can really enjoy. The students' motivation leads to creating a positive learning spiral for them:

- Easy books are good for understanding
- They understand well, so they read more
- Reading becomes a fun thing to do
- So they read even more
- Their second language (Japanese) gets better and better

Ten Principles for Successful ER

Successful ER courses are based on some principles, such as those suggested by Day and Bamford (1998). They proposed **Ten Principles for successful ER**. They are:

1. The reading material is easy.
2. A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available.
3. Learners choose what they want to read.
4. Learners read as much as possible.
5. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding.
6. Reading is its own reward.
7. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.
8. Reading is individual and silent.
9. Teachers orient and guide their students.
10. The teacher is a role model of a reader.

(Day & Bamford, 2002, pp. 137–141)

As indicated in these principles, an ER class should be learner-centered, flexible, fun and productive for each participant.

Graded Readers for ER

Students in Japanese ER class starts reading Graded Readers in which vocabulary and sentences are carefully controlled by proficiency level. There are basically five to six or more levels of ER readers. Here are images of the sample readers (Figures 1 and 2) and the table of level descriptions (Figure 3).



Figure 1



Figure 2

	Number of kanji	Number of vocabulary	
Introductory	0 入門	350 ~400	現在形、過去形、疑問詞、～たい など 基本的に「です、ます形」を使っています。
Beginners 1	1 初級上	350 400 ~1500	現在形、過去形、疑問詞、～たい など 副「です、ます形」を使っています。
Beginners 2	2 初級下	500 1500 ~2500	辞書形、て形、ない形、た形、 連体形、～と (条件)、～(理由)、 ～なる、～のだ など
Intermediate 1	3 中級上	800 2500 ~5000	可動形、命令形、受身形、使役形、～と、 ～たら、～ば、～なら、～そう (結果)、 ～よう (提案、依頼)、～よう (勧誘) など
Intermediate 2	4 中級下	1300 5000 ~10000	使役形、使役受身形、～そう (依頼)、～らしい、 ～はず、～もの、～ようにする/なる、 ～ことにする/なる など

Figure 3

Japanese ER Class

I started LANG 5800 “Extensive Reading in Japanese,” one-credit, once a week class in Spring 2017 and repeated it in Summer 1 2017.

LANG 5800 Extensive Reading in Japanese (Spring 2017)

- Wednesday, 4:00-4:50PM (Once a week, One-credit course)
- Class at Jpns ER collection space (Waldo Library, First floor)
- 14 enrollments (the cap is 12)
- Japanese 1010 level ~ JPNS 4510 level
- Course requirements:
 - Attendance—30%
 - Reading log—40%
 - Final Presentation/Project—30%

Students from the beginning level (JPNS 1010) to the most advanced level (JPNS 4510 or 5600) were allowed to enroll in this class. I gave them reading materials of various proficiency levels, including Grades Readers and other authentic materials, such as children's books and light novels, and let each student choose a material for his/her own. Following the Four Golden Rules for ER, I did not assign a material to the students. Students read books or stories at their own pace without using dictionaries. They might switch books if they wished. See photos of the class (Figures 4 -6)



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

Waldo Library --- Kathleen Langan, Humanities Librarian and other staff members) --- built up the Japanese ER collection (Figure 7). We have categorized reading materials into ten levels. Kathleen picked up “Pokemon” stickers to indicate levels of books in the collection (Figures 8 and 9).



Figure 7

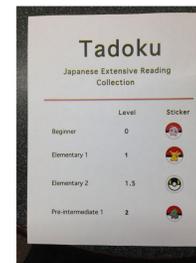


Figure 8

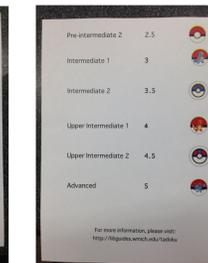


Figure 9

Japanese ER Class (cont'd)

Before the semester started, I asked fourteen students to fill in a questionnaire to get to know about each student's interest in reading. Most students have not read much in their second language (Japanese) and almost all of them answer that they always look up dictionaries when they meet unknown words. They tend to be hesitant about giving up a book in the middle of reading. In the first day of the class I explained the Four Golden Rules for ER, suggesting that they try to keep the rules as much as possible.

One of the course requirements is to keep logs — the record of what, how much, and when the students read in the ER method. I have asked them to keep record for their reading not only during the class time, but also any other time they go to read ER books in the library. Here is a sample of the log form (Figure 10).

No.	月日	本のなまえ	読む時間 約何分	むずかしさ	おもしろさ	感想 (Write either in Japanese or English)
例	1/14	やまのぼり	30-40	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	知らない言葉が多かった。とてもおもしろかった。There were some unknown words, but it was very interesting.
1				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
2				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
3				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
4				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
5				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
6				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
7				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
8				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
9				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
10				1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	

Figure 10

For example, a student R.V. came to the ER shelves to read Japanese books almost every day. When the third week ended, and I asked all students to submit their logs, R.V. had already finished reading 25 books! Although each book has only 15-30 pages, it is quite an accomplishment for him to read a number of books written in his second language for only a few weeks.

Conclusion

Through my experience to teach ER classes in Spring and Summer 2017 and a workshop that I attended in Japan, I learned that an instructor of ER class should always keep in mind that the students may be frustrated or stuck in the middle of reading; therefore, it is important that an instructor observes /watches each student carefully, and gives them appropriate guidance in a timely manner. For example, when a student doesn't seem to be focused on a book, the instructor approaches to the student and may give some information about the book or talk about the author. After discussing the book a little, the instructor may suggest that the student pick up another book. Some students may resist giving up a book, but the instructor shows them that there is no problem to put it away. In this way, the students in the ER class may gradually form a new habit for reading. Thus, individual attention is crucial for students' success for ER.