

**Driven to read:  
Enthusiastic readers in a Japanese high school's extensive reading program**

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**Abstract**

The paper reports on a long-term, multi-case study examining the motivations of avid readers in an extensive reading program at a private Japanese high school. Using an ethnographic approach to case study research, the project explores nine participants—their motivations for reading and what English study means for them. The two and a half year study finds strong similarities between the participants such as a love of literacy and a desire for autonomy. The findings call for greater consideration of non-cognitive factors such as affect and personal attributes in motivation research. This study adds to a growing body of qualitative literature focused on L2 reading motivation.

**Keywords:** motivation, extensive reading, L2 reading, literacy, autonomy, qualitative study, Japanese students, high school, educational ethnography, affect, personal attributes

No matter what course or subject, there are always some students who excel and some who struggle; it is a classroom reality. However, in the extensive reading program of the school in Osaka where I worked, there was a huge divide between our lowest and highest performing students—more than any other subject I have taught. There were a few students who read only dozens of pages a semester; most read three to four hundred pages; our most ardent readers regularly read more than a thousand pages per semester—hundreds of pages beyond that required to earn an “A” in the course. For these students, books seemed to be like food, and they were always hungry.

**Extensive Reading**

There is variation in the pedagogical community as to what is meant by extensive reading (ER). The program at the school has been based upon a practical application of Susser and Robb's (1990) working definition of ER<sup>1</sup>:

...a language teaching/learning procedure that is reading (a) of large quantities of material or long-texts; (b) for global or general understanding; (c) with the intention of obtaining pleasure from the text. Further, because (d) reading is individualized, with students choosing the books

they want to read, and (e) the books are not discussed in class (p. 10).

This ER program has been relatively successful. In addition to fostering a habit of English reading in our EFL students, it has provided them with a valuable source of English input.

Long (1981) argued that lack of enough comprehensible input usually results in failure of L2 acquisition. Redfield (1999) and others have attributed the lack of meaningful input as a primary reason for the failure of the English education system here in Japan. This helps explain why so many of Japan's students, despite more than six years of English education, have not truly acquired English as a functional second language. Yet, ER can provide Japanese students with massive amounts of input which is both comprehensible and meaningful. Therefore, ER programs are increasingly viewed as vital for English education in Japan. With this in mind, I began a research project exploring the motivations and attributes of the avid readers in the school's ER program to better understand what drove them to read so much.

### **Theoretical Framework of Motivation**

What is motivation? Dörnyei (2001) wrote that despite a variety of working definitions throughout the literature, most include the following three aspects: choice, persistence, and effort. The design of this study has been informed by motivation constructs from the disciplines of psychology, education, and second language acquisition.

The most dominant model of L2 motivation remains Gardner and Lambert's (1972) socio-educational model, which posited that motivation has a direct effect on second language acquisition (SLA). The authors argued that a strong integrative orientation (desire to have contact with native L2 speakers and to interact with L2 cultures) is a solid predictor of successful SLA and therefore more vital to SLA success than other motivational orientations such as instrumental orientation (desire to master the subject for utilitarian purposes such as job enhancement and increased income). In the field of SLA, the socio-educational model and its derivatives have dominated. However, some have been critical, particularly when the model has been applied to non-ESL environments. Au (1988) argued that a large number of studies—particularly those done outside of Western culture—have questioned the preeminent position of integrative orientation as the most likely indicator of success. Liu (1998) contended that most TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language) programs, and the SLA theories they are based on, assume learners have immigrated to North America, Britain, or Australia and have been culturally co-opted into the dominate cultures, a situation in which integrative orientations would likely prove to be the most beneficial. Sridhar (1994) argued that “current theories [in SLA] are powerfully constrained by Western cultural premises” (p. 800). It is valid to question how appropriate it is to utilize Western cultural constructs in understanding motivation in non-Western contexts.

Within the Asian context in particular, there have been inconsistent findings regarding the existence of an integrative orientation and the role it plays in acquisition. Warden and Lin's (2000) study of non-English majors at a university in Taiwan found no significant evidence for an integrative motivational group among their participants and instead describe ‘required

motivation' as a significant indicator of success. Chen, Warden, and Chang's (2005) survey of Taiwanese learners also found that integrative motivation did not play a significant role, and instead suggested a particular cultural motivator as an indicator of success. Conversely, Kimura, Nakata, and Okumura (2000) found that both intrinsic and integrative motivations were evident and in fact were large factors in their study of junior high school students in Japan. In a study looking at the values and beliefs of low-proficiency Japanese students of English, Lee (2004) was able to detect both instrumental and integrative motivations. However, she found neither were significant predictors of success. Rather, linguistic-confidence and attitude were more salient. Despite these inconsistencies, the model's orientations have been a helpful paradigm for understanding the variation in motivations evident in this project's participants.

Since 1972, there have been several modifications and expansions to the original socio-educational model. In particular, Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) extended social-psychological construct of L2 motivation and Clément's (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998) work with linguistic self-confidence have been very helpful to me in allowing for a more nuanced contextualization of L2 motivation. Noels, Pelletier, Clément, and Vallerand (2000) argued that these additional models are complimentary constructs to socio-educational theory.

Additional motivation models have sprung up in the last thirty years, due in part to the inconsistent research findings and concerns that the model was limiting (Ely, 1986; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Broadening considerably my understanding of motivation has been Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, which proposed that people's activity rationale could be viewed in terms of the degree to which that activity had been freely chosen and was therefore self-determined. They placed a variety of regulations on a continuum between outwardly determined (extrinsic) motivations to self-determined ones; the most self-determined orientation is intrinsic motivation (the desire to perform an activity for enjoyment and internal pleasure). Though not as commonly utilized in field of SLA as the socio-educational model, self-determination theory has been very useful in observing and categorizing the kinds of motivation observed in the participants of the present study.

Dörnyei and Ottó's (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Dörnyei, 2003) process model looks at the development of motivation over time, dividing the process into 'preactional,' 'actional,' and 'postactional' stages. The temporal aspect of this model has proved enlightening as I was trying to understand the changes observed in many of this study's participants over the two and half years they were monitored.

Another useful paradigm comes from research into 'possible selves.' Markus & Nurius (1986) argued that by looking at individuals' ideas of what they might possibly become, we can more fully grasp what appear on the surface to be illogical and unstable human actions and ideas. Higgins' work (1987, 1996) on possible selves, self-discrepancy theory, made distinct the notions of the actual-self (representations of attributes we think we possess), the ideal-self (hopes and desires we have for our futures), and the ought-self (characteristics and skills we believe that we should possess). Dörnyei (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a; 2005b) adopted Higgin's work to help explain the struggle second language learners go through when trying to minimize or eliminate the discrepancies between their actual selves and their idealized possible selves. According to

this model “this Ideal L2 Self is at the heart of motivated L2 learning behaviors.” (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a, p. 30). This use of the possible selves construct and the role it may have on learners’ motivation seems to be well-suited to explaining the dynamic mix of motivations my students exhibit.

Expectancy-value theory has been useful for understanding motivation in the context of reading. According to expectancy-value theory, the behavior of individuals is a function of the expectancy that an individual has and the value of the goal toward which the individual is working. Day and Bamford (1998) used expectancy-value theory in their proposed model for L2 motivation, breaking down expectancy into two factors: L2 reading ability and the quality of the reading materials (how interesting, language level, attractiveness, and availability). This model also separates value into another two factors: attitudes toward L2 reading and sociocultural factors. In their adaptation of the expectancy-value theory, Wigfield and Guthrie (1995) argued that L1 readers’ perceived chances of success and the value they assign to a particular task are the primary determinants of motivation. Wigfield and Guthrie suggested that a learner’s motivation to read may be domain-specific (1995). Expectancy-value theory has been particularly useful for the current study in that it incorporates non-cognitive considerations such as emotion.

As the project progressed, it became increasingly apparent that attitude and affect played a large part in encouraging the participants to read so avidly. Attitude, the way one feels and thinks about a particular topic, has a profound effect on motivation, but is also affected by motivation. Cotterall (1995) argued that attitudes have a significant influence on learning behaviors. Arnold and Brown (1999) defined affect as facets of moods, attitudes, and feelings which can affect behavior. Dörnyei (2001) admitted that within the domain of SLA motivation theories are usually dominated by the cognitive approach and often fail to adequately take emotion into account. Yet Schumann (1998) asserted that acquisition of an L2 is largely driven by emotional considerations.

Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) concept of a ‘flow’ experience—a state of mind and body when people are completely involved in a particular task while super motivated and enthralled by it—speaks to the power affect can have in motivating learners. In her investigation of flow experiences in the foreign language classroom, Egbert (2003) wrote:

Flow researchers have found that the following conditions occur during flow experiences: (a) a perceived balance of skills and challenge, (b) opportunities for intense concentration, (c) clear task goals, (d) feedback that one is succeeding at the task, (e) a sense of control, (f) a lack of self-consciousness, and (g) the perception that time passes more quickly (p. 499).

Referring to the power of flow, Arnold and Brown (1999) noted that “motivation, after all, is better guided by a move towards pleasure ... than by a move away from pain” (p. 2). This was evident in all nine participants in the present study.

## L2 Reading Motivation in Japan

Among the few SLA motivation studies to look at L2 reading specifically in the Japanese context (Nishino, 2005, 2007; Brantmeier, 2006; Sheu, 2004; Takase, 2001, 2002, 2007; Mori, 1999; Mason & Krashen, 1997), Mori (2002) explored the motivations of Japanese female university students. Mori found that Japanese learners of English were motivated to read primarily by four factors: intrinsic value, attainment value, extrinsic utility value, and expectancy for success. She suggested that integrative orientation might not be a distinct construct, at least in the Japanese context, and argued that L2 reading motivation may bear less resemblance to context specific L2 motivational models like Gardner and Lambert's and more to general models of motivation such as expectancy-value theories.

Nishino's 2005 study adapted Mori's survey instrument for a high school setting and is more central to this project. In her study of L2 reading motivations of Japanese high school students, Nishino (2005) found that foreign language motivation was multidimensional. Her findings concurred with Mori's, supporting motivational constructs proposed by expectancy-value theory. Nishino's participants believed that English reading was related to their future goals—a parallel finding of this present study.

Takase (2007) investigated Japanese high school students' motivation for L2 reading, finding students' intrinsic motivation for L1 and L2 reading the most notable factor—yet it was interesting that, no direct correlation between the two could be established. Familial attitudes toward reading were also a factor in increasing student motivation.

In the only other longitudinal case examining the motivation of Japanese high school students to read extensively, Nishino (2007) found dynamic shifts in L2 reading motivation, as was also apparent during this project. What initially motivates a learner to begin reading extensively will change, in part as a result of their success and failures, and in part due to outside factors. Nishino's study was published after data had been collected for this study, but before the analysis was finished; it has proved to be helpful during the final analysis and writing phases of this project.

### Current Study

The project was begun to investigate enthusiastic readers in an extensive reading program at a private high school in Japan. The research was driven by these questions:

What motivates these particular students to read so avidly?  
What personal attributes, habits, and values do they have that spur them on to read more than others?

I wanted to understand why they read as much as they did and how reading in English figured into their efforts to acquire an L2 and into their plans for the future.

Sakui and Gaies (1999) asserted that there are limitations as to how deeply quantitative studies

can delve into participants' motivations. Ushioda (as cited in Dörnyei, 2001) argued that qualitative methods may be better suited to examining the role of motivation over a span of time; however, to date, most research on motivation in the area of SLA has been quantitative, particularly in Asian contexts<sup>2</sup>. Qualitative inquiry can act to compliment the large number of quantitative studies on L2 motivational factors. However, as Tani-Fukuchi and Sakamoto (2005) noted, "Longitudinal and qualitative studies employing interviews and classroom observation are still rather scarce in Japanese foreign language motivation research and need to be addressed in future studies" (p. 347). The present study, along with others, helps address this deficit.

A qualitative, multi-case study approach was chosen to explore reader motivations "in terms of what patterns of thinking and belief underlie such activity and shape students' engagement in the learning process" (Ushioda, 2001, p. 96). An ethnographic approach was adopted for the case studies. The label 'case study with an ethnographic approach' refers to the methodological approach for data collection. It is not an 'ethnography,' which is defined as a socio-cultural interpretation of the data (Merriam, 1998). As both an instructor and a manager of the ER program, I had a deep perspective on the participants, which should afford a dimension oftentimes lacking in studies of L2 motivation. The intention of this project is to assist in filling in the colors of the outlines left by quantitative studies, as well as qualitative cross-sectional research, in order to help arrive at a fuller, more vivid picture of L2 readers who read so voluminously.

### *Setting*

The research was conducted at the high school where I was employed as an instructor and coordinator of the English program. It is a private school in Osaka, Japan known for its intensive English curriculum and non-traditional atmosphere. Though designated an 'international' school, all but a few of the students are of Japanese nationality. A number of students come to the school looking for a learning environment which is less conventional, with few limitations placed on student behavior outside of school and an informal atmosphere on campus; for at least a third of the students, the English emphasis is a secondary consideration. All students have ten to fifteen hours of English instruction and content courses taught in English each week. At the time of the study, the student population was approximately 90 students spread among three grades (10th through 12th).

Reading is a central part of the English curriculum. Students are required to take one year of 'basic reading' (a course using the traditional yakudoku, grammar-translation, approach). Students further take two years of both ER and intensive reading (IR); IR, also called 'direct instruction,' is the primary method of teaching reading in EFL throughout the world (for a discussion of differences, see Welch, 1997; Bamford & Day, 1997). The IR and ER courses each meet once a week. There are elective classes in basic reading skills for underclassmen and an ER elective class for seniors. Utilization of all three approaches to reading instruction (grammar translation, IR, and ER) is one of the school's strongest assets and has proved effective in appealing to the widest range of student personalities and interests.

Though ER classes meet once a week, students are expected to read daily, even on weekends and vacations (for more details on the school's extensive reading program, see Judge, 2006). The

library is open during school hours and students are encouraged to pick up new books whenever they need. The library consists of graded readers, Japanese stories translated into English (mostly historical tales and contemporary comics), and English books written for L1 youth. Currently there are over 600 books. Readers are allowed to bring in their own materials, and some do. Students are evaluated on the number of weighted-pages they read<sup>3</sup>. The library is in a large room with comfortable chairs, tables, and posters on the walls of various books. The room is relatively cheery and students often hang out there when not in class.

### *Participants*

For this project, learners who were reading much more than they needed to in order to do well in the class were selected. The difficulty level of books read were not taken into consideration, only the volume of pages. Among the eager readers, there were varying levels of English competency, ranging from advanced to intermediate. Eleven students were initially recruited to participate, of which nine remained in the study. Two participants were dropped mid-way because of difficulties in arranging times for interviews.

All participants shared qualities essential for this project. First, they had high page-counts (see Table 1). Second, they exhibited a lack of shyness and frankness helpful when discussing a program which was administered by the researcher—I needed participants who would tell me, to my face, what they did and did not like about the program, studying English, and themselves. Finally, they were students who were in several of my classes and with whom I had regular access to outside of the classroom. I was fortunate to find participants who were direct and forthcoming, which was essential for thoroughly exploring a topic as intricate, intimate, and ambiguous as motivation.

My position within the school and my relationship with the participants were not unproblematic. Power and personal relationships need to be considered. The participants were in my classes and knew me as a teacher and ER program manager. They could have felt reluctant to express views and opinions that reflect negatively on ER and the school. Block (2000) noted that “in the course of an interview the ... research participants might change voices depending on the way they situate themselves vis-à-vis a particular question and the person asking it” (p. 760). However, due to the informal atmosphere of the school and the close nature of my interpersonal relationships with these particular learners, I am confident they spoke their minds freely without much regard for my relationship to them. As an added measure, informed consent forms made clear that their participation would in no way effect our school or personal relationships. Participants were periodically reminded of their right to withdraw at anytime. Finally, students were given the option of having their case studies removed from the larger study at the end of their participation in the project.

Though aware of the pitfalls of being too close to the participants, I am equally aware of the necessity of being close enough to participants to be able to speak authoritatively. Patton (2002) made the point by looking at the converse situation: “Distance does not guarantee objectivity; it merely guarantees distance” (p. 575). It is essential that researchers become as familiar as possible with participants; the very nature of qualitative inquiry requires a subjective, heuristic, informal understanding of participants.

Table 1. *Participants in the study*

Name*	Sex	Semesters of ER class observed	Class level**	Max pages read each semester***
Satoshi	Male	3 +	1 <sup>st</sup>	755, 955, 560
Mari	Female	2 +	2 <sup>nd</sup> , then 1 <sup>st</sup>	505, 770
Hanako	Female	3 +	1 <sup>st</sup>	480, 795, 1077
Atsuko	Female	3 +	2 <sup>nd</sup> , then 1 <sup>st</sup>	659, 1057, 1876
Saori	Female	5	2 <sup>nd</sup> , then 1 <sup>st</sup>	732, 705, 1939, 1176, 577
Eri	Female	4 +	2 <sup>nd</sup>	570, 871, 1405, 698
Riku	Male	3 +	2 <sup>nd</sup>	427, 598, 918
Ryoichi	Male	3 +	2 <sup>nd</sup>	632, 805, 2223
Ken	Male	3 +	2 <sup>nd</sup> , then 1 <sup>st</sup>	464, 804, 1119

*Note.* \* All names are pseudonyms. \*\* Students are streamed into four levels, 1<sup>st</sup> being the highest and 4<sup>th</sup> the lowest. \*\*\* There are approximately 15 weeks per semester. At the time of the study, those in the highest level were expected to read a minimum of 5 pages per day for an “A” (15 weeks \* 7 days \* 5 pages = 525); for the lowest level, the minimum for an “A” was 2 pages per day (210). The participants for this study came from the highest two levels.

Nine participants completed the study: four male, five female. The participants ranged in age from 16 to 17 years old at the start of the project. All had been abroad for short periods of time, but none had ever lived in English-speaking countries. When the study began, two participants, Satoshi and Mari, were in the 11th grade; the others were in the 10th grade. Data was gathered for approximately two and a half years, until shortly after the younger cohort graduated from the school. The two older participants generously continued to make themselves available for more than a full year after they graduated.

### Data Collection Methods

Case studies are research without a particular methodological approach. The defining characteristic of case study research is the unit of study—the case. For this project, each participant is a separate case that when compared can lead to a greater understanding of the phenomena being studied. Case studies are by nature holistic, heuristic, and context sensitive.

There are various disciplinary orientations that can be utilized when undertaking case study research (Merriam, 1998). An ethnographic approach was chosen as the most suitable for this site. My long time employment at the school, my position as English Coordinator and manager of the ER Program, and finally the informal relations between teachers and students were all factors that lent themselves to an ethnographic approach.

Taking such an approach, informal methods of data gathering were incorporated. Participants were observed in ER classes, in other courses, and periodically, outside of school. When possible, notes were made throughout the observation period. Analysis was further informed by numerous casual conversations and email exchanges on topics such as reading, English study, and other themes. Long-term participant-observation is a rarely utilized technique in L2 education research, yet it proved to be the most fruitful method of gathering data in this study. The many hours I spent together with participants in and outside of the school setting were invaluable, providing



insight into participants' thinking patterns, behaviors, hopes and dreams.

Interviews were the primary method of formal data collection. The first two interviews were structured by a protocol—influenced by Mori's (2002) survey instrument; the questions were thought out in advance and asked in a specified order (see Appendices A and B). The third interview involved participants being shown different books from the library and being asked about which kind of books they wanted to read and why. The final interview was informal and open-ended to pursue ideas developed during previous talks and observations. The first set of interviews was done at the beginning of the study. The second and third interviews were done several months later. The final interview was done shortly after each participant graduated from the high school. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for coding and analysis. Notes were also kept for each interview.

The interviews were conducted primarily in English, with occasional Japanese usage. Since I have limited fluency in Japanese, bringing in an interpreter was considered. However, after consulting with several participants, it became clear that most felt uncomfortable with the idea of having a stranger present during talks. Additionally, the participants were a bit put-off by the suggestion, as they were accustomed to speaking in English at school and felt that it was somewhat an insult to their abilities. However, a translator was engaged during the development of the interview protocols, so all questions could be provided to the interviewees in both languages. Further, the translator listened to the recorded interviews and provided confirmation/correction of the author's understandings of any Japanese language utterances.

A written questionnaire was also used to gather data (see Appendix C). The instrument consisted of seven half-completed sentences. The participants were asked to finish the sentences and then briefly explain their reasoning. The survey was done via the internet or as a take-home activity to give participants a chance to answer at their own pace and without the researcher present. The questionnaire was composed in English, translated into Japanese by a bilingual teacher, and finally checked by the translator to insure that the questions were as similar as possible in both languages. Students were encouraged to answer in either language, but most replied in English, with only occasional comments in Japanese.

Documents were used as additional sources of data. Merriam (1998) observed that documents are helpful “for qualitative case studies because they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated” (p. 126). Within the ER program, students have a reading record and produce book summaries; these were helpful for understanding the impressions participants had while reading individual texts. Participants also permitted copies of selected work done in other courses at the school to be collected (personal journal entries, school essays and miscellaneous assignments), giving me a vital avenue into student thinking. Documentary evidence was used, as Yin (2003) recommended, to “corroborate and augment” data gathered from observations, interviews, and the questionnaire (p. 87).

### Analysis of the Cases: Emergent Themes

Data was coded for primary themes and analyzed using *content analysis*. Patton (2002) defined content analysis as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (p. 453). Krippendorff (2004) noted that it “has evolved into a repertoire of methods of research that promise to yield inferences from all kinds of... data” (p. 17). Content analysis is empirically grounded. It is particularly useful in cases where there are large amounts of data and when the goal is to look for patterns and identifications (Krippendorff, 2004). Content analysis was chosen because its unobtrusive nature and contextual approach lent itself to the ethnographic method employed for this study.

Analysis on the project began with an inductive approach and then, as themes started to solidify, progressed to deductive analysis to affirm the authenticity of findings. By the second round of analysis on the first interviews, fourteen categories that appeared significant were coded from the data: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, motivational intensity, ethnocentricity level, familial factors, teacher-student relationships, identity issues, autonomy, L2 anxiety, linguistic confidence, a need for cognition, and a love of literacy. After the second formal interviews were analyzed, a new category was added: willingness to communicate. The love for literacy theme was then reorganized into two distinct themes, including a love of reading for each language. The first interviews were subsequently reanalyzed for the expanded categories. Werner and Schoepfle (as cited in Merriam, 1998) suggested using such classification systems as ‘cognitive maps’ to help the researcher identify relevant patterns.

Data was analyzed in stages: as it was gathered, after each instrument had been applied to all the participants, and again when the individual case summaries were constructed. Analysis continued in smaller spurts of activity—each time another case report was completed, the previous cases were reviewed so that each participant acted as a heuristic sounding board for the other cases. Over time, several central themes emerged from the data.

Many of the nine participants showed significant similarities: a love of literacy in their L1, an appreciation for autonomous activities, an incorporation of English competency into their idealized selves, and a dynamic multitude of motivations that were mutually supportive. There were also differences found among the nine: varying levels of English competency, linguistic confidence, L2 anxiety, social engagement, and willingness to communicate. Due to limitations of space, the discussion will be confined to the two strongest themes that emerged from the data: a love of L1 reading that fed L2 reading behavior and the lure of autonomy that ER engenders.

#### *A love of literacy since early youth*

Interviewer	What is your goal for English reading? Why do you do it?
Atsuko	Why? I didn’t do much thinking about it. I am just read. I like reading. I just like reading.

(Interview #1)<sup>4</sup>

Atsuko                      Reading is one of my favorite things!  
(Interview #3)

Atsuko's enthusiasm for reading was clear and she was not alone. Saori, another participant, typifies what I found. She was a keen reader in both Japanese and English, in and out of school. Saori has been reading in Japanese since early childhood. Her grandparents are big readers and Saori remembered their home as being full of various kinds of books. Saori's love of Meiji-era stories came from her grandmother. Literacy and education are valued by her grandparents and extended family—something she felt strongly. One of Saori's first interests when beginning the ER program was reading books whose translations (into Japanese) she had read in her youth. Though Saori's familial connection to reading was specific to her experience, most of the nine participants reported memories of family encouragement of reading. All of the participants felt that literacy was valued in their families.

Studies have linked early literacy development to a variety of academic achievements (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Bus, Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995). In arguing for the importance of literacy programs for the young, Siegel and Hanson (1992) noted that "Early childhood [reading] experiences... are particularly important to literacy development" (p. 9). It is therefore no surprise that six of the nine participants professed a strong love of reading in Japanese, a habit they reported beginning in their early years. This love of reading and the respect they showed for literacy seems to have paved the way for these participants to embrace reading in English.

Some of the participants saw reading in English as a natural extension of their interest in reading in Japanese. Hanako epitomized the responses several gave when asked about enjoyment of reading:

I like reading. Reading books is very good for me. I can know many things and of course it is very interesting.... I like reading English books but Japanese books too. I want to read many kinds of books. So, only English or only Japanese, or only novels is bad. I don't like reading only one type of thing.

(Interview #1)

This is not to say, however, that they viewed English reading in exactly the same way as they did reading in Japanese. For Atsuko, the pleasure of reading was enhanced when reading in English because it also gave her a sense of pride:

When I finish reading [English books] I get more an achievement than Japanese books and if the [English] book is interesting, I also get a feeling of satisfaction.

(Email Correspondence)

For Ken, the opposite seemed true. Ken liked reading in Japanese, and although he maintained that he also enjoyed reading in English, he admitted the pleasure was substantially less because of the challenge of reading in an L2:

I cannot read a book [in English] comfortably like a Japanese book. I know Japanese very well, so I can read Japanese books comfortably, but I don't know English well, so I have to read a book hard. [Sometimes] I feel tired, if I read hard.

(Email Correspondence)

Like Ken, Ryoichi insisted that while he loved reading in both Japanese and English, for him the kind of pleasure was different. This finding concurs with Takase (2007), who suggested that though both L1 and L2 intrinsic motivation to read are significant, they are distinct phenomena. Not all of the participants, however, made a distinction between the pleasures of L1 and L2 reading. Atusko felt that her love of reading was the same, though she understood the challenges to be different.

The increased challenges of reading in an L2 did not prevent any of the participants from finding joy in the exercise. If the book was not too challenging and if the topic was something that interested him, Ken became very engaged in the text. Ken loved mysteries and adventure stories, but above all he loved movie adaptations:

[I like] reading a books about a movie. I like movies, so I feel happy when I read English books about movie....In addition, if I know the story of a movie I can read it easily. I can read my favorite movie stories in English.

(Email Correspondence)

Eri, too, found that reading favored genres was effective in keeping her reading, as long as the texts were not beyond her comfort level. When asked what a 'good ER book' would be for her, Eri wrote:

A good ER book for me is books in my favorite categories, like mysteries, and books that are not too difficult to read. [For example English versions of Japanese comic books are] effective to keep my interest in the story.

(Questionnaire)

Eri was by no means alone in this respect. For many of the nine participants, they saw reading as a central part of their lives and English reading to be an extension of that habit.

During his first interview, Satoshi said emphatically, "[English] reading gives us new words and new point of views... new ways of thinking." For Hanako, English reading is a tool to reach out to other cultures more directly:

I am interested in [international] literature and performing arts. And I want to touch them directly. This is why I study English. Reading English books is very easy way to know real English...

(Questionnaire)

Saori, too, felt that L2 reading was a necessary step in her pursuit of learning about art; she believed that a solid reading ability in both English and French would eventually be required for her to understand European art, a subject that she was passionate about. Many of the participants seemed to have incorporated a notion of being ‘capable English readers’ into their idealized possible selves and were actively working toward that dream – something that speaks to Dörnyei’s argument for the existence of an ‘Ideal L2 Self’ in highly motivated learners (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a; 2005b).

As I observed the nine over the course of the study, it became clear that most had integrated a love and respect for L1 reading into their motivation for learning English. Participants’ L2 reading motivations were multifaceted and often in flux – for most in this study, their drives appeared to be connected to internal desires and external needs. Riku wrote “One thing I like about reading English is that I can study with fun. Reading is not quite studying, still I can learn...” For most of the participants, reading in English combined the intrinsic joys they found when reading good books in Japanese with the instrumentally-oriented satisfaction that came from knowing they were successfully reading in a second language, something which was important to their future academic and professional plans. Also evident in many of the nine was an enhancement of that joy stemming from being closer to the thinking of other cultures, which is strongly integrative in nature. Of the nine, Satoshi, Mari, Eri, Saori and Hanako demonstrated vibrant integrative orientations; Atsuko and Riku exhibited more moderate amounts of integrativeness; Ken and Ryoichi usually appeared more driven by extrinsic considerations and showed lesser (however, not insignificant amounts of) integrative motivation. The multifaceted interplay of motivational constructs may in fact be one of the reasons why Takase (2007) did not detect a positive relationship between a love of reading in the L1 and in the L2; previous quantitative studies have also failed to show such a connection.

Of the nine participants in the larger study, all but one reported reading lots of Japanese materials prior to starting the ER program. It may seem obvious, but the power a love of reading can have on a child’s academic future is so potent it deserves repeating. Though the literature reveals a firm link between L1 and L2 literacy skills (for examples, see Bialystok, 2002; and Ford, 2005), I was unable to find anything that *clearly* identifies the link between a love of reading in L1 and a love of reading in the L2. Takase (2001) found that *both* are factors in motivating students to read more in English. In a later study, Takase (2007) again found that they were both significant indicators for predicting high volume reading; however, as mentioned before, she was unable to observe any positive relationship between the two. Nonetheless, it seems intuitive that a love of reading in one’s first language might feed into a love of reading in another language, assuming there are enough interesting, accessible texts written at a comfortable difficulty level for the language learner.

Many of the participants reported that the joy of reading was introduced to them by their parents. Atsuko’s mother was a kindergarten teacher who had lots of beginning texts around her home; her father was a big reader of technology and science fiction books. Mari reported that both her parents were big readers as well; her mother was a regular at the local municipal library. Riku stated that his father was a big reader of philosophy books; Ryoichi said his father read every day on the train commute to and from work, reading mostly mysteries. Christine Nuttall (2000)

claimed that “Reading is like an infectious disease: it is caught, not taught” (p. 192); these participants are shining examples of that.

There is an elective ER course for seniors. It is held early first period on Fridays; when asked why she was willing to take the elective ER course during her final semester, a time when most seniors lighten their class loads to concentrate on studying for university entrance exams, Saori replied without hesitation:

Morning is a little hard for me, but I like reading. Many English books [in the ER library]. I want to read more [of these] books. And I want to become a good reader.

(Interview #3)

### *The appeal of autonomy*

When comparing the school’s intensive reading course (IR) with that of the extensive reading class (ER), several of the participants made a clear distinction about their enjoyment of the classes. Atusko commented:

One thing like about [ER] is that I am free to choose books by myself. One thing I don’t like about [IR] is that I am forced to read something which I am not interested.

(Questionnaire)

Hanako concurred:

As for intensive reading, if the teacher has many discussions I can share my opinion. But if the teacher does not, or, if the book is not interesting to me, then I don’t want to [read].

(Interview #1)

Extensive reading provides learners with as much autonomy as they are likely to experience in a school setting. Students choose not only their own reading material, but also when, where, and how much to read. Dickinson (1995) argued that more effective learning comes about when learners are intrinsically motivated and provided with an ‘autonomy supporting’ environment; she further claimed that autonomy will enhance the learners level of intrinsic motivation (p. 169). Schraw, Flowerday, and Reisetter’s (1998) study questioned whether choice in reading truly improves cognitive engagement, however, it supported the idea that choice does contribute to affective engagement. All of the participants in the present study indicated that the independence they felt was a key aspect of their enjoyment of the ER program.

Atsuko is a prime example. Though she had many friends at school, Atsuko often appeared a little bit a part from others. Her reading classes gave her a chance to go her own way and spread her wings. To Atsuko, the joy she had reading was a private affair, though she was not at all ashamed when it was brought to the attention of the class how well she was doing. Atsuko was

proud of the fact that she carefully chose books based on her own interests. She valued reading experiences that affected her emotionally and gave her something to think about. Atsuko, unlike many of my less-than-avid readers, never hesitated to put down a book that failed to keep her interest. She utilized the power that autonomy gave her quite readily.

ER was well-suited to the participants' natures. Hanako is representative; she demonstrated significant anxiety about making mistakes. Hanako, like Atsuko, preferred writing and reading, where she could control the pace and had time to look things up. Speaking and listening she found to be less enjoyable because she was neither able to unilaterally control the choice of topic nor the pace at which conversation occurred; she was a very capable speaker, though somewhat shy. However, it seemed to be in her nature to prefer reading and writing because they lent themselves to her meticulous and independent nature.

A desire for independence in education generally was evident among almost all the participants. When asked about her time spent studying at *juku* (cram school), Saori said:

I didn't like *juku*. I don't like studying only for university tests. I like learning fun things...I want to get knowledge, I don't want to learn about things that have been decided by others. Boring.  
(Interview #2)

This sentiment was echoed by Mari, who resented her mother's firm guidance on what to study in preparation for university exams:

Study is my own business. It is not her business. I don't want someone to tell about my way of studying.  
(Interview #3)

Eri was another participant who thrived most when doing tasks that had a high degree of autonomy. Writing and ER were two classes she reported enjoying the most. Eri was an agreeable person, known in school for working well with others, but she felt this reputation was not a positive one. When discussing her choice of university, I could hear the resentment in her voice when explaining that she choose the same university as her brother because of its art and English programs, and not because her older brother was also there:

Some people say 'you just follow your brother' but I don't!  
I don't want to hear that thing. I picked a university just for me.  
When someone say such a thing, I don't like that.  
(Interview #3)

Students are in charge of practically every aspect of the ER program except for grades, the only area to get negative critiques from the participants. Several of the participants expressed complaints about the page-count system in the ER program. They wanted to be left to their own devices to read whatever and whenever they wanted. In particular, Hanako was adamant that she would have enjoyed the program more if she did not have to be concerned with counting pages and recording books read. In her first interview, Hanako complained:

I like reading English books but Japanese books too. I want to read many kinds of books. So, only English or only Japanese, or only novels... I don't like reading only one type.... ER is concerned with grades. If I want to read a Japanese book, but I can't read it. So I read the English [one], but I think about grade or credit.

(Interview #1)

Sixteen months later, asked to reflect back about the feelings she had expressed, she said:

Hanako I want to read books just for my pleasure.  
 Interviewer So you don't want to be graded or watched?  
 Hanako Yes. Just read.  
 Interviewer So do you think the grade for ER, did it push you to read more, or did it get in the way of reading?  
 Hanako Hmm. Push me to read more, but not as enjoyable.  
 Interviewer So it helped you read a lot, but it took away some pleasure in reading?  
 Hanako Yes. Sometimes.<sup>5</sup>

(Interview #3)

As a high school instructor, I believe that dropping page counting is not feasible, administratively or practically; some students would fail to read even a single book, and it would be difficult to assess those that had read. Further, while it is true that ER aims to promote a love of reading in L2 students, for a program to be successful in the context of Japan, school administrators, parents, and students must be convinced that reading extensively will not only feed their love of reading, but also lead to higher fluency, which will have benefits for the learners' academic careers. Therefore, for ER to be truly effective in Japanese high schools, the program must aim at feeding *both* intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

What is salient to this project, however, is that Hanako and a few of the others were so motivated to read that they did not need the pressure of page-counts. In fact, Hanako continued reading in English during her final year of school, despite not enrolling in the ER elective class. Hanako maintained that she did not sign up for the class because it was held too early (first period) and she also felt a need to concentrate on studying for university exams.<sup>6</sup> Yet in her free time, she read books in English about acting, comedy, theatre, and topics related to her interests. At least in her case (and many others in the study), page counting was not a motivating factor. Despite having issues with page counting, they continued to read. All participants earned an "A+" in each semester of the course. In their senior year of school, Eri and Saori took ER as an elective; Hanako, Ryoichi, and Riku did not, but reported continuing reading on their own.

What stood out among the nine participants in the present study was a desire to find books that interested them personally and a predisposition for learning practices that offered a high degree of autonomy. It is significant that of the nine participants, none of them displayed any difficulty with independent tasks in any of their other courses; in fact, several had a marked preference for them. The solitary and quiet nature of ER class did not detract from these learners' enjoyment of



reading.

Autonomy is not a cure-all, however. Not all students—particularly in the Japanese context—find a high level of self-determination desirable, and even those who do often lose motivation when learning takes place in isolation. For that very reason, the reading program at the school features several different reading programs and courses utilizing different approaches to teaching reading.

### **Study Limitations and Concerns**

All research outside a controlled environment is a series of compromises, and this study is no different. This research had two primary limitations: linguistic challenges and the potential for researcher bias.

I am not fluent in Japanese, yet respondents were asked to be as forthcoming and detailed as they could. The problem was minimized by bringing in Japanese language support where possible. A translator was engaged for surveys, protocols, and transcription of any Japanese used during interviews. An on site Japanese teacher who was bilingual agreed to check the work of the translator and to assist during the observation phase as was necessary. All participants were well-known to me (between one to three years prior to the study), and we had already established a comfortable rapport. Respondents were encouraged to use Japanese whenever they liked or needed—my proficiency level is high enough to get the general idea—and everything was checked later by the translator or the bilingual Japanese teacher, who listened to the recorded interviews to ensure that, my understanding of participants' words or nuances was acceptable.

My position relative to the participants is also an issue. The validity of qualitative research, in part, depends on the integrity of the researcher and a willingness to be forthcoming about how they situate themselves among those they study. There is no way that I can claim the objectivity of a disinterested party – nor would I wish to. Being the ER program manager and an instructor at the site, as well as knowing the participants for a long time puts me, the researcher, at risk of adopting the point of view of the informant uncritically (Adler and Adler, 2003).

During the analytical phase of the study I took steps to mediate this bias. First, while analyzing data, I was careful to keep in mind my position and relationship with my students. Second, reading as broadly as I could in the areas of motivation, SLA, and ER, I constantly compared my findings with the literature in an attempt to maintain a wide perspective. Finally, I consulted with other teachers at the school who knew the participants well and asked for their input regarding my analysis.

### **Discussion**

At the beginning of the project, I expected that there might be similarities in the strength and types of motivation evident among most of the participants. While most exhibited an intrinsic interest in English reading and some level of integrative orientation, only three of the participants

appeared to be driven by such motivations over prolonged periods. Three others seemed to be more influenced by instrumental considerations. Overall, no discernable patterns emerged from the data that would suggest that one particular kind of motivation was superior to another in terms of encouraging L2 reading.

All nine subjects displayed an ample mix of motivations that appeared to change shape and intensity dynamically over the course of the study; these findings are similar to Nishino's (2007) and Takase's (2002) studies. The participants demonstrated vibrant motivational orientations that were multi-faceted and in a near-constant state of change. Even when the kinds of motivations in play were clear, they changed significantly over time in ways that revealed no easily understandable pattern. Whichever particular motivation was strongest at any one time in these participants did not appear significant. However, they exhibited motivational changes that were much more animated and vigorous than the less-than-avid readers in the school's program. Could the very fluidity of these participants' motivations have been a major contributing factor to their avid reading? More study is needed.

The nine cases in the present study support Nishino's (2007) argument that a variety of factors influence the motivations of L2 readers, including sociocultural influences external to the ER environment; as she noted, "multiple factors might have interplayed, altering the participants' motivational constructs moment by moment" (p. 96). This speaks to the importance of temporal considerations in motivation research. Mori (2002), Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), Ushioda (1996), and others have argued for a view of motivation that takes into account the passing of time.

Several participants in the current study talked about having experiences similar to what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described as a 'flow' experience. Free reading would seem to lend itself to such flow-inducing tasks, at least among learners who have a positive affective connection to reading. It was clear that many of the participants in the study had experienced flow while reading in English on multiple occasions.

Extensive reading provided these nine individual learners with the autonomy, the access to interesting materials, and the positive reinforcement needed for continued L2 acquisition. ER supported their affective bond with reading in general. Further, all of them saw reading in English as a part of their path toward their future possible selves. Thanks to Dörnyei and others, SLA-specific research into possible selves is on the rise.

Examination of these nine participants highlights several issues that need further exploration for their pedagogical and research implications: the importance of L1 literacy as a predictor for L2 reading success, the benefits and pitfalls of autonomous activities in schools, and a need for learning environments that foster a multitude of motivations and that encourage students to see English ability as part of their idealized selves. An Arab proverb says, "A book is like a garden carried in the pocket." Language students who believe this are more likely to read avidly in their L2, providing they have access to a wide variety of materials at appropriate levels. Surveying incoming students to determine their interest in L1 reading and their experiences with literacy in their youth may help L2 reading programs determine what strategies to incorporate to increase motivation. What needs to be looked at next are the unmotivated L2 readers. If we can find a way to engage them at anywhere close to the levels I was fortunate to observe in the participants

of this study, we cannot help but produce successful L2 readers and communicators.

## **Conclusion**

Motivation is an amorphous, dynamic construct—one that resides, in large parts, in the subconscious of the individual. Interviews and questionnaires only scratch at the surface of the phenomenon; observations and documents can give perspective, but only to a degree. I would argue that motivation research is best served when motivation is looked at indirectly. Motivation can be more deeply understood by examining affect, behavior, and attitudes; motivation is influenced by them and, in turn, influences them.

Though I set out to examine the kinds of motivation of my most avid readers, what I found was that these participants' motivations could neither be adequately understood by merely labeling and categorizing various types, nor by measuring their intensity at a singular point in time. I have come to believe the future of motivation studies lies in holistic and heuristic examinations of the personal attributes, affect, and individual variations in our learners.

The present study enforces my belief that educational programs with facets appealing to a wide variety of motivations and that are conducive to helping students along their own individual paths toward finding idealized identities are the programs that work best. Extensive reading can and should be a part of any L2 curriculum, for it empowers individual learners to find for themselves a path toward second language acquisition while furthering a love of reading that will benefit them years into their futures.

Who were these nine participants? They were highly independent, headstrong, intelligent, and sensitive young learners who found enjoyment, knowledge, satisfaction, and a safe space away from the pressures of the world around them and the stresses of learning a second language. This description might surprise some, but as Tani-Fukuchi and Sakamoto (2005) reminded their readers, it is important to be aware of the stereotypes that reside in us. As instructors and researchers, we need to look beyond stereotypes. If I have learned anything from studying these individual readers, it is that teachers who are lucky enough to have literate, independent students who are aware of what it takes to accomplish their dreams only have to offer a secure, supportive environment with access to plenty of interesting reading materials and let nature take its course.

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## Notes

1. For a more thorough description of extensive reading, see Welch (1997); Waring (1997); Helgesen (1997).
2. A recent notable exception is Nishino's (2007) longitudinal study looking at the experiences of two female high school students reading extensively in Japan.
3. The value of pages counted depends on the average number of words on each page and difficulty of the vocabulary and grammar in the text. For discussion on page weighting, see Helgesen (1997); or Susser and Robb (1989).
4. Participants' remarks have been edited for clarity, brevity, and L2 global errors. Words within brackets [] are assumed based on context, or translated from Japanese.
5. Observing this participant over the length of the study, I am confident that despite her comments, she would agree schools need to assess students; however, Hanako loved reading so much that she could not see that others might not read in English if there hadn't been formal courses and page-counting.
6. At the time of Hanako's third interview, she had just finished what is called in Japan 'Exam Hell'—a period when senior high students take a series of university entrance exams. I viewed her comments in part as a reaction to her frustration with 'exam hell' rather than to merely feelings about grades and page counting. For more on 'Exam Hell,' see Haberman (1988).

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## Appendix A

### *A guided interview questions for interview #1*

1. Do you like reading in English? Why?  
(英語で本を読むのは好きですか? またどうしてですか?)
2. How often do you read in English? (どれくらい頻りに英語で本を読みますか?)
3. Regarding English reading, what types of books appeal to you? Why?

- (英語のリーディングでどのような種類の本が好きですか? またどうしてですか?)
4. Where do you do most of your L2 reading? (英語のリーディングを主にどこでしますか?)
  5. Do you like reading in Japanese? (日本語での読書は好きですか?)
  6. If reading (IR & ER) were not required, would you take it as an elective?  
(もしIRやERが必修でなければ、選択科目としてIRやERの授業を取りますか?)
  7. What do you want to gain from reading in English?  
(英語のリーディングから何を得たいですか?)
  8. How much a factor is grades in pushing you to read?  
(あなたがリーディングをする理由の中で「良い成績を得ること」はどれほどの割合を占めていますか?)
  9. What do you want to do in the future (career)? Do you think that reading in English will be helpful to your future career? (あなたは将来どのような仕事をしたいですか? また、英語のリーディングは将来の職業で役に立つと思いますか?)
  10. Do you think that reading in English makes you more 'international'?  
(英語のリーディングはあなたをより国際的にしていると思いますか?)
  11. When you are reading, do you find yourself thinking in English or Japanese?  
(英語のリーディングをしている時、英語で考えていますか? 日本語ですか?)
  12. What is your weakest skill area (listening, reading, speaking, writing)?  
(英語で、あなたの一番の弱点は何ですか? リスニング、リーディング、スピーキング、ライティング)
  13. What is your strongest skill area (listening, reading, speaking, writing)? (では、あなたの一番得意なものは何ですか? (リスニング、リーディング、スピーキング、ライティング))
  14. Do you prefer short stories or longer ones? Easier or more difficult ones? (短編と長編ではどちらを好みますか? また、簡単なものと難解なものではどちらを好みますか?)
  15. How often do you use the dictionary when reading for ER? How do you feel about it? What kind of dictionary do you use? (ERのリーディングの際、どれくらい頻繁に辞書を使用しますか? 辞書を使用することに対してどう感じますか? また、どんな辞書を使用しますか?)
  16. How 'into' the stories do you get when you are reading English books?  
(英語でリーディングをしている時、どれほど話に入りこんでいますか?)
  17. What is your goal for English study? (英語学習における最終目標は何ですか?)
  18. When did you first become interested in English? What age and why? (初めて英語に興味を持ったのはいつですか? 何歳でしたか? どうしてですか?)

## Appendix B

### *A guided interview questions for interview #2*

Integrative:

1. Do you want to make friends with foreigners outside of school?  
学校以外で外国人の友達を作りたいですか?
2. Do you have a desire to understand the cultures of other countries?  
外国の文化を理解したいという気持ちはありますか?



## Instrumental:

3. Do you believe that English is necessary for your personal development?  
あなたの個人の成長に英語は必要だと思いますか?
4. Is English necessary for your future career?  
あなたの将来の職業に英語は必要ですか?

## Anxiety:

5. Are you nervous when talking to foreigners in English?  
外国人に英語で話す時緊張しますか?
6. Are you nervous about answering questions in your English Classrooms?  
英語のクラスで質問に回答する時緊張しますか?

## Linguistic Confidence:

7. When you speak in English how much do you worry about making mistakes?  
英語を話す時、どれほど間違えることが気になりますか?
8. How confident are you that eventually you will master English?  
英語を完全にマスターすることに対してどれほど自信がありますか?

## Motivational Intensity:

9. Do you feel that you usually study English often in school? Why?  
学校では英語を常に一生懸命勉強していると感じますか? またどうしてですか?
10. Do you spend more effort studying English than other subjects? Why?  
他の科目より英語に努力を費やしていますか? またどうしてですか?

**Appendix C***Interview Questions for the Internet Survey*

Please complete the following sentence using your own words (English or Japanese). After you have completed the sentences, please provide explanations of what the sentences mean and why you feel that way as detailed as possible.

以下の文章を自分の言葉で完成させてください。文章を完成させた後に、その文章の意図するもの、またどうしてそう感じるのかをできる限り詳しく説明してください。

1. For me, reading in English is ...  
私にとって英語のリーディングとは、
2. I did a lot of reading in the ER program because ...  
ER プログラムで多くのリーディングをしました。なぜなら、
3. One thing I like about reading in English is ...  
英語のリーディングで好きなことを一つ挙げるなら、

4. One think I don't like about reading in English is ...  
英語のリーディングで嫌いなことを一つ挙げるなら、
5. A good ER book for me is ...  
私にとって、良い ER の本とは、
6. A bad ER book for me is ...  
私にとって、悪い ER の本とは、
7. The reason(s) why I am motivated to read in English is ...  
英語のリーディングに対する意欲をかきたてる理由は、

### **About the Author**

Patrick B. Judge earned his MS.Ed from Temple University, Japan. He currently teaches at several universities in the Kansai region of Japan, where he has been a long-time resident. His research interests include extensive reading, learner identities, motivation, and intensive use of media in the classroom. Email: [pjudge@me.com](mailto:pjudge@me.com)