



CPD Session Minutes

Date	April 24 th 2026
Title	Recycling Readers
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Learning Outcomes	• Be able to distinguish extensive reading from intensive reading • Appreciate the multiple benefits of graded readers • Understand the central dilemma (individual activity v group class) • Use some tips for success with readers • Recognize common pitfalls • Recycling readers for other purposes
Summary	The workshop aims to emphasis the usefulness of Graded Readers for their primary purpose (Extensive Reading) and other uses which they be recycled for.

Background

This workshop focused on Readers. There were two aspects considered. Firstly, how to get learners to actually READ. This is the primary reason for prescribing readers is to develop their Extensive Reading Skills. The second aspect of the workshop ways we can recycle the Readers for other purposes, such as listening, dialogue building, role plays and structured discussions.

Learners have varying levels of motivation. Many have limited experience of reading, even in their first language for some learners the very idea of reading a book independently feels unfamiliar or intimidating. It is also worth acknowledging that some teachers themselves may not have read a book for a long time, and some do not consistently read the graded readers assigned to their classes.

The purpose of this workshop is to encourage teachers to persevere with the necessary set-up required for learners to complete a reader successfully. The primary learning outcome is simple but fundamental: learners read.

Reading is, by its nature, a private and individual activity. It cannot meaningfully be done in groups. Despite this, some teachers ask students to take turns reading aloud in class, while others attempt to “tell” the story through summaries, films, or detailed explanations. Although well-intentioned, these approaches are counter-productive: they remove the need for the learner to read and therefore undermine the core learning outcome.

While teachers do play an important role in supporting understanding, their chief role in extensive reading is that of “setter-up”. This means establishing a clear routine and a firm expectation that learners will read a small number of pages each evening at home.

The readers used in the programme are commensurate with the learners’ CEFR level and are typically less than 100 pages, written in graded language. They are not linguistically taxing, provided learners develop the habit of reading little and often. Most of the books are simplified versions of classic novels whose copyright has expired. While these may not be the most contemporary or “exciting” titles, they include works such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Dubliners*, *The Elephant Man*, and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

We do not expect all learners to become devotees of the English literary canon. The objective is far more practical: to develop the skill of reading independently over an extended period, even if that period is limited to a few pages at a time. This is the essence of extensive reading, and it is a core learning outcome of the programme.

Achieving this requires patience, persistence, and perseverance on the part of the teacher. This workshop explores how teachers can establish routines, maintain expectations, and use classroom activities to reinforce the simple but powerful message that reading happens outside the classroom — and it matters

What is the Evidence?

The overall picture is positive. Research on extensive reading has quite consistently shown its positive impact across a range of second and foreign language learning domains, with effects found for reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, motivation, writing, oral proficiency, and general language proficiency. [Springer](#)

Meta-analyses back it up. A major meta-analysis found that the effects of extensive reading were positive across all included language domains and target populations, with effect sizes ranging from small to medium. [Springer](#)

Graded readers are especially effective. Effects were larger when graded readers — books written with simplified language and controlled vocabulary to match different proficiency levels — were used, and when participants were asked to answer comprehension questions about what they read. [Springer](#)

Motivation improves too. Studies on online extensive reading programs found that experimental groups significantly outperformed control groups in reading comprehension, and that participants found the programs pleasurable and motivating, with their confidence increasing as a result. [Nature](#)

Classroom programmes also confirm the benefits. A review of classroom-based extensive reading research confirmed previous findings on the general effectiveness of extensive reading in promoting motivation, vocabulary, and fluency development, while also identifying ways to support reluctant or grade-focused students. [Cambridge Core](#)

Some important caveats, though:

- Some earlier meta-analyses were partly based on weaker research designs — studies without a control group — so the strength of the evidence varies across studies. [Springer](#)
- The research has also been geographically skewed, with most studies conducted in Asian countries and mainly targeting English, which limits how widely the findings can be generalised. [Springer](#)
- Without considerable teacher guidance and supportive activities, students are not likely to become self-motivated independent readers on their own. [Cambridge Core](#)

So in short: the claim is well-supported, especially for vocabulary growth, reading fluency, and motivation — but the quality of the evidence varies, and good programme design (including graded texts and some accountability) makes a real difference to outcomes.

Extract from Teachers Guide

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1.6.1 WHAT ARE GRADED READERS?

Graded readers are books specifically written or adapted for language learners. They use controlled vocabulary and simplified grammar tailored to different proficiency levels, allowing learners to build reading fluency without being overwhelmed by complex language. Many graded readers are based on literary classics or culturally significant stories.

1.6.2 WHY USE GRADED READERS?

Graded readers play an important role in the DCI language syllabus. Their use supports multiple learning objectives:

1. Develop Extensive Reading Skills – Improves abilities to navigate large pieces of texts and encourages reading for pleasure and fluency.
2. Enhance Language Awareness – Builds vocabulary, grammar, and understanding of narrative structure.
3. Introduce Cultural Contexts – Offers insights into diverse cultures, societies, and historical periods.
4. Broaden Discourse – Moves beyond contemporary Dublin to explore wider English-speaking experiences.
5. Provide a Shared Narrative – Creates a common reference point for class discussions and activities.
6. Expand Speaking Skills – Helps learners practice recalling, describing, explaining, and narrating skills as opposed to opinion-based discussion.
7. Prepare for End of Cycle Speaking – Allows learners to prepare for otherwise unseen EoC speaking tasks.
8. Prepare for TIE Exam – Provides a choice of appropriate level books for those presenting for TIE.

9. Meet Cultural Requirements – At least 50% of selected readers are by Irish authors, fulfilling the Irish culture component required by ACELS.

1.6.3 CAN A CLASS ACTUALLY READ A BOOK TOGETHER?

No. Reading is essentially an individual skill (unlike speaking). Teachers should not expect one homogeneous outcome from a group of different learners.

Reading as an Individual Skill

- Cognitive Process: Reading involves internal processes like decoding, comprehension, inference-making, and vocabulary recognition, all of which occur in the individual reader's mind.
- Pacing and Strategy: Each learner reads at their own pace and may use different strategies (e.g., skimming, scanning, re-reading) depending on their proficiency and purpose.
- Silent Reading: Most real-world reading is done silently and independently, making it a solitary activity by nature.
- Personal Interpretation: Readers bring their own background knowledge, experiences, and interests to the text, which shapes their reaction and understanding.

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1.6.4 OK, SO WHY DO WE “DO” A CLASS READER TOGETHER?

In the same way a book club provides the impetus and shared support for an individual activity, a reading class is set up *around* the reading activity—not directly reading together.

Reading as a Social/Classroom Activity

- Shared Texts: Creates opportunities for discussion, clarification, and collaborative learning, and comparison of shared and diverse experiences.
- Discussion and Interaction: Talking about a text—summarizing, debating, or analysing characters—turns reading into a communicative act.
- Scaffolding: Teachers and peers can support weaker readers through guided reading, vocabulary pre-teaching, and comprehension checks.

- Assessment and Feedback: Reading comprehension is often assessed through group activities, presentations, or speaking tasks, linking it to other skills.

1.6.5 BEST PRACTICES FOR USING READERS IN CLASS

1. Explain the Methodology

- Explain the purpose and value of extensive reading.
- “Sell” the virtue of completing a book and the sense of achievement.

2. Setting the Scene

- Introduce the book, author, and cultural background.
- Present the main characters and setting.
- Use visuals to build interest and context.

3. Starting the Reading Process

- Begin with a short excerpt read by the teacher or a professional recording.
- Avoid excessive in-class reading aloud by students—it has limited value and can be time-consuming.
- Encourage students to read chapters independently (e.g., one chapter per night or every two days).
- Don’t be thrown off by students who claim to have read the book before. If they have their workload will be lighter, and they can borrow an alternative text from the backup library at Bachelors Walk Reception.

4. Keeping Momentum

- Champion those learners who are reading, rather than chasing those who are not. A successful class moves at the pace of its stronger performers.
- Allow time for students who have fallen behind to catch up. This includes students joining the class up to week 5.
- Share learners’ reading progress with your co-teacher, who can reference it in the Bi-Weekly Report.

5. In-Class Activities

- Speaking: Role plays, character interviews, retelling scenes.
 - Listening: Audio versions of key scenes.
 - Writing: Summaries, alternative endings, diary entries from a character's perspective.
 - Vocabulary: Extract and review key terms from each chapter.
 - Grammar: Highlight and practice structures used in the text.
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6. Preparing for Speaking Tests

- Focus on learners' ability to describe, explain, and narrate the plot.
 - Avoid overemphasis on personal opinions unless comprehension is solid.
 - Practice summarizing the story and discussing characters and events clearly.
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7. Additional Considerations

- Ensure learners become familiar with literary metalanguage: setting, character, plot, narrator, climax, ending, etc.
- Advise learners that they are unlikely to progress at the end of the cycle without mastering the reader.
- Avoid sharing any negative personal opinions about a book—teachers are significant influencers.
- Showing a full film version of the book can be engaging but should be used cautiously; it may reduce motivation to read or oversimplify the narrative.
- The primary goal is to develop learners' ability to independently process extended texts. The purpose is not storytelling *per se*.