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Extensive reading and reading motivation in an Austrian lower secondary classroom

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Read quickly and

Enjoyably with

Adequate comprehension, so they

Don't need a dictionary.

(ER Foundation 2011: 1)

Abstract (English)

This thesis investigates the implementation of an extensive reading (ER) programme in a lower secondary middle school EFL classroom in Vienna, focusing on its impact on students' motivation to read in English. The study was prompted by a growing concern about students' low engagement with reading tasks and aimed to explore whether ER could offer a more student-centred and motivating alternative to other more traditional types of teaching reading, such as reading aloud or comprehension question exercises.

The following questions guided the research: (1) How does participation in an ER programme affect students' motivation to read in English? (1a) How do students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to read change during the ER programme? (1b) How does their perceived reading competence develop and how does it relate to motivation? (2) What specific strategies within an ER programme most effectively enhance students' motivation to read? (2a) How does allowing students to choose their own reading materials affect their motivation? (2b) How do post-reading activities influence students' motivation? (2c) How does teacher guidance influence motivation?

Over eight weeks, 21 students participated in a structured ER programme with regular in-class reading sessions. Data were collected through questionnaires, unstructured observation notes and oral student feedback. The results indicate that ER positively influenced reading motivation. Students showed a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, developed a stronger sense of reading competence and began to view reading in English more positively. Free book selection, creative follow-up tasks and teacher support emerged as key motivational factors.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on ER in EFL settings. It highlights how carefully designed ER programmes can foster greater autonomy, enjoyment and long-term motivation for reading among adolescent learners.

Zusammenfassung (Deutsch)

Diese Masterarbeit untersucht die Umsetzung eines ER-Projekts in einer Mittelschulklasse der Sekundarstufe I in Wien und konzentriert sich auf dessen Einfluss auf die Lesemotivation der Schüler*innen im Englischunterricht. Ausgangspunkt war die Beobachtung einer geringen Lesebereitschaft bei vielen Lernenden. Ziel der Studie war es, zu erforschen, ob ER eine motivierende und schülerzentrierte Alternative zu traditionellen Leseformaten, wie zum Beispiel laut Lesen oder Übungen mit Verständnisfragen, darstellen kann.

Die Studie orientiert sich an folgenden Forschungsfragen: (1) Wie beeinflusst die Teilnahme an einem ER-Projekt die Lesemotivation der Schüler*innen im Fach Englisch? (1a) Wie verändert sich die intrinsische und extrinsische Motivation der Schüler*innen während des Projekts? (1b) Wie entwickelt sich das wahrgenommene Lesevermögen der Schüler*innen und wie steht es in Zusammenhang mit ihrer Motivation? (2) Welche spezifischen Strategien innerhalb des ER-Projekts wirken besonders motivationsfördernd? (2a) Wie wirkt sich die freie Buchwahl auf die Motivation aus? (2b) Wie beeinflussen Nachbereitungsaufgaben die Lesemotivation? (2c) Welchen Einfluss hat die Lehrkraft auf die Motivation?

Während der achtwöchigen Projektdauer nahmen 21 Schüler*innen an einem strukturierten ER-Projekt teil, das regelmäßige Lesezeiten im Unterricht umfasste. Die Datenerhebung erfolgte mittels Fragebögen, unstrukturierten Beobachtungen im Unterricht und mündlichen Feedbacks seitens der Schüler*innen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass das ER-Projekt die Lesemotivation positiv beeinflusste. Die Schüler*innen entwickelten eine höhere intrinsische Motivation, stärkere Lesekompetenzen und eine positivere Haltung zum Lesen in Englisch. Besonders motivationsfördernd wirkten die freie Wahl der Lektüre, kreative Aufgaben sowie Unterstützung durch die Lehrperson.

Diese Arbeit leistet einen Beitrag zur Erforschung von ER im EFL-Kontext und zeigt auf, wie ein gut geplantes ER-Projekt Autonomie, Lesefreude und langfristige Motivation bei jugendlichen Lernenden fördern kann.

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Abbreviations

BMBWF.....	Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung
C.....	comparison
CLT.....	communicative language teaching
ER.....	extensive reading
EFL.....	English as a foreign language
GR.....	graded reader
IR.....	intensive reading
MS.....	Mittelschule / middle school
Q.....	question
RQ.....	research question
S.....	student
T.....	teacher

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1. Introduction

Reading, together with listening, speaking and writing, forms one of the core skills in language acquisition and contributes significantly to the development of linguistic competence. Despite its importance, many students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) encounter significant difficulties with reading. These challenges often stem from reading anxiety, limited linguistic resources or the lack of intrinsic interest in reading. The resulting reluctance to engage with reading materials frequently leads to reduced exposure to the target language and lower overall language proficiency.

In recent years, extensive reading (ER) has been promoted as a promising approach to address such issues in EFL contexts. ER encourages learners to read substantial amounts of longer material at an appropriate difficulty level, primarily for enjoyment and general understanding. Research shows that ER can promote reading fluency, expand vocabulary and improve overall language proficiency while also fostering a positive attitude toward reading (Day & Bamford 2007: 16-36; Nation & Waring 2013: 14-30). Crucially, ER has been demonstrated to enhance students' motivation to read, which can be a decisive factor for sustainable language learning (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 14-65).

The motivation to pursue this study in the field of ER originates from my personal experience in a middle school (MS) classroom in Vienna. Over the past few years, I have noticed a strong reluctance to read in English among many of my students. Some perceive reading as exhausting and overwhelming, especially when encountering longer texts. According to my students, this negative attitude often derives from reading anxiety, limited language skills or a general lack of interest in either the process of reading or the topic itself. As a result, many students quickly lose motivation when a reading lesson is announced or a new text is introduced. Their consistently lower performance in reading tasks, compared to listening and writing activities, in class tests (*Schularbeiten*), further highlights the challenges they face.

Several broader social and educational developments seem to reinforce students' declining interest in reading. In my opinion, schools often prioritise class test results and rigid adherence to curricula over fostering a genuine interest in literature and reading. At the same time, the prevalence of digital and visual media has reshaped young people's leisure activities. They are more drawn to short-form entertainment and less to sustained reading. Reading, which requires both solitude and concentration, is increasingly perceived as less appealing in today's fast-paced society (Davis & Magee, 2020: 5-6). Nevertheless, reading skills remain crucial to students' educational and academic success from an early stage. Strong reading abilities form the foundation for processing and understanding information effectively and are necessary for many future careers (McGeown et al. 2015: 546).

In response to these challenges, I began exploring solutions in the field of EFL teaching to address my students' lack of motivation and negative attitudes towards reading. One influential resource was *Extensive reading in the second language classroom* by Day and Bamford (2007), which is widely cited in the academic literature and often recommended by experts in EFL teaching.

Inspired by this model, I integrated ER into my classroom practice. My main objective is to foster greater motivation among my students to engage with texts in a foreign language and to help them develop a more positive attitude toward reading culture. Moreover, this project offered me an opportunity for professional growth by encouraging me to critically evaluate and expand my teaching strategies. I sought not only to improve my students' reading engagement but also to refine my own instructional practice. The experience ultimately led me to systematically investigate how ER can affect reading motivation in an Austrian lower secondary school. This thesis, therefore, examines both the general impact of ER on students' motivation to read and the effectiveness of strategies used within the programme.

Finally, this thesis is organised as follows. The opening section outlines the background and rationale for investigating ER within the Austrian EFL context, followed by a presentation of the research questions that guide the study. The theoretical framework integrates three central areas: the principles of ER, its

relationship to reading motivation and practical considerations for its implementation in the classroom. The empirical part then describes the design, participants and procedures of the field study, leading to an analysis and discussion of the collected data. The concluding sections summarise the principal findings, reflect on the study's limitations and propose implications for future pedagogical practice and research.

2. Research questions

This thesis explores how implementing an ER programme affects reading motivation among 3rd-grade students in an Austrian MS. It aims to investigate not only the overall influence of ER on student motivation but also the role of specific strategies, such as post-reading activities and teacher support.

The research is guided by two overarching questions, which are further divided into sub-questions:

RQ1: How does the participation in an ER programme affect students' motivation to read in English?

RQ1a: How do students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to read change during the ER programme?

RQ1b: How do the students' perceived reading competence develop during the ER programme and how do they relate to motivation?

RQ2: What specific strategies within an ER programme most effectively enhance students' motivation to read?

RQ2a: How does allowing students to choose their own reading materials affect reading motivation?

RQ2b: How do post-reading activities influence students' motivation to continue reading?

RQ2c: How does teacher guidance influence students' reading motivation?

By addressing these questions, the present study aims to offer both theoretical insights and practical implications for realising ER in Austrian EFL lower secondary classrooms. The findings are intended to help language teachers develop motivating and student-centred reading practices that support both language development and reading engagement.

3. Extensive reading

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation for understanding ER as a pedagogical approach in language learning. It begins by examining key definitions of reading and explores how meaning is constructed through the interaction between the reader and the text. The discussion then turns to the concept of ER, contrasting it with intensive reading to clarify their distinct purposes within language instruction. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the main characteristics of ER, including its goals, guiding principles and the role of both learners and teachers in the process. Particular attention is given to scaffolded ER, which highlights the importance of structured teacher support in fostering learner autonomy and sustained engagement. The final section discusses the potential linguistic and motivational effects of ER, establishing its relevance as a foundation for the empirical investigation presented later in this thesis.

3.1. The definition of reading

Reading is a multifaceted and interactive process that involves the reader, the text and the author's intended message. It is not a passive reception of information but an active process in which meaning is constructed through the interaction between these elements. Comprehension depends mainly on the reader's prior knowledge and expectations (Alderson & Urquhart 1984: xv-xxviii). For such knowledge to enhance understanding, it must be both accessible and consciously applied, as mere possession of background knowledge is insufficient (Bransford et al. 1984: 33). In this sense, texts do not convey a fixed or universal meaning but offer interpretive potential that emerges through the reader's engagement with them. Day and Bamford (2007: 12) similarly define reading as "the construction of meaning from a printed or written message", emphasising that meaning does not reside within the text itself but arises when readers connect it to their prior knowledge and experiences. At the same time, authors write with an intended meaning in mind, making the process of reading more complex than a purely reader-driven interpretation.

Reading can also be understood as an interactive process that combines both bottom-up and top-down dimensions, each contributing to comprehension in complementary ways (Grabe & Stoller 2020: 28-29). In bottom-up processing, readers focus on the linguistic elements of a text, beginning with the smallest units such as letters, sounds and individual words before moving on to larger structures of meaning, including phrases, sentences and entire paragraphs (Richards 2015: 448-451). This process involves decoding and recognising language patterns, allowing readers to construct meaning from the text itself gradually. Top-down processing, on the other hand, is conceptually driven and relies on the reader's prior knowledge, experiences and expectations. It enables readers to make predictions, form hypotheses about the content and interpret implicit meanings that are not directly stated. In this way, comprehension arises from the dynamic interaction between the linguistic cues provided by the text and the cognitive frameworks that the reader brings to it (Alderson & Urquhart 1984: xviii; Richards 2015: 448-452). Skilled readers typically integrate both processes flexibly. They draw on bottom-up decoding when encountering unfamiliar language and rely on top-down strategies to construct coherence and anticipate meaning throughout the reading experience.

In addition to the interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes, proficient readers actively monitor their comprehension and apply metacognitive strategies to resolve difficulties and maintain understanding. Such methods include predicting content, questioning, summarising and clarifying meaning when confusion arises (Anderson 2002: 1-3). These processes enable learners to become more autonomous and strategic readers, which is particularly significant in foreign language contexts where limited linguistic knowledge can impede comprehension.

In other words, successful reading relies on a balance between decoding linguistic forms and integrating them with existing knowledge, experiences and expectations as well as metacognitive strategies. Skilled readers adapt their approach depending on their purpose of reading, the text type and its level of difficulty. In this way, reading can function not only as a tool for learning and personal development but also as a source of enjoyment and active engagement with the world (Richards 2015: 448-451). The combination of reading as both a cognitive skill and a means of personal

enrichment forms the foundation of ER, which aims to foster positive reading habits and support language development.

3.2. Definition of extensive reading

ER is a simple concept. It entails reading a substantial number of fiction and non-fiction texts regularly, primarily for enjoyment and general understanding. The aim is to encourage learners to read widely and frequently so that reading becomes natural and enjoyable. There is no set number of books that categorically defines reading as ER, since this varies and is based on many different factors, such as the length of the texts, the reader's linguistic proficiency or the time available for reading. Instead, each reader is encouraged to determine an individual reading pace and set personal goals that match their interest and abilities.

The emphasis of ER is not on decoding individual words or small units of information. Rather than analysing every linguistic element in isolation, readers are encouraged to focus on meaning and enjoyment, which promotes fluency and confidence over time (Day & Bamford 2007: 84). Engaging in ER allows the learners to gradually improve their productive and receptive language abilities, including vocabulary, grammatical and syntactic knowledge. Repeated exposure to meaningful input helps learners internalise language patterns naturally, leading to a more intuitive language use. ER can also speed up the reading process as students typically gradually become more advanced and confident readers when they engage in ER (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 2, 6). In this way, reading fluency develops as a by-product of quantity and consistency rather than explicit instruction. As Day (2020: 13) explains, "the best way to help students become fluent readers is by letting them read. People learn to read by reading: the more students read, the better they become". This principle reinforces the notion that reading itself is both the means and the end of literacy development.

While this thesis focuses on reading, it is essential to acknowledge that extensive input is not limited to written texts. According to Krashen's *Input Hypothesis*, comprehensible input is the essential ingredient for language acquisition, enabling learners to progress by understanding messages slightly beyond their current level.

This process, referred to as *i+1*, emphasises that language learners are exposed to input that is both understandable and challenging enough to extend their language competence. It applies not only to reading but also to listening and viewing, which similarly expose learners to large amounts of meaningful and accessible input (Krashen 1985: 2-4). Other forms of extensive input, such as extensive listening and extensive viewing, follow comparable principles and can support language development by fostering fluency, vocabulary growth, motivation and overall confidence in the target language (Renandya & Farrell 2011: 55-56). Nevertheless, the present study concentrates on ER, as it most directly addresses the issue of students' reading motivation in an Austrian lower secondary EFL classroom.

3.3. Definition of intensive reading

In contrast to ER, intensive reading (IR) refers to the careful and detailed reading of shorter and often more difficult texts, typically chosen by the teacher. IR normally involves cautious analysis of vocabulary, grammar and text structure with the primary goal of achieving a complete and detailed understanding of the meaning. It is an approach that places strong emphasis on accuracy and form, requiring learners to pay close attention to how language functions (Richards 2015: 464). Such activities often involve translation, comprehension questions or focused discussions on grammatical and lexical features of the text. IR is mainly a structured classroom activity where the teacher provides scaffolding and corrective feedback, guiding readers through challenging texts line by line. Teachers often model effective IR strategies and explicitly draw attention to key linguistic or textual features. Students typically read slowly and frequently pause to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary or clarify complex syntactic patterns (Taembo 2023: 176-178).

3.4. Extensive vs. intensive reading

The two approaches of ER and IR complement each other. ER strengthens reading fluency and motivation, which in turn supports learners in approaching the demands of IR (Robb & Ewert 2024: 318). When combined effectively, these approaches create a balanced approach to reading that promotes both broad comprehension and

detailed linguistic awareness, thereby preparing learners for a wide range of reading purposes.

Empirical research underscores the pedagogical value of combining ER and IR in language instruction. Bell (2001: 4-11) found that learners who engaged in ER alongside IR achieved markedly higher gains in both reading speed and comprehension than those following an IR programme, despite equal time-on-task. Suk (2016: 82-86) also examined the effects of incorporating an ER component into a traditional IR course among Korean EFL university students. Over a 15-week period, the experimental group, which received both IR and ER instruction, demonstrated significantly greater improvement in reading comprehension, reading rate and vocabulary acquisition than the group that engaged exclusively in IR. These findings indicate that while IR supports detailed text analysis and linguistic accuracy, ER contributes to fluency development and the consolidation of language knowledge. A balanced integration of both approaches therefore appears to yield the most comprehensive outcomes for L2 reading development.

3.5. Ten characteristics of extensive reading

Day and Bamford (2007: 7-8) formulate the following 10 characteristics of ER in an educational setting:

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

ER therefore encourages students to read a lot. Learners should have access to a variety of topics and text types, allowing them to choose materials that match their interests and preferred reading styles. The main aim is to read for enjoyment, to acquire information and to develop overall comprehension, with reading itself

regarded as an intrinsically rewarding activity. Reading in ER is therefore not associated with tests or comprehension tasks, as is often the case with IR. However, follow-up activities may be incorporated to provide additional support, enhance motivation and monitor learners' engagement. Texts are carefully chosen to match the students' language levels and to support fluency without the need for dictionaries. ER is typically a silent and individual activity that allows each learner to progress at their own pace. Teachers play a vital role in introducing ER, guiding students and modelling positive reading habits through their own visible enthusiasm and participation (Day & Bamford 2007: 7-8).

Zhou (2024: 11) categorises the ten characteristics of ER by Day and Bamford (2007: 7-8) into four main groups, each reflecting on a different aspect of the reading process. The first category concerns the nature of reading (statements 5-8). ER involves reading for pleasure rather than focusing on every word and it is typically done silently and individually, with reading itself serving as its own reward. The second category addresses the reading materials (statements 1-2), which should consist of a variety of texts to cater to different interests. The third category highlights the teacher's role (statements 9-10), emphasising their guidance and active participation as reading models. Finally, the fourth category focuses on the learner's role (statements 3-4), stressing student autonomy in text selection and the importance of enjoyment to encourage ER habits (Zhou 2024: 11).

These core characteristics are further supported by Jacobs and Farrell (2012: 3-5), who emphasise the importance of providing abundant opportunities for learners to engage in large quantities of comprehensible input. They argue that "students learn to read by reading and read to learn at the same time", highlighting the reciprocal relationship between reading quantity and reading proficiency. Similarly, Leather and Uden (2021: 1-3) highlight that reading large amounts of text is crucial to developing not only linguistic skills but also confidence, motivation and a positive attitude towards language learning. Sustained and enjoyable reading experiences help foster both autonomy and lifelong reading habits. By integrating these perspectives, it becomes clear that at the heart of ER lies the principle that the more

students read, the more they develop their language skills and intrinsic motivation, which makes ER an essential foundation for successful language acquisition.

3.6. Scaffolded extensive reading

Sun (2022: 1-13) found that many students require guidance not only in selecting appropriate texts but also in developing strategies with unknown vocabulary and maintaining reading flow. Continuous supervision and motivational feedback proved essential for sustaining engagement and confidence, particularly among beginners. In response, Sun (2022: 9) introduces the concept of *scaffolded ER*, defined as reading large amounts of engaging material for L2 learning, facilitated by structured teacher support.

While sharing the fundamental characteristics of ER outlined by Day and Bamford (2007: 7-8), this approach places stronger emphasis on teacher involvement, particularly at the beginning stages of the implementation. The level of support is gradually reduced as learners gain confidence and independence, allowing them to take increasing responsibility for their own reading. To put this into practice, Sun (2022: 9) adapts Day and Bamford's principles to include providing accessible and engaging texts, as well as explicit guidance on material selection and reading strategies. The approach also emphasises close monitoring of progress and the use of collaborative activities to enhance motivation. Although this model requires considerable teacher involvement, it can still foster autonomy and enjoyment by combining individual reading with a supportive classroom community.

In the present study, the principles of scaffolded ER were partially incorporated in the design of the ER programme. Recognising that many students were inexperienced and felt overwhelmed by the programme, the decision was made to increase teacher involvement to provide stronger guidance and support throughout the process. This adaptation ensured that students could gradually develop their confidence and their capacity to read independently.

3.7. Goals and effects of extensive reading

The overarching goal of ER is to promote incidental learning, understood as the natural acquisition and gradual improvement of language skills without deliberate focus on it (Nation & Waring 2013: 22-23). By exposing learners to large amounts of comprehensible text, ER develops language competence through meaningful input rather than explicit instruction, supporting the view of reading as an active and meaning-making process as discussed earlier in section 3.1. This focus on natural and extensive exposure positions ER as a pedagogical approach that allows language to develop intuitively through use rather than conscious study.

One of the first observable effects of ER is its influence on learner's attitude and motivation. When reading is enjoyable and self-directed, students begin to perceive it as rewarding rather than as a task imposed by the teacher. This shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation fosters positive attitudes towards reading and enhances students' willingness to engage with texts voluntarily, which in turn supports language development (Ferdila 2017: 75). The opportunity to select texts that match personal interests and proficiency level increases engagement and ownership of learning (Lake 2014: 2-3). Moreover, ER can build confidence, reduce anxiety and nurture a lifelong interest in reading (ER Foundation 2011: 1). Still, motivational outcomes vary depending on individual factors such as personality, prior reading experiences in other languages and level of concentration.

In addition to its affective advantages, ER also contributes to the development of reading fluency, which combines reading speed and comprehension. Greater fluency allows students to process text more smoothly, which enhances comprehension, builds confidence and motivates them to read more extensively. Research shows that ER significantly increases reading speed, especially among beginner and intermediate learners (Iwahori 2008: 77-82; Mc Lean & Rouault 2017: 101-103; Mo 2021: 109-117; Peterson 2022: 4-13). Findings from short-term programmes tend to show only modest progress (Endris 2018: 236-242; Song 2020: 60-69), likely because the development of deep processing requires sustained exposure over time. In contrast, long-term projects report more substantial gains in

both fluency and comprehension (Yoshizawa et al. 2020: 1-10). These findings suggest that the benefits of ER regarding fluency and comprehension are cumulative and become more pronounced as learners engage with ER over extended periods.

A further well-documented benefit of ER is vocabulary development. Repeated encounters with words in meaningful contexts deepen learners' understanding of form, meaning and use (Nation & Waring 2013: 29). ER contributes both to vocabulary breadth, through exposure to many new items and to depth by reinforcing familiar words. As learners repeatedly meet words across different texts, they gradually internalise collocations, grammatical behaviour and pragmatic nuances. In a case study, Pigada and Schmitt (2006: 12-18) demonstrated that a one-month ER programme produced measurable improvements in learner's knowledge of spelling, meaning and grammatical usage of words. Spelling showed the most substantial gains. However, progress depends on the appropriate balance of known and unknown words, since excessive unfamiliar vocabulary can hinder comprehension. This balance is also crucial for maintaining the pleasure aspect of ER while ensuring that the input remains comprehensible (Nation & Waring 2013: 29). It underscores the importance of careful text selection and appropriate difficulty levels when setting up an ER project (see Section 5.3).

Despite these findings, it is not certain whether they can be fully transferred to Austrian lower secondary classrooms. Differences in curricula, educational systems, learner motivation and cultural attitudes towards reading may all influence the outcomes of ER. Further research is therefore required to assess whether comparable benefits in motivation, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension can be achieved with Austrian EFL learners. Understanding these contextual variables is essential for adapting ER principles to local educational realities and for designing motivating and feasible programmes in Austrian schools.

4. Extensive reading and reading motivation

This chapter explores the relationship between ER and reading motivation, building directly on the theoretical foundations established in the previous section. It begins by outlining key theories of motivation relevant to language learning, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the self-determination theory. The second part focuses on reading motivation, examining factors such as self-efficacy, goal orientation and the perceived value of reading. The third section links these motivational constructs to the principles of ER, illustrating how features such as learner autonomy, free book choice and reading for pleasure can enhance intrinsic motivation and engagement. This discussion also considers the potential of scaffolded ER to support less confident readers. The final section reviews empirical studies that have investigated the motivational effects of ER in EFL and school-based contexts.

4.1. The importance of motivation in extensive reading

Day and Bamford (2007: 27) describe motivation as the invisible driving force that compels individuals to take action or refrain from doing so. Motivation plays a crucial role not only in our daily lives but also in language learning, particularly in the context of ER. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021: 4) explain that motivation influences the choice of learning activities, the amount of effort learners invest and their perseverance when facing difficulties. Without sufficient motivation, learners are unlikely to consistently engage with texts, which can then limit their overall reading fluency and language development. Creating an environment that fosters and sustains motivation is therefore essential for the success of any ER programme, as motivation determines whether students will approach reading as an opportunity for growth or as an obligation.

Reading requires a considerable cognitive and emotional effort, especially when reading in a second or foreign language. For many learners, it can appear daunting or even discouraging. Leather and Uden (2021: 2-3) highlight that to motivate students to read more, it is essential that they believe they can succeed and perceive reading as both enjoyable and rewarding. Many students underestimate their

reading abilities, which can lead to diminished interest and reluctance to engage with reading tasks. This situation can be explained through the *Self-Determination Theory*, which identifies competence as one of the three psychological needs, alongside autonomy and relatedness, essential for sustained motivation (Deci & Ryan cited in Dörnyei 1985: 16-18). When learners do not feel competent, they are less likely to do the task. Conversely, when students experience success and recognise their own progress, the sense of competence strengthens, thereby increasing their intrinsic motivation to read.

One of the major barriers to developing motivation is the use of texts that are too advanced for students' current language proficiency level. When reading materials include complex grammar, challenging syntax and difficult vocabulary, learners tend to slow down and focus on decoding individual words rather than understanding the overall meaning. This bottom-up approach conflicts with the core principles of ER, which prioritises fluency, comprehension and enjoyment. Encountering overly difficult texts can result in frustration and a sense of failure, ultimately reducing motivation to read further (Yang et al. 2021: 95-96). Furthermore, repeated experiences of failure may reinforce negative self-perceptions as readers, which can create a cycle of avoidance and low motivation (see Section 4.5). In this sense motivation and text accessibility are mutually enforcing. Appropriate materials promote confidence, while confidence sustains the motivation necessary for continued engagement with ER.

Teachers play a vital role in countering these challenges by offering a selection of books that matches students' language levels and interests. Providing accessible texts enables learners to experience early success, which helps build confidence and foster a more positive attitude toward reading. Hu and Nation (2000 cited in Leather & Uden 2021: 4) suggest that learners should know approximately 98% of the vocabulary in a text to read fluently and enjoyably without frequent interruptions for decoding. This threshold ensures that reading remains comprehensible and pleasurable. Nevertheless, highly motivated readers may handle a slightly higher

percentage of unknown words, as their intrinsic motivation encourages them to overcome such challenges (Leather & Uden 2021: 6, 13).

4.2. Extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation in extensive reading

Motivation is commonly categorised into two broad categories, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation originates from within the individual and is driven by personal interest or enjoyment. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is influenced by external factors, such as the desire to achieve good grades (Ryan & Deci 2000: 69). Both play an important role in determining whether students engage with reading and how sustainable this engagement becomes over time. In the context of ER, the distinction is particularly relevant because reading in a foreign language is often perceived as demanding. Many learners initially rely on external encouragement before discovering the intrinsic satisfaction that reading can offer.

A long-lasting debate in education concerns the use of extrinsic rewards to encourage reading. While some teachers argue that rewards can serve as an effective entry point, especially for reluctant readers, others caution that they are usually short-lived and may hinder the development of a genuine interest in reading (Deci et al. 2001: 1-3). In practice, a balanced approach may be the most effective. Extrinsic incentives can provide a temporary spark, however, the ultimate goal of an ER programme should be to foster an enduring intrinsic engagement with reading. If rewards are employed, they should remain closely tied to learning outcomes, such as extra reading time or a book voucher, rather than unrelated items that risk undermining the educational purpose (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 64).

Research supports the superiority of intrinsic motivation for long-term success. Recent evidence from Lin (2025: 5-8) confirms that ER fosters higher levels of intrinsic motivation, self-reflection and academic well-being than IR or traditional reading approaches, largely due to its emphasis on autonomy and learner choice. Schaffner et al. (2013: 382) show that intrinsic motivation leads to sustained reading engagement and improved reading comprehension, whereas the reliance on extrinsic motivators produces only temporary effects. Becker et al. (2010: 776), in a large-scale study with elementary students, found that those who perceive reading

as desirable and enjoyable achieve higher literacy levels, completely extrinsically motivated readers often display weaker skills. Rettig and Schiefele (2023: 685-709) strengthen these findings in a longitudinal study involving 131 German primary school students. Their research demonstrates a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and improved reading efficiency, which subsequently enhances comprehension. However, most of these findings stem from primary education and it remains uncertain to what extent they can be generalised to adolescents in lower secondary settings, where developmental, social and institutional factors, such as peer influence, assessment practices and curricular constraints, may alter motivational dynamics.

Taken together, these insights highlight the centrality of intrinsic motivation for sustained success in ER programmes. Nevertheless, extrinsic motivators cannot be disregarded entirely, particularly at the beginning of a project when learners are still hesitant or unfamiliar with autonomous reading practices. Teachers therefore face the challenge of maintaining an appropriate balance between the two forms of motivation by using extrinsic incentives strategically to initiate engagement, while progressively guiding students toward the intrinsic enjoyment and personal value of reading.

4.3. Factors influencing reading motivation

Beyond the general distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic drives, reading motivation is shaped by a complex interplay of cognitive, affective and social factors. Day and Bamford (2007: 27-30) highlight four particularly influential elements, namely the reading materials, the sociocultural environment, the learner's ability and their attitudes toward reading. The first two are closely interrelated, as the availability of appropriate materials and the value attributed to reading within the family, peer group or wider community jointly influence how students approach texts. Accessible texts support persistence, while materials that are too difficult or easy can quickly discourage learners. Similarly, when reading is positively modelled and supported by significant others, such as parents, teachers and peers, learners are more likely to perceive it as meaningful, enjoyable and worth investing effort in.

The other two factors, perceived ability and reading attitude, also reinforce one another. Learners who feel competent in their reading skills are more inclined to approach texts confidently, while those who experience repeated difficulties often develop negative attitudes and avoidance behaviours. Conversely, positive attitudes toward reading, shaped by earlier experiences in school or in other languages, strengthen the willingness to persevere even when challenges arise (Day & Bamford 2007: 27-30; Wigfield et al. 2016: 19). This reciprocal relationship illustrates how both confidence and affective orientation contribute to sustained reading engagement.

To expand on the framework posed by Day and Bamford (2007: 27-30), the present discussion draws on Watkins and Coffey's (2004: 111) multidimensional model, which identifies 11 factors which can influence reading motivation positively or negatively. One such additional element is curiosity, which captures learners' desire to explore topics that interest them and acquire new knowledge through reading. Closely related is involvement, which describes the enjoyment readers experience when they become absorbed in a text. Another critical dimension is importance, reflecting the personal or academic value students assign to reading, such as perceiving it as beneficial for learning, success or self-development.

Watkins and Coffey (2004: 111) also highlight several influences that complement Day and Bamford's (2007: 27-30) model. Grades and recognition motivate learners through academic performance and external approval, while competition stems from the wish to outperform peers. Less productive motives include compliance, where students read mainly to meet institutional demands and work avoidance, where reading serves as a strategy to escape other tasks or responsibilities. Finally, social motives underline that reading can also be a collective activity, as some learners find motivation in sharing books, discussing ideas with others and participating in group reading experiences.

Integrating these perspectives reveals that reading motivation extends far beyond a binary opposition of intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. Instead, it represents a multidimensional construct shaped by personal dispositions, external demands and

social interactions. This synthesis highlights the need for ER programmes to recognise the diversity of motivational influences and to design classroom practices that respond flexibly to learners' varying needs and interests (Day & Bamford 2007: 27-30; Watkins & Coffey 2004: 111; Wigfield et al. 2016: 19).

4.4. Creating a motivating classroom environment

A supportive classroom atmosphere is essential for sustaining reading motivation in ER programmes. As discussed in the previous section, learners' willingness to engage with reading in English is shaped by factors such as their earlier reading experiences, their general attitudes toward reading and the perceived relevance of the reading materials. If learners associate reading with frustration, boredom or failure, their motivation to participate will inevitably decline. Teachers therefore need to take deliberate steps to reverse such perception and to establish reading as a positive and rewarding experience. To address these interrelated factors, teachers must create a welcoming environment that ensures students' emotional safety and autonomy (Day & Bamford 2007: 25-26).

Classroom practice plays a central role in maintaining this motivation. Leather and Uden (2021: 32) propose several practical strategies for enhancing reading motivation in the classroom. Teachers can support learner by offering accessible and interesting materials and ensuring a wide range of choices. Choice is central, as it fosters autonomy and helps learners feel a sense of ownership over their reading. Teachers should also help learners set clear and achievable goals which can also strengthen motivation by making the process more tangible and rewarding. Explaining the aims, principles and long-term benefits of ER, such as vocabulary development and better reading fluency, helps students recognise its relevance and value. Introducing essential strategies before an ER project begins, such as how to select suitable books or read for overall understanding rather than decoding every single word, further strengthens students' confidence. Additionally, teachers should provide continuous feedback throughout the whole programme. Taken together, these classroom practices not only guide learner effectively but also create a shared understanding of ER among students, colleagues and school authorities, ensuring

that ER becomes a valued and well-supported element of the school's educational culture (Leather & Uden 2021: 32).

Building a strong sense of community further enhances students' motivation to read. When learners feel valued and respected as members of a reading community, they are more likely to develop a lasting interest in reading. A classroom culture that encourages interaction, collaboration and shared reflection can transform reading into a socially meaningful experience rather than a solitary task. When reading together in the classroom, students may inspire one another and create a sense of shared purpose. In such environments, enthusiasm can become contagious, helping to establish a collective motivation to read. Teacher modelling contributes to this process, as demonstrating enthusiasm for reading and participating alongside students helps foster a positive classroom reading culture (Day & Bamford 2007: 7-8; Hadiyanto 2018: 222-226; Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 65).

On an individual level, perceived progress is crucial for sustaining motivation. Research suggest that ER has the power to transform even reluctant or less motivated readers into enthusiastic ones, particularly when they notice language improvement in their language abilities through their regular reading sessions. Mason and Krashen (1997: 92-93) emphasise that increased learners' belief in their second language skills in general and reading skills in particular lead to greater confidence when approaching texts. In this regard, self-efficacy, which is the belief in one's capacity to succeed, becomes a crucial factor. Students need to believe that they are capable of reading to maintain high levels of motivation and achieve stronger performance outcomes (Wigfield et al. 2016: 191). Teachers can nurture self-efficacy by acknowledging individual progress, setting attainable reading goals and encouraging learners to reflect on their growth. Celebrating small successes, such as finishing a book or understanding a previously challenging passage, helps reinforce learners' positive self-concept as readers.

In conclusion, creating a motivating classroom environment for ER requires a holistic approach that combines supportive classroom conditions, effective teaching practices, a strong sense of reading community and the reinforcement of individual

self-efficacy. By combining these elements, teachers can cultivate intrinsic motivation, nurture lasting interest in reading and foster a culture of lifelong learning.

4.5. The motivational reading cycle and classroom implementation

Understanding how motivation develops over time is also essential for the effective implementation of an ER programme. At the beginning of an ER project, levels of motivation can be particularly high as students frequently experience, for the first time, the ability to read longer texts or even successfully complete books in a foreign language and comprehend the content. This initial sense of achievement is both rewarding and enjoyable and may lead to quicker progress with relatively little effort due to the heightened motivation (Day & Bamford 2007: 27-30). However, as the project progresses, sustaining this motivation becomes a greater challenge, requiring ongoing teacher support and careful programme design to prevent disengagement.

Leather and Uden (2021: 29-31) address this challenge by proposing their *Motivational Reading Cycle*, which outlines key stages for maintaining engagement (see Figure 1). The first step in this cycle is to ensure that learners have access to reading materials at an appropriate language level. Teachers must gather information about each student's personal interests and reading preferences to select suitable texts, as was done in the initial informal data collection for this thesis (see Section 6.2). In the second phase, it is essential to create a supportive reading community where learners feel part of a collective effort. Here, the teacher plays a dual role, as facilitator and as reading model, openly demonstrating enthusiasm for reading and encouraging students to do the same. Although reading itself is an individual and silent act, the act of reading simultaneously as a group fosters a sense of unity, mutual encouragement and collective progress (Sun 2022: 9). Such a classroom atmosphere not only enhances motivation but also contributes to students' social connections and belonging within the reading community.

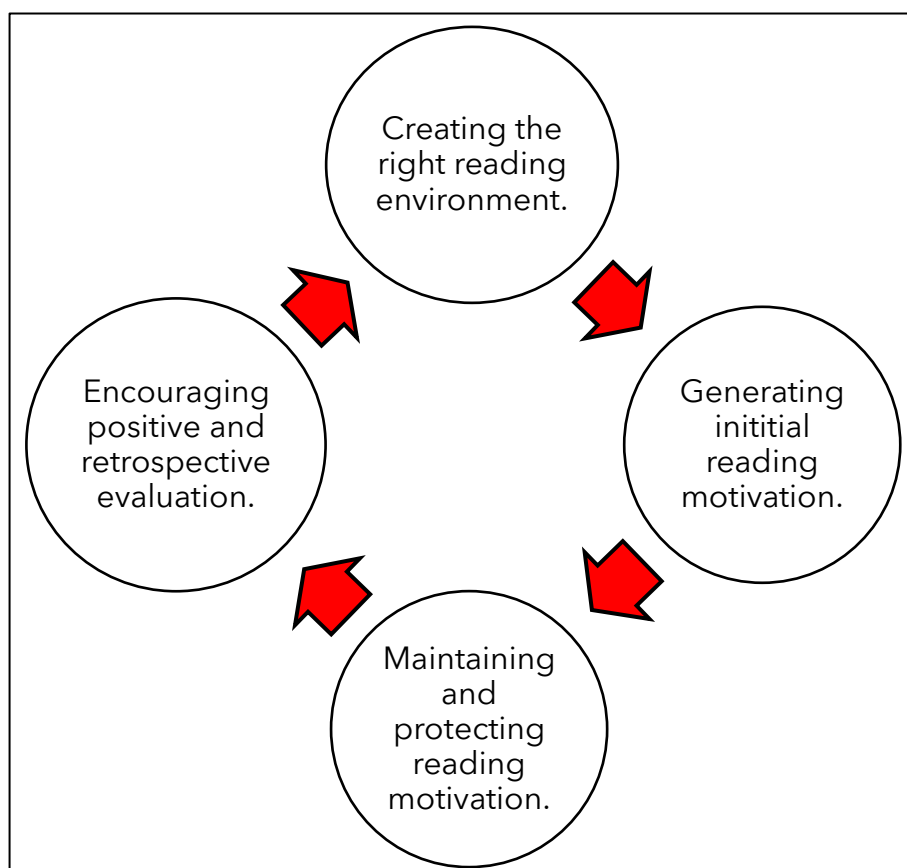


Figure 1: Motivational reading cycle (Leather & Uden 2021: 30).

After establishing initial motivation, the teacher's task shifts to sustaining it over time. The third stage of the motivational cycle, therefore, focuses on goal setting and continuous support. Setting individual or community reading goals before starting an ER project can encourage students to continue reading and work towards clear targets. The level of support needed may vary significantly between students. Some learners maintain high motivation and continue reading independently with minimal intervention, while others require regular encouragement and reassurance from the teacher to remain engaged. In this way, the teacher functions as both mentor and motivator, helping students regulate their reading behaviour and overcome potential obstacles (Leather & Uden 2021: 29-31).

The fourth stage of the motivational reading cycle concerns feedback and evaluation. It is essential to clarify what students need to do to reach their reading goals, whether these are self-set or developed together with the teacher and class community. Teacher and learner collaboratively assess the reading process, discuss progress and, where necessary, adapt reading strategies or replace unsuitable

materials (Leather & Uden 2021: 29-31). Constructive feedback not only informs students about their development but also reinforces self-efficacy and helps maintain enthusiasm for reading.

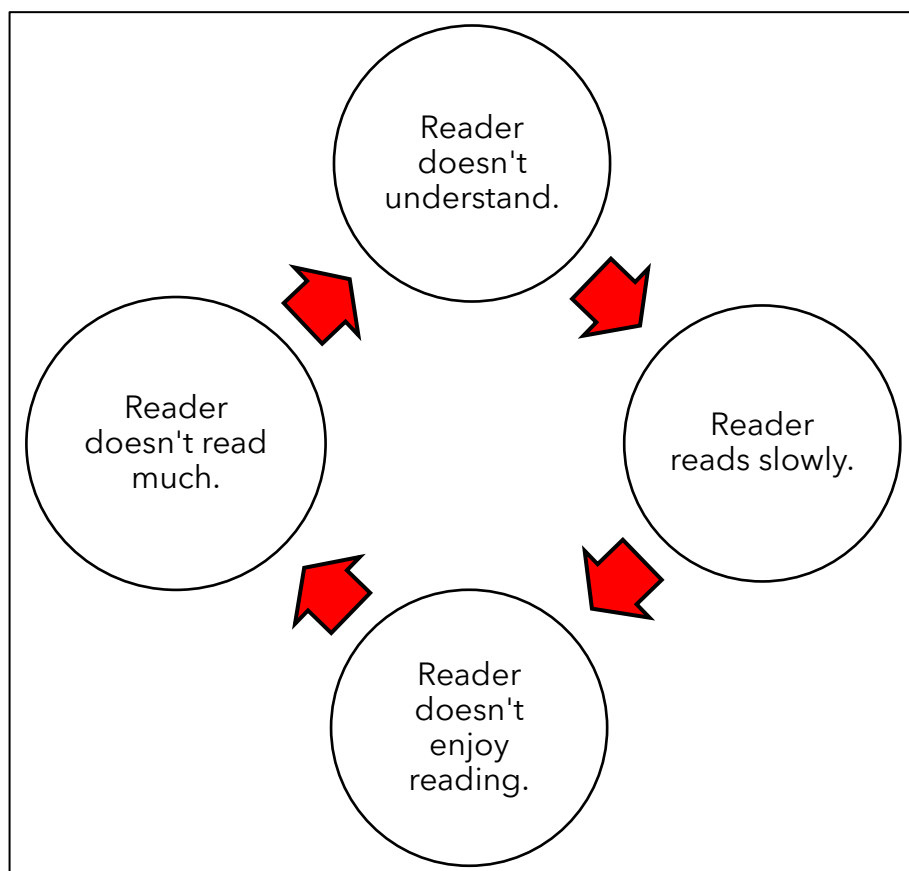


Figure 2: Cycle of frustration (Nuttall 1983: 167).

However, not all learners progress smoothly through the motivational cycle proposed by Leather and Uden (2021: 29-31). While motivated and good readers progress naturally through the reading cycle, less confident and weaker readers face additional challenges (see Figure 2). Nuttall (1983: 167-168) describes the *Cycle of Frustration* experienced by slow and reluctant readers, in which repeated comprehension difficulties lead to negative attitudes, decreased effort and eventual avoidance of reading altogether. Regardless of where a student enters this cycle, it often leads to reduced reading or complete avoidance of reading activities. Breaking this negative pattern can be difficult without adequate support from the teacher. Comprehension difficulties play a central role in this cycle. When texts are too challenging or a student's skills are not sufficiently developed, motivation declines rapidly. In contrast to these difficulties, confident and engaged readers

frequently experience a reinforcing loop of success and enjoyment (ER Foundation 2011: 4).

Taken together, the two models show that reading motivation is dynamic rather than linear. Leather and Uden's (2021:30) motivational reading cycle illustrates how teachers can proactively scaffold and sustain engagement through structured support, whereas Nuttall's (1983: 167) cycle of frustration underscores the risks faced by weaker students when support and accessible materials are lacking. Viewed jointly, the two cycles highlight the dual nature of the teacher's role in ER, namely, to maintain momentum for confident readers while simultaneously preventing frustration and disengagement among those who struggle. Both perspectives, therefore, emphasise that effective ER instruction depends on teachers' ability to recognise fluctuations in motivation and to respond flexibly with timely, individualised guidance. Ultimately, sustained motivation emerges not from one-time interventions but from the ongoing interplay between appropriate materials, supportive feedback and positive classroom culture.

4.6. Sustaining motivation

Sustaining student motivation throughout an ER programme is a key component for long-term success. Regular and meaningful feedback is central to this process as it allows teachers to reflect on progress and maintain a sense of direction. Teachers should therefore provide structured feedback during and at the end of the project to discuss students' achievements, the extent to which they have met their reading goals and the challenges they may have encountered. These feedback sessions play a motivational role and can be done orally or in a written format. They should also offer the students an opportunity to address any issues they may have encountered or to seek recommendations for future reading materials (Day and Bamford 2007: 26, 127-128). This approach aligns with phase four of the motivational cycle outlined in chapter 4.4, which emphasises the importance of feedback and evaluation in sustaining engagement and promoting continued reading.

5. Extensive reading in the classroom

ER seems to address many challenges associated with EFL acquisition, namely limited exposure to the target language, low motivation and difficulties with comprehension. To maximise its benefits, ER should be integrated into classroom practices, where regular in-class reading sessions provide regular structured opportunities to engage with texts. These sessions help reduce feelings of being overwhelmed, build reading confidence and foster a more positive attitude toward English reading overall (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 2). Nevertheless, ER is not generally considered sufficient on its own. It is most effective when combined with complementary instructional methods such as communicative classroom activities, which together create a balanced framework that supports both fluency and accuracy (Tamrackitkun 2010: 4, 199).

In recent years, ER has become increasingly recognised as an effective and research-based approach to language teaching, resulting in gradual shifts in teachers' perceptions and classroom practices. Several years ago, many teachers were unfamiliar with the concept of ER and thought that IR was the only appropriate and beneficial form of reading instruction in schools. Consequently, students were often assigned texts beyond their proficiency level, which forced them to decode each word individually or rely heavily on translation, often leading to frustration and disengagement. Over time, however, this perspective has evolved. An expanding body of research, professional development initiatives and teacher networks has contributed to greater awareness of ER and its pedagogical benefits. Today, a growing number of teachers are aware of ER and incorporate it into their teaching practices or are considering doing so. This trend has led to curricular adjustments in several contexts, aimed at providing clearer guidance and institutional support for integrating ER into classroom instruction (Nation & Waring 2013: 3-4).

Although ER effectively supports language development, some teachers still doubt its value due to its lack of explicit and direct instruction in the classroom. As a result, they may feel that they are not actively fulfilling their professional role as teachers and that students will not effectively learn or improve their language skills without

explicit teaching. However, such concerns are largely unfounded. Learners can acquire and enhance their language proficiency even in the absence of direct instruction, as ER facilitates natural language development through exposure and engagement with texts. By engaging with texts extensively, students encounter vocabulary, grammar and discourse patterns in authentic contexts, which allows them to internalise language more effectively than through isolated drills (Nation & Waring 2013: 25).

This chapter demonstrates how ER can be implemented in the Austrian lower-secondary EFL classroom. It begins by linking ER to curriculum goals such as the use of authentic, age-appropriate texts and the development of overall comprehension skills. The following section outlines key aspects of implementation, including possible organisational models, scheduling of reading time and goal-setting practices. Subsequent sections discuss the selection of suitable reading materials, the organisation of an ER library and the teacher's role as guide and reading model. The chapter also reviews a variety of post-reading and evaluation activities that help sustain motivation and monitor progress. It concludes by addressing common challenges, such as limited resources, mixed proficiency levels and time constraints, and presents strategies to ensure the long-term success of ER in the classroom.

5.1. Reading in the Austrian curriculum and its implications for ER

Before discussing how ER can be integrated into classroom practice, it is important to first consider how reading is positioned within the Austrian curriculum. Examining the curriculum provides the broader framework within which ER must operate and clarifies the official expectations regarding reading in lower secondary education. Understanding these curricular aims helps to situate ER not as an external addition but as a complementary approach that fulfils the national goals for reading development.

The view of reading as an active and meaning-making process is reflected in the Austrian curriculum for lower secondary schools. Reading is described as a foundation for lifelong learning and as a skill that enables learners to engage critically and independently with written information. The curriculum states:

Das Erfassen von Informationen aus geschriebenen Texten bildet die Grundlage für lebenslanges Lernen. Dabei steht die Hinführung zur Lektüre von einfachen, authentischen, altersadäquaten Texten im Fokus. Für das Textverständnis sind sowohl das globale Verständnis, das Verstehen von spezifischen Informationen wie auch die Fähigkeit, einfache Schlussfolgerungen aus dem Geschriebenen zu ziehen, erforderlich (BMBWF 2024: 46).

The objectives mentioned in the Austrian curriculum directly reflect the theoretical perspectives discussed in Section 3.1. This statement shows that reading goes beyond simple word decoding and involves engaging with texts on various levels. Learners are expected to comprehend the overall meaning, identify specific information and draw inferences to achieve full comprehension of text, skills that align with the interactive nature of reading described through bottom-up and top-down processes (Grabe & Stoller 2020: 28-29; Richards 2015: 448-451). Given the view of reading as an active and central process, it is necessary to adopt teaching methods that effectively promote students' reading development. ER represents one such teaching model as it corresponds to the aims of the Austrian curriculum and the theoretical considerations of reading.

By encouraging the use of authentic and age-appropriate texts, the curriculum also aims to foster motivation and cultivate a positive attitude toward reading. It also supports the development of critical thinking and autonomous learning skills, which are essential skills for academic success and active participation in society (BMBWF 2024: 46). This integrated approach seeks to empower learners to become more confident and independent readers who can navigate a wide range of texts for diverse purposes such as acquiring information or experiencing reading enjoyment (Richards 2015: 448-451).

5.2. Implementing ER programmes

The following sections outline practical strategies for implementing ER in schools, discuss organisational considerations and highlight the importance of setting goals. The aim is to offer teachers a structured and comprehensive framework for integrating ER into language education.

5.2.1. Organisational models for ER

Selecting an appropriate organisational model is the first step in successfully implementing ER programmes and can greatly influence their sustainability and effectiveness. Day and Bamford (2007: 40-41) suggest 4 main organisational methods to realise an ER programme:

1. **Independent course:** ER is provided as an independent mandatory course and not connected to the regular English lessons.
2. **Integration into reading clubs:** ER is incorporated into already existing reading courses, such as book or literature clubs.
3. **Optional course component:** ER is integrated into an existing language course as an optional component and thus not graded by the teacher.
4. **Extracurricular activity:** ER is offered as an extracurricular activity with voluntary attendance, so that only interested students participate in the programme.

In the Austrian school context, all four models are theoretically possible but differ in feasibility. Establishing ER as an independent course would be very difficult to integrate, since even though schools enjoy some autonomy in creating subjects, introducing a new mandatory course is highly constrained by the national curriculum. In contrast, integrating ER into existing reading clubs or incorporating it as an optional component within English lessons offers a more practical and flexible approach that teachers can readily adapt to their classroom contexts. The extracurricular model is also realistic in Austrian schools, particularly through the format of a *unverbindliche Übung*, which allows schools to offer voluntary activities outside the regular timetable (BMBWF 2024: 20-21). Such arrangements provide opportunities for motivated students to pursue reading more intensively while reducing administrative constraints for teachers.

These considerations align with Farrell's (2009: 84) argument that "ER is based on the theory that people learn to read by reading material outside the normal curriculum". This perspective underlines that ER should not replace traditional forms of language instruction but rather complement them, offering students additional

opportunities to engage with authentic texts and to develop reading fluency in a less formal and more learner-centred setting. When implemented this way, ER can bridge the gap between structured classroom learning and independent reading, encouraging students to transfer classroom knowledge into autonomous reading experiences.

Ultimately, the choice of organisational model is shaped by a range of factors, including student and teacher preferences, administrative support, national curriculum requirements and the resources available within a school. As Day and Bamford (2007: 41) and Nation and Waring (2013: 9-10) emphasise, there is no universally optimal approach. Instead, ER programmes should be tailored to the specific conditions of each school, considering both institutional frameworks and the needs of students and teachers. The goal is not to prescribe a universal model, but to develop flexible solutions that reflect the needs of both learners and teachers.

5.2.2. Reading time

Deciding whether students should read in or outside the classroom in ER programmes requires careful consideration of both pedagogical and practical factors. Day and Bamford (2007: 43) argue that in-class reading offers significant advantages, as it allows teachers to monitor progress, provide immediate support, and ensure that all students are engaging with the texts. In addition, reading in class can also help reluctant readers to develop confidence and establish consistent reading habits in a structured environment. Conversely, reading outside the classroom promotes autonomy. It helps cultivate lifelong reading habits by allowing students to choose their preferred time and setting for reading (Nation & Waring 2013: 9). While each approach has distinct pedagogical strengths, combining the two can create a more comprehensive reading experience. A balanced model, incorporating both in-class and out-of-class reading opportunities, is therefore the most effective way for fostering motivation, supporting fluency and encouraging independent reading practices.

In the ER programme implemented for this study, the organisation of reading sessions sought to balance accessibility, autonomy and institutional requirements.

The design also reflects the school's no-homework policy, which limited opportunities for at-home reading. As a result, most reading sessions took place in the classroom, ensuring that all students participate equally and benefit from structured guidance. Nevertheless, students were encouraged to use the free time or quieter moments in other classes for additional reading. This flexible arrangement aimed to accommodate different reading preferences while maintaining consistency and accountability.

After each session, students recorded their progress using personalised bookmarks featuring their names, which the teacher distributed at the beginning of the project (see Appendix A). These bookmarks served both as an external motivational factor and a practical organisational tool. They allowed students to visualise their advancement through a book while also giving the teacher insight into reading frequency and engagement. All books were stored in the classroom to guarantee easy access and encourage spontaneous reading. Students were allowed to borrow books to take home but were required to check them out with the teacher to ensure proper organisation of the inventory of books. There was no fixed borrowing period to avoid pressuring students and to encourage reading at each learner's individual pace. Interestingly, only 7 students chose to take books home, indicating a strong preference for in-class reading and reinforcing the importance of flexible organisational approaches that align with student habits and preferences. This finding highlights the importance of adapting ER organisation to the learning culture and routines of the students.

5.2.3. Programme duration

In addition to allocating regular reading time, the overall duration of an ER programme plays an important role in determining its effectiveness. A recent meta-analysis (Nakanishi 2015: 27) found that one year of ER produced medium to large gains in reading proficiency, while a single semester yielded only small effects. These results suggest that longer exposure leads to greater progress in comprehension, reading speed and vocabulary. Likewise Grabe (2009: 328) emphasises that consistent reading over extended periods fosters lasting improvement in reading

competence. Due to curricular and scheduling constraints, the present ER project could only be implemented over a two-month period which must be taken into consideration when interpreting the outcomes.

5.2.4. Setting reading goals

Setting appropriate and clearly defined reading goals is essential for maintaining student motivation and ensuring steady progress throughout the ER programme. Students are more likely to continue reading when they experience a sense of purpose and achievement. More proficient readers typically manage longer sessions than beginners, who may struggle with comprehension and are less familiar with reading strategies. This highlights the importance of scaffolding, discussed in Section 3.6, to support learners at varying proficiency levels to reach their full individual potential.

To establish meaningful goals, teachers must have a thorough understanding of their students' language abilities and reading habits. Such goals can be framed in different ways, such as the number of books read, pages completed or time spent reading, but they should always be realistic and personalised. Clear communication of these objectives at the outset of an ER project can help motivate students and provide a sense of direction (Day & Bamford 2007: 84-85). The teacher's role is to balance challenge and attainability. Goals that are too demanding can cause frustration, whereas those that are too modest may fail to inspire effort or progress.

Various researchers propose different benchmarks for weekly reading, but these should be regarded only as general guidelines. For example, Paulston and Burder (1976, cited in Day & Bamford 2007: 85) suggest a target of approximately 50 pages per week. However, such targets must be adapted to learners' proficiency and available reading time. In practice, the teacher determines the most appropriate targets in consultation with individual students, thereby ensuring that goals are both realistic and motivating. This collaborative process also fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, as students take an active role in defining their own progress within the ER programme.

5.3. Reading materials

Selecting appropriate reading materials is a central element in the successful implementation of ER programmes. Careful book selection not only supports language development and reading fluency but also fosters motivation, autonomy and sustained engagement. The following subsections examine key considerations in text selection, including appropriate difficulty levels and additional text characteristics that make materials attractive and accessible to learners. Furthermore, they explore the debate between using authentic versus graded texts and briefly discuss the value of alternative text types such as children's books, comics and online resources. Finally, the crucial role of teacher guidance in helping students navigate book choices and develop effective reading habits is highlighted.

5.3.1. Difficulty levels of reading materials

Choosing appropriate reading materials is a crucial factor for the success of ER programmes, as many researchers emphasise. Jacobs and Farrell (2012: 14) distinguish three general levels of reading difficulty: *frustrational*, *instructional* and *independent*. Frustrational texts exceed the reader's current ability and, as the name implies, tend to produce frustration because they are too demanding and complex. Students would need dictionaries or other external resources to understand these texts. In an ER setting, frequent dictionary use contradicts one of the core principles, namely, reading fluently for meaning rather than decoding each individual word.

Instructional texts are likewise above the reader's current proficiency level, but comprehension remains possible with the support of the teacher, external resources or IR strategies (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 14). They could, however, serve as transitional materials that gradually prepare students for independent reading through explicit strategy training or targeted vocabulary work.

The third category, independent texts, may be read autonomously without external assistance. Ideally, independent texts are slightly below the student's present language level so that a learning process and improvement remain possible. These texts include grammar and vocabulary that are largely familiar to students and their sentence complexity and structure still allow for autonomous reading. The content

should be sufficiently clear so that students can follow it using contextual clues or visuals (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 14).

It is important to note that students are not required to understand every individual word when reading extensively. Instead, they should focus on comprehending the overall meaning of the text (Day 2020: 13). Day and Bamford (2007: 27-30) define this level of reading as *i-1*, indicating that a text is slightly below the learner's current level of language proficiency. This approach aligns with Jacobs and Farrell's (2012: 14) emphasis on promoting reading fluency through accessible input. Reading at this slightly lower level allows learners to read faster, gain confidence and experience the pleasure of understanding longer texts without constant interruption. During an ER project, students should therefore primarily read materials at this independent level, as such texts enable fluent and confident reading and support the development of regular reading habits (Day & Bamford 2007: 28; Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 14-15).

The impact of text difficulty on reading comprehension and motivation underscores the need to select materials suited to learners' proficiency. In a study with 120 high school students in Taiwan, Yang et al. (2021: 78-102) found that those who read texts at the *i-1* level—slightly below their proficiency achieved higher comprehension scores than peers reading *i+1* texts, as easier materials enabled more fluent and sustained reading. These findings support Day and Bamford's (2007: 28) and Jacobs and Farrell's (2012: 14) argument for using independent-level texts to foster both reading fluency and pleasure.

Regarding motivation, both groups in the study conducted by Yang et al. (2021: 78-102) initially showed increased engagement, yet over time, the *i+1* group showed greater reading avoidance due to the higher cognitive demands. This connects to the concerns expressed by Day and Bamford (2007: 43) about overly challenging materials hindering enjoyment and persistence. Interestingly, however, the *i+1* group also reported greater self-efficacy, suggesting that occasional exposure to more demanding materials can boost readers' confidence and perceived competence. Based on these findings, Yang et. al (2021: 95) recommend starting ER

programmes with *i-1* materials before gradually introducing *i+1* texts to maintain engagement while promoting ongoing language development.

While independent-level texts are more suitable for ER, student attitudes towards them can present challenges, highlighting the importance of teacher support. Many learners may feel embarrassed or resistant when assigned easier texts, perceiving them as a sign of regression in their language development. Day and Bamford (2007: 43) emphasise that teachers must address such misconceptions by explaining that easier materials can foster confidence and fluency. Jacobs and Farrell (2012: 14-15) similarly highlight that simpler texts allow students to focus on content rather than decoding, facilitating deeper engagement and analysis. Through explicit encouragement and consistent modelling of positive reading behaviour, teachers can normalise the use of simpler materials and help students appreciate their pedagogical value.

Text difficulty is influenced not only by linguistic complexity but also by topic familiarity and literary devices. Familiar topics are easier to process, while features such as metaphors or flashbacks can significantly increase a text's complexity and therefore also the reader's cognitive load (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 15). Consequently, when selecting materials, teachers must consider both linguistic and conceptual dimensions to ensure that the texts remain engaging, comprehensible and appropriately challenging.

Vocabulary familiarity presents another critical factor that directly connects to text accessibility and reading fluency. Hu and Nation (2000: 422) suggest that students should know approximately 90-95% of a text's vocabulary to ensure smooth and uninterrupted reading. The ER Foundation (2011: 3) even recommends a higher threshold of 98% to maximise comprehension and confidence. These recommendations align with the principles described by Day and Bamford (2007: 30, 119) and Nation and Waring (2013: 9), who argue that minimising the need for frequent dictionary use is essential to maintain reading flow and enjoyment.

Finally, selecting appropriate materials requires considering subjective perceptions of difficulty and individual differences among learners, as several authors have

pointed out. Many publishers indicate the proficiency levels of their books, which can serve as a helpful guide for teachers. However, Nation and Waring (2013: 15) caution that different publishers use varying criteria for categorising text difficulty, making these labels only a rough guideline. Moreover, students' perceptions of text difficulty are influenced by personal interests, familiarity with genres, existing reading strategies and overall motivation (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 15). A text that appears simple from a linguistic standpoint may still be cognitively or culturally demanding, depending on the reader's background and engagement with the topic. This interplay of objective and subjective factors again highlights the importance of individualised and careful text selection and supports the use of a diverse range of publishers and materials to meet the learners' needs (Day & Bamford 2007: 41; Nation & Waring 2013: 15).

5.3.2. Other characteristics of effective reading materials

In addition to the difficulty level, other features of reading materials also play a critical role in the success of ER programmes. According to Nuttall (1983: 171-172), an ER programme should incorporate reading materials that exhibit four key features, namely that they are appealing, varied, easy and short. These four criteria build directly on the importance of text difficulty discussed previously. They highlight that text accessibility is not determined solely by its linguistic level but also by how attractive and inviting the material is to students. A text that is visually and conceptually engaging can motivate learners to read more frequently and with greater enthusiasm, thereby supporting the long-term goals of ER.

Visually engaging materials, including vivid colours, appealing illustrations and large, clear fonts, can further capture readers' attention and reduce their initial resistance to reading (Leather & Uden 2021: 115-116). Such visual elements can make texts appear more approachable, especially for younger or less confident readers who may initially perceive reading in a foreign language as a demanding task. They also support comprehension through contextual or visual cues and increase motivation by making reading seem less intimidating and more enjoyable.

This is particularly relevant in lower secondary settings, where students' reading confidence and willingness to engage are still developing.

The length of texts also plays an important motivational role. Shorter texts often appear more manageable and less intimidating, encouraging hesitant readers to start and complete them. Nonetheless, some students may prefer longer books if they enjoy challenging themselves and are not discouraged by length (Bieri 2018: 286-292). These preferences underline the importance of providing a variety of materials to cater to the different learner profiles.

5.3.3. Authentic texts vs. graded readers

Despite the considerable variety of materials available, selecting appropriate reading texts continues to represent one of the central challenges in implementing effective ER programmes. As Jacobs and Farrell (2012: 6) note, "almost anything with words can serve as ER material." Nevertheless, the broad range of potential sources also makes it difficult for teachers to determine which texts best match learners' abilities, interests and motivational needs. However, most English books and other text types are designed for native speakers, which often makes them difficult for language learners to access and enjoy. Beginners in particular usually face significant obstacles due to limited linguistic skills, which can complicate both the decoding of unfamiliar vocabulary and the comprehension of overall meaning (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 6).

One primary source of this difficulty is the widespread emphasis on using authentic materials in language classrooms, a belief strongly influenced by the rise of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Beginning in the 1970s, CLT promoted the idea that authentic texts are superior for language learning because they offer richer cultural context and reflect real-life language use (Day & Bamford 2007: 53-54). According to this perspective, authentic texts are considered more engaging and motivating and are believed to better prepare students for genuine language use outside the classroom. Authentic texts can indeed boost learners' confidence and offer exposure to diverse genres and styles (Martinez 2002 cited in

Tvaltchrelidze 2017: 15-16). They also provide valuable insight into cultural norms and everyday communication patterns that simplified materials may lack.

However, these materials often exceed students' proficiency levels and can lead to demotivation, especially for beginners. Students may struggle with complex vocabulary and cultural references, leading to excessive dictionary use and loss of fluency, comprehension and motivation (Day & Bamford 2007: 55; Nation & Waring 2013: 8). There often is a mismatch between students' cognitive maturity and their limited language proficiency in lower secondary. While the students may be capable of engaging with sophisticated content, their restricted linguistic resources texts available to them.

As an alternative to authentic texts, graded readers (GRs) provide a more accessible entry point into ER, particularly for language learners. They address many of the challenges associated with authentic materials by providing linguistically controlled yet engaging texts that enable learners to read extensively without constant difficulty. GRs are specifically designed for learners at various proficiency levels and thus gradually bridge to authentic reading materials (Day & Bamford 2007: 56). Many GRs are adaptations of classic works whose copyrights have expired. They are modified to simplify the language and narrative structure while preserving the central theme and stylistic tone of the original. This matches the core of the ER principle that materials should be easy to understand and promote reading fluency (Day & Bamford 2007: 7-8).

GRs are carefully constructed to match specific proficiency levels, with vocabulary and grammar deliberately controlled to ensure readability. Texts for beginners typically use simple sentence structures, high-frequency words and supportive illustrations, while texts for advanced learners gradually increase in length, lexical range and complexity (Day 2020: 14; ER Foundation 2011: 2). This structure supports sustained motivation by offering students materials that align with their current language abilities while allowing for gradual linguistic development over time.

A key strength of GRs lies in their versatility and potential to support learner autonomy and motivation. Because GRs are available across multiple proficiency

levels and genres, they allow students to engage with texts that best suit their current interests and abilities. In line with the principles of text progression, students can start with simpler texts to build confidence and then move to more challenging ones as they feel ready. However, it is crucial to emphasise that progression within ER should be viewed as flexible rather than strictly sequential. Students should be encouraged to experiment with different levels and to revisit easier texts whenever they wish to consolidate understanding or enjoy the reading experience (Mason & Krashen 1997: 93).

Despite their many advantages, GRs also face criticism that should be acknowledged when designing ER programmes. If the grading is inconsistent, texts may become confusing and hinder steady progress. Over-simplification, on the other hand, can lead to stories that feel monotonous or lack coherence, thereby limiting opportunities for learners to internalise natural language patterns. Problems also arise when information is poorly controlled. The rapid introduction of numerous characters or events can overwhelm readers and interrupt fluency (Hill 2013: 88-90). Furthermore, many GRs can appear somewhat artificial as they often provide only limited cultural and historical context, which may reduce their broader educational value (Gillis-Furutaka 2015: 9-17). Nevertheless, despite these limitations, GRs remain a valuable and practical tool for building foundational reading skills and sustaining motivation in ER contexts.

5.3.4. Beyond graded readers and authentic texts

In addition to GRs and authentic texts, other forms of literature can significantly enrich an ER programme and address learners' diverse needs. Children's literature and young adult fiction offer accessible and engaging options for ER, especially for beginner and intermediate learners. Children's books are typically designed to appeal to developing readers through colourful layouts, supportive illustrations and concise storylines, allowing them to be completed in a single reading session (Day & Bamford 2007: 58-59, 98). These visual and structural features help reduce reading anxiety and make reading appear less intimidating. Day and Bamford (2007: 104) also recommend young adult literature, as these books tend to be relatively short,

feature straightforward plots and convey mostly literal meanings. The contexts and themes are usually familiar to students and the language is often colloquial, further facilitating comprehension and engagement.

Comics and graphic novels represent another valuable resource in ER programmes due to their firm reliance on images to tell stories, which supports meaning-making even when vocabulary is challenging (Day & Bamford 2007: 104-105). These visually driven narratives align with principles discussed in earlier sections regarding the importance of visual support in reducing cognitive load and maintaining reading flow. Visually engaging materials are beneficial for less confident readers and help sustain motivation by combining visual and textual clues.

Newspapers and magazines provide additional opportunities for ER, particularly for more advanced learners seeking exposure to current and authentic content. Articles are generally brief and can often be completed in just a few minutes, which aligns with the principle of keeping texts manageable to encourage continued reading. The up-to-date nature of these texts can further increase students' motivation by connecting reading to real-world topics of interest. However, teachers must ensure that students possess sufficient background knowledge, as many magazine articles involve overarching themes (e.g. politics, science, sports) that require specific expertise to understand fully. To address this challenge, simplified or youth-oriented publications, such as children's newspaper editions or tabloid-style news articles, can serve as more accessible alternatives. These options minimise the need for external assistance and help maintain the reading flow essential for successful ER (Day & Bamford 2007: 101-103).

In recent years, the internet has emerged as an increasingly valuable resource for ER, offering students an almost limitless selection of texts. Day (2015: 297) emphasises that online materials expand opportunities for engaging with diverse content, particularly outside the classroom. The internet allows learners to select topics based on personal interests and thus promotes autonomy and fosters intrinsic motivation. Blogs, online articles, fan fictions and digital magazines can all serve as potential ER

materials, if they match learners' interests and proficiency levels. When thoughtfully selected, digital texts support the motivational dimensions of ER.

A well-stocked and diverse reading library remains central to the success of any ER programme, since “when books are readily available, when the print environment is enriched, more reading is done” (Krashen 2004: 36). The library should support a wide range of reading preferences and language levels. To achieve this, materials are visually appealing, thematically relevant and age-appropriate, encouraging regular and self-directed reading habits (Day & Bamford 2007: 97). An ideal ER library would include a mix of GRs, children’s books, young adult literature, comics, magazines, newspapers, digital texts and carefully selected authentic texts. This range of materials ensures that every student, regardless of their language level or personal interests, can find a text that supports both their reading development and motivation.

Identifying students' reading preferences can be challenging, particularly for those who do not read regularly in their first language or another language. One effective strategy is for teachers to observe learners' reading choices and behaviours to gain insights into their interests and current habits. Alternatively, soliciting feedback through surveys or questionnaires allows teachers to compile a targeted list of recommended materials that reflect learners’ stated interests (Day & Bamford 2007: 97; Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 20). This method was incorporated into the informal initial data collection for this thesis (see Section 6.2).

5.3.5. The role of teachers in selecting reading materials

Teacher support plays a critical role in guiding students through the book selection process in ER programmes, especially for younger or less experienced readers. Ito (2024: 107–109) conducted a study involving 91 young learners at a private language school in Japan to examine learners’ motivation and their need for teacher guidance in an ER context. Approximately 10% of students indicated that they would like more active assistance from their teacher, particularly in selecting appropriate and suitable books. In comparison, a further 15% reported that they valued the support already received when choosing the reading materials. These findings

suggest that teacher involvement remains essential even in reading programmes that promote learner autonomy since guidance can help students make informed choices.

These findings also suggest that students who seek support often struggle to identify their reading preferences and select books that align with their language level and personal interests. Although the overall number of students requesting help was relatively small, the study nevertheless emphasises that teacher involvement remains an essential factor in the book selection process and in other aspects of ER implementation. At the same time, Ito's (2024: 107-109) research highlights the importance of maintaining a balance between teacher guidance and learner independence, as maintaining students' autonomy in choosing books helps to foster motivation and engagement. However, it also demonstrates the potential challenges students face when attempting to exercise that autonomy effectively, particularly those who are inexperienced or less confident readers. Consequently, teacher support should aim to guide and scaffold decision-making without limiting students' sense of ownership over their reading choices.

Similar concerns are echoed in Shane's (2018: 245-252) study, which further emphasises the need for careful and well-timed teacher intervention during book selection. Shane (2018: 245-252) observed that many university students did not base their book choices primarily on linguistic difficulty. Instead, their choices were often strongly influenced by non-linguistic factors such as visual appeal or plot content. For instance, the most frequently cited reason for selecting a book was the design of the cover or the inclusion of an appealing illustration. These findings indicate that aesthetic and content-related aspects often outweigh linguistic considerations, highlighting the importance of teacher guidance in helping students make balanced choices that combine interest with appropriate language level.

To address these challenges, Shane (2018: 251) recommends increased and proactive teacher involvement during the initial stages of an ER programme. One suggested strategy is for students and teachers to jointly select a class reader that all students read together at the beginning. This shared reading experience can

serve as a scaffolded introduction to ER, providing learners with a model of effective reading practices and opportunities for guided discussion. It also helps students develop a clearer understanding of the goals, routines and expectations of ER before transitioning toward greater autonomy in their individual book selections.

5.4. Building an ER library

Before launching an ER programme, teachers must engage in careful planning to determine how reading materials are provided, as ensuring access to suitable texts is a prerequisite for success. Building an ER library can initially present significant challenges for teachers, particularly in terms of resources and logistics (Wood 2017: 157). Teachers need to decide whether students will bring their own books to class or whether the teacher will establish a dedicated ER library. Although the initial setup may be demanding, a well-organised library can be expanded and refined over many years, forming a suitable basis for future ER initiatives. Teachers are therefore advised to begin with a modest selection of texts and gradually broaden the collection over time (Day & Bamford 2007: 108-109; Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 13).

The size and diversity of the library depend on several factors, including the time available, the number of contributing teachers and the financial resources. In some cases, the existing school library may already provide sufficient resources to initiate an ER programme. Yet, this is often not the case and teachers may need to develop creative solutions. Many schools allocate budgets for new library books and teachers can proactively recommend suitable titles or assist in the selection and acquisition process. Involving students can also be beneficial. For instance, they might contribute by donating books or money, although such contributions should always be discussed with parents in advance if the students are minors (Day & Bamford 2007: 108-109).

Given the financial constraints that many teachers face, a range of practical strategies can help create an ER library at low cost. Leather and Uden (2021: 124) emphasise the importance of resourceful and collaborative approaches to overcome budget limitations. Some effective strategies include:

- Using digital resources, as numerous websites offer free reading materials.

- Encouraging current and former students to contribute books they no longer need.
- Requesting donations from colleagues and other school staff who may wish to declutter.
- Asking parents and families to donate books or other materials.
- Considering collecting not only books but also magazines and newspapers.
- Contacting local organisations that might be willing to donate reading materials.
- Visiting second-hand bookstores, browsing online marketplaces or going to flea markets for low-cost or free items.
- Organising book swaps among students, allowing them to exchange materials they have already read.
- Writing original texts together with the students as a classroom activity.

By following some of these recommendations, teachers can gradually build a diverse and affordable library to support effective ER. Such an approach also promotes student ownership and strengthens the reader community, which, as discussed in Section 4.4, is a key factor in maintaining long-term motivation.

To enhance both accessibility and practicality, the physical organisation of the ER library should be planned with care. Nation and Waring (2013: 16) highlight that it is not necessary for every class to maintain a separate library. More efficient alternatives include using a mobile library, such as a trolley, that can be moved between classrooms, or establishing a central, fixed library accessible to all participating classes.

Establishing a minimum core collection is crucial to ensure that every student has sufficient choice and flexibility. Each student should have at least one book available, with extra copies on hand for those who wish to switch texts. Ideally, each student should have between two and four books to choose from at any given time (Day & Bamford 2007: 108-109).

5.4.1. Presentation and organisation of the extensive reading library

The presentation and arrangement of books in the classroom play a crucial role in motivating students and contributing to the overall success of an ER programme. As Holbrook (1993: 14) observes, “the ways you present reading materials influence how students receive them.” In other words, books and texts must be displayed in an appealing and well-organised manner to stimulate the students’ curiosity and encourage them to engage with reading (Holbrook 1993: 14-15). Similarly, Day and Bamford (2007: 97) stress that the classroom environment should invite exploration and make books easy to access, especially for reluctant readers.

Once a sufficient collection of materials has been gathered, teachers should carefully plan the organisation of books, newspapers and magazines. Arranging books attractively, in a layout reminiscent of a bookstore, can further boost students’ motivation. Prominently displaying the front covers can be particularly effective, as visual appeal strongly influences learners’ book choices (Shane 2018: 245-252). In addition, teachers may consider creating thematic or seasonal displays, for instance, a “Mystery Month” or “Travel Corner,” to regularly renew students’ interest and to introduce them to genres or authors they might not have chosen independently. Such dynamic arrangements can transform the reading space into a continually evolving environment that reflects both students’ interests and current classroom topics discussed in English or other subjects.

Providing an accessible and systematically structured overview of the available reading materials further supports students’ autonomy and facilitates informed decision-making. Displaying a comprehensive list of all available items allows students to easily see what texts are offered and facilitates the selection process. This list can be made accessible either in print or digital form. According to Kluge (1993: 7-8), a digital format is preferable since it enables students to search for specific titles quickly and conveniently. Digital lists also offer the advantage of easy updating and can include additional information such as short book summaries, difficulty levels or recommendations for peers, which can further guide students in their selection. Moreover, teachers should retain their own copy of the list to track borrowed, lost or

damaged books and to maintain an up-to-date inventory (Day & Bamford 2007: 112). Regularly reviewing this inventory ensures that the library remains balanced in terms of genres, levels and topics.



Figure 3: Presentation of reading materials in the classroom.

5.4.2. Categorisation methods

Clear and consistent organisation of reading material is essential to support student choice and maintain motivation in an ER programme. Potential organisational methods include categorisation by topic, difficulty level or text length (Day & Bamford 2007: 112). Establishing a coherent system not only helps students navigate the available resources efficiently but also communicates that reading is a valued and structured activity within the classroom environment.

Choosing how to organise the materials depends largely on students' needs and preferences. According to Nuttall (1983: 177), the most logical way to organise reading materials in a classroom is either by level of difficulty or by thematic content. Teachers must decide which approach is more suitable and effective for their group

of students. This choice depends on whether students are more motivated by linguistic accessibility or by topic interest. As Nuttall (1983: 177) states:

If your class library does not need to cater for widely different linguistic levels, it should be classified according to content, because once the language level is left out of account, it is naturally the content that determines the student's choice. But if you have to supply books for students of very different levels of proficiency, it is more helpful for the primary classification to be in terms of linguistic levels, so that students do not waste time or get discouraged trying to find suitable books.

This statement underscores the importance of matching the organisational strategy to the linguistic diversity within a class, ensuring that both weaker and stronger readers can engage meaningfully with the available materials. In heterogeneous classrooms, categorisation by difficulty helps prevent frustration and fosters confidence, whereas thematic organisation can encourage curiosity and promote peer discussions when language levels are more homogenous.

If teachers decide to classify the books according to difficulty, they must be familiar with the materials and prepared to invest time in reading and evaluating them. Assigning levels accurately requires close attention (Day & Bamford 2007: 112). This process can also serve as valuable professional development, allowing teachers to better understand the complexity of the texts and to recommend them more effectively to students based on personal familiarity. Nowadays, information on text levels is often available online through publishers' catalogues or digital ER platforms, which can support teachers in organising their collections more efficiently. GRs typically do not require assessment since they are already marked with the appropriate language level. Junko (2004: 27-28) further recommends labelling books with coloured stickers corresponding to different language levels to allow readers to quickly identify suitable texts without any unnecessary frustration. In addition to colour coding, brief written indicators such as "Beginner", "Intermediate" or "Advanced" can be attached to the spine or the cover to make the system even more transparent for students.

For this project, a simplified two-level system was implemented. Only two categories, namely *easy* and *difficult*, were created. Easy books were marked with a

green sticker on the cover page and difficult texts with a red one. The easy category included GRs up to the A2 level and children's books containing many illustrations, while the difficult category consisted of texts above A2, young adult literature and authentic adult texts. Books for adult readers were also included since a small number of students in the class demonstrated a high proficiency level and wanted to challenge themselves by reading such text types. This simplified approach was chosen to maintain clarity and avoid overwhelming students with excessive classification details. At the same time, it provided enough variation to cater to diverse reading abilities, ensuring that each learner could find texts that were both accessible and stimulating. Future implementations could further refine this system by introducing an intermediate level.

5.5. Teacher's role

The teacher plays a central and multifaceted role in supporting student success throughout an ER programme. During an ER project, the teacher assumes several dynamic and interconnected roles. A key responsibility of the teacher is to act as a facilitator who helps students select appropriate texts that match their interests and language level. This support can involve asking questions such as "What types of books do you enjoy?", "What length of book do you like to read?" and "What TV shows, websites, or movies do you enjoy? Can you find books that are connected to them?" (ER Foundation 2011: 9; Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 18, 62). Many students may feel overwhelmed by the abundance of options and actively seek the teacher's support in making suitable choices. This personalised guidance empowers students to make informed decisions and promotes a sense of ownership over their reading journey. In this respect, the teacher functions not only as a guide but also as a mentor who nurtures self-awareness and autonomy in reading.

Teachers also play an essential role in motivating students to stay engaged with reading throughout the ER programme. An important first step is to introduce the concept of ER to the class, highlighting its numerous advantages and, if necessary, supporting these claims with relevant research findings. By emphasising the positive impact of ER on language acquisition, fluency and overall development, teachers

can strengthen the perceived value of reading within the learning process (Day 2013: 14). Framing the ER project as an opportunity for personal growth rather than an academic requirement can further encourage reluctant readers to participate actively. In doing so, teachers help students understand that reading contributes not only to linguistic progress but also to imagination, empathy and cultural awareness. Additionally, it is essential for teachers to model genuine enthusiasm and interest in reading (Day & Bamford 2007: 7-8). Authentic engagement, rather than simply instructing students to read, helps establish credibility and motivates learners to adopt positive reading habits. Teachers should be visibly involved with various reading materials beyond course textbooks and actively discuss their own reading experiences with students. Sharing book recommendations and guiding students on how to access resources further reinforces the supportive reading culture. Teachers who actively participate in reading sessions also demonstrate that reading is a shared and valued activity. Teachers should join students in reading during designated class periods rather than using this time for unrelated tasks such as grading or lesson planning. Such visible participation signals to students that reading holds high value and is not secondary to other academic duties (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 53-56; Krashen 2004: 50). This modelling effect can be particularly powerful for younger or less confident readers, who often emulate the enthusiasm and behaviour of their teachers.

Alternatively, teachers may use in-class time to offer targeted support where needed. This can include helping students who face difficulties with book selection or reading comprehension, checking in with learners about their progress, or asking questions to encourage reflection and engagement (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 53-56; Krashen 2004: 50). Establishing a balance between autonomy and guidance is essential. While some students thrive on independence, others require consistent reassurance and feedback to remain motivated. Creating short one-to-one conversations during reading periods can help teachers better understand individual challenges and adapt their support accordingly.

Classroom reading periods also provide opportunities for teachers to observe student behaviour, identify those who excel or struggle and take notes for future feedback and support. However, Nation and Waring (2013: 13) caution that these interventions should be carefully managed to avoid disrupting students who prefer to read in quiet concentration. Teachers must therefore develop sensitivity to the different working styles of their learners, distinguishing between those who benefit from encouragement and those who prefer uninterrupted focus.

Sun (2022: 1-13) conducted a study to examine the teacher's role in detail and concluded that the teacher plays a crucial role by serving as a motivator, strategy guide, monitor and provider of appropriate scaffolding for students. Teacher involvement begins at the stage of book selection. The teacher observed during Sun's study shared (Sun 2020: 6):

From parents' feedback, I knew that most students had no experience of reading original English novels or other authentic materials in English before starting middle school, so I recommended some books. I didn't say you must choose from these books, but later I found that most of the selected books were from the list I recommended.

The findings also indicate that teacher support is especially valuable in helping students make appropriate reading choices. Approximately 60% of the students expected the teacher to provide book and text recommendations and 80% of them reported that they ultimately chose reading materials based on these suggestions. Furthermore, two-thirds of the students indicated they relied on recommendations to avoid feeling overwhelmed, lacking effective strategies or resources for selecting appropriate books on their own. These findings underscore that simply providing a wide variety of texts is insufficient. Active teacher guidance is essential to help students make quicker and more effective choices, thus enhancing the overall success of the ER programme (Sun 2020: 1-13).

5.6. Post-reading activities

Although ER ideally emphasises reading for enjoyment and intrinsic motivation, some form of assessment is often introduced in the classroom context. In principle, ER does not require the evaluation of the reading process and many programmes

operate successfully without formal assessment (Day & Bamford 2007: 86-89). Nevertheless, in school settings, teachers are usually expected to document student progress and evaluation can also provide useful insights into how learners engage with texts. For this reason, I decided to include assessment in the present study, not primarily for the purpose of assigning grades but to gain a deeper understanding of students' reading behaviour, motivation and development over time. In this sense, assessment was conceptualised as a diagnostic and reflective tool, balancing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (see Section 4.2).

Post-reading activities proved to be the most effective way to achieve my aims as they offer flexible and low-pressure means of assessment. Such tasks need to remain concise and minimally intrusive so that the central emphasis continues to be on fostering a love of reading rather than on fulfilling supplementary requirements (Day & Bamford 2007: 86-89).

The positive effect of reflective post-reading tasks has been confirmed in empirical research. In a study with Japanese EFL learners, Aliponga (2013: 75-78) examined the use of a reading journal with post-reading activities in an ER course and found that they significantly enhanced student's motivation, comprehension and critical thinking. Most participants reported that keeping a journal increased their concentration, reading speed and vocabulary awareness while also strengthening their confidence as readers. The study concluded that post-reading activities can serve as effective means of connecting reading for pleasure with structured reflection and learner autonomy. These findings support the view that carefully designed post-reading exercises contribute not only to language development but also to the sustainability of motivation in ER programmes.

Beyond assessment, post-reading activities offer multiple pedagogical benefits, including the enhancement of language skills, cognitive engagement and collaborative learning. These activities allow teachers not only to grade the students but also to verify that students have completed their reading while also providing opportunities for personal reflection and creative expression (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 73). Through these activities, students can examine the text critically, discuss

interpretations and share their insights with peers who have read the same book or are interested in it. Such exchanges can transform the classroom into a community of readers, where individual experiences with texts are valued and discussed collectively. Moreover, these exchanges encourage students to recommend or critique books, promoting a community of readers within the classroom, as seen in the motivational strategies discussed in Chapter 4.4. Depending on whether the activities are oral or written, they also develop additional linguistic skills such as speaking and writing (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 73). Thus, post-reading activities can support critical thinking, broaden students' communicative competence and foster motivation while aligning with the holistic language development goals of ER.

Despite their advantages, post-reading activities require careful implementation to avoid undermining ER principles. These activities consume valuable time that could otherwise be devoted to actual reading. Therefore, post-reading activities should remain focused, meaningful and time-efficient (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 74). Teachers, too, may experience increased workload from grading the tasks and providing feedback on them, which further underscores the need for efficiency and clarity (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 74). To ensure sustainability, it is advisable for teachers to alternate between shorter reflective tasks and more elaborate creative exercises, depending on the phase of the ER programme and students' energy levels.

To mitigate these challenges while maximising its impact, a range of traditional and creative post-reading strategies was integrated in this ER programme. This combination was designed to accommodate students with different learning styles and levels of linguistic competence, ensuring that all learners could demonstrate their understanding and express their ideas in ways that felt meaningful and achievable. The following section outlines the most relevant activities used, explaining their pedagogical purpose and how they contributed to students' motivation and language development.

5.6.1. Comprehension questions

One of the most straightforward post-reading activities involves asking comprehension questions to ensure that students have grasped the main idea of the

text. These questions should prioritise global comprehension and overall meaning rather than focusing on details (Day & Bamford 2007: 141). As the learners were each reading different books, they were required to create their own comprehension questions. This task shifts responsibility from teacher to learner and encourages students to take an active role in assessing their own understanding. Such a learner-centred approach increases engagement and encourages a deeper cognitive and linguistic connection with the text. Once the questions are developed, they can be exchanged with peers who have read the same material. The exchange of questions provides opportunities for negotiation of meaning and discussion of alternative interpretations, which helps learners see that understanding a text can be both individual and shared.

An example from this project shows how a student engaged with the book *SpongeBob SquarePants* by creating the following comprehension questions:

- *Where does SpongeBob live?*
- *When does he meet Sandy?*
- *Why does Squidward not like SpongeBob and Patrick?*
- *What kind of snail is Gary?*
- *Who is Squidward?*

5.6.2. Summary and review

Summaries and reviews are among the most widely used post-reading activities in ER. These tasks can focus on the entire text or specific sections and may be presented either orally or in written form, depending on students' preferences and language proficiency (Day & Bamford 2007: 142). Although such tasks primarily assess students' productive language skills, they also offer valuable indirect insights into comprehension and personal engagement with the story. By requiring students to recall, condense and reformulate information, summaries encourage both active processing and critical reflection on the text.

A useful variation on traditional summaries involves setting a strict word limit for the exercise, such as limiting the response to exactly 30 words. This method not only assesses comprehension but also encourages linguistic precision (Leather & Uden

2021: 98). Students must prioritise essential information, make deliberate word choices and demonstrate an awareness of structure and cohesion within a highly constrained format.

For more creatively inclined learners, the summary can be expressed visually, such as through a drawing, mind map or comic strip (Day & Bamford 2007: 147). These visual alternatives can help reduce the linguistic pressure. They also foster creativity, engagement and confidence, particularly among visual learners who might find long written tasks intimidating. Figure 4 below illustrates a visual summary created by a student for *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, where key elements of the narrative were condensed into a single image.



Figure 4: Visual summary for the book *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

An engaging extension of the summary format is to ask students to summarise the text and find an alternative ending to the story. In this task, students must first demonstrate that they clearly understand the original plot and then propose a different ending. It is fundamental that the students explicitly indicate the point at which their new ending differs from the original narrative. This approach allows for deeper processing of the text and supports both inferencing and narrative skills (Lai 2004: 155; Leather & Uden 2021: 86-87).

The following alternative ending was written by a student for the book *Sherlock Holmes and a Study in Scarlet*:

John Ferrier finds his way out of the forest and then goes all the way to the nearest town next to the ocean. There, he pays for a boat trip to Europe, because he knows that he is being chased. In Europe him [he] and Lucy get different names and live happy[ily] for the rest of their live[s].

Another effective summary variation of the summary task is the timeline, which requires the student to identify the key events of the text in the correct order (Jacobs & Farrell, 2012: 76), as shown in Figure 5, which depicts a timeline for *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* created by a student. The key difference is that students do not write full sentences, making a timeline shorter than a summary while still giving a clear overview of the story. This format reduces the linguistic load and helps learners visualise narrative progression. Timelines also reinforce logical sequencing and coherence.



Figure 5: Timeline for the book *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

5.6.3. Creative post-reading activities

Creative post-reading activities provide students with engaging and imaginative ways to interact with the text, fostering deeper comprehension and sustained motivation. These tasks allow the learners to personalise their reading experience

by expressing themselves visually, spatially or linguistically. Unlike traditional written summaries, such creative activities appeal to diverse learning styles and can make reading reflection more enjoyable and inclusive.

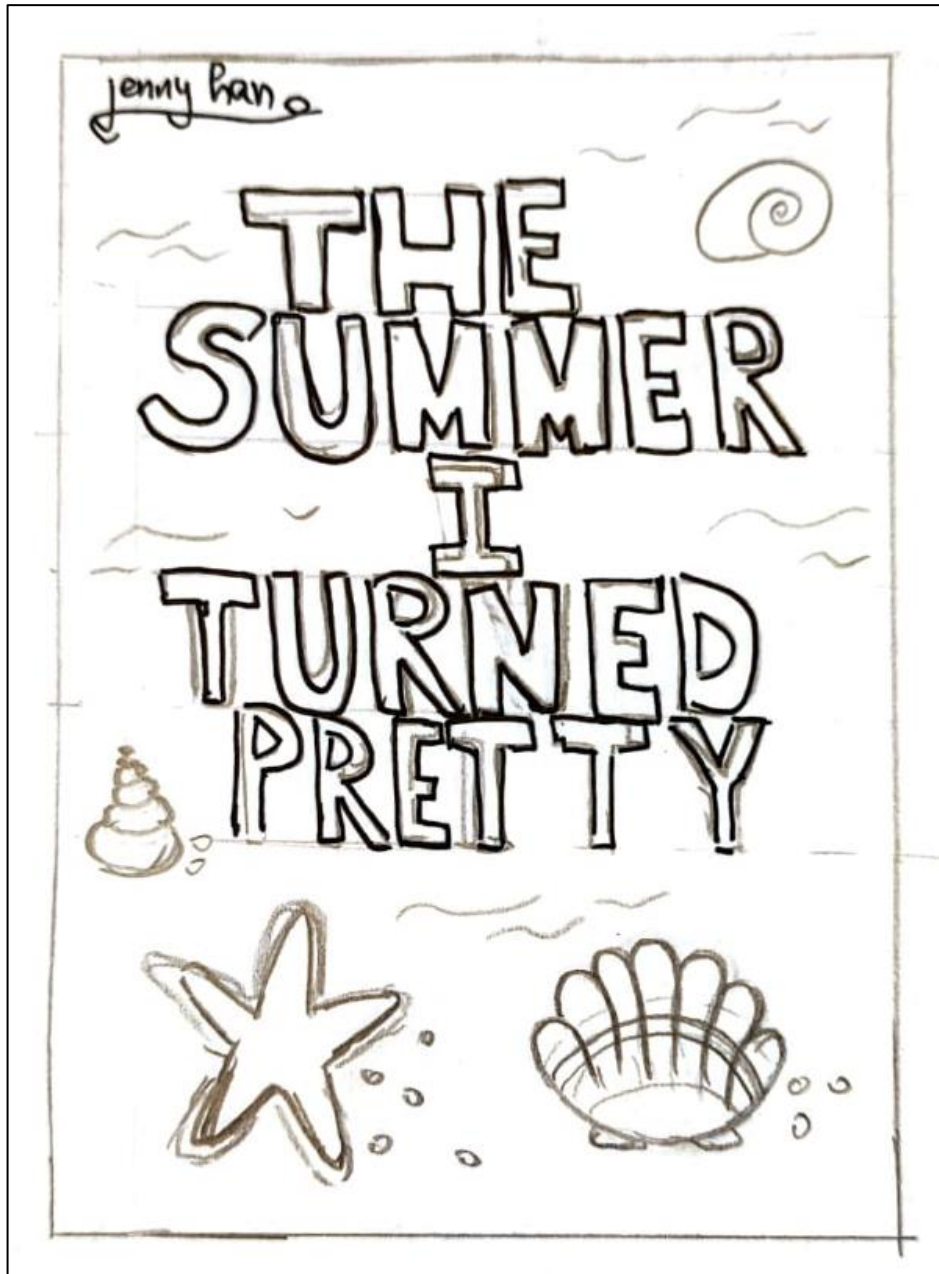


Figure 6: Alternative cover for the book *The Summer I Turned Pretty*.

One particularly creative task is designing an alternative book cover, which encourages students to visually interpret the central themes, settings and characters of the story (Helgesen 2004: 143-144; Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 75). Figure 6 illustrates an alternative book cover for *The Summer I turned pretty*, created by a student to represent the tone and content of the novel. Such visual reinterpretations can further

inspire classroom discussions, as students compare how their artistic choices convey different interpretations of the same text.

Students could also be assigned to draw a map with all the main locations mentioned in the text. To complete this, learners must identify key settings and understand how these locations relate to the plot (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 75). This activity reinforces spatial awareness and supports comprehension. It also draws on background knowledge of how maps function.

A more language-focused activity is creating a word search puzzle. In this activity, the students select ten or more words that are strongly associated with the text and embed them into a grid. They then fill in the empty spaces in the grid with random letters. Afterwards, the word search can be exchanged with another student so that classmates can solve each other's puzzles, turning the task into a collaborative game that reinforces vocabulary and comprehension (Pölzleitner n.d.). Alternatively, students may also use an online word search generator to create the puzzle.

5.6.4. Post-reading exercises with a specific layout

A reading quilt is an example of a post-reading activity with a distinctive and visually structured layout. It combines elements from various post-reading exercises into a single task. As implied by the name, this activity resembles a quilt and consists of a 3x3 grid. Each square is assigned a specific aspect of the text, such as an event at the beginning, main characters, a highlight of the story or a random fact. Students fill in these squares using only key words, making this method not only creative and visually appealing but also highly efficient for reviewing a variety of elements from the text (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 76). By summarising information in short segments, the reading quilt helps learners identify central ideas, recognise narrative structure and practise concise language use. An example created by a student for "A Study in Scarlet" is shown in Figure 7.

Fill in the reading quilt using key words only.

event at the beginning Holmes meets Holmes Dr. Watson	event in the middle John Ferrier takes little Lucy with him	event at the end Sherlock finds the murderer dead in the hotel
main characters Sherlock Holmes John Ferrier Lucy Ferrier	minor characters Dr. Watson	highlight of the story Sherlock solved the crime
fact #1 Sherlock knows German	fact #2 Dr. Watson was in Afghanistan	fact #3 Sherlock hasn't solved any crime before

Figure 7: Reading quilt for the book *Sherlock Holmes and a Study in Scarlet*.

A related activity is the story pyramid, which also focuses on summarising the text using key words. In this exercise, students fill in a pyramid-shaped diagram composed of eight horizontal levels, with each level requiring a fixed number of words. The content of the levels is predefined and remains the same for every text. The top level of the pyramid requires one keyword. Each lower level increases by one word (Pölzleitner n.d.). The activity requires a high degree of language proficiency and should thus be carried out with more experienced readers. It fosters careful word selection, enhances summarising skills and strengthens learners' ability to capture the essence of a story in a compact format.

These are the words that a student chose to describe *Diary of a Wimpy Kid - Rodrick Rules* in the story pyramid:

1. Name one main character - **Greg**
2. two words that describe the main character - **funny, nice**
3. three words about the setting/place - **home, school, Grandma's**
4. four words about the main character's problem and goal - **He wants much popularity.**
5. five words about important events in the story - **Rodrick's party and the door**

6. *Six words about how it ends* – **He gets noticed and has popularity.**
7. *Seven words about your favourite part* – **When Greg and Rodrick work together once.**
8. *eight words that you would tell your friend* – **It's fun and exciting to read the book.**

Another structured activity, the story pie, involves dividing a circle into six segments. Each part needs to be filled with keywords or short phrases concerning a significant event in the text. These events do not need to be arranged in chronological order. The story pie is less demanding than the previous activities discussed in this chapter and therefore more suitable for younger or less confident learners (Pözlleitner n.d.).

5.6.5. Short post-reading activities

Short post-reading activities offer an efficient way to reflect on a text without disrupting the flow of reading. They are particularly useful when time is limited in the ER programme. Such tasks maintain the focus in reading as an enjoyable and fluent activity while still allowing for brief yet meaningful reflection.

One such activity is asking students to identify three adjectives that capture the essence of the text or state a few reasons why another student should read the text (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 78). The exercise can be completed quickly and focuses on key words only, which maintains the emphasis on enjoyment and fluency. Alternatively, readers may describe emotions they experienced while reading, fostering greater emotional engagement with the material. These affective responses help students develop awareness of how literature can evoke personal reactions.

Another brief activity invites the students to describe their favourite character from the text and explain why this character appeals to them. This task not only encourages reflection on character development but also allows students to connect personally with the story. If preferred, learners may express themselves creatively by drawing a picture of the character.

To deepen the connection with the text, students can be encouraged to share their favourite sentence or paragraph. The simplest version is copying or highlighting these sentences. A more advanced version, suitable for older learners, includes a short explanation of why these lines were meaningful to them (Harper Makaafi 2004: 165-166). This activity can foster peer discussions and recommendations, contributing to the reading community. Those sentences were taken by a student as their favourite ones in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Rodrick Rules*:

- a) *"I'll be famous one day, but for now I'm stuck in middle school with a bunch of morons."*
- b) *"The best person I know is myself."*
- c) *"I'm probably something like 95% chicken nugget."*

The following hashtag activity (see Figure 8 and Figure 9) directly links reading to students' existing digital habits by leveraging platforms such as Instagram and TikTok and can thereby foster motivation through the sense of relevance and personal expression. In today's technology-driven environment, it is both practical and engaging to connect classroom reading with the digital world by asking students to create relevant and meaningful hashtags for the text they have read. This exercise is designed to integrate literacy with digital fluency. The hashtags are intended for use on platforms such as Instagram or TikTok. This exercise presupposes a degree of IT knowledge. However, it can be assumed that especially younger students are familiar with the use of hashtags.

#readwithme #bedtimestory #nostalgia #kidsbook #read

Figure 8: Hashtags used by a student for *The Rainbow Fish*.

#halfgod #greekgods #adventures #lightningthief #forteenagers

Figure 9: Hashtags used by a student for *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*.

5.6.6. Post-reading activities focusing on the author

Post-reading activities that focus on the author shift the focus away from mere comprehension of the textual context and towards a more deeply biographical, interpretative and creative engagement. These tasks are designed to promote

reflection, digital literacy and personal connection with the text and its author. For instance, students could use the internet to research and compile interesting facts about the author. However, a challenge of this task is the risk that students may rely on AI or other digital tools and submit derivative ideas that are not their own.

To mitigate this risk, an alternative approach involves students preparing for a simulated interview with the author, where they act as the interviewer. This context requires them to critically formulate questions that investigate both the author's personal background and the content of the text. For example, Figure 10 illustrates how a student created interview questions for John Green, the author of *The Fault in Our Stars*. Additionally, for students who might prefer a different format, writing a letter or an email to the author offers a similar opportunity to engage critically with the author and their work (Leather & Uden 2021: 85-86).

Imagine you are interviewing the author of the text.
Prepare five questions for the interview.

Question 1	Why did you write it?
Question 2	Why did you write about cancer?
Question 3	Why did you make it so difficult for teenagers to read?
Question 4	on what purpose?
Question 5	Did you like how the Book ended

Figure 10: Questions for the author of *The Fault in Our Stars*.

5.6.7. Feedback rubrics

Feedback rubrics offer a structured and efficient method for collecting the students' reflective responses and reactions after reading. As a post-reading activity, they serve critical evaluative and motivational functions. After finishing a text, students are asked to complete a pre-designed feedback rubric that explores their opinions on the text. Crucially, this post-reading activity does not focus exclusively on the content itself but rather encourages higher-order critical thinking and reflective analysis of the text (Leather & Uden 2021: 93). Depending on the desired level of detail in the responses and the time available for the task, the feedback rubric may include either open-ended or closed questions. An example is shown in Table 1, which includes statements designed for students to respond to on a three-point Likert scale.

Table 1: Feedback rubrics as a post-reading activity.

1. I enjoyed reading this text.	☺ ☹ ☹
2. I want to read another text like this.	☺ ☹ ☹
3. I would recommend this book.	☺ ☹ ☹
4. This text helped me to improve my reading.	☺ ☹ ☹
5. I needed a dictionary to understand this text.	☺ ☹ ☹
6. This text helped me to understand my English.	☺ ☹ ☹
7. I don't have time to read books.	☺ ☹ ☹
8. I often get distracted when reading.	☺ ☹ ☹

5.7. Evaluation in ER programmes

Deciding if and how to evaluate an ER programme requires balancing pedagogical goals with institutional expectations. In case teachers decide to evaluate the students in the ER project they must first decide whether to grade the reading process itself or to assess students through post-reading activities, such as book reports and summaries, which can then be integrated into the overall grade (Day & Bamford 2007: 86). Nation and Waring (2013: 20-21) suggest that one of the most straightforward ways to evaluate ER is by measuring the volume of reading completed, using metrics such as the number of books or pages read. This method provides a clear and quantifiable indicator of engagement and progress in the ER programme.

However, measuring the reading volume presents inherent challenges due to text variability and student behaviour. However, not all pages are equivalent in content

and difficulty. For example, the density of content on short pages in GRs allows for faster reading compared to dense pages in authentic and unillustrated texts. This discrepancy may encourage some students to choose materials far below their language proficiency level solely to achieve higher page counts with minimal effort, thus undermining the core pedagogical principles of ER.

Establishing clear and realistic goals helps sustain motivation and ensure progression throughout the ER project. Goals can be set collaboratively with the teacher's guidance, particularly when students are new to ER or when assessment is included in the programme. In some situations, teachers may need to define these goals on behalf of the students to provide necessary direction and structure. When assisting students with goal setting, teachers must remain mindful that many learners may have limited prior reading experience and might not yet know how to define realistic targets for themselves (Day & Bamford 2007: 45-46).

Evaluating ER must therefore be learner-centred. A flexible approach, which includes goal setting, a certain reading volume and reflective post-reading activities, can support both institutional requirements and the core principles of ER.

5.8. Potential challenges of extensive reading

Despite its many benefits, ER remains underused in schools due to persistent financial and structural barriers. While ER offers significant advantages, it simultaneously presents substantial obstacles for both teachers organising the programme and students participating in it.

One of the major challenges is the prohibitive financial cost of establishing and maintaining an ER library. Not all schools or teachers possess the necessary budget. These issues are particularly pressing in larger classrooms or schools without an existing stock of books. In such contexts, providing sufficiently accessible materials across multiple levels and genres can be logistically demanding Ferdila (2014: 70-71). In certain instances, teachers may need to use personal funds to create an ER library. As discussed in Chapter 5.4, creative solutions such as book donations, swaps and the utilisation of digital materials can help ease this burden.

Waring and Vu (2020: 20) mention several structural barriers such as limited time, lack of resources and inflexible curricula. These institutional challenges are particularly difficult to overcome because ER needs to be recognised not only by classroom practitioners but also by decision-makers at higher administrative levels, including school leadership and educational authorities. This underscores the importance of administrative and institutional support where comprehensive and curricular revisions, dedicated training in ER methodologies during teacher education programmes and increased government funding are necessary to make ER more attractive for teachers.

Teachers are required to adopt new roles that differ from those in traditional EFL teaching. They must act as reading models, motivators and facilitators (see chapter 5.5). However, some teachers may hesitate to implement ER due to the prevailing misconception that explicit language instruction is more effective than reading-based language exposure (Leather & Uden 2021: 3, 124).

Another frequent challenge is the wide range of language proficiency levels within a single classroom. ER promotes individualised reading, but weaker readers may still feel overwhelmed by the task of choosing and understanding texts, even when books are categorised by difficulty (see Chapter 5.3.1.). Day and Bamford (2007: 137) recommend peer support by pairing struggling students with fluent reading buddies or providing audio versions of books to build fluency and confidence.

Students also face personal and organisational challenges in an ER programme that can limit their engagement. Many learners struggle to structure their reading schedules, find suitable reading environments and maintain consistent reading habits. Consequently, students often require continuous motivation and reassurance from teachers to stay engaged and meet their goals. Regular encouragement emphasizing ER as a valuable tool for language improvement is therefore essential (Day & Bamford 2007: 123, 126-127; Leather & Uden 2021: 24).

Finally, it is important for teachers to accept that not all students will engage equally in the project. Despite thoughtful book selection and thorough preparation, some students may not immerse themselves in reading, limiting the benefits they gain. As

Nuttall (1983: 171) states, students' motivation can vary widely and teachers must remain supportive without expecting unanimous enthusiasm.

6. Field study

This chapter presents the empirical component of the thesis and outlines the procedures followed in conducting the field study. It begins by describing the research context, participant group and overall project design. The subsequent sections detail the initial informal data collection, which served to identify students' reading habits, preferences and motivational profiles prior to the intervention. The following part explains the structure and implementation of the ER programme, including the organisational setup, reading rules and learning goals established for the participants.

6.1. Research context and project design

This MEd thesis investigates the implementation of an ER programme in a third-grade MS class in Vienna to explore the effects on students' motivation to read. The project was conducted in the 22nd district of Vienna, where I currently work as a full-time teacher and I have been teaching this class for three years. The class comprised 23 students (8 female and 15 male) aged between 12 and 15 years. However, the final cohort consisted of 22 active participants. One male student was excluded due to his limited proficiency in both English and German, which required him to attend mandatory German classes during my English lessons. Additionally, one female student deregistered from school at the end of May and therefore only contributed to the initial formal data collection.

The ER project was designed with clear time constraints, institutional goals and programme structure in mind. It spanned eight weeks and took place in May and June 2024. Students' language proficiency predominantly aligned with the A2 level, with several demonstrating A2+ or higher (Lehrplan 2024: 50). The timetable of the school included four regular English lessons per week, each lasting 50 minutes, along with one additional 50-minute English study session. Reading sessions were integrated into the regular lessons and typically lasted 15-20 minutes at the beginning of each class, depending on subsequent activities planned for that day. The full 50-minute study session was dedicated entirely to reading and post-reading tasks. It should be noted that two reading sessions were omitted to accommodate a

class test. Consequently, the ER programme consisted of 38 dedicated reading sessions in total.

The ER project was evaluated as a graded component to ensure student accountability. In line with Barrett and Datesman's (1992: iii) recommendations, students were expected to engage in one or two post-reading activities weekly and encouraged to read as many pages as possible, without imposing a fixed minimum requirement. These expectations were clearly communicated to the students at the beginning of the programme.

6.2. Initial informal data collection

To better understand the students' reading attitudes and preferences, an informal diagnostic questionnaire was conducted prior to the ER programme. Students were asked about their reading preferences and habits in a two-page questionnaire administered two months before the project started in March 2024. One of the primary objectives of the questionnaire was to gather insights into the types of reading materials students prefer in their first language, as well as any other languages they know. Book suggestions that met the criteria for appropriate content and language proficiency were incorporated into the ER library, contingent on availability at a reasonable price. Additionally, it aimed to identify the readers' preferred genres in literature, films and series. Further questions were designed to explore students' hobbies, leisure activities and media consumption habits, including apps and platforms they frequently use. This holistic approach provided a comprehensive profile of students' interests, facilitating the selection of engaging and relevant reading materials. The questionnaire was exclusively administered in German to prevent any language barriers and to ensure participation from students with varying levels of English proficiency.

The questions and statements in the questionnaire are a hybridisation of items proposed by Leather and Uden (2021: 33-43) as well as Chong (2022: 49-66). The questionnaire comprises 16 questions (see Appendix B).

6.2.1. Q1 to Q8

Q1 to Q8 (see Table 2) were designed to examine the students' perspectives on reading, their reading habits and their motivation. As Figure 11 illustrates, the overall picture was predominantly negative. Specifically, only 5 students reported enjoying reading in any language, while 12 expressed a clear reluctance towards it. Enjoyment of reading in English was similarly low, with 5 students responding positively and 6 partially agreeing. This low level of positive affect towards reading suggests that for nearly half the cohort, reading is associated with neutral or negative emotions, which presents a significant barrier to voluntary engagement. Data concerning reading habits were weak overall. Just 3 learners reported engaging in regular reading in any language, while the majority admitted to reading rarely or not at all. Only 4 students read outside the classroom and merely 2 described reading as a hobby or stated that they always carried a book with them. Engagement with bookstores and libraries was likewise limited, with only 3 students reporting regular visits.

Table 2: Q1 to Q8 in the initial informal data collection.

Item number	Original text in German
Q1	Ich lese gerne Bücher.
Q2	Ich lese gerne englische Bücher.
Q3	Ich lese oft Bücher.
Q4	Ich lese oft englische Bücher.
Q5	Ich lese auch außerhalb des Unterrichts.
Q6	Lesen ist mein Hobby.
Q7	Ich habe immer ein Buch dabei.
Q8	Ich gehe oft in Bibliotheken oder Büchereien.

These results suggest that most learners lacked established reading routines, regular exposure to texts or intrinsic motivation to engage with reading beyond compulsory school tasks. The data strongly implies that students perceive reading not as an autonomous leisure pursuit but primarily as an extrinsic obligation imposed by the curriculum.

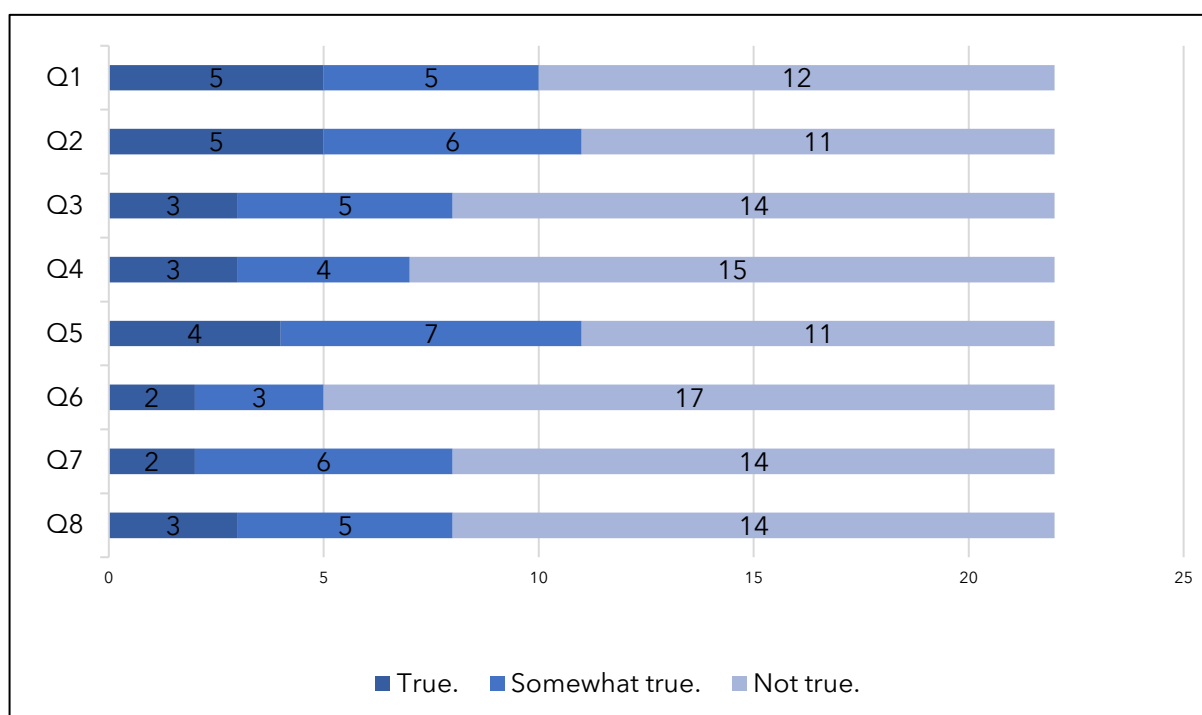


Figure 11: Students' answers to Q1 to Q8 in the initial informal data collection.

Furthermore, the findings suggest a potential deficit in reading self-efficacy, particularly concerning foreign language texts. The minimal engagement outside the classroom, coupled with the low hobby scores, indicates that students have not yet developed the confidence or the time management strategies necessary to incorporate reading autonomously into their personal schedules. The low rate of library and bookstore visits also suggests that external environmental support for reading, whether from home or community, is weak, heightening the challenge faced by the school in fostering a positive reading culture.

6.2.2. Q9 and Q10

The favoured genre among the learners, as evidenced by their responses to Q9 and Q10 (see Figure 12), in which they could select multiple options, was action, which was chosen by 10 students. Horror (8), comedy, history, detective, thriller and adventure, with seven mentions each, were also highly rated. Fantasy, romance, drama and bibliography each received 6 votes and sports only 5. Sci-fi and western were selected by only 2 students, while music and biography were not selected at

all. These results reflected a clear preference for fiction that is exciting, suspenseful or emotionally engaging.

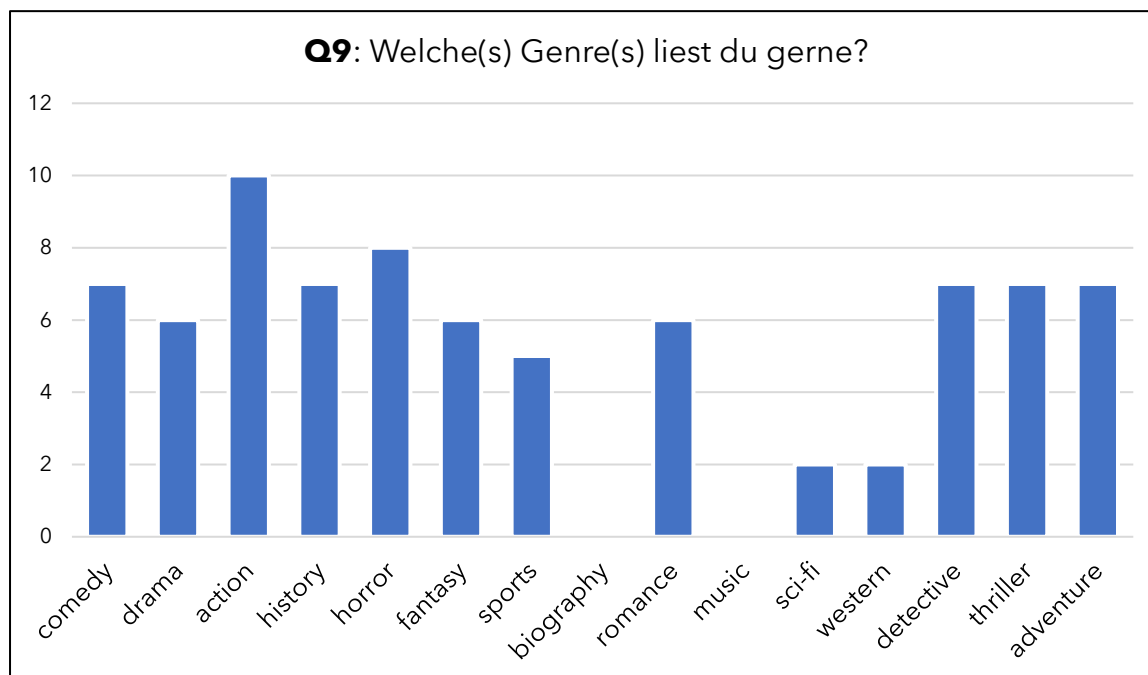


Figure 12: The students' answers to Q9 in the initial informal data collection.

Figure 13, which visualises students' favourite film and TV genres, revealed highly congruent patterns. Action again led with 13 students, followed by comedy (12), horror (10), and adventure (10). Drama (9), thriller (7) and sports (7) remained popular, while fantasy (6), sci-fi (5), history (5), romance (5) and detective stories (5) show moderate appeal. Music (2) and western (3) were again among the least favoured and biography was not selected by any student.

These preferences directly influenced the subsequent selection of texts for the classroom ER library. A collection of 83 books was assembled to reflect the most selected genres, particularly action, horror, comedy and adventure. By aligning the reading material with the students' interests, the teacher aimed to sustain motivation and promote lasting engagement throughout the ER programme.

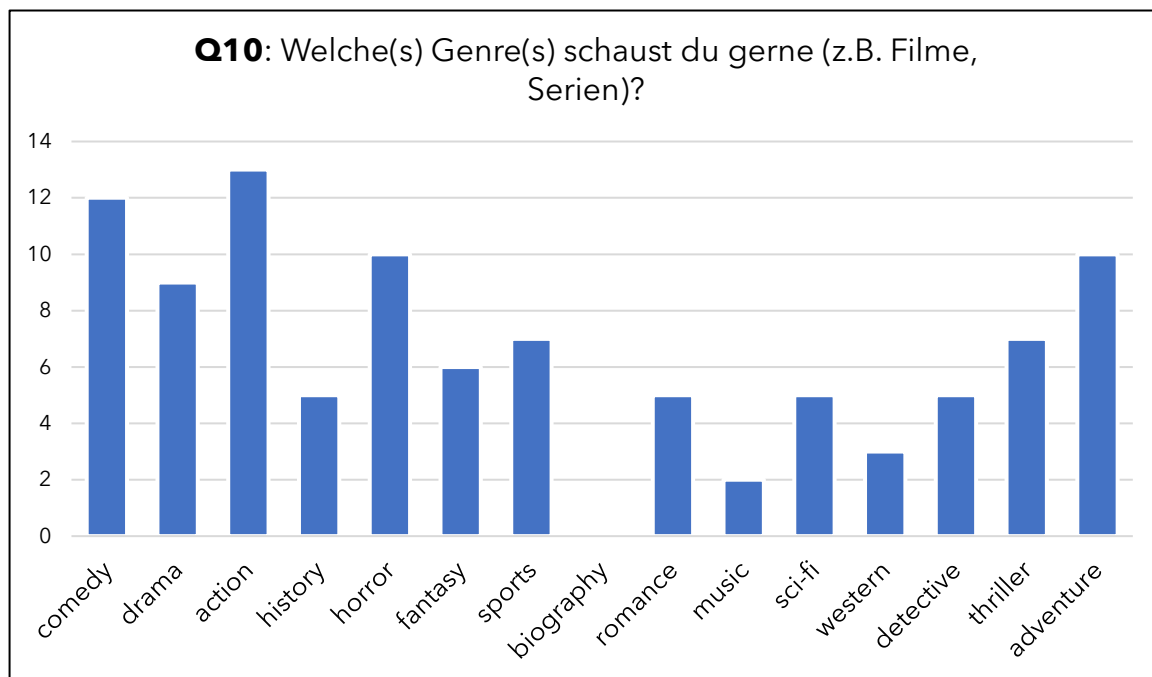


Figure 13: The students' answers to Q10 in the initial informal data collection.

6.2.3. Q12 and Q13

The responses to Q12 and Q13 were also utilised to construct the library for the ER programme. As shown in Table 3, some students spontaneously offered one or more titles when asked about the best book they had ever read, while others did not provide a response. The books represented a wide range of genres. The answers included *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling, religious texts such as the Bible and the Quran, *Ein Kapitän von 15 Jahren* by Jules Verne and *Die Studie in Pink* by Arthur Conan Doyle. However, a significant portion of the cohort demonstrated a lack of literary attachment. Seven students, however, stated that they had no favourite book and responded with phrases such as *gar keine*, *keines*, or *Ich habe kein Lieblingsbuch*. One student noted *Filme sind besser*, explicitly suggesting a preference for visual media over literature.

Table 3: Students' answers to Q12 in the initial informal data collection.

Q12: Welches war das beste Buch, das du jemals gelesen hast?	
gar keines / keine / ich habe keine / keines / Ich habe kein Lieblingsbuch. [x2] / gar keine	über Mord
Bibel	Ein Kapitän von 15 Jahren - Jules Verne
Harry Potter	It ends with us - Coleen Hoover.
Playboy	Die Studie in Pink - Arthur Conan Doyle
in Englisch	Quran
Gibt's keine. Filme sind besser.	

Table 4 displays the responses to Q13, which asked students what book they would like to read in English. The responses included *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling, *The Sign of the Four* by Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Bible*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* by Truman Capote, and *It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover. One student expressed interest in reading something by Jules Verne, while another mentioned *The Last of Us*. Similar to Q12, a few answers were humorous, such as *Playboy*.

Table 4: Students' answers to Q13 in the initial informal data collection.

Q13: Welches Buch würdest du gerne auf Englisch lesen?	
Bibel	It ends with us
Harry Potter	Playboy
Das Zeichen der Vier - Arthur Conan Doyle	Frühstück bei Tiffany
Harry Potter	The last of us
etwas von Jules	

The teacher reviewed the students' suggestions for availability, level of difficulty and content suitability. Titles such as *It Ends with Us* and *Playboy* were removed from consideration due to content deemed inappropriate for the students' age group and the educational setting. In contrast, classic and age-appropriate titles such as *Harry Potter*, Arthur Conan Doyle's detective stories and selected works by Jules Verne were used to help shape the final book selection. This process ensures that the final library balances students' interests, as evidenced by their suggestions, with pedagogical requirements for content suitability and language accessibility.

6.2.4. Q14

The responses to Q14 were also considered when selecting books for the ER library. The chart in Figure 14 showed that 8 students enjoy playing (video) games, making

it the most frequently mentioned leisure activity. This was closely followed by sports (7) and sleep (5). The most popular sports among the learners, as shared informally in class discussions, were table tennis and football. Other common responses included meeting friends (3) and being outdoors (3), while activities such as studying, relaxing or using a phone were mentioned twice.

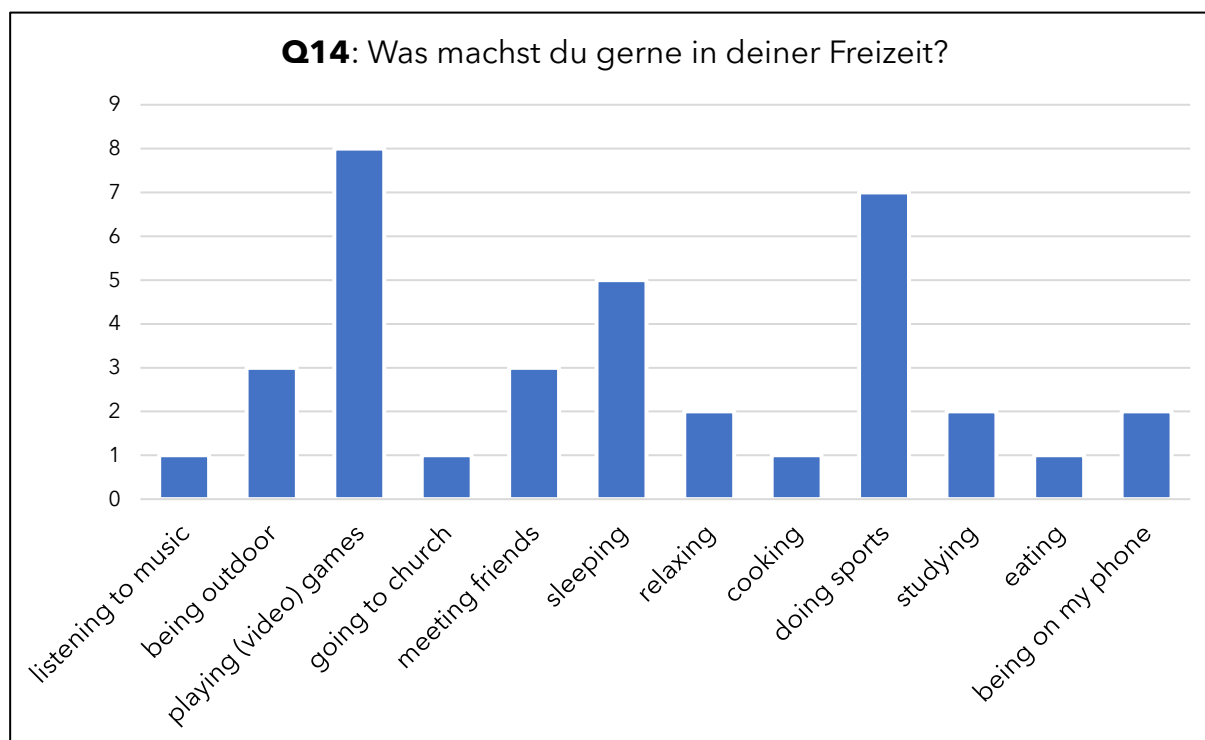


Figure 14: Students' answers to Q14 in the initial informal data collection.

Based on these findings, I made efforts to include titles that directly reflect students' interests, such as books related to video games or prominent sports personalities. This strategy's inclusion was intended to bolster intrinsic motivation by aligning the reading materials with students' daily lives and established hobbies.

6.3. Extensive reading intervention

Before launching the ER project, the teacher dedicated a full 50-minute lesson to introducing students to its central purpose, organisational structure and performance expectations using a PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix C). While most students had previously encountered some form of ER through the annual school-wide reading project in German, many were largely unfamiliar with the fundamental principles of ER in an EFL context. Consequently, uncertainty

surrounded the selection of books, which naturally became a central focus of the introductory lesson.

Thorough preparation and clear communication are considered foundational requirements in the ER literature. The ER Foundation (2011: 7) recommends that teachers allow ample time to present the pedagogical rationale behind ER in class, explain the procedures clearly and answer the questions that students may have. This initial investment of time is crucial for setting student expectations and fostering buy-in. Similarly, Barret and Datesman (1992: xviii) advise that even meticulously prepared handouts and presentations often require reinforcement and clarification. They further suggest that it is important to present the pedagogical rationale in an accessible way:

It's a good idea to explain the pedagogical rationale for this approach to the students. Some students are entrenched in the idea that you need to have a book that tells you exactly what to do in order to learn, so it's hard for them to believe that they can become better readers just by reading. It is not necessary to explain Krashen's theory of language learning in detail. But, it is important for them to know that there is evidence that this system works and that they are responsible for their own success or failure in making it work (Barrett & Datesman 1992: xviii).

To support this foundational process, the intervention lesson (see Table 5) began with a short brainstorming activity. I initiated the discussion by writing the term *Extensive Reading* on the board and asking the students to work in small groups and discuss whether they had previously engaged in ER and what they believed it involved. Students then shared their ideas in a brief plenary session. In their discussions, some students recalled having already participated in an ER project, although they were unfamiliar with the formal definition itself. This suggests recognition of the practice, even without the associated academic terminology. A few other students noted that they had never encountered the term before and did not know what it meant, with one group even associating the term "extensive" with "extreme", highlighting a linguistic misunderstanding that necessitated immediate clarification of the core concept.

Table 5: Lesson plan for the reading intervention.

Planned time	Procedure	Format	Skills
3 min	Greeting, T takes the register		
3 min	Brainstorming T writes the term "Extensive Reading" on the board T asks the S: "What is ER? Have you heard of the term before? What could it mean?"	T-S-S	speaking listening
13 min	General information about the project T presents the concept of ER and the most important rules of the project S see the presentation on the smartboard, have a copy of the slides in the reading journal	T-S-S	listening
10 min	Five-finger rule T introduces the term "five-finger rule" and explains the guidelines, S practice the rule by analysing the three texts in the reading journal, S underline the unknown words and decide whether they should read the material depending on the number of unknown words T collects the results	S T-S-S	listening reading
5 min	Reading exercises T shows some example exercises, do one example exercise with the book <i>The Little Prince</i> since the whole class has read it	T-S	listening writing
15 min	Start of the project S use the rest of the lesson to read after choosing one book from the reading basket	S	reading
1 min	Closing of lesson T summarises the lesson	T-S-S	

This activity was followed by a structured presentation on the project's objectives and procedural rules (see Appendix C). I clarified that the students would read for 15 to 20 minutes at the beginning at each of the four weekly regular English lessons and additionally during the weekly 50-minute study session. In total, students were expected to read at least for 1 hour and 50 minutes per week over a period of eight weeks. Reading outside of class was encouraged but remained optional. Adhering to school policy, which prohibits homework, all reading was to take place during the lessons. Only printed books were allowed. The use of electronic devices, such as iPads, was forbidden during reading time, as this can lead to potential distraction and hinder sustained focus. Students could select a book from the classroom library, borrow a book from the school's library or bring in other books they had already purchased from a bookstore or had borrowed from a public library, as long as the texts were appropriate for ER.

Although the ER philosophy typically discourages grading, a portfolio (see Appendix D) with post-reading activities and a reading log (see Appendix E) was introduced to meet institutional requirements for accountability. I clarified this assessment framework in the introductory lesson. Students completed one or two short post-reading tasks in the portfolio each week. The portfolios were collected and assessed at the end of the ER programme. These tasks were deliberately kept brief to ensure that the focus of the project remained on reading volume and fluency rather than on complex written output.

After establishing the grading system for the ER project, I outlined the ER project's pedagogical objectives, which include fostering a love for reading, increasing reading motivation, improving reading proficiency and expanding vocabulary. I further emphasised that, when implemented effectively, ER offers numerous benefits, including the potential to enhance students' overall language proficiency. Subsequently, I introduced the definition of ER, followed by the ten principles of ER as originally formulated by Day and Bamford (2007: 7, 8).

Next, I explained the five-finger rule, a practical strategy that can be used to assess whether a book is appropriately challenging for ER based on the unknown words per page. To demonstrate the method, students examined three short texts of various difficulty levels on the smartboard. They counted the unfamiliar words and applied the rule (see Appendix F). To avoid any potential embarrassment regarding individual language proficiency levels, the results of this assessment were not shared with the rest of the class. The teacher also hung up a poster with a detailed description of the five-finger rule (see Appendix G) in the reading corner of the classroom.

To familiarise students with the reading portfolio, I presented several example tasks. One sample exercise was completed together using *The Little Prince*, a book that all students had previously read in English. Not all exercises were explained in detail, as some had already been introduced in earlier English lessons. In the final phase of the lesson, students selected a book and began reading. This immediate engagement allowed students to apply the five-finger rule and start the ER

experience within a supportive setting. The first reading period was intended as a trial to check the level of difficulty. Some students subsequently exchange their initial choice for a different book. I observed student behaviour, provided support with book selection and ensured that reading habits aligned with ER principles. According to the ER Foundation (2011: 7-8), early teacher support and observation are crucial to help students adopt the right strategies and routines.

6.4. Rules and goals of the extensive reading programme

It is crucial for both students and teachers to establish clear rules and objectives before the ER programme begins. A consistent structure and predictable routine during the reading sessions help the students develop reading discipline and reinforce the perceived value in language learning and ultimately facilitate the shift toward autonomous reading habits.

6.4.1. Five-finger rule

During the ER intervention lesson, students were introduced to the five-finger rule, a practical self-assessment guideline designed to help learners assess whether a book matches their current language proficiency level. This guideline is grounded in the recommendations proposed by Hiebert & Reutzel (2010 cited in ER Foundation 2023).

The rule functions by having students count the number of unfamiliar words encountered on a single page, using their fingers to keep track. If a student encounters 0 to 1 unknown words, the text is considered too easy and is therefore unlikely to support meaningful vocabulary development. Encountering 2 to 3 unknown words indicates an optimal level of difficulty at which the learning process is best developed without overwhelming the reader. Four unknown words suggested a more challenging text that might slightly impede comprehension, though it remains within an acceptable range. Finally, 5 or more unknown words indicate that the text is too difficult and may potentially disrupt the fluency and sustained engagement crucial for successful ER (Hiebert & Reutzel 2010 cited in ER Foundation 2023).

6.4.2. Reading log

The students participating in the field study were instructed to keep a reading log to monitor their reading progress (Schmidt 2004: 75-77). This log formed a mandatory part of the reading portfolio and was introduced at the beginning of the programme. Implementing a simple tracking system like a reading log can help visualise the students' reading progress and potentially serve as a motivational tool by promoting increased reading volume.

Each student recorded the title of the book, the date and the number of pages read during each reading session. The reading log helped the students keep track of their reading progress and contributed to a sense of autonomy over their reading journey. For me, the log served as an important observation tool. It enabled ongoing monitoring of students' engagement, book choices and consistency, all of which support the informal assessment practices (Nation & Waring 2013: 14). The tracker used in this programme was intentionally simplified to reduce the workload and maintain the focus on reading (Poggi 1993: 20-21).

To further motivate the students, a reader of the week was awarded every week throughout the entire project. The students with the highest cumulative number of pages read were rewarded with the title and the name was then visibly displayed in the classroom, serving as both public recognition and positive encouragement for continued engagement in reading (Poggi 1993: 20-21; Yu 2004: 59-61). This gamified approach to tracking aimed to boost student motivation while maintaining the ER programme's emphasis on enjoyment and autonomy.

6.4.3. Reading goals in the field study

At the beginning of the ER programme, the teacher outlined the objectives for the students. Although the literature generally recommends that language learners read one book per week to maximise the benefits of ER (ER Foundation 2011: 5), a pragmatic adjustment was made for this field study. Students were instead encouraged, to complete half a book or one full book every two weeks, if possible. If students were unable to reach the designated book limit, this was not considered problematic. This adjustment was made in recognition of the limited instructional

time available for the programme and was highly contingent upon the length and type of texts selected by the students. Further exceptions were explicitly granted for learners who chose to read longer authentic texts, as these inherently required more time to complete.

7. Presentation and discussion of the final data collection

This chapter presents and discusses the findings obtained from the final data collection conducted at the end of the ER project. It begins with an overview of the questionnaire results, which include both quantitative and qualitative data reflecting students' attitudes, motivation and perceived language development. The analysis is organised according to thematic categories and questionnaire sections to ensure clarity and coherence. Each subsection examines patterns and tendencies observed in the data, linking them to the research questions outlined in Chapter 2 and the theoretical framework discussed in earlier chapters. The chapter concludes by comparing the results with the initial data collection to evaluate changes in students' reading motivation and to highlight the overall impact of the ER programme on their engagement with reading in English.

7.1. Final data collection

The final data collection was conducted in June 2024, approximately two months after the introduction of the ER programme. A total of 21 students participated in this phase. A questionnaire was developed to evaluate the students' perception of the reading project, their reading motivation and their self-assessed language development (see Appendix H). It also aimed to explore the specific factors that influenced their reading experience. The instrument was based on the work of Chong et al. (2022: 57) and was structurally and linguistically adapted to the learners' age and proficiency level.

The questionnaire consisted of two distinct main parts. The first part included 21 closed-ended items grouped into four thematic sections, namely personal experience with the reading project, perceived learning outcomes, reasons for reading and supportive factors. Students responded to these statements using a three-point Likert scale, visually supported by smiley faces. The second part contained eight open-ended questions. These invited students to reflect more personally on their experiences with the ER project and provided valuable qualitative data, which served to triangulate and enrich the quantitative results,

offering deeper insights into students' emotional and motivational responses to the ER experience.

7.1.1. Q1 to Q5

The first 5 items in the final data collection (Q1 to Q5, see Table 6 and Figure 15) aimed to elicit students' overall affective and cognitive reflections on the ER project. Each item was presented in German and evaluated using a three-point Likert scale, which utilised emoticons for visual support. A laughing smiley indicated strong agreement, a neutral smiley indicated partial agreement or ambivalence and a sad smiley represented clear disagreement.

Table 6: Q1 to Q5 in the final data collection.

Deine persönliche Erfahrung zum Leseprojekt			
1. Das Projekt hat mir gezeigt, dass lesen wichtig ist.	😊	😐	😞
2. Das Projekt hat mir gezeigt, dass lesen Spaß macht.	😊	😐	😞
3. Wegen des Projektes lese ich jetzt öfter.	😊	😐	😞
4. Ich hatte genug Zeit, um zu lesen.	😊	😐	😞
5. Ich hatte Schwierigkeiten motiviert zu bleiben.	😊	😐	😞

In Q1, which measured student's belief that reading is important, 11 students agreed, 8 partially agreed and 2 disagreed. This highly positive result suggests that the project successfully conveyed the intrinsic and instrumental value of reading to the majority of participants. This finding supports the assumption that ER can enhance students' awareness of reading as a valuable skill.

A similar trend is evident in Q2, where 9 students reported to have enjoyed the reading experience, 7 found it somewhat enjoyable and 5 expressed that they did not enjoy reading at all. While many of the students derived pleasure from the activity, the substantial minority expressing a lack of enjoyment, underscores the complexity of transforming deeply entrenched negative attitudes toward reading.

Q3 examined whether the ER programme influenced students' reading behaviour outside the classroom. While 6 students reported to read regularly, 10 stated they read occasionally and 5 indicated they had not maintained this habit after the programme. These results suggest that, although some students were positively affected and began to internalize the practice, the project did not lead to a wholesale and consistent increase in the time students devoted to reading outside of the

structured classroom environment. This difficulty in transitioning to autonomous reading habits mirrors Day and Bamford's (2007: 46-48) and Leather and Uden's (2021: 3) observations that EFL learners initially struggle with establishing autonomous reading habits due to anxiety and perceived difficulty.

In Q4, students evaluated whether the reading time provided during the project was sufficient. The majority, namely 12 students, indicated that the time was adequate, while 3 students were not satisfied. It is important to acknowledge, however, that it remains unclear whether the latter group found the reading time excessive, suggesting a resistance to the activity or insufficient, suggesting a desire for more reading time, as no follow-up clarification was provided.

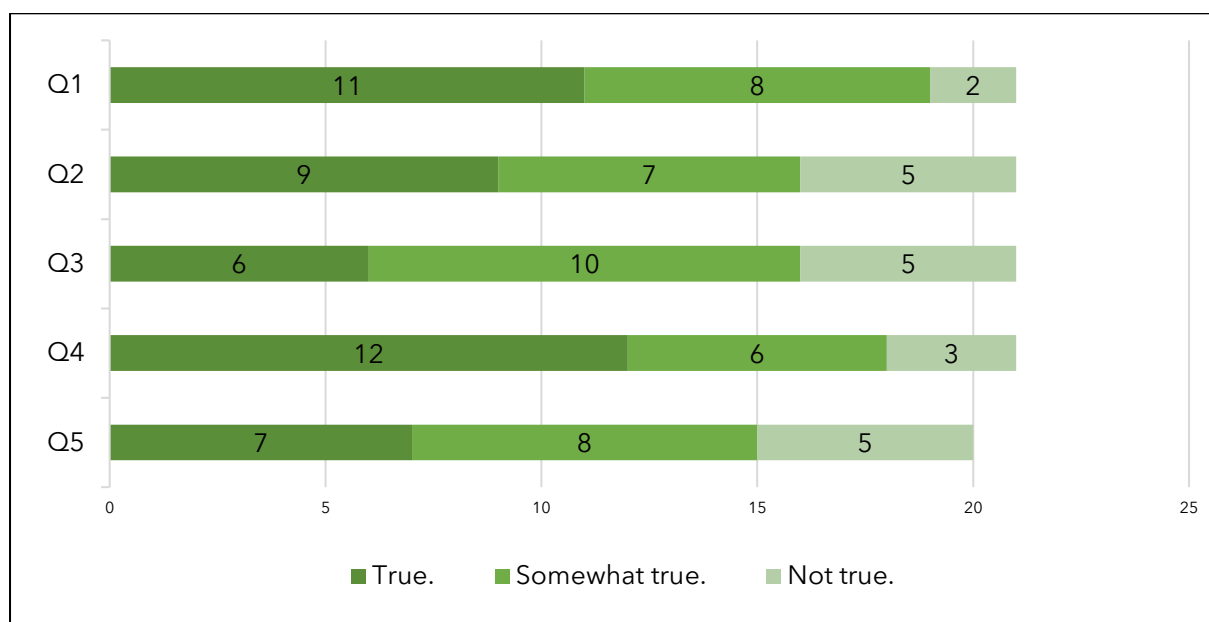


Figure 15: Students' answers to Q1 to Q5 in the final data collection.

Finally, Q5 addresses students' self-assessed motivation levels over the course of the programme. Seven students reported persistent difficulties staying motivated, 8 stated they experienced occasional motivational challenges and 5 remained consistently motivated. One student did not respond to this item.

Although persistent low motivation was an issue for a minority of learners, the overall level of engagement remained relatively stable for a significant portion of the group. The finding that 8 students reported only occasional challenges suggests that the integrated structure and student choice provided by the ER framework were

substantially effective in mitigating motivational fatigue over the eight-week period. Considering the extremely low baseline motivation reported in the initial informal data collection (Q1 and Q2, see Section 6.2.1), the fact that 13 students reported consistent or only occasional challenges represents a notable achievement in shifting the affective responses toward the reading activity.

7.1.2. Q6 to Q11

Q6 to Q11 (see Table 7 and Figure 16) focus on the students' self-assessed learning outcomes and areas of improvement thanks to the ER programme. While it was not feasible to cover all aspects of language development associated with ER as outlined in the relevant literature, a selection of key benefits was included in the questionnaire. A closed-ended response format was chosen as a deliberate methodological decision to ensure accessibility for the learners. Specifically, had the students been asked to identify their individual learning gains in an open-ended format, the task would likely have been overly demanding given their age and current language proficiency level.

Table 7: Q6 to Q11 in the final data collection.

Was du gelernt hast			
6. Ich bin beim Lesen auf Englisch sicherer geworden.	😊	😐	☹️
7. Mein Englisch ist durch das Lesen besser geworden.	😊	😐	☹️
8. Das Projekt hat mir geholfen neue Wörter zu lernen.	😊	😐	☹️
9. Das Projekt hat mir geholfen meine Grammatik zu verbessern.	😊	😐	☹️
10. Das Projekt hat mir geholfen schneller zu lesen.	😊	😐	☹️
11. Ich weiß jetzt, wie ich das richtige Buch für mich wähle.	😊	😐	☹️

Q6 asked students whether they felt more confident reading in English by the end of the ER programme. It directly addresses RQ1b which investigates how students' perceived reading competence develops during the ER programme and how it relates to motivation. Of the 21 students, 12 agreed, 6 partially agreed and 3 disagreed. These responses suggest that a clear majority of the participants, namely 57%, experienced a noticeable increase in reading confidence, a foundational goal of ER. This boost in self-belief is perhaps the most immediate psychological benefit of the programme, as it directly addresses the anxiety often associated with reading in a foreign language.

In Q7, students were asked whether they believed their overall English skills had improved through the ER project. A total of 11 students agreed, 7 partially agreed and 3 did not perceive any improvement. While not all students reported clear language gains, the majority did observe at least some progress in their holistic English proficiency, confirming that sustained reading exposure leads to holistic language gains (Yamashita 2008: 662).

Q8 focuses on vocabulary acquisition. This item received the most positive responses in this section. 16 students agreed, 1 partially agreed and only 4 disagreed. This indicates that vocabulary growth was the most strongly and widely perceived benefit of the ER programme, aligning directly with established literature on the effects of high-volume reading (Nation & Waring 2013: 16). This outcome is logical, as encountering words repeatedly in context provided the necessary frequency for lexical acquisition, making this benefit the most tangible and recognizable to learners.

In Q9, students evaluated whether their grammar had improved because of the project. While 12 students agreed and 6 partially agreed, 3 did not perceive any grammatical improvement. These figures suggest that a considerable number of learners felt they had strengthened their grammatical skills, often through exposure to correct structures, although this was not as clearly recognised as the explicit gains in vocabulary. The contrast in recognition between vocabulary (highly positive) and grammar (moderately positive) likely reflects the nature of these skills. Vocabulary is discrete and easily tracked, while grammar is acquired implicitly and is harder for learners to isolate as a direct consequence of reading (Rettig & Schiefele 2023: 149).

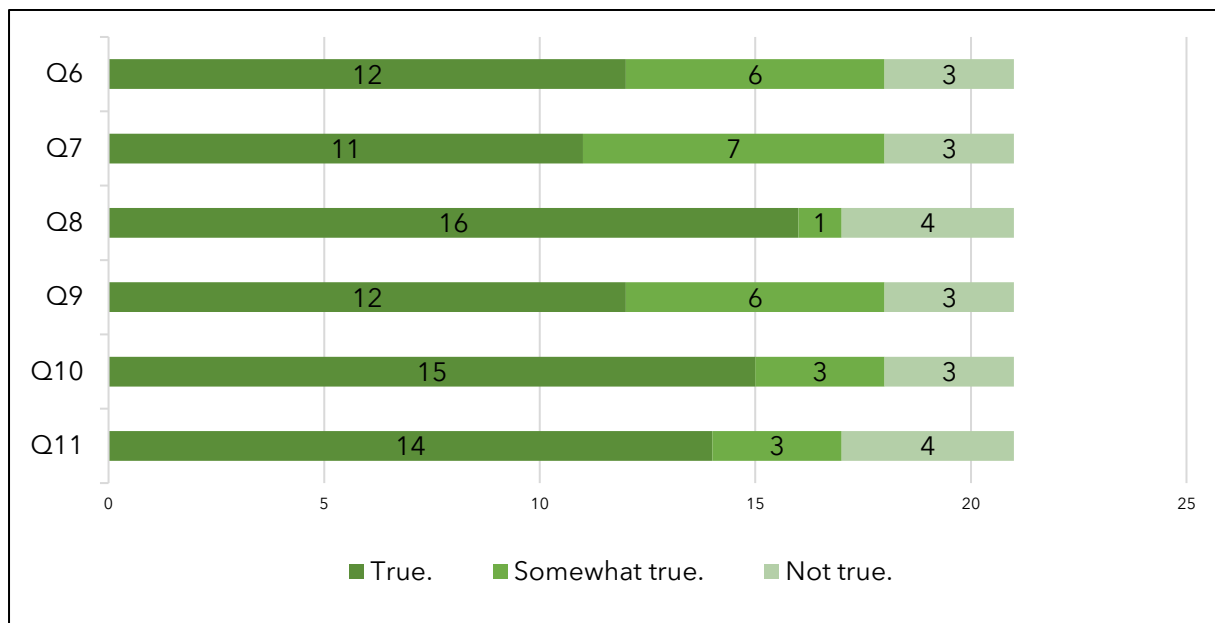


Figure 16: Students' answers to Q6 to Q11 in the final data collection.

Q10 addresses reading fluency. Here, 15 students agreed, 3 partially agreed and 3 disagreed. The exceptionally high number of positive responses (over 71%) suggests that many students noticed an increase in reading speed, likely due to repeated reading practice in a low-pressure environment. This supports Yamashita's (2008: 662) claim that perceived reading fluency is closely linked to continued engagement and long-term motivation.

Finally, Q11 asked whether students felt better equipped to choose appropriate books for themselves. A total of 14 students reported that they had learned to select suitable texts, 3 partially agreed and 4 disagreed. These findings reflect the perceived effectiveness of strategies such as the five-finger rule, which was introduced at the beginning of the project to support autonomous book selection. The option to choose reading materials independently was widely appreciated (66.7%), supporting findings by Day and Bamford (2007: 111-113) that autonomy in book selection increases motivation when paired with scaffolding such as the five-finger rule. This result directly relates to RQ2 and suggests that guided autonomy in book selection is one of the key motivational factors contributing to students' engagement and sustained participation in the ER project.

7.1.3. Q12 to Q18

Q12 to Q18 (see Table 8 and Figure 17) explore the students' individual motivations for reading, both in general and within the context of the ER programme. The reasons included in the statements were intrinsic as well as extrinsic factors.

In Q12, 6 students agreed, 10 partially agreed and 5 disagreed, suggesting that while a minority experiences intrinsic pleasure from reading, the largest proportion of the cohort held a more neutral or ambivalent stance toward general reading enjoyment. A similar distribution was observed in Q13, with 7 students agreeing, 7 partially agreeing and 7 disagreeing. This indicated a broad spectrum of attitudes toward reading in English specifically. The balanced responses underscore the challenge of implementing ER, as the teacher must simultaneously cater to a small group of highly motivated learners, a large group of neutral or undecided learners and a persistent group who actively dislike the activity.

Table 8: Q12 to Q18 in the final data collection.

Gründe fürs Lesen	
12. Ich lese gerne Bücher.	😊 😐 😞
13. Ich lese gerne englische Bücher.	😊 😐 😞
14. Ich lese, weil es wichtig ist.	😊 😐 😞
15. Ich lese, weil es Spaß macht.	😊 😐 😞
16. Ich lese, weil ich Neues lernen will.	😊 😐 😞
17. Ich lese, weil meine Eltern mich auffordern.	😊 😐 😞
18. Ich lese, weil meine Lehrperson mich auffordert.	😊 😐 😞

Further probing the students' reason for reading, Q14 found that 9 students stated they read because they consider it important, while 8 somewhat agreed and 4 disagreed. Q15, which focused on deeper inherent pleasure, yielded slightly more reserved responses. 7 agreed, 9 partially agreed and 5 disagreed. In the initial data collection, students reported mainly extrinsic reasons such as grades and teacher pressure. In the final data collection, curiosity and desire to improve skills became dominant motives (Rettig & Schiefele 2023: 149; Schaffner et al. 2013: 5). This shift illustrates a transition from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, as defined in Chapter 4.2, where external rewards and obligations gradually give way to internalised interest and self-determined engagement with reading.

The highest level of agreement in this section was found in Q16, with 13 students reporting that acquiring new knowledge motivated them to read, 5 agreeing partially and only 3 disagreeing. The strong consensus on knowledge acquisition suggests that while direct enjoyment may be low, students overwhelmingly recognise the cognitive utility of reading. This recognition of reading's practical benefit, even without high intrinsic pleasure, provides a strong foundation for the ER programme to build upon (Nation & Waring 2013: 16).

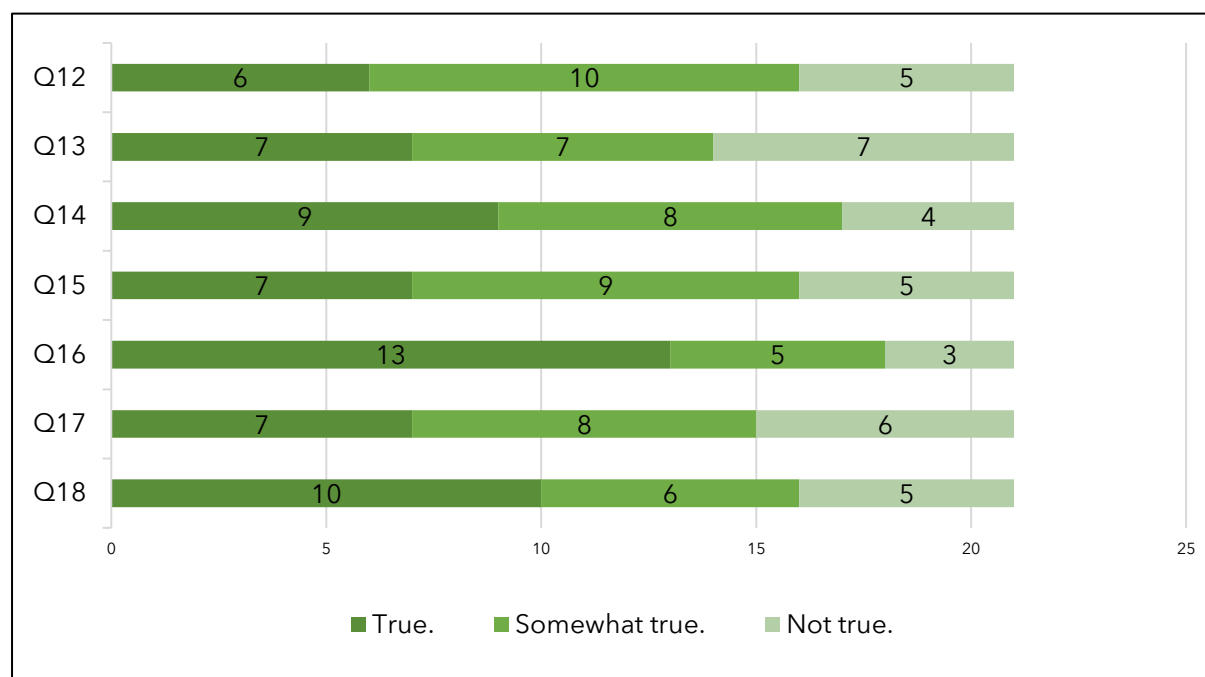


Figure 17: Students' answers to Q12 to Q18 in the final data collection.

The influence of external factors was also considered. In Q17, 7 students agreed, 8 partially agreed and 6 disagreed that their parents had an impact on their reading behaviour. This divided response suggests that parental influence is not a uniformly strong or consistent factor in this cohort. In Q18, 10 students agreed, 6 somewhat agreed and 5 disagreed. The higher agreement rate for teacher influence compared to parental influence underscores the critical role of the classroom teacher as a motivational agent in the ER programme. The teacher's role is thus instrumental in providing necessary extrinsic encouragement to initiate and sustain the reading habit. The teacher's role as motivator, model and scaffold was critical, underlining the importance of teacher involvement in ER (Day & Bamford 2007: 111; Sun 2022: 1-2).

7.1.4. Q19 to Q22

Q19 to Q22 (see Table 9 and Figure 18) examined which aspects of the ER programme supported students most in regard to motivation during the reading process. In Q19, 13 students claimed that they liked the selection of the books curated by me, 5 partially agreed and 3 disagreed. This high level of approval validates the effectiveness of the initial data-driven collection process, which was informed by the students' interest and genre preferences. The availability of age-appropriate and interest-driven reading materials contributed to increased engagement, confirming recommendations by Day and Bamford (2007: 111-113). This result relates to RQ2a and suggests that book selection with learners' preferences not only enhanced their sense of autonomy but also strengthened intrinsic motivation by making reading personally meaningful and enjoyable.

In Q20, 14 students stated that they enjoyed selecting their own books, 4 agreed partially and 3 disagreed. The marginally higher positive response for Q20 compared to Q19 suggests that autonomy in choice is a slightly more powerful motivational factor than the quality of the teacher's curation. The option to choose reading materials independently was widely appreciated by the students, supporting findings that autonomy increases motivation when paired with scaffolding such as the five-finger rule (Day & Bamford 2007: 111-113; ER Foundation 2023).

Table 9: Q19 to Q22 in the final data collection.

Was mir beim Lesen geholfen hat			
19. Die Auswahl der Bücher hat mir gefallen.	😊	😊	😊
20. Es hat mir gefallen, dass ich die Bücher selbst aussuchen konnte.	😊	😊	😊
21. Die Übungen im Portfolio haben mir geholfen, die Bücher besser zu verstehen.	😊	😊	😊
22. Meine Lehrperson hat mir beim Projekt geholfen.	😊	😊	😊

Q21 focuses on the effectiveness of post-reading tasks. Twelve students felt that the portfolio activities helped them understand the books better, 6 agreed partially and 3 did not find them helpful. This finding confirms that the structured post-reading activities, provided a valuable metacognitive function by encouraging active reflection and reinforcing comprehension for the majority of the cohort. These results directly address RQ2b, which explores how post-reading activities influence

students' motivation to continue reading. The positive responses indicate that meaningful and well-scaffolded reflection tasks can sustain engagement by linking reading to personal understanding and by giving students a tangible sense of progress and achievement.

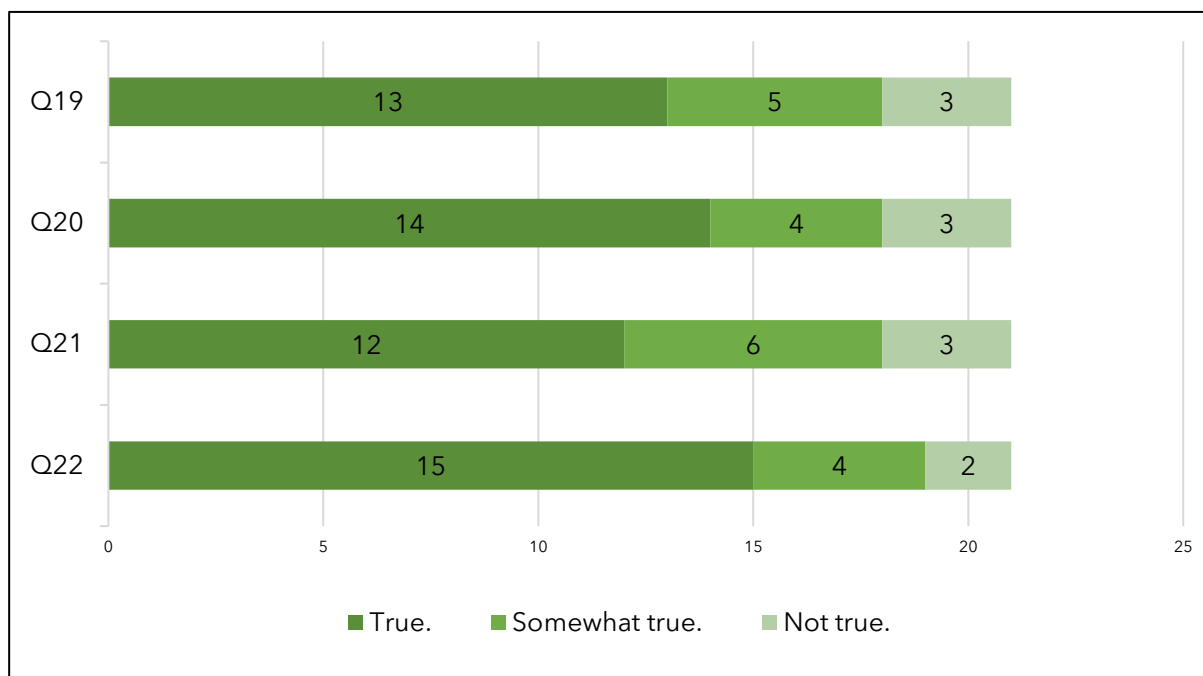


Figure 18: Students' answers to Q19 to Q22 in the final data collection.

Finally, Q22 received the most positive responses in this section with 15 students agreeing, 4 partially agreeing and only 2 disagreeing. This item asked students whether they considered the teacher's support helpful during the project. The overwhelming agreement (over 71%) highlights the critical role of the teacher as a facilitator and resource within the ER framework. This result strongly indicates that, despite the push for learner autonomy, active teacher involvement remains essential for the success and positive reception of the ER programme, particularly among younger learners who require guidance in establishing new habits. The teacher's role as motivator, model and scaffold was critical to the success of the ER programme (Day & Bamford 2007: 111; Ito 2024: 5)

7.1.5. Q23

The final phase of data collection comprised a series of open-ended questions. The responses were thematically categorised based on their content. A total of 19 students responded to these questions.

In Q23, students were asked to express their opinions on the reading project. Among these responses, 13 students evaluated the project positively, stating that they liked it or liked it very much. Two of these students elaborated on their positive feedback by mentioning that they found reading enjoyable and engaging. This strong majority confirms the high overall affective outcome of the ER intervention. In contrast, 2 students explicitly expressed their dislike of the ER programme. One of these students explained that their negative evaluation was rooted in a general aversion to reading and writing, indicating a pre-existing and generalised motivational barrier. Additionally, 1 student did not explicitly state whether they enjoyed the project but indicated that they found it too difficult. Another student reported enjoying the project despite finding it somewhat challenging. This tension between enjoyment and difficulty highlights the need for continued scaffolding in text selection. Two students provided responses that deviated from a direct evaluation of the project. One student noted that, as a result of the project, they had become a more proficient reader ("Kann jetzt besser lesen."), indicating that the perceived self-improvement served as a positive outcome. Another student commented on the availability of reading time, expressing appreciation for having ample time to read, particularly when feeling bored ("Man hat sehr viel Zeit gehabt. Ich fand es cool zu lesen, während man Langeweile hat."). This comment is particularly insightful, suggesting the ER period successfully repositioned reading as a viable and low-pressure alternative during structured school time. Students' responses indicate that reading was increasingly perceived as manageable and enjoyable, confirming that regular ER sessions helped reframe reading positively (Nation & Waring 2013: 16; Yamashita 2013: 662).

7.1.6. Q24

Students were asked whether they would be willing to repeat the reading project and to give reasons for their responses. Out of 19 respondents, 15 expressed a clear preference for repeating the ER project, citing various motivations. These motivations can be grouped into instrumental, affective and structural benefits.

Four students indicated that they had learned something new and gained skill, reflecting the instrumental motivation, throughout the ER programme. 5 mentioned the enjoyment they experienced, reflecting affective value, over the eight-week reading period and 2 students were happy about the high grades on their reading portfolios and, consequently, the possibility to improve their overall English grades at the end of the semester, highlighting the power of extrinsic rewards. Another 4 students responded affirmatively for diverse reasons, including finding the ER project inherently interesting or appreciating the period of complete silence at the beginning of English lessons, which they found conducive to concentration, demonstrating a benefit of the structural environment.

Conversely, only a minority, 4 students, indicated that they would not want to repeat the project. Their reasons varied, with some finding the ER experience uninteresting or expressing a general dislike for reading even after participating in the project. Others found the process overwhelming or too difficult, which is understandable given their developmental stage, because they were navigating independent book selection in English for the first time and also had to adapt to a new reading routine within a structured programme. This minority feedback underscores the need for even more personalised scaffolding during the initial phases of text selection to overcome pre-existing barriers, which were clearly too significant for this short intervention to fully overcome.

7.1.7. Q25

Q5 is an open-ended question that aimed to find out what the students perceived they had learned in the ER project. The responses indicate that the majority of students reported having acquired new English words. This finding aligns with the strong qualitative result from Q8, confirming that vocabulary acquisition was the most tangible and widely recognised benefit. Additionally, 5 students noted an overall improvement in their reading skills, stating that reading had become easier or that they were now able to read more quickly. These point directly to gains in reading fluency and automaticity, a primary goal of ER. In relation to this development, 2 students observed that they not only enhanced their reading

abilities but also made progress in their English proficiency overall. Furthermore, 2 participants discovered that reading can be enjoyable and expressed that they now take pleasure in it. This affective shift is a crucial indicator of the potential for long-term independent reading habits. Conversely, 2 students reported that they did not learn anything new, nor did they experience any improvement. This small but important minority response suggests that either the intervention was insufficient to break their initial resistance or they lack the self-awareness necessary to recognise subtle gains, underscoring the limitations of self-reported data.

7.1.8. Q26

Q26 (see Figure 19) was an open-ended question that sought to identify the factors that actively motivated students to read during the ER project. The most frequently mentioned reason was the support and encouragement provided by the teacher. Seven students stated that their teacher played a key role in motivating them. They appreciated the guidance, regular feedback and the positive atmosphere the teacher created in the classroom. This underscores the critical importance of the teacher as a reliable and supportive agent in the ER environment to help initiate and sustain engagement, particularly for hesitant readers (Day & Bamford 2007: 111).

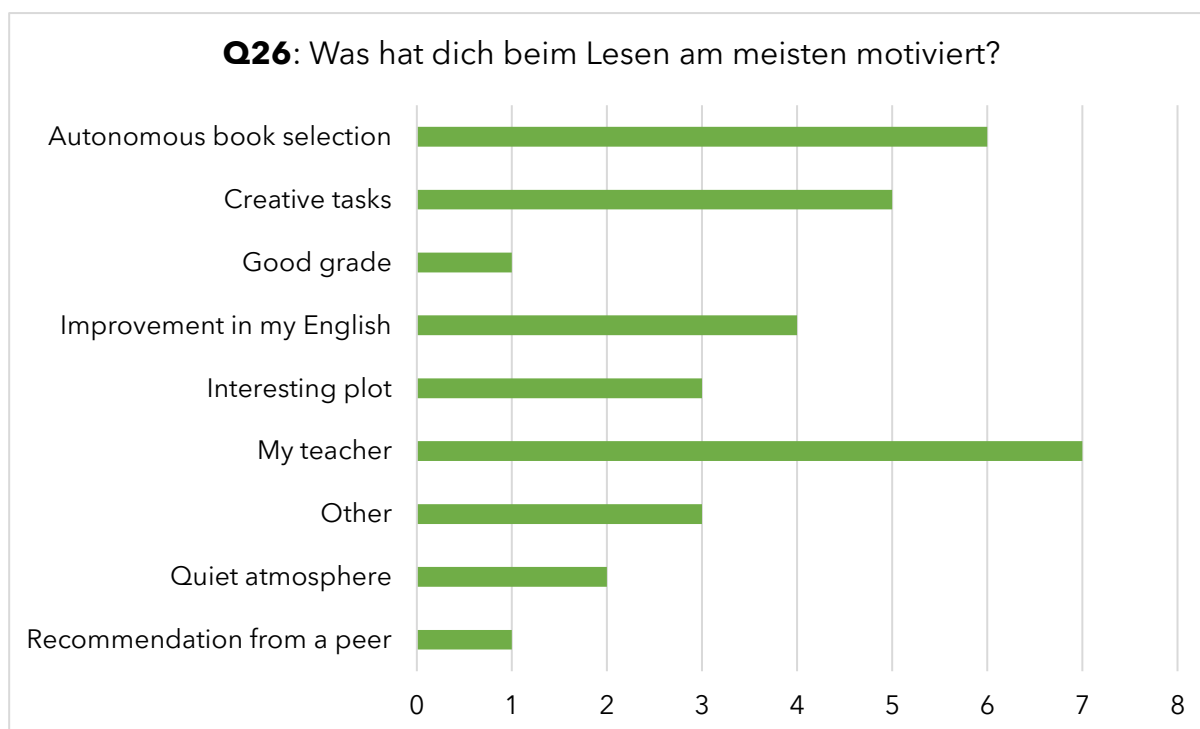


Figure 19: Students' answers to Q26 in the final data collection.

The freedom to choose their own books was another frequently cited motivational factor. Six students said that being able to select a text based on their personal interests helped them feel more willing to read. Creative activities also proved motivating for 5 students. Tasks such as designing an alternative book cover or drawing a favourite scene allowed them to express themselves and engage with the texts in a meaningful way.

Four students stated that they were motivated because they noticed improvement in their English, demonstrating the influence of perceived competence or instrumental motivation. A few students highlighted that interesting plots made them want to continue reading. Others valued the quiet and relaxed classroom atmosphere at the beginning of each lesson, which provided a calm space to concentrate. Only 1 student mentioned being motivated by grades and one reported reading a book because it was recommended by a classmate.

At this point, it should be noted that several students appeared overwhelmed by this open-ended question and asked me for clarification. In response, I decided to provide a few sample answers in front of the whole class to guide them. Students were also encouraged to list multiple motivating factors if possible. This instructional intervention likely influenced the nature and range of the final responses and should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results.

7.1.9. Q27

The students' responses to Q27 suggest that the ER project had a generally positive and multifaceted impact on their attitudes towards reading in English. Out of the 19 students who responded, 6 reported that they now like reading in English more than before and 4 stated that it feels easier to read English texts. Three students mentioned that they feel more confident when reading in English. Some typical responses illustrating these affective and skill gains included simple statements such as "Es ist einfacher jetzt", "Ich mag es mehr", or "Englische Bücher sind nicht so schwierig". One student noted that they were surprised by how much they understood and that they now feel more confident when reading English texts. Others mentioned that the project showed them that reading can be fun, especially

when the story is interesting or when they can choose the book themselves, linking positive attitude directly to intrinsic motivation and autonomy as discussed in Chapters 4.2 and 4.4.

However, not all students reported a noticeable change. Three students stated that their attitude had not changed, while another three responded with “Keine Ahnung” or a similarly uncertain answer. These six responses indicate that for approximately one third of the responding learners, the project may not have significantly altered their perception of reading in English or that they lack the meta-cognitive language necessary to accurately reflect on their experience. This outcome also highlights the limitations of a short-term intervention, supporting the observation made in Chapter 5.2.3 that extended exposure is typically required to achieve lasting changes in reading motivation.

7.1.10. Q28

In Q28 (see Figure 20), students were asked to indicate which exercise in the portfolio they enjoyed the most with the aim of identifying which tasks were most motivating for them. The results are clear and highly concentrated. Ten students reported that their favourite activity was designing and drawing a new book cover. Although not all students provided a reason for their choice, those who did stated that they either enjoy drawing or prefer tasks that involve creativity. This finding confirms that allowing for artistic and imaginative expression can act as a powerful source of intrinsic motivation. One student selected the reasoning exercise as their preferred task. Additionally, 1 student each identified the story pie, the word search and the *Facts about the author* as their favourite exercises. The student who favoured these tasks explained that they enjoy solving riddles and puzzles in general. The *Facts about the author* exercise involves researching five facts about the author of the text using an iPad. The student who chose this activity as their favourite mentioned that the use of the iPad contributed significantly to their enjoyment of the exercise.

In summary, the responses to this question suggest that many students are particularly motivated by exercises that incorporate creative elements, such as

designing an alternative book cover or constructing a word puzzle, confirming that differentiated, enjoyable tasks increase intrinsic motivation (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 62).

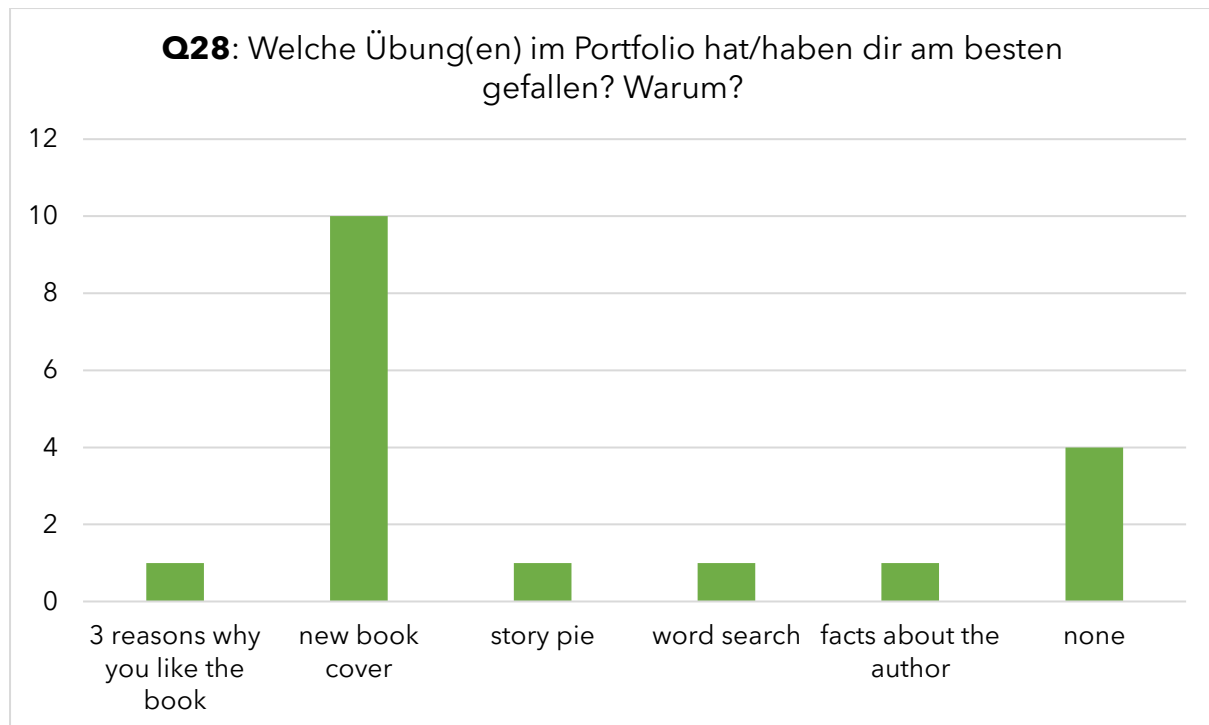


Figure 20: Students' answers to Q28 in the final data collection.

7.1.11. Q29

In Q29 (see Figure 21), students indicate which exercises in the portfolio they particularly disliked. This question aimed to identify the tasks that are least intrinsically motivating for the participants. Interestingly, more than half of the students stated that they enjoyed all the exercises. It is important to note, however, that during the ER project, students had the freedom to choose which tasks they wished to complete. This autonomy may contribute significantly to the predominantly positive responses, as learners likely selected activities that match their individual preferences and strengths, effectively filtering out tasks they would naturally dislike.

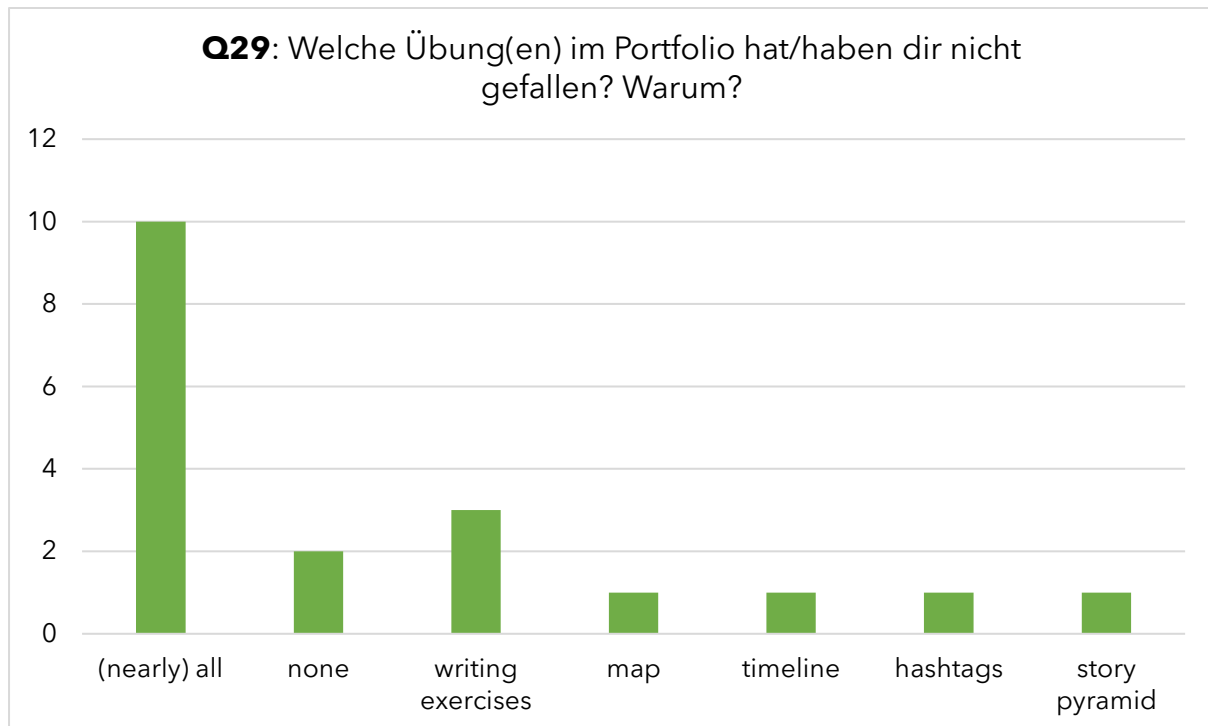


Figure 21: The students' answers to Q29 in the final data collection.

Two students reported that they did not enjoy any of the exercises, suggesting a generally low level of engagement or a pre-existing negative attitude towards the reading journal. Furthermore, 3 students explicitly expressed a strong aversion to tasks that involved writing. One student described writing as physically exhausting, another found it cognitively demanding and the third student did not provide a reason. In addition to writing tasks, individual students expressed negative attitudes towards specific exercises, namely the map activity, the timeline, the hashtag creation and the story pyramid. One student criticised the latter for being too demanding in terms of content, as they found it increasingly difficult to produce appropriate words and ideas to complete the exercise. This specific feedback signals that tasks requiring a high degree of content synthesis or abstract thought, such as the story pyramid, introduce a significant cognitive load that should be carefully managed or offered as optional.

7.1.12. Q30

The questionnaire concluded with an invitation to offer optional additional feedback to the teacher regarding the ER project. Twelve students offered positive feedback,

indicating that they enjoyed the project and would be willing to participate in a similar one again. Their comments demonstrated variety. Some students lauded the concept of the project, while others expressed their gratitude to the teacher for integrating it into the English lessons. A key finding was that 2 students explicitly stated that they enjoy reading their books, which strongly increased their motivation to repeat the ER project. One student highlighted the positive reading atmosphere in the classroom and appreciated the moments of silence and concentration at the beginning of each lesson.

In contrast, 2 students provided negative feedback. One expressed a general dislike for school, which extended to the reading project. The other found the project too difficult and complex, suggesting that the tasks exceeded their current language proficiency or familiarity with the format. Five students chose not to provide any additional feedback. Overall, the optional comments affirm the project's success and positive reception among the majority of the participants.

7.2. Comparison of the initial and final data collection

To compare attitudes towards reading and observe potential changes in reading motivation, students responded to the same two core statements (**C1**: Ich lese gerne Bücher. / **C2**: Ich lese gerne englische Bücher.) prior to and following the ER programme. Agreement was measured using a three-point Likert scale, presented visually as 3 distinct smileys. It is necessary to acknowledge a slight variance in the total number of participants between the pre- and post-programme data sets. Specifically, while 22 students commenced the ER programme, only 21 completed it, as 1 student transferred schools during the project and was consequently unavailable for the final data collection.

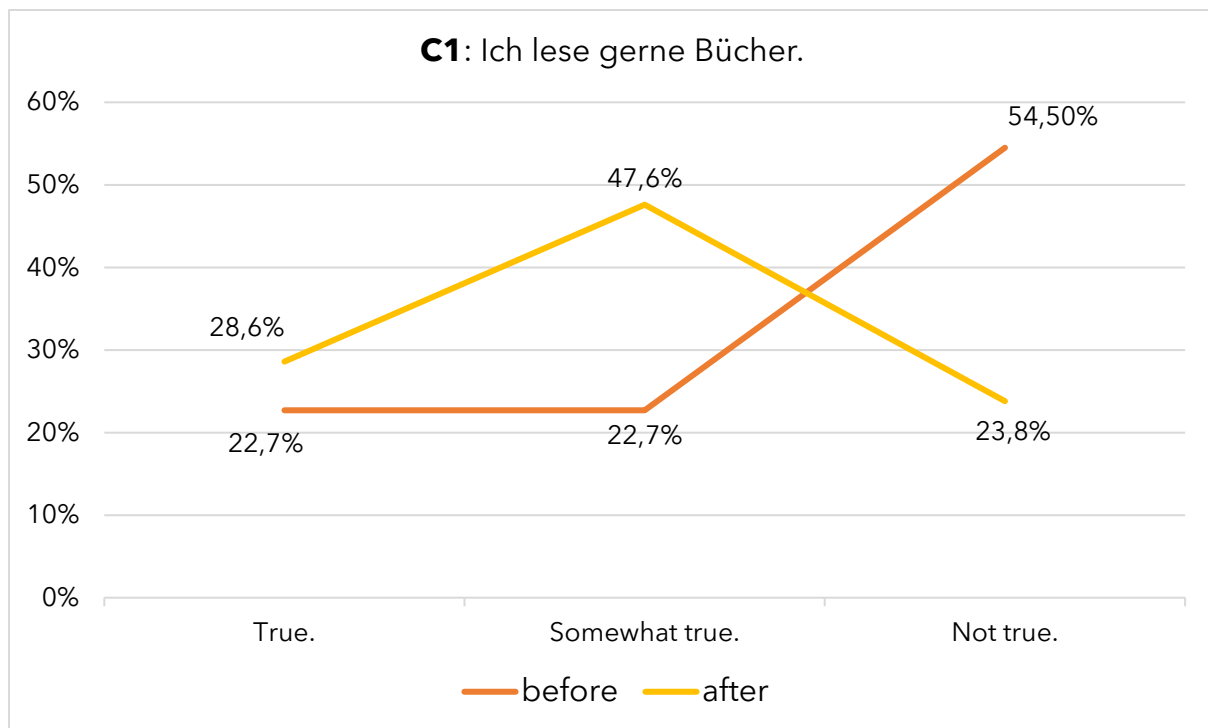


Figure 22: The students' answers in C1.

Figure 22 illustrates the student's responses to statement C1. The data reveal a consistent positive trend in general reading enjoyment following the programme. At the onset of the programme, 22.7% expressed their enjoyment of reading. By the end, this share had risen to 28.6%. More notably, the proportion of students who somewhat enjoyed reading also showed a substantial gain, moving from 22.7% to 47.6%. At the same time, negative responses decreased substantially. Initially, 54.5% of the students indicated that they did not enjoy reading, whereas afterwards only 23.8% selected this option. This marked shift suggests an overall increase in reading enjoyment and a positive influence on students' overall attitude toward reading in general.

Figure 23 presents the results for statement C2, which assessed students' specific enjoyment of reading in English. A strong positive shift is evident. Before the programme, 18.2% selected the happy face, indicating full enjoyment of reading in English. This proportion increased significantly to 33.3% after completing the ER project. A similar, though more modest, increase occurred among those who somewhat agree, with responses rising from 27.3% to 33.3%. The most substantial and encouraging change was observed within the negative category. While 54.5%

of students initially indicated that they did not enjoy reading in English, only 33.3% expressed this in the final data collection. This notable decline of 21.2% in negative responses strongly suggests the ER project was highly effective in fostering a more positive and accepting attitude toward reading in a foreign language.

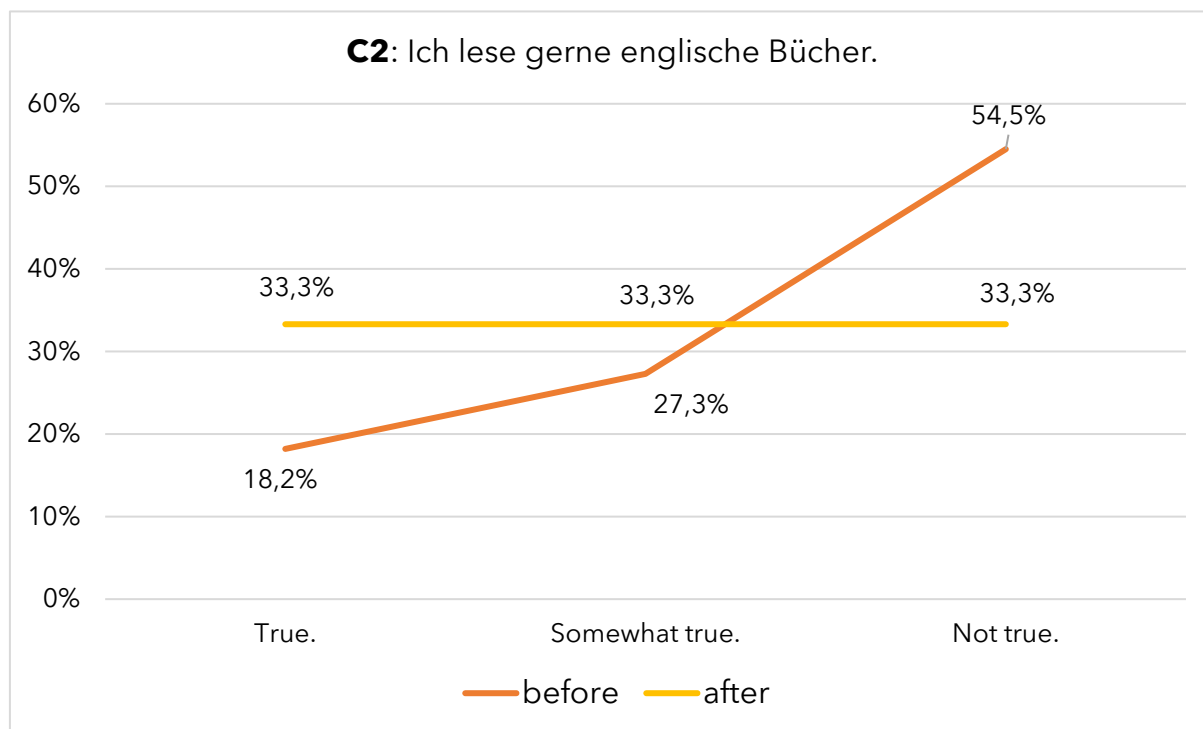


Figure 23: The students' answers in C2.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the ER programme produced a range of positive outcomes with regard to students' reading motivation in English. Through a combination of increased autonomy, positive reading experiences and supportive structures, the project succeeded in engaging learners who had previously expressed negative or indifferent attitudes toward reading. The final data collection shows that students experienced a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, began to view reading as more enjoyable and developed a clearer sense of their own reading competence. These motivational changes are particularly significant in an EFL context, where students often struggle with confidence and sustained reading engagement. The findings thus provide empirical support for the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapters 3 and 4, which emphasise that motivation in language learning depends on the interplay of autonomy, competence and meaningful input.

Equally important were the specific strategies embedded in the ER programme. Allowing students to choose their own reading materials enabled a sense of ownership and increased engagement. Creative post-reading tasks offered students meaningful ways to respond to texts, which enhanced emotional involvement and motivation to continue reading. Teacher support emerged as another critical factor, with students consistently citing guidance, encouragement and modelling as key elements in their reading progress. Together, these components created a classroom culture where reading was both valued and personally rewarding. This combination of autonomy, structure and positive reinforcement aligns with Day and Bamford's (2007: 7-8) 10 principles of ER and demonstrates that when these principles are adapted to local curricular contexts, they can yield measurable motivational gains even within a relatively short implementation period.

The data also reveal the interdependence of these motivational factors. Students' increased confidence, fostered by accessible reading materials and visible progress, appeared to strengthen their willingness to continue reading. Similarly, the supportive role of the teacher not only provided necessary extrinsic encouragement but also helped internalise motivation, enabling learners to find personal value in

the act of reading. This dynamic process, moving from teacher-led encouragement to student-driven engagement, reflects the motivational reading cycle proposed by Leather and Uden (2021: 29-31), confirming that sustained support and feedback are vital for maintaining long-term commitment.

From a linguistic perspective, several students reported improvement in their reading fluency and vocabulary acquisition. While these self-assessments were not formally measured through testing, they correspond closely with previous research (Pigada & Schmitt 2006: 12-18) showing that ER can lead to incidental language development through repeated exposure to comprehensible input. The fact that students themselves recognised such progress reinforces the motivational value of perceiving tangible achievement, as outlined in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1985 cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda 2021: 27). In this way, linguistic and affective progress appear mutually reinforcing. As students noticed improvement, their confidence and intrinsic motivation to read grew stronger.

Ultimately, this study supports the claim that ER, when tailored to the learners' needs and implemented with care, can serve as a powerful tool to promote reading motivation in lower secondary EFL settings. While individual responses varied, the overall patterns suggest that ER offers an accessible, flexible and student-centred approach that is well suited to long-term language learning goals. The results are especially encouraging considering the short duration of the intervention. Even within an eight-week timeframe, notable attitudinal and behavioural changes were observable, suggesting that carefully structured ER projects can act as effective catalysts for cultivating interest and enjoyment in reading. However, as noted in Chapter 9, a longer implementation period would likely yield more sustainable and generalisable results, allowing students to consolidate the newly developed reading habits over time.

At the pedagogical level, the findings underline the importance of integrating ER into everyday classroom practice rather than viewing it as an optional or supplementary activity. Teachers are encouraged to create classroom environments where reading is embedded as a regular, low-pressure activity that values personal

choice and enjoyment. Establishing a small but diverse classroom library, scheduling consistent reading time and maintaining a supportive and enthusiastic presence can help transform reading from a task into a shared and valued experience. The teacher's active participation, reading alongside students, discussing books, and offering tailored recommendations, appears particularly effective in reinforcing a positive reading culture.

Furthermore, the success of creative post-reading activities in this study highlights the value of offering students opportunities for individual expression. Short, varied tasks that allow for artistic, emotional or reflective responses, such as drawing, summarising or sharing favourite sentences, enable learners to personalise their reading experience. These activities encourage emotional engagement, which in turn strengthens the intrinsic motivation to continue reading beyond the classroom setting. Such practices can also foster collaborative discussions and peer recommendations, contributing to a classroom community of readers.

From a broader educational perspective, this thesis contributes to the growing body of research that supports ER as an effective and contextually adaptable methodology for EFL instruction. It demonstrates that ER can successfully coexist with curricular goals in Austrian MS by complementing traditional reading instruction with a focus on fluency, motivation and learner autonomy. The positive outcomes of this study provide a foundation for further integration of ER into Austrian EFL teaching, ideally supported by institutional frameworks, teacher training and access to appropriate reading materials.

Taken together, these results demonstrate that ER, when carefully implemented in a lower secondary EFL context in Austria, can significantly enhance learners' motivation, attitudes and reading behaviours. The project not only improved students' perception of reading in English but also provided evidence that meaningful engagement with texts can lead to broader educational benefits, such as greater confidence, curiosity and self-regulation. In the long term, these outcomes suggest that ER may serve as a sustainable pathway toward developing

autonomous, lifelong readers who view language learning as both achievable and personally rewarding.

9. Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights into the implementation and effects of an ER programme in a lower secondary EFL classroom, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the relatively small sample size of 22 actively participating students restricts the generalizability of the findings. Although the results are meaningful within this specific context, caution should be exercised when attempting to extend them to larger or different educational settings, particularly in schools with different demographic or linguistic profiles.

Secondly, the duration of the ER project was limited to 8 weeks. While some changes in attitudes and motivation were observed within this period, longer-term effects on reading habits, language proficiency and sustained motivation could not be thoroughly examined. ER is intended as a long-term strategy to develop reading fluency and foster a lifelong love of reading. Thus, a longer programme might have revealed deeper or more stable changes in reading behaviours.

Another limitation relates to the integration of ER as a graded component of the curriculum. While necessary for institutional reasons, including grades, may have influenced students' motivations, potentially biasing results towards extrinsic rather than purely intrinsic motivation. Some students might have engaged with the reading activities primarily to achieve a positive grade rather than for personal enjoyment or language development. Future studies might consider alternative evaluation methods, such as purely formative assessments, to minimise this influence.

Additionally, the variability in students' language proficiency levels posed a challenge throughout the project. Although differentiation strategies were employed, including categorising books by difficulty and offering guidance in book selection, weaker readers might still have struggled to engage fully with the texts. This variation could have affected their overall experience and progress, as some students may have required more intensive support than was feasible within the scope of this study. Furthermore, certain learners might benefit from alternative text

formats or different types of input, such as audio-visual materials or interactive sources, to better accommodate their individual needs.

The study also relied heavily on self-reported data collected through questionnaires and reflective feedback. While this method provides valuable insights into students' subjective experiences and perceptions, it is inherently limited by the possibility of response bias. Some students might have provided certain answers to align with perceived teacher expectations despite the anonymous data collection.

Lastly, due to time constraints and the school's policies, reading outside of class was not strongly emphasised or systematically monitored. As a result, it remains unclear how effectively students transferred their in-class reading habits to independent reading at home. Future research could explore strategies to support and measure out-of-class reading more strongly, providing a more comprehensive understanding of ER's potential to foster lifelong reading habits.

In summary, while the study provides encouraging evidence of the benefits of ER in motivating students and improving attitudes towards reading in Austrian MS, these limitations highlight the need for further research with larger sample sizes, longer durations and varied contexts to fully understand and maximise the potential of ER programmes in EFL classrooms.

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11. Appendix

11.1. Appendix A



11.2. Appendix B

Liebe*r Schüler*in,

Bald werden wir mit einem Leseprojekt im Unterrichtsfach Englisch starten. Damit ich die passenden Bücher und Texte vorbereiten kann, brauche ich deine Hilfe!

Bitte beantworte die Fragen sorgfältig. Schreibe deinen Namen nicht dazu, da ich nicht wissen darf, wer welche Antwort gegeben hat.

Danke!

Male den Smiley an, der für dich am besten passt.

1. Ich lese gerne Bücher.			
2. Ich lese gerne englische Bücher.			
3. Ich lese oft Bücher.			
4. Ich lese oft englische Bücher.			
5. Ich lese auch außerhalb des Unterrichts.			
6. Lesen ist mein Hobby.			
7. Ich habe immer ein Buch dabei.			
8. Ich gehe oft in Bibliotheken und Büchereien.			

 Stimmt. /  Stimmt teilweise. /  Stimmt nicht.

Kreuze die passenden Symbole an. Mehrere Antworten sind möglich.

9. Welche(s) Genre(s) liest du gerne?

 ☐ Komödie	 ☐ Drama	 ☐ Action	 ☐ Geschichte	 ☐ Horror
 ☐ Fantasy	 ☐ Sport	 ☐ Biografie	 ☐ Romantik	 ☐ Musik
 ☐ Sci-Fi	 ☐ Western	 ☐ Detektiv	 ☐ Thriller	 ☐ Abenteuer

10. Welche(s) Genre(s) schaust du gerne (z.B. Filme, Serien)?

 ☐ Komödie	 ☐ Drama	 ☐ Action	 ☐ Geschichte	 ☐ Horror
 ☐ Fantasy	 ☐ Sport	 ☐ Biografie	 ☐ Romantik	 ☐ Musik
 ☐ Sci-Fi	 ☐ Western	 ☐ Detektiv	 ☐ Thriller	 ☐ Abenteuer

Beantworte die Fragen.

11. Welches war das **letzte** Buch, das du gelesen hast? (in Englisch oder einer anderen Sprache)

12. Welches war das **beste** Buch, das du jemals gelesen hast? (in Englisch oder einer anderen Sprache)

13. Welches Buch würdest du gerne in Englisch lesen?

14. Was machst du gerne in deiner Freizeit?

Kreuze die passenden Antworten an. Mehrere Antworten sind möglich.

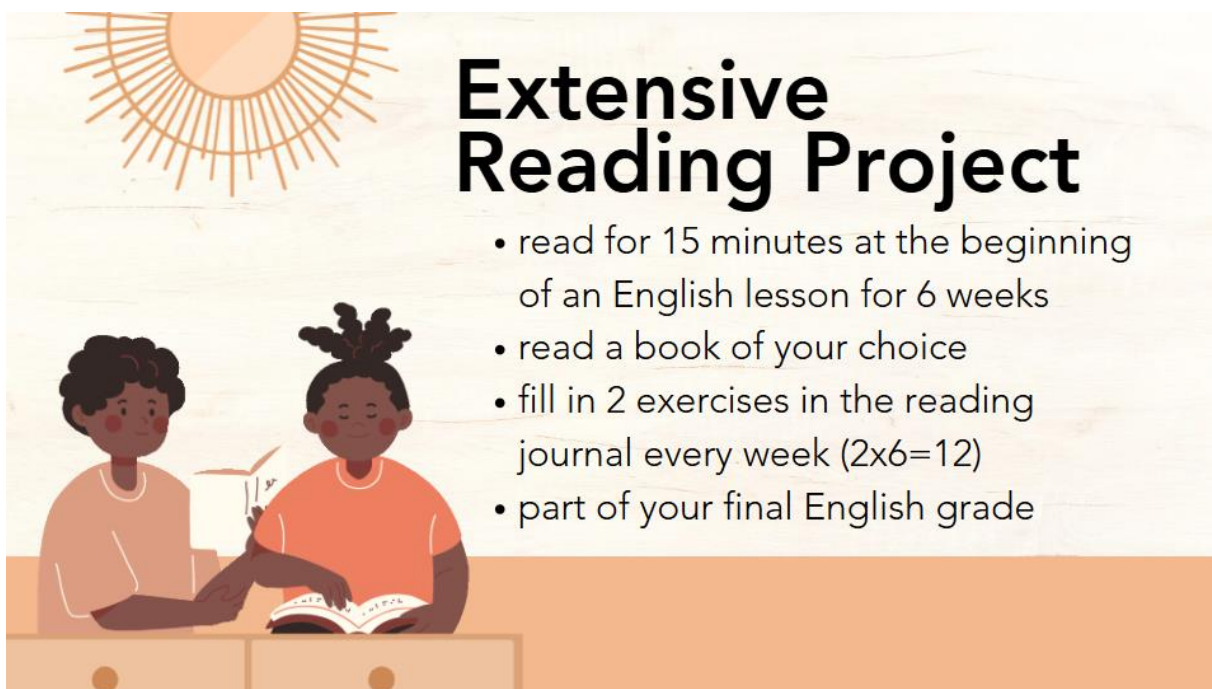
15. Welche **Medien** verwendest du neben Büchern noch?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Online-Medien (z.B. Instagram, TikTok) | ☐ Fernsehen |
| ☐ Zeitungen / Zeitschriften | ☐ Hörbücher / Podcasts |
| ☐ Radio | ☐ andere Medien: _____ |

16. Welche **Online-Medien** verwendest du?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ TikTok | ☐ Snapchat |
| ☐ Instagram | ☐ Discord |
| ☐ Spotify | ☐ andere Medien: _____ |

11.3. Appendix C





Objectives

- enjoy reading English books
- ideally, increase your reading motivation in a foreign language
- better language skills
- greater vocabulary range



Extensive Reading

"Extensive Reading [...] is about students reading in quantity and about them building the desire to make reading a lifelong habit, a habit they value and enjoy." (Jacobs & Farrell 2012: 2)



10 Rules of Extensive Reading

- Students read as much as possible.
- A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available.
- Students select what they want to read.



10 Rules of Extensive Reading

- The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding.
- Reading is its own reward.



10 Rules of Extensive Reading

- Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students.
- Reading is individual and silent.
- Reading speed is usually faster than slower.



10 Rules of Extensive Reading

- Teachers orient students to the goals of the program.
- The teacher is a role model of a reader for the students.

(Day & Bamford 2007: 7, 8)



11.4. Appendix D

Exercise 1 - Review

Write a short review of the text. There is no word limit.

Include the three parts of a review: content - opinion - target group.

Exercise 2 - Most interesting part

What was the most interesting part of the text? Why?

Exercise 3 - New cover

Design a new front cover for your text. Include pictures and words, if possible.

Exercise 4 - Questions

Form five questions about the book. You don't have to answer them.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

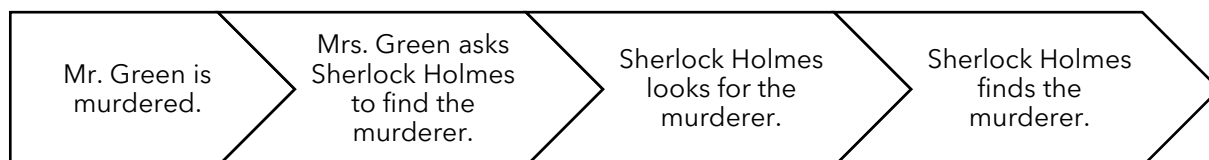
Exercise 5 - Map

Draw a map with all the important places from the book.

Exercise 6 - Timeline

Create a timeline of the events in the text.

Here is an example for you.



Exercise 7 - Reading quilt

Fill in the reading quilt using key words only.

event at the beginning	event in the middle	event at the end
main characters	minor characters	highlight of the story
fact #1	fact #2	fact #3

Exercise 8 - Adjectives

Use three adjectives to describe the book.

Word 1	
Word 2	
Word 3	

Exercise 9 - Favourite Character

Who is your favourite character? Why?

Briefly describe your favourite character or draw a picture.

Exercise 10 - Post-It Note

Get a sticky note from the teacher.

Write a short note for the next reader and put it on the first page of the book.

What did you write on the note?

Exercise 11 - Facts about the author

Use your iPad and find out more about the author.

Write down five facts.

Fact 1	
Fact 2	
Fact 3	
Fact 4	
Fact 5	

Exercise 12 - Letters

Use every letter from the title and find a word that is connected to the text.

Here is an example.

Art	H	ur Conan Doyle
s	O	lves crimes
	L	ondon
	M	urder
Bak	E	r Street 221B
Dr Wat	S	on

Exercise 13 - Interview questions

Imagine you are interviewing the author of the text.

Prepare five questions for the interview.

Question 1	
Question 2	
Question 3	
Question 4	
Question 5	

Exercise 14 - Alternative ending

Write an alternative ending for the story. How could the text also end?

Exercise 15 - Reasoning

Why should other students read the text?

Exercise 16 - Questionnaire

Fill in the questionnaire and colour the smiley that is most suitable for you.

1. I enjoyed reading this text.	  
2. I want to read another text like this.	  
3. I would recommend this book.	  
4. This text helped me to improve my reading.	  
5. I needed a dictionary to understand this text.	  
6. I don't have time to read books.	  
7. I often get distracted when reading.	  

Exercise 17 - Summary

Summarise the text in 30 words exactly. No more or less.

Exercise 18 - Oral Summary

Give the teacher an oral summary of the text.

Use the space below to make notes first.

Exercise 19 - Hashtags

Find at least five suitable hashtags for the text that could be used on *Instagram* or *TikTok*.

Here is an example for you:

Sherlock Holmes - **#crime #London #bestfriends #detective #clever**

Exercise 20 - Favourite Sentences

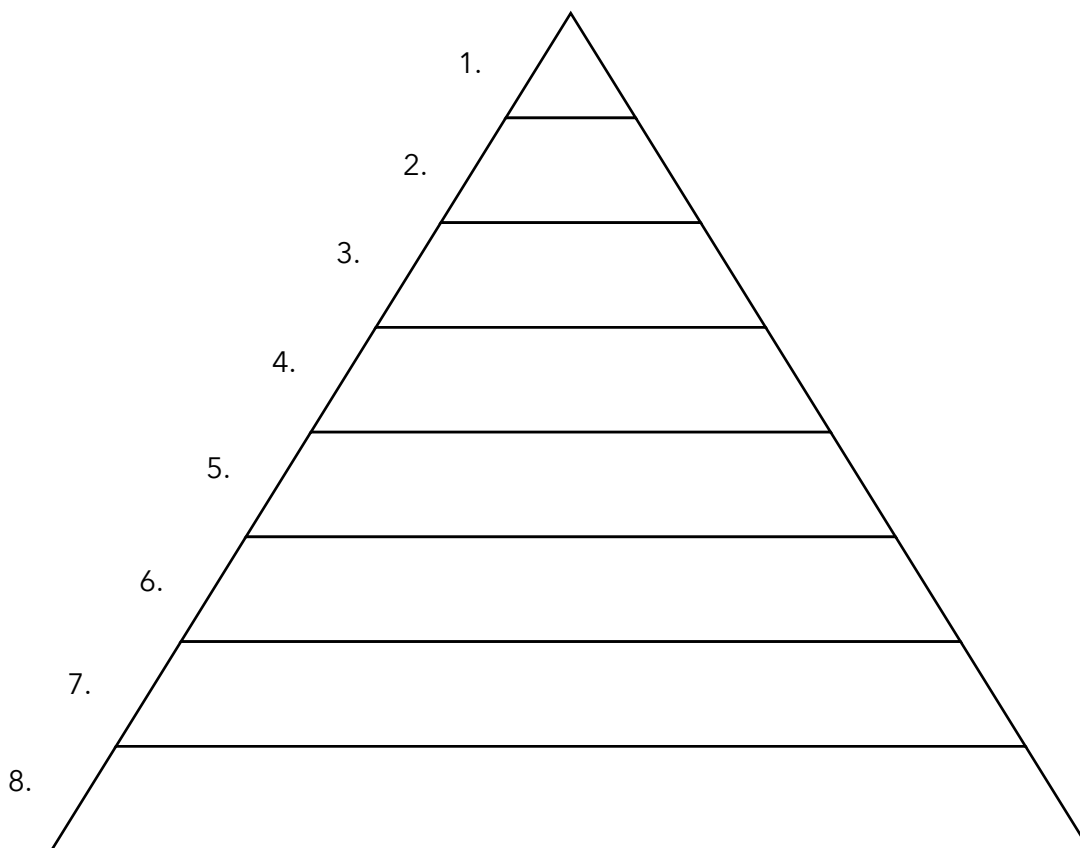
Copy the three sentences from the book that you like best.

Sentence 1	
Sentence 2	
Sentence 3	

Exercise 21 - Story Pyramid

Fill in the pyramid and be precise with the number of words.

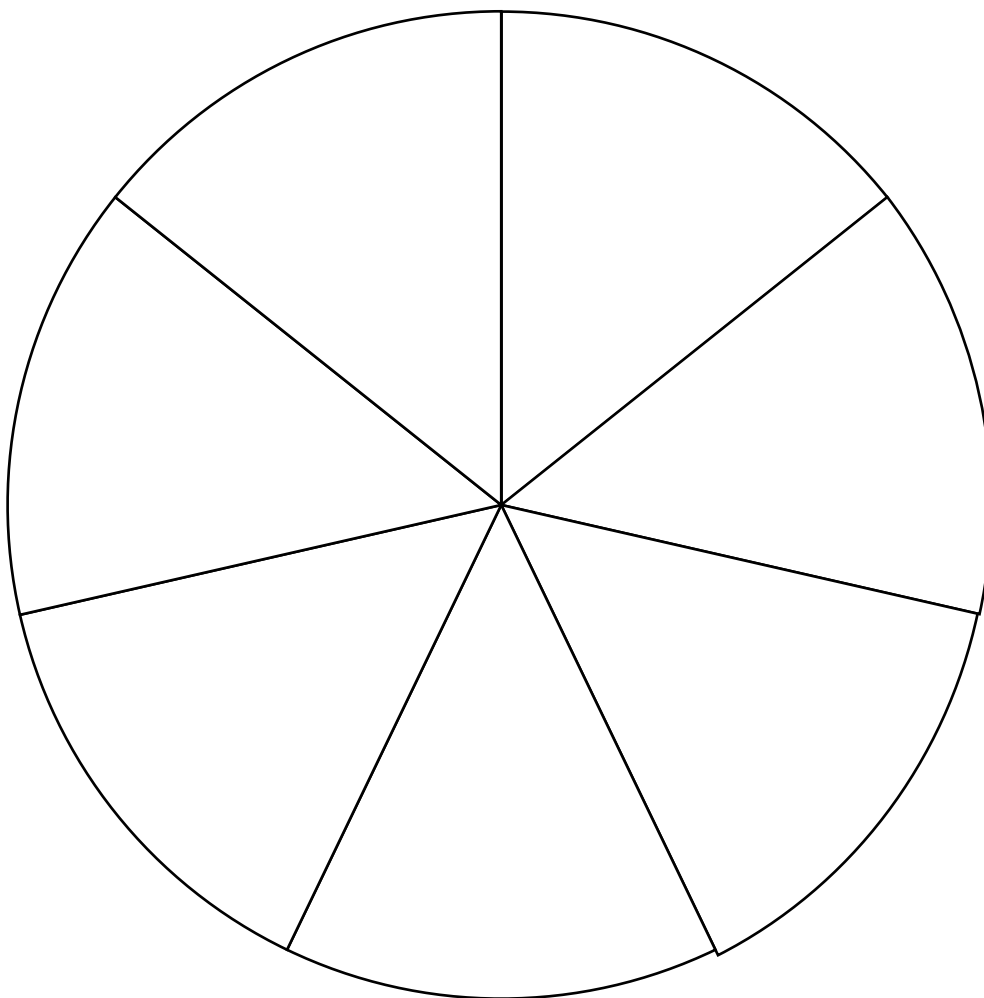
1. name one main character
2. two words that describe the main character
3. three words about the setting / place
4. four words about the main character's problem and goal
5. five words about important events in the story
6. six words about how it ends
7. seven words about your favourite part
8. eight words that you would tell your friends about the text



Exercise 22 - Story Pie

Write down the six most important events in the text.

Put every event in a separate piece of the pie.



Exercise 23 - Feelings

How did you feel while reading the text? Why did you feel this way?

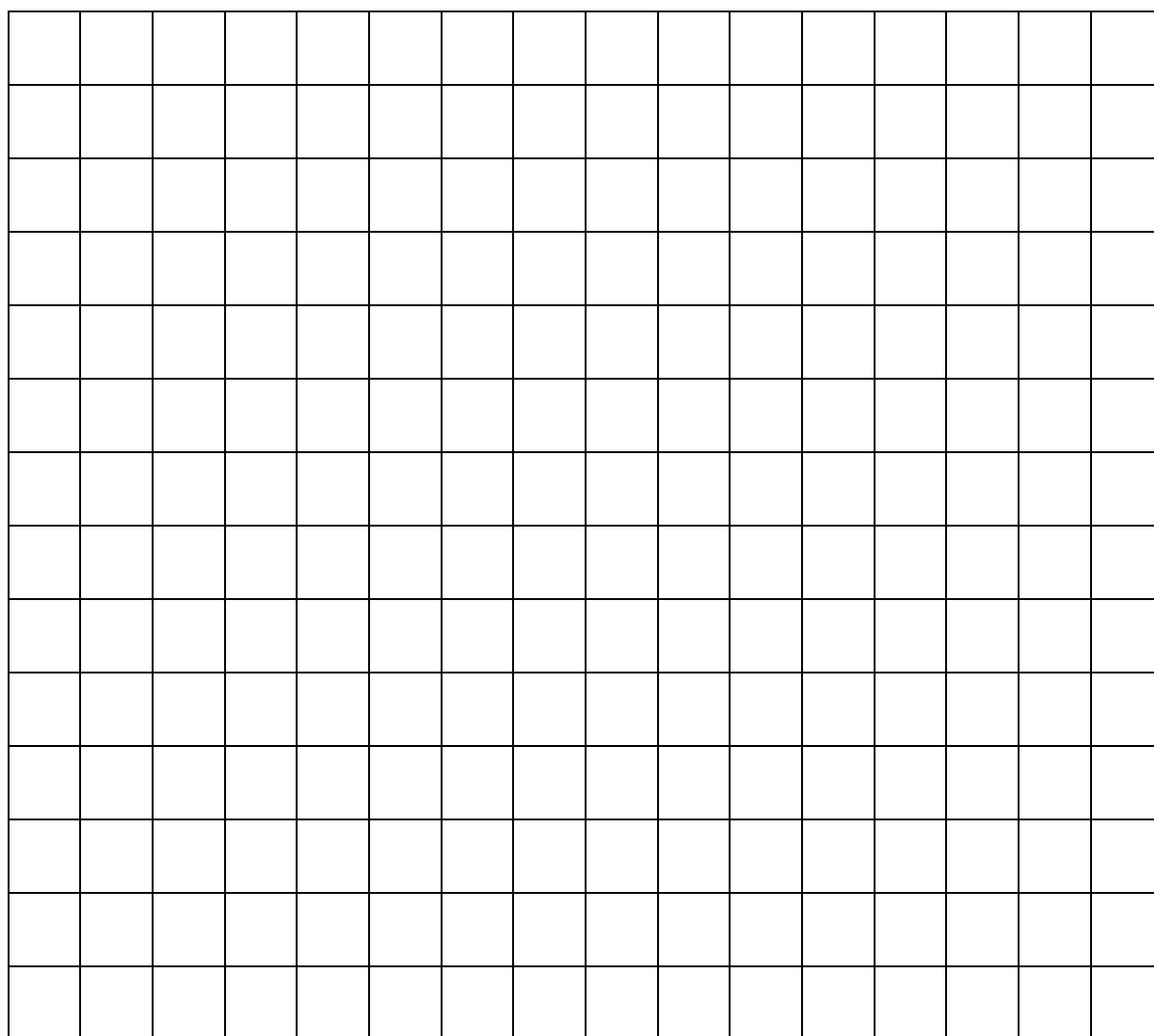
Exercise 24 - Wordsearch

Create your own word search.

Hide ten words in the word search that are connected to the text.

Fill in the empty boxes with random letters.

Give the word search to another student to solve it.



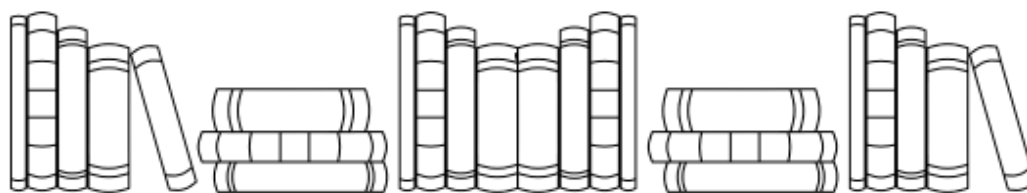
Exercise 25 - Picture

Draw a picture to summarise the text.

11.5. Appendix E

Reading Tracker

After finishing a book, poem, article or short story, colour in a book on the shelf and write down the title, author and date.



Title	Author	Date

11.6. Appendix F

Five-Finger Rule

Count the words that you don't know.

First, I wake up. Then, I get dressed. I walk to school. I do not ride a bike. I do not ride the bus. I like to go to school. It rains. I do not like rain. I eat lunch. I eat a sandwich and an apple. I play outside. I like to play. I read a book. I like to read books. I walk home. I do not like walking home. My mother cooks soup for dinner. The soup is hot. Then, I go to bed. I do not like to go to bed.

<https://lingua.com/english/reading/my-day/>

Five-Finger Rule

Count the words that you don't know.

Keith recently came back from a trip to Chicago, Illinois. This midwestern metropolis is found along the shore of Lake Michigan. During his visit, Keith spent a lot of time exploring the city to visit important landmarks and monuments. Keith loves baseball, and he made sure to take a visit to Wrigley Field. Not only did he take a tour of this spectacular stadium, but he also got to watch a Chicago Cubs game.

<https://lingua.com/english/reading/chicago/>

Five-Finger Rule

Count the words that you don't know.

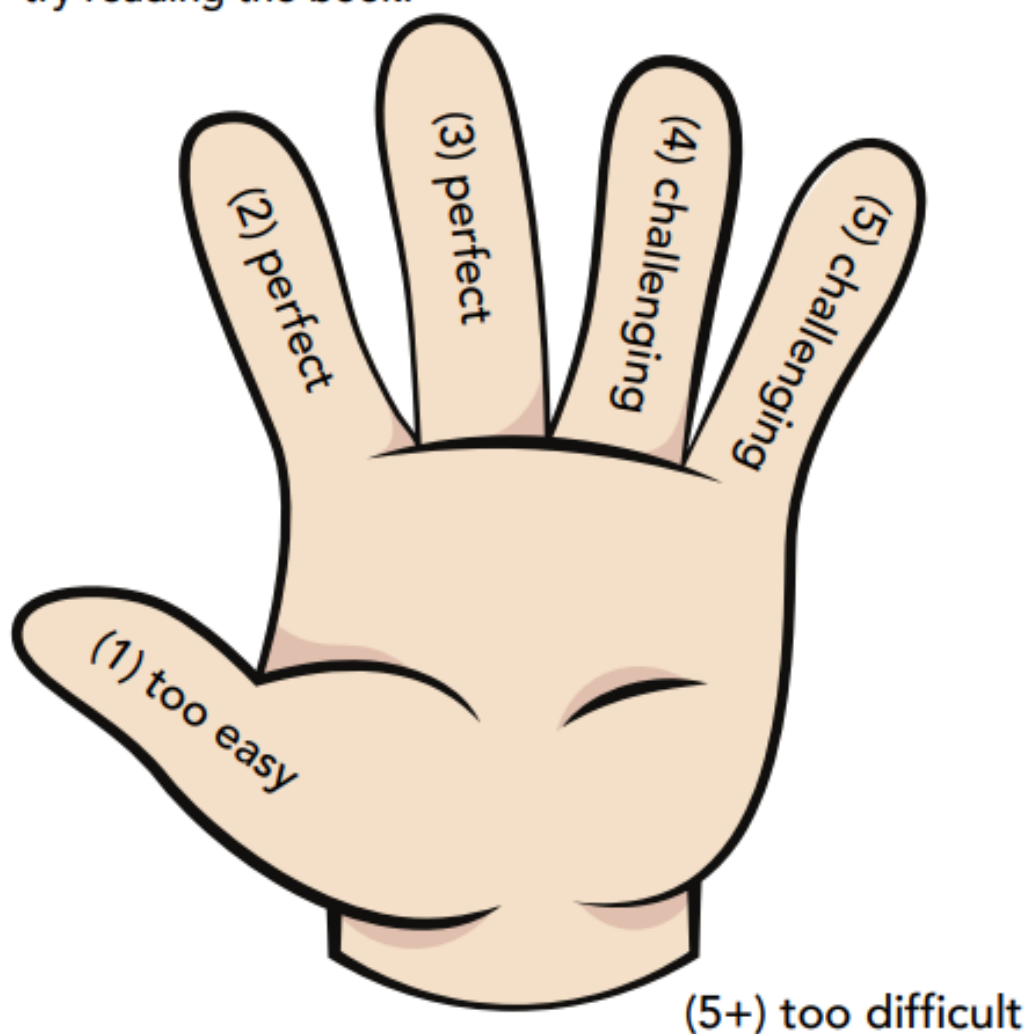
In our modern world, there are many factors that place the wellbeing of the planet in jeopardy. While some people have the opinion that environmental problems are just a natural occurrence, others believe that human beings have a huge impact on the environment. Regardless of your viewpoint, take into consideration the following factors that place our environment as well as the planet Earth in danger.

<https://lingua.com/english/reading/environment/>

FIVE FINGER RULE

Use your finger to check if the language level of the book is suitable for you:

- Open any page in the book.
- Count the words on the page that you DON'T know (with your fingers).
- The number of unknown words tells you if you should try reading the book.



11.8. Appendix H

Liebe*r Schüler*in,

Das Leseprojekt im Unterrichtsfach *Englisch* ist nun beendet und ich würde gerne deine Meinung dazu wissen.

Bitte beantworte die Fragen sorgfältig.

Schreibe deinen Namen **nicht** dazu, da ich nicht wissen darf, wer welche Antwort gegeben hat.

Danke!

Male den Smiley an, der für dich am besten passt.

Deine persönliche Erfahrung mit dem Leseprojekt			
1. Das Projekt hat mir gezeigt, dass lesen wichtig ist.			
2. Das Projekt hat mir gezeigt, dass lesen Spaß macht.			
3. Wegen des Projektes lese ich jetzt öfter.			
4. Ich hatte genug Zeit, um zu lesen.			
5. Ich hatte manchmal Schwierigkeiten motiviert zu bleiben.			
Was du gelernt hast...			
6. Ich bin beim Lesen auf Englisch sicherer geworden.			
7. Mein Englisch ist durch das Lesen besser geworden.			
8. Das Projekt hat mir geholfen neue Wörter zu lernen.			
9. Das Projekt hat mir geholfen meine Grammatik zu verbessern.			
10. Das Projekt hat mir geholfen schneller zu lesen.			
11. Ich weiß jetzt, wie ich das richtige Buch für mich wähle.			
Gründe fürs Lesen			
12. Ich lese gerne Bücher.			
13. Ich lese gerne englische Bücher.			
14. Ich lese, weil es wichtig ist.			
15. Ich lese, weil es Spaß macht.			

16. Ich lese, weil ich Neues lernen will.			
17. Ich lese, weil meine Eltern mich auffordern.			
18. Ich lese, weil meine Lehrperson mich auffordert.			
Was mir beim Lesen geholfen hat...			
19. Die Auswahl der Bücher hat mir gefallen.			
20. Es hat mir gefallen, dass ich die Bücher selbst aussuchen konnte.			
21. Die Übungen im Portfolio haben mir geholfen, die Bücher besser zu verstehen.			
22. Meine Lehrperson hat mir beim Projekt geholfen.			

😊 Stimmt. / 😐 Stimmt teilweise. / ☹ Stimmt nicht.

Beantworte die Fragen.

23. Wie hat dir das Leseprojekt gefallen?

24. Würdest du das Leseprojekt gerne wiederholen? Warum? Warum nicht?

25. Was hast du durch das Leseprojekt gelernt?

26. Was hat dich beim Lesen am meisten motiviert?

27. Hat sich deine Meinung zum Lesen in Englisch durch das Projekt verändert?

Wenn ja, wie?

28. Welche Übung(en) im *Reading Journal* hat/haben dir am besten gefallen?

Warum?

29. Welche Übung(en) im *Reading Journal* hat/haben dir nicht gefallen? Warum?

30. Was möchtest du deiner Lehrerin noch zum Leseprojekt sagen?