

Response to Taylor's Reforming Assessment Is Key to Successful ER Implementation: Expanding on Robb (2022)

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I completely agree with Taylor (2022) that a proportion of the students' grades based on participation or effort would surely facilitate the implementation of ER or any other of the four skills. Improvement in actual ability can only occur through meaning-based input and output activities (see Nation, 2007) which are by and large denied students due to the focus on intensive language study.

Malaysia is an interesting case since a program that is intended to foster reading habits called "NILAM" has been in place in all primary and secondary schools, at least nominally, for two decades. According to Taib et al. (2022), however, it has not been successful since it has all but been ignored in many schools, and student participation carries no marks in their final course grades. There is little buy-in from teachers since the program is seen as one of many directives from the top with little effort to encourage practical implementation.

What is needed goes beyond what we can do by simply writing about the issue. Some form of direct intervention or political action is needed for the ministries to wake up to the fact that students cannot improve their language skills without active meaning-focused practice. We need to encourage local movements where concerned individuals, teachers, administrators and parents directly approach local influencers to make this happen.

References

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About the author

Thomas Robb, Ph.D., University of Hawaii, is Professor Emeritus, Kyoto Sangyo University, where he was chair of the Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages until March 2017. He is a long-time user of CALL and the Internet, and has created a number of websites and applications for Extensive Reading, student projects, interactive learning, and professional exchange. He is the administrator of the graded reader quiz program, MReader.org. He has been president of JALT (The Japan Association for Language Teaching), has been on the Board of Directors of International TESOL, and a past president of Pacific CALL. He is chair of the Extensive Reading Foundation and editor of the online journal, TESL-EJ.