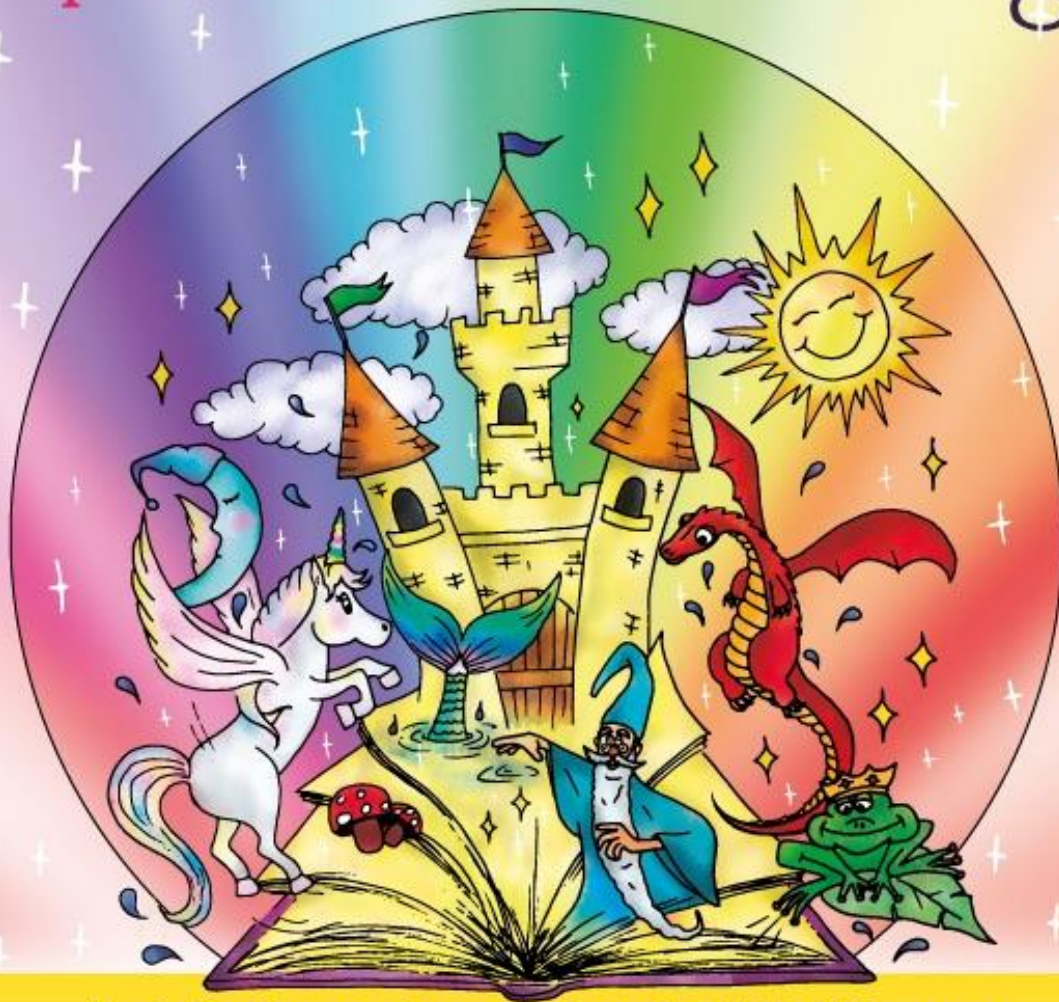


# Practical Extensive Reading

Tips and Resources



Slavka Borislavova • Somayah Gerami • Debbie Kellermann  
Margarita Kosior • Pham Thi Hai Trang • Danielle Sales • Steve Sanders  
Trần Thị Thuý Quỳnh • Montse Watkin • Nathália Thomaz

Edited by Kate Cory-Wright

# Practical Extensive Reading: Tips and Resources

---

## Welcome!

*Fostering a love of reading in our students is a goal that many language teachers share. We know the lifelong benefits of loving books, especially as many of us learned English - or another language – through reading. The challenge is: how to help our students become lifelong readers?*

*During the month of March 2017 a group of EFL/ESL teachers participated in a one-month online course on Extensive Reading (ER). The course was delivered by Kate Cory-Wright and hosted by the International Teacher Development Institute (iTDi). Each week we attended a webinar, completed tasks, and took part in online discussions about Extensive Reading*

*The course participants were qualified educators, each with at least 10 years' experience of teaching plus a higher education degree or a Masters. Participants included a broad spectrum of experience, too, ranging from teaching young learners and teenagers to college students and adults. Last but not least, the course was enhanced by a variety of cultural backgrounds, owing to the locations the participants work: Brazil, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Greece, India, Iran, USA, and Vietnam (See "About the Authors" for more information). In summary, it was a lively course, with plenty of active participation.*

*By the end of March 2017, our group had generated a wealth of ideas, information, and resources with regard to ER. The next logical step was to share it with others. So please enjoy this free collection of tips and resources on ER!*

*Best wishes from,*

Kate Cory-Wright and the ER Course Participants

## Special thanks

**Cover Design:** Kati Alice Bilsborough.

**Photos:** Fiona Paton Loader, Montse Watkin, Margarita Kosior.

**ER Course host:** International Teacher Development Institute (iTDi).

[http://itdi.pro/itdihome/advanced\\_courses.php](http://itdi.pro/itdihome/advanced_courses.php)

# Practical Extensive Reading: Tips and Resources

---

## CONTENTS

<b>PART 1</b>	<b>Introduction to Extensive Reading (ER)</b>	<b>3</b>
	The meaning and characteristics of ER	
<b>PART 2</b>	<b>Materials for an ER Program</b>	<b>5</b>
	Graded readers; free and low cost materials	
<b>PART 3</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>8</b>
	Introducing ER; training students to choose; training to read	
<b>PART 4</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>14</b>
	How to get students motivated and how to keep them motivated	
	<b>About the Authors</b>	<b>18</b>



Margarita reading in class

# Practical Extensive Reading: Tips and Resources

---

## PART 1 Introduction to Extensive Reading

### Extensive Reading is:

1. Enjoying - without help – a lot of unfamiliar texts... reading at an appropriate speed, silently, and with adequate understanding. (C. Nuttall)
2. An approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy material in the new language. (Bamford and Day)

By reading numerous easy and enjoyable books on a regular basis, students develop a larger vocabulary, in addition to other skills. S. Krashen has described the Extensive Reading approach as an approach which lets students improve their language “without study and without teachers”.

**Extensive Reading** is commonly confused with literature classes and even reading a (teacher-selected) class reader together. However, those are not examples of ER. The characteristics that define ER are as follows:

### Key Characteristics of Extensive Reading

- Students read a lot, quickly, and often.
- The material is easy for the students' level.
- The student chooses what to read.
- Students have a wide variety of genres and topics to choose from.
- Students read for pleasure and information.
- Reading is individual and silent.
- The teacher acts as a role model.

From: **Extensive Reading Foundation** <http://erfoundation.org>

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/extensive-reading>



Montse: ER is rewarding, satisfying and enjoyable. It has many benefits:

- It develops fluency and general reading skills.
- It consolidates students' learning (especially EFL learners).
- ER has a knock-on effect, meaning that it improves spelling and writing, vocabulary, listening and oral confidence.
- ER opens students' eyes to the world outside the classroom.
- Reading develops imagination, empathy and tolerance towards others. It develops autonomy and in an unpredictable world, a book can be a true friend and companion.



Reading books extensively develops imagination.

Steve: Numerous studies on “Book Floods” (see Steven Krashen: The Power of Reading) show the extent to which students' language improves significantly with ER. In many cases, it improves more with an ER program than with a textbook.

<http://ed.ted.com/on/Qc4uzO6n>

“ER is widely regarded as the single most effective way of acquiring and maintaining a foreign language”. Day and Bamford)

# Practical Extensive Reading: Tips and Resources

---

## PART 2 Materials for an ER Program

Montse: Make sure you have a **wide variety** of books for students to choose from, to reflect their personal interests and language level.

### Genres and Styles

- classics
- adventure
- fantasy
- poetry
- mysteries
- ghost stories
- cartoons
- graphic novels (i.e., classics using a modern art style)
- multiple path readers (students choose the stages in the adventure!)  
[www.atama-ii.com](http://www.atama-ii.com)
- stories written through text messages  
[www.wired.com/2016/08/seeking-new-distribution-method-novelists-take-texting/amp/](http://www.wired.com/2016/08/seeking-new-distribution-method-novelists-take-texting/amp/)
- non-fiction (“information books”) e.g., National Geographic Footprint



Steve: In my experience, teenagers enjoy **information books**.

**When choosing books for your students, use the SAVE method:**

- Short      Appealing      Varied      Easy  
(Christine Nuttall)

Margarita: I recommend stories with an easy pattern and a lot of repetition. Sometimes children like to read the same stories over and over again, so classical childrens’ stories are a good idea. It is important that the graphic work is good too and pleasing to the eye.

## Graded Readers

Graded readers are simplified books. These books are typically divided into 7 levels, from starter to advanced. Graded readers are carefully written using a controlled number of headwords and even grammar structures.

Quynh: With graded readers, students consolidate language that they have already learned. If they choose an easy book, they should already know the vocabulary, because of the controlled nature of readers. This means that students don't need a dictionary. They read a different book each.

**Assessing graded readers:** <http://erfoundation.org/wordpress/assessing-graded-readers-by-peter-viney/>

NOTE: Publishers use different systems for naming and numbering graded readers, which can be confusing. To compare levels, use this chart:

<http://www.robwaring.org/er/scale/comparison.htm>

## Books for Teachers on a Low Budget

There many sites with free books, but please **respect copyright**. If the books are illegally copied or sold, the author loses financial income which is rightfully theirs. The following are currently *legal*:

### Free books

) <https://www.comixology.com/free-comics>

) <https://www.gutenberg.org/>

) <http://english-e-books.net/>

) [www.freebooksy.com](http://www.freebooksy.com)

) <https://freekidsbooks.org/>

Debbie: the Oxford Owl library series is free of charge. For more free materials, you can also ask for donations, go to garage sales, expat libraries, run a fundraiser, or ask publishers for some samples.

## Helping Students Choose the Right book

A key factor in ER is: let students choose the book *they* want to read.

### If students choose their own book,

- the book will be the right interest, length, and level
- they will learn the skill of choosing
- it has a positive effect on self-esteem and motivation
- they are more likely to become lifelong readers

Nathalia: You can suggest that the student reads the first two pages. If the reading is easy and smooth, the book is suitable. If it's too hard, and the text has too many words that the student doesn't understand, he or she should change the book.

## The 5-finger rule

To find a good reading level, choose a book.  
Open to any page. Read it. On your hand, count the number of new words.

0-1 new words = too easy.

**2-3 = This level is perfect!**

4 = This is a "challenge" level.  
It is a little difficult. But you can try it if the book seems really interesting.

5+ = Too difficult.  
If a book is too difficult, you probably won't enjoy it.



www.ERFoundation.org

Based on an idea from Hebert & Kautz,  
"Revisiting 5% of Reading,"  
International Reading Association, 2010

Trang: ask them to check the level of the book if there is one. If not, tell students to turn to any page and read and if they understand most of the page, then the book is for them. A simple way to check is to introduce the 5 finger test. If a student lays the 5 fingers of one hand randomly on 5 different words on a page, they should know at least 3 of them.

Somayah: Provide two or three sheets, each containing an excerpt from a story. The three sheets should all be different levels. Have students read all three and choose which level they felt most comfortable with.

# Practical Extensive Reading: Tips and Resources

---

## PART 3 Methodology

It helps to introduce extensive reading in a gradual way.

**Stage 1: Whole Class Reading** Read to the class. Elicit ideas about the story and encourage prediction. To increase enjoyment, use artwork, mime, singing and discussion. Enjoy the book as a class.



Margarita reading aloud (whole class)

**Stage 2: Move on to Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)** Students read on their own in class, for about 15-20 minutes.



Debbie: When students can't concentrate in class, ask them to stop and read for a while. We call this D.E.A.R. time (Drop Everything And Read).

Quynh: The role of the teacher is to facilitate and assist learners, and be a role model. During SSR, while the learners read, so does the teacher.

### 3. Buddy Reading (optional)

Students read in pairs (either in the classroom or at home).

Steve: This method works especially well with mixed ability students, as they can share the experience and help each other where necessary.

### 4. Now you can start Extensive Reading!

Students choose different books each (according to their level). They read the books on their own, at their own pace, when and where they want!



Children select their own books to read (Muscat, Oman)

Quynh: The aim of the last stage (Extensive Reading) is to read **a lot of easy books for pleasure** at an appropriate **pace**.

The more reading undertaken by the learner during ER, the more successful the outcome!

## Getting Started with Extensive Reading

### PRIMARY STUDENTS

Montse: We start gently. I take in attractive books. Have students pass them round, feel them, smell them. As a whole class, we look at the front cover, the title and chat about the books, what they could be about and what might happen in the story. (Students will already be familiar with books from Whole Class Reading and from phonics lessons, but may not have talked about reading and why reading is important explicitly). I encourage students to notice how books are similar, different, and the differences between fiction and non-fiction.

I ask students to discuss a favourite book or what they read at home. Then I ask the class to vote for one book for me to read in the class. At the end of each page I ask questions about what I had just read. What do students think a certain word means, talk about the characters etc. to keep students listening and engaged. I model good reading behaviour and when I finish the story, I ask if children enjoyed book and why / how the book connects to their own lives. Next I group students in pairs and give each pair a book to look at and talk about without reading. This activity could also be done in a school library.

Finally, we discuss the ER program and the procedure of borrowing books.

Margarita: Read with them. Play with the text. Show them what a great resource for more fun it is. Incorporate movement, music, arts and crafts and engage them in group projects. After you do something together, ask them to bring their favourite English book and tell others about it. This is important because the enthusiasm of some spreads to the others.



Margarita involved in a library activity

## Getting Started with Extensive Reading SECONDARY AND ADULT STUDENTS

Quynh: Before introducing the program formally, I conduct a survey asking students about reading in their own lives, what they read, how often they read; why they do not do regular reading (I believe that most of my students do not read often. The majority of them just read short texts in their course books (intensive reading) or hand-outs that the teacher gives them. The survey also asks what their needs are (and may be some more questions). On the next day I show students findings of the survey.

Quynh: The teacher and his/her students dress up a character from a book they like. We can also take students to a library, a bookstore, or a book exhibition. We can also invite bookworms or authors to class to have a talk.

Debbie: In my college, we go straight to the task at hand. We discuss what ER is, the benefits, and I demonstrate some useful reading techniques. They practice SSR in class for a few days, experimenting with different genres and levels. Then I explain the procedure and objectives. Students select an easy book each (below their level) and they take it home to read.

Trang: It helps to introduce the principles of Extensive Reading to your students. You can do this using a manual (with a written description of what ER is) or even a video. See Kevin Ryan's examples:

Why do Extensive Reading? <https://youtu.be/THHJR4s1UB4>

Why do Extensive Reading? <https://youtu.be/QB6XGTIXVHk>

Why do Extensive Reading? <https://youtu.be/xoPXoDf-OYo>

Nathalia: ER is "reading for pleasure". I make it clear to students that if he or she isn't enjoying a book, it is no problem to stop and **change it**.

Debbie: It is essential to set clear goals for your students. Be sure to include goals for speed and quantity. For example:

**By the end of March students will have:**

- ) read 1 book per week / 500 pages in total / 10,000 words (amount)
- ) managed to read a level 4 book at 100 wpm (speed)

## Training Young Learners to Read Books



### Young Learner Books

Montse: Above all, students need a basic training in phonics. They need to be able to recognize words with two vowels and endings like – ough.

Students need to be shown how to turn pages, what to do with tricky words, and how their knowledge of life and common sense can be useful tools,

Margarita: Ask them how / where they usually read at home. If they read in bed, have them bring their sleeping bags with them to class next time :) Create the conditions which will make them comfortable.

## Training Teenagers and Adults to Read Extensively

Quynh: Form habits, such as read silently for at least 15 minutes every day.

Slavka: In order to help students develop comprehension and speed, explain that the goal of ER is to read quickly with *adequate* comprehension (not total comprehension). Discourage reading aloud. And have students take timed readings occasionally (student should aim to read 180 wpm).

Somayeh: One of the major problems my students have is the number of new words they encounter. They tend to stop all the time to look up a word, which breaks the comprehension flow. Encourage them to skip words they don't know, and to look it up only if they see it three times or more and it seems necessary to comprehension. Explain that it is not a problem if students don't understand every word.

Somayeh: It is crucial for our students to become autonomous readers. Make them familiar with some useful reading strategies such as guessing the meaning of the word. You can also teach them how to skim a book.

## Checking Comprehension

**ER does not embrace the concept of tests. However, if you need to prove that students have read a book, you can check comprehension in a way which does not demotivate. These ideas may help.**

Trang: Given that students are all reading different books, teachers can design ONE set of questions to fit all books, e.g., what do think about it? Which character do you like best? How would you like to change the ending? Can you rewrite the blurb?

Slavka: I like the idea of making large bookmarks which they can use for sharing their feelings about the book. They can draw pictures of the favourite characters there and copy their favourite lines from the book.

Danielle: You can ask them to draw what they understood about the book.

Trang: students can keep a journal to freely write their reflections about the book (or the section they read). Each course participant can present their reactions to the book in any form they like (drawings, text, graffiti, etc.)

Somayah: Sometimes I show them a piece of clothing of characters to see if those students who have read that book will recognize the character.

Debbie: MReader is a highly recommended learning management system.

### MReader:

- is free of charge
- is available to everyone across the world
- works with many graded readers (note: the project is growing)
- tracks who in your class has read which books
- provides short “timed” quizzes to test students on each book
- tracks word count (you see how many words each student has read)

<https://www.mreader.org>

# Practical Extensive Reading: Tips and Resources

---

## PART 4 Motivation

### My students hate reading. What can I do?

**1. Relax.** It will be a challenge for you, but a good challenge!

**2. Be sensitive.** Many students hate reading, because they have had bad experiences in the past, such a reading aloud in class where they felt intimidated. Others are not from families or cultures that read. They may not have had a childhood in which parents read to them.

**3. Students need to find the right book.**

The chances are they haven't found the right book yet. Many English-speaking teenagers hated reading until the Harry Potter series was published. After that, they became avid readers.

<https://www.weareteachers.com/the-perfect-book-for-every-type-of-reluctant-reader-i-see-in-middle-school/>

**4. Confusion about Extensive Reading.** Many students have never tried ER. They may be confusing it with IR; for example, maybe they assume that you want them to read a text above their reading level, which they will analyse in class. Maybe they expect comprehension questions, too.

**5. Reading is a solitary activity.** For many teenagers, that is the key problem. Try: Buddy Reading, reading circles, join an online community or an existing "book club", create twitter hash tags for sharing books,

**6. Be patient.** When I introduced ER to my students, aged 8-13, I handed them each a written invitation (in class). I poured many attractive books on a rug and let them choose a book to borrow. Most were eager, but two students did not accept the offer. So I did nothing. Gradually, after a few weeks, the two began to see the fun their classmates were having. They then accepted – of their own volition – and became avid readers (Kate).

## Practical Ideas to Motivate Students

Danielle: Go on a field trip. Visit a bookstore and have students buy a book of their own or visit a library to get a library card (it may be their first!)

Montse: Have students make a “Reading wall”, with drawings, dioramas, or descriptions of books they enjoyed.

Slavka: Students share what they have learned from books they have read.

Margarita; Students develop a sense of ownership and pride when they receive applause from wider audiences. So I like to organize an exhibition of the books they have read and exhibiting them, e.g. in the local library.

Margarita: Use creative ways for students to track the amount of books read by the group, e.g., a book tower. This enables them to see progress.



A “book tower”

### COMMENTS:

Montse: I think it’s important at an early stage that students are praised, encouraged and the love for books nurtured.

Somayeh: We can reward students (extrinsic motivation). But the best reward is intrinsic. The students themselves should feel satisfied with their own performance. Nothing is stronger than that internal satisfaction of knowing you can read.

## Practical Ideas to Sustain Motivation

After a few months of extensive reading, it is possible that students may feel this is just a weekly exercise and lose interest. Three suggestions:

### Take time to reflect

Debbie: Reflect on how you are running the course and what needs to be improved. Typical problems I have noticed include:

- Students are choosing books for the wrong reasons.
- They aren't actually reading the books.
- You run out of books too quickly and you need more.
- You lack the funds to keep a good supply of books.

Somayah: At this stage, it's important for students to reflect on how things are going. Ask students to suggest how they could improve their reading environment. Discuss possible changes, e.g. play classical music in the background while they read; ask students to enrich the reading by bringing ANYTHING they think others might find interesting to read. In case of little ones, invite parents to read together with their kids.

### Find new ways to motivate students

Montse: Make a wall display to show what they have achieved. Give students post-its and encourage them to write new words from their book (each week/month) and add to the "Word Wall". Another idea is to have students make a video to show another class what they have achieved (or to show students who will do ER next year)

Somayah: Place a page at the end of each book. Have students sign all the books they have read, as a sign of "victory".

Margarita: As a surprise, devote a class to writing to the authors of books they read. See who gets a response (contact authors first).

Nathalia: Provide new enjoyable challenges, e.g., organize a 'sprint' read. Challenge students to read as much as possible in the next week.

<https://www.weareteachers.com/summer-reading-challenge-bookmark/>

## Have fun!

Margarita: Students come dressed in their pyjamas and bring sleeping bags pillows, food and drink, etc. Students can either read a book they have read before (and liked), or they can read a new book. Invite parents or teachers too, so that it feels like more of a reading community.

Quynh: Teacher / students dress up as a character in a book they enjoyed.



Montse, dressed up



Paddington

Steve: organise an “edible book” day. Students make food connected to book themes or titles. They describe the book and then eat the food.

Margarita: If students are feeling overwhelmed, introduce arts and crafts.

Debbie: Students “sell” their book to classmates, using a poster or video.

Danielle: Have students write their own books (use an app, e.g., Storybird).

Debbie: Students create a triptych of their book with main settings and characters. They can put this on display for others to read.

Recommended reading

<https://www.weareteachers.com/what-do-you-do-when-a-kid-says-i-hate-reading/>

<http://www.learningunlimitedllc.com/2013/11/25-great-ways-schools-can-promote-reading/>

<http://www.er-central.com/contributors/learn-about-extensive-reading-and-listening/how-to-do-extensive-reading/101-ideas-for-ere/>

# About the Authors

## Primary and Secondary

**Montse** is a freelance writer and author of primary course books, including science books for bilingual schools and EFL course books including Close Up A1+ and the Keyhole and Footsteps series. She has worked for many years as a teacher, trainer and consultant for the British Council around the world, and also at international schools. She is hoping to set up a library/ programme especially for disadvantaged children in India, where she is currently based and working as a part-time volunteer.

**Slavka** has been teaching English for 15 years. She currently teaches English to children aged 7 to 13 in a primary school in Bulgaria. She is passionate about reading and determined to share her passion with young learners. Her concern is that many children prefer computers and games

**Steve** is a CELTA qualified teacher, qualified IELTS examiner, and trainer. He has 35 years' experience in teaching English, and currently teaches English to teenagers and adults in Ecuador. He has taught in many countries, including Spain where he owned his private language school.

**Somayeh**, from Tehran (Iran), has been teaching for more than 12 years. In her school system ER is obligatory. However, there is no syllabus in place and most teachers tend to teach ER in a fairly ad hoc way.

**Danielle** has an M.A. in Children's Literature. She currently works as an ELT editor in Brazil and is also a volunteer teacher. Her special interest is digital books for children.

**Nathalia** is an editorial assistant at the same Brazilian publishing house as Danielle, which is publishing its first collection of graded readers. Nathalia holds an M.A. in Children's Literature.

## University / College Teachers

**Quynh** holds a Masters in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (with a final thesis on ER). She is from Vietnam, where she has been teaching at a university for 13 years. She uses graded readers in an ER program with students majoring in English. She is implementing an ER program in two reading classes this semester.

**Trang** holds a Masters in Linguistics from a university in Sweden. She is from Vietnam and teaches in the same public university as Quynh.

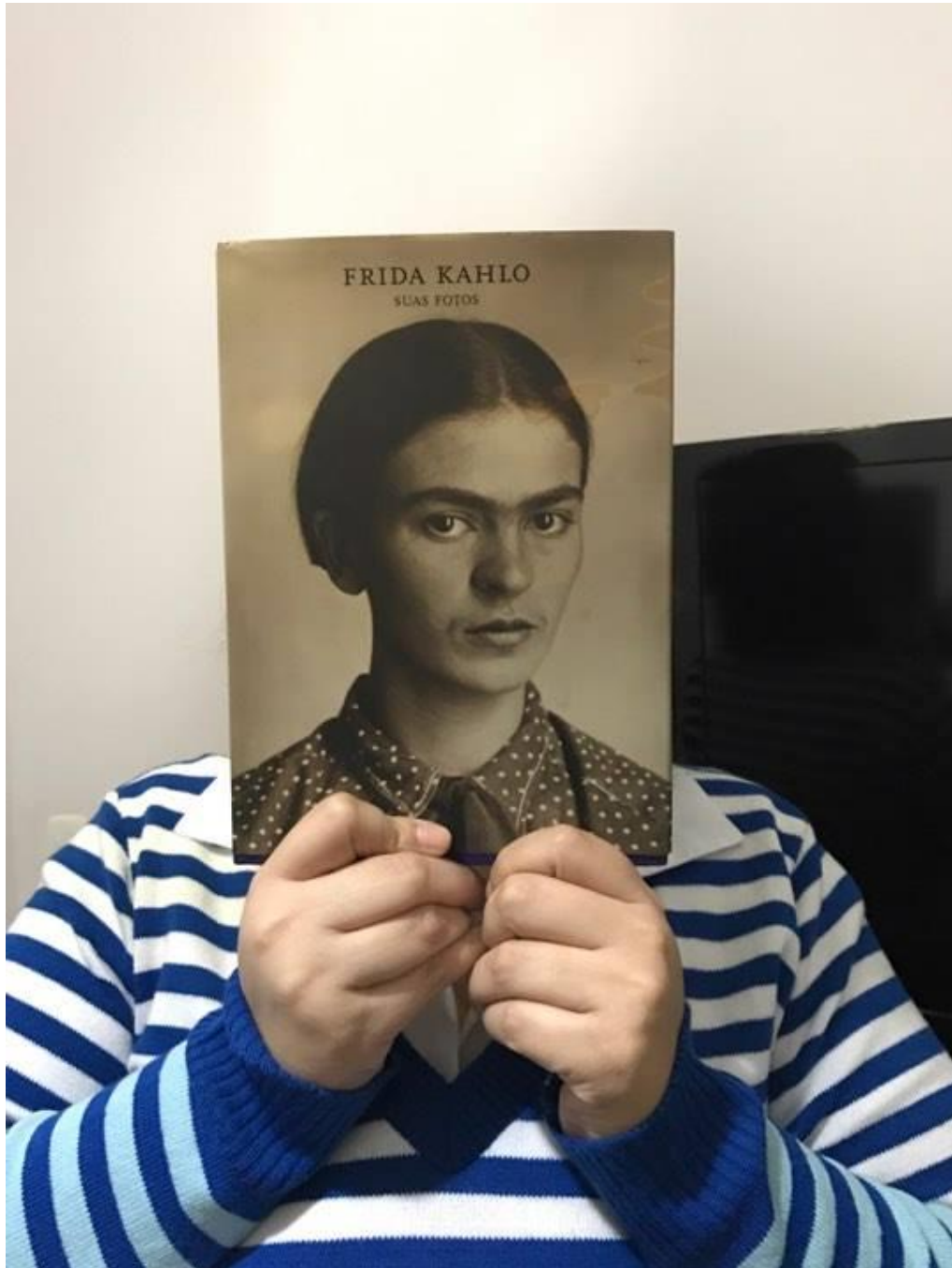
**Debbie** is an IEP instructor of adult ELLs at the University of North Florida in the USA, which has a structured "Pleasure Reading" program for all instructional levels from Beginners to Pre-University Levels. For the previous ten years, she was a faculty instructor at the University of Florida in Gainesville. She is interested in how language instructors can build reading skills (e.g., chunking and speed reading) while increasing the pleasurable aspects of reading.

**Margarita** Born in Poland and based in Greece, Margarita Kosior is a tertiary educator teaching Language Teaching Methodology at Bachelor's and Master's levels. Margarita is also a passionate storyteller particularly interested in ELT for young and very young learners. She also designs teaching materials for all ages and levels. As an advocate for social justice, Margarita presents her insights and ideas on her blog: [www.eltforabetterworld.blogspot.com](http://www.eltforabetterworld.blogspot.com) Margarita is a regular presenter at international ELT conferences and has written articles for journals, conference proceedings and newsletters. Her other ELT-related experience includes working as an examiner, course book proof-reader, and serving on the TESOL Macedonia-Thrace, Northern Greece Board as the Vice Chair and ebulletin Editor-in-Chief.

## Editor

**Kate Cory-Wright** is an award-winning author, freelance teacher trainer and ELT Consultant, based in Ecuador. She has published more than 25 ELT books, including *Our World*, by National Geographic Learning. For the past 25 years, Kate has delivered over 500 academic seminars, webinars, workshops and short courses on a wide range of professional ELT topics. She has trained teachers in 27 countries, including the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Asia, and all of Latin America. On weekends she runs voluntary classes for disadvantaged children, including an extensive reading program which has been running for two years.

*This book is dedicated to teachers, learners and readers around the world.*



Danielle Sales having fun with one of her favourite books