

Extensive Reading: Habits and Attitudes in a Japanese EFL Context

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Introduction

Promising signs of the rising status of extensive reading (ER) as a viable approach to second language (L2) pedagogy include, (a) the comprehensive work of Day and Bamford (1998) as part of the Cambridge Language Education series, (b) the growing bibliography of ER-related articles found on <www.extensivereading.net>, (c) dedication of an entire issue of *The Language Teacher* (May, 1997) to ER related topics, and (d) an active online discussion group hosted by Yahoo at <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ExtensiveReading/>>. Still, many teachers, administrators and institutions remain skeptical or are not sure how to implement an ER approach. This skepticism is at least partially related to a perceived reluctance and/or inability to read independently on the part of many L2 learners. To overcome this formidable obstacle requires a better understanding of habits and attitudes related to reading in specific teaching/learning contexts. Thus, the present study was designed to explore these issues in an EFL context at Japanese universities, and is based on investigations by Camiciottoli (2001) and her work with Italian university EFL students.

Despite lingering questions concerning the effectiveness of input-only

approaches (Lightbrown, P., Halter, R, White, J. & Horst, R., 2002), there is mounting evidence that ER provides a number of language learning benefits beyond reading proficiency (Bell, 1998; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Elley & Mangubhai, 1981; Elley, 1991; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs, 1999). At the same time, the literature points to increased interest in the positive influence of ER on affective variables such as attitude and motivation (Bamford & Day, 1998; Camiciottoli, 2001; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Day & Bamford, 1998; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs, 1999). Still, these important aspects of L2 learning and acquisition are often treated as an afterthought or appendage. Further clarification of the relationship between ER and these affective variables will add to the theoretical foundation for introducing ER as a supplement to existing L2 programs or as a stand-alone approach to L2 pedagogy.

Day and Bamford (2002) base their definition of ER on the following principles: (1) reading material should be easy, (2) variety in both types of material and genre should be made available, (3) learners choose what to read, (4) quantity is key, (5) pleasure, information and general understanding are the goal, (6) reading is its own reward, (7) faster reading rates are desirable, (8) reading is individual and silent, (9) the teacher's job is to orient and guide, and (10) the teacher acts as role model. ER is often contrasted to "traditional" forms of reading instruction, i.e. grammar-translation or other "bottom-up" approaches, or in relation to reading sub-skills such as skimming, scanning and intensive reading. Expanding on a description provided by Welch (1997), Day and Bamford (1998) define ER by contrasting it with intensive reading, which includes a more laborious approach to tackling limited amounts of more difficult text selected by the teacher while repeatedly referencing a dictionary.

Other related terms include pleasure reading, sustained silent reading (SSR),

and free voluntary reading (FVR). The term *pleasure reading* is sometimes used to describe ER, but as Day and Bamford (1998) explain, this can be misleading and may undermine the credibility of ER in the eyes of students, parents, teachers and administrators. SSR involves setting aside at least 15 minutes of class time for teacher and students to read material of their own choosing. In addition, some researchers use the term FVR to avoid the frivolous undertones and stress the independent nature of this type of reading (Krashen, 1995).

Review of Research

Despite the increased interest and accumulating evidence of the language learning and affective benefits mentioned above, ER still occupies a position outside mainstream L2 pedagogy. Day and Bamford (1998) address many of the reasons suggested for this lack of prominence (pgs. 46-48), and conclude that “. . . reservations about committing to extensive reading can be dealt with by starting small and letting extensive reading prove itself.”

Again, the language learning benefits of ER have been well documented, yet affective benefits have normally taken the backseat. At the same time, there are only a limited number of articles dealing specifically with adult language learners or with ER used in EFL contexts, and even fewer that include a qualitative approach to research design. The following literature review includes those studies judged to be most relevant to the current investigation and the Japanese EFL context.

ER in EFL Contexts

In her survey study of 182 business majors enrolled in a required EFL program at university in Italy, Camiciottoli (2001) found that her subjects read English with low frequency but had quite positive attitudes toward the practice of reading in English. Lack of time was the most often reported reason for not reading, which

she judged as reflecting a low priority placed on reading among this group. Camiciottoli was encouraged though by the fact that about one-third of respondents indicated logistic reasons for their lack of reading in the target language. She felt that more of her subjects could be “won over” to reading if reading material in English were made available. *Reading frequency* in L1 was found to be positively correlated at significant levels to reading frequency in L2, as was *experience in the target culture*. The author was surprised to find however a negative correlation between years of previous English study and attitudes toward reading. Her interpretation was that at least some learners who have studied English for several years may suffer a form of defeatism, and that the accompanying low levels of confidence may “discourage students from associating reading English with a pleasant leisure-time activity, causing them to be less willing to find time to read and less convinced of its importance.”

Nash and Yuan (1992/93) introduce their experiences implementing an ER program as part of a first-year university EFL reading course in Taiwan. Course goals included improving reading by reading rather than classroom instruction, and students were encouraged to read for meaning and not worry about understanding every word. The authors were most encouraged by the fact that students having access to large amounts of interesting reading material via the ER program developed a habit of reading in the L2 and saw L2 reading as enjoyable.

Renandya, Rajan, and Jacobs (1999) investigated how well an ER program could be implemented with older EFL students, namely a group of 47 Vietnamese government officials studying English in Singapore. The authors report that participants responded positively to the ER component of their studies, and thus that ER is indeed a viable option for such learners. The most important finding was that the only three variables to significantly correlate with learning gains (as measured by a pre- and post- English proficiency test) were those associated with the quantity

of reading, i.e. amount of reading in English done in both home country and in Singapore, as well as newspaper and/or magazine reading. Of these, only ER done in Singapore was found to be a significant predictor of higher gains. One further finding was that prior language proficiency was not significantly correlated with the amount of ER reading during the program, i.e. even less proficient individuals seem to have read extensively.

Walker (1997) investigated an extensive reading program (using graded readers) for overseas students preparing to enter university in the United Kingdom. Participants from European, Far-Eastern and Arabic countries were enrolled in courses for general EFL or English for academic purposes (EAP), and instruments included two parallel cloze tests (administered at the beginning and end of each 10-week term), questionnaires and recorded interviews. Walker acknowledges limitations of the study due to the low number of students continuing for two or three consecutive terms, but judged that (a) participants approached this reading much as they would L1 leisure reading, i.e. in the privacy of their own home, at night, etc., (b) the average quantity of reading was comparable for general EFL and EAP students, (c) student's level was not a predictor of reading quantity, (d) the amount of reading was a predictor of ability to perform on the cloze test, with beneficial effect increasing over time, (e) general EFL students evaluated this type of reading slightly higher than EAP students, but a substantial number of EAP students found it useful, and (f) the readers were viewed as more useful than enjoyable.

Reluctant Readers

Mason and Krashen (1997) report the results of three experiments designed to confirm the value of extensive reading in a post-secondary EFL context in Japan. Most relevant to the current study, the first experiment involved a group of

Extensive Reading: Habits and Attitudes in a Japanese EFL Context

“reluctant” learners who were introduced to ER at the start of the second half of the school year and showed greater gains on a 100-item cloze test as compared to the control group who continued with traditional reading instruction. The authors believed the most “impressive and important” findings were the “clear improvement in attitude shown by the experimental students.”

Day and Bamford (2000) also address the issue of attitudes and motivation as related to “reluctant readers.” The authors believe the first step in helping these learners develop a positive attitude toward reading in English is to reconsider traditional approaches to EFL reading.

Traditional approaches and classroom practices, with their focus on translating, answering comprehension questions, or practicing skills such as finding main ideas, tend to ignore the larger context of students’ attitudes toward reading and their motivation to read. The result, inevitably, is students with little or no interest in reading English (2000, p. 12).

The authors also recognize a detrimental mentality among teachers and students, dubbed earlier (Day & Bamford, 1998) as the macho maxim of reading instruction, i.e. no reading pain, no reading gain. They feel this is unfortunate in that “struggling with difficult, dull material is not the way to become a willing EFL reader. Nor is it, in fact, the most efficient way of becoming an able reader.” Thus, it is “important for teachers to orient their students to the goals and methodology of an extensive reading program.”

Motivation

Although not specifically dealing with ER, Mori (2002) administered a 30-item Likert scale questionnaire to 447 students enrolled in required EFL reading classes

at a women's university in Japan to investigate foreign language reading motivation. Although the majority of items were expected to cluster into factors that correspond to eight of 11 aspects of L1 reading motivation identified in earlier studies, a principal components analysis clearly identified only Reading Efficacy and Importance of Reading. Reading Curiosity, Reading Involvement, Reading Avoidance and Reading Challenge clustered into one factor, defined as Intrinsic Value of Reading. The author concluded that, "different facets of reading motivation may be so interrelated that they can be better explained by a more encompassing motivational model such as the expectancy-value theory." Mori felt that her findings supported her hypothesis that integrative motivation as investigated by Robert Gardner (Gardner, 1985; Gardner, 2001) may not be as applicable in EFL contexts such as Japan.

Qualitative Studies

Cho and Krashen (1994) conducted a qualitative study with four migrant women (3 Korean, 1 Spanish) ranging in age from 21 to 35. The purpose of their study was to test their hypotheses that (a) adult ESL students would read more if introduced to the right type of material, and (b) more free reading would have a positive influence on vocabulary acquisition. Participants were asked to read teen literature for pleasure. This reading continued over several months, with the number of books read ranging between 8 and 23. The three Korean subjects were asked to underline any unknown words, after which the researchers used the list of words to check vocabulary acquisition. As for their first hypothesis, all participants reported enjoying this kind of reading and expressed a desire to continue. Two of the less proficient students chose to use dictionaries while reading, but still seemed to catch the "reading bug." Results of vocabulary acquisition assessment showed that all learners made impressive progress, especially the two who used dictionaries. The

Extensive Reading: Habits and Attitudes in a Japanese EFL Context

authors also reported positive comments in terms of language gains in other areas, specifically speaking and listening, and felt the combined results of this study support the value of reading texts in only one genre or by only one author, i.e. narrow reading.

Another qualitative study was conducted by Leung (2002), who analyzed her own diary entries as a new reader of Japanese materials such as comic books, children's stories and textbooks. She concluded that extensive reading can enhance vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension, and promote a positive attitude toward reading, "if learners are given the opportunity to read extensively for pleasure and develop a passion for reading, they can become more eager to learn the necessary reading skills and vocabulary they need in order to enjoy what they read."

Research Questions

To facilitate comparison, this study addresses the same research questions put forth by Camiciottoli (2001):

1. How frequently do students read in English?
2. What are students' attitudes toward reading in English?
3. What are the reasons that may limit frequency?
4. Which factors may influence frequency and attitudes?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 221 students participated in the study. All of the students were enrolled in one of the author's required EFL courses for non-English majors at a private university in the Kansai region of Japan. Seven of nine courses were for first-year students, one was for third-year students, and the last was open to any

undergraduate. Ages ranged from 18 to 26 (several of the older students have either failed in their earlier attempt(s) to enter their university of choice or have not yet earned the required credit and are repeating a required course), but the large majority were either 18 or 19 years old (175). Males slightly outnumbered females (M=117, F=104). Classes meet once a week for 90-minutes.

Materials

A 23-item questionnaire based on that reported in Camiciottoli (2001) was translated into Japanese and checked by three Japanese colleagues for accuracy and clarity. The revised version (Appendix One) was administered toward the end of the first of two 15-week terms. Camiciottoli (2001) described this questionnaire as being designed specifically to collect data on *frequency* and *attitude* (dependent variables) relating to extensive reading in English, and the following factors (independent variables) believed to influence them:

- a. Years of previous study (items 3 & 5)
- b. Past access to English books (item 6)
- c. Encouragement to read in English for pleasure (item 7)
- d. Self-perception of reading ability in English (items 8-9)
- e. Experience in an English-speaking culture (items 10-11)
- f. Frequency of reading books in Italian (items 12-13)

The one additional question included in the current survey was item 4, *What other English classes are you currently taking at school?* This was considered to be another important variable possibly related to both reading *frequency* and *attitude*. Items 1 through 13 were used to gather general information and data related to the six independent variables, items 14 through 16 to address the dependent variable *frequency*, items 17 through 22 to address the dependent variable *attitude*, and item 23 to gain a better understanding of reading interests for future classes (data not

included in this report). Further information on the design of the questionnaire and testing of validity and reliability is available in Camiciottoli (2001). During one of our regular meetings, students were presented with a brief explanation of the research project, the meaning of terms such as *pleasure reading* and *leisure reading*, and the voluntary nature of participation. All students agreed to participate and were given twenty minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The same 4-point response scale used in Camiciottoli (2001) operationally defined all variables, with four points being awarded for the highest frequency/quantity/intensity or most positive degree of the characteristic measured and one point being assigned for the lowest or least positive. As with the previous study, students were asked to rank the type of material according to which they read most often (item 15). The maximum score of 4 was given if *books* were ranked highest, 3 for *newspapers*, 2 for *magazines*, and 1 for *lyrics to pop/rock songs*. The rationale for scoring newspapers over magazines (different from Camiciottoli) is that most magazines read by this group are dedicated to light topics such as sports, music or fashion. Items 18 (reasons that limit book reading in English) and 21 (reasons why pleasure reading in English is important) asked participants to rank three options from a list of six. The present study adhered to assumptions made in Camiciottoli (2001), with three of the choices in each question judged as reflecting a more favorable attitude (item 18=a, c and e) or a broader awareness of the value of reading in English (item 21=b, d and f). These answers were designated Type A responses, with the remaining answers designated as Type B responses (item 18=b, d and f; item 21=a, c and e). Items 18 and 21 were scored as follows:

4 points: all Type A responses

3 points: two Type A responses/one Type B response

2 points: two Type B responses/one Type A response

1 point: all Type B responses

Results

Answers were entered into a spreadsheet and tallied for percentages, means and standard deviation. Overall results are reported in Appendix Two. Reading *frequency* was measured by summing the scores for items 14 (How often do you read something in English for pleasure?), 15 (What do you usually read in English during your leisure time?) and 16 (In the last 12 months, how many books in English have you read for pleasure?). Scores ranged from a minimum of 1 (1 point for item 14, while skipping 15 and 16) to a maximum of 12 (4 points for each item). The mean score was 3.9, and the resulting reading frequency index is shown in Figure 1.

L2 *reading attitude* was measured by combining the scores for items 17 (Would

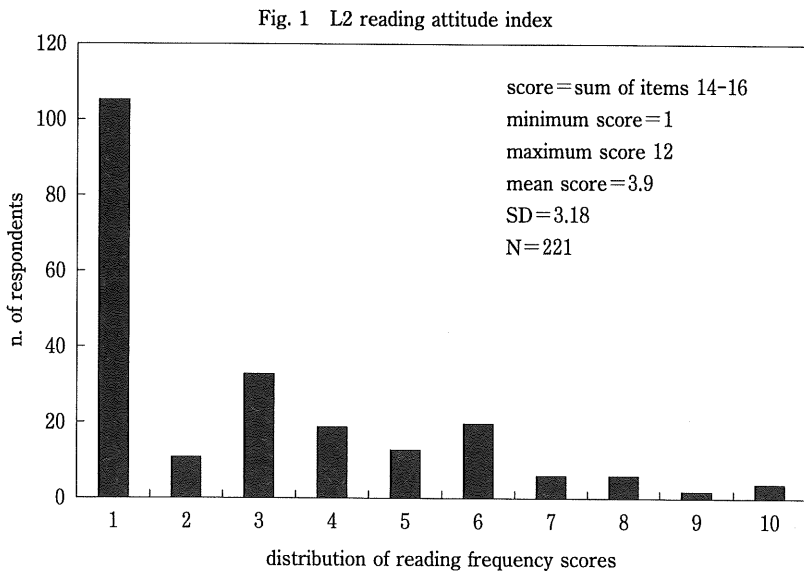
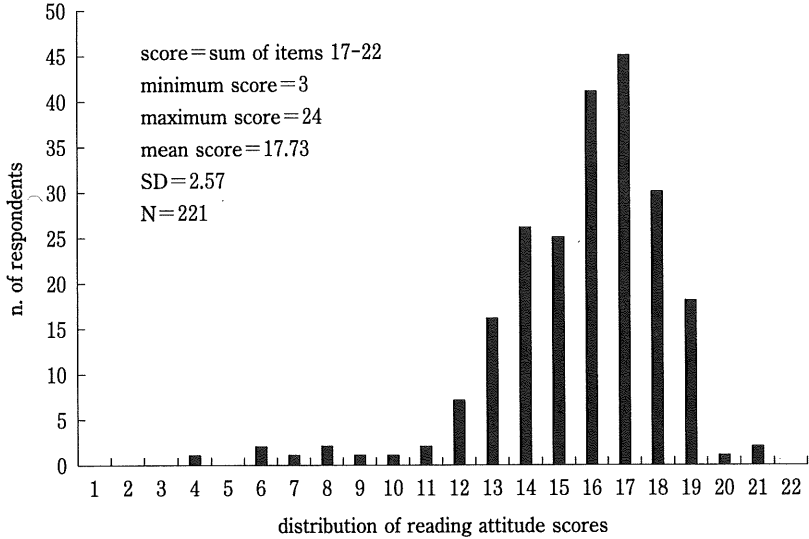


Fig. 2 L2 reading attitude index

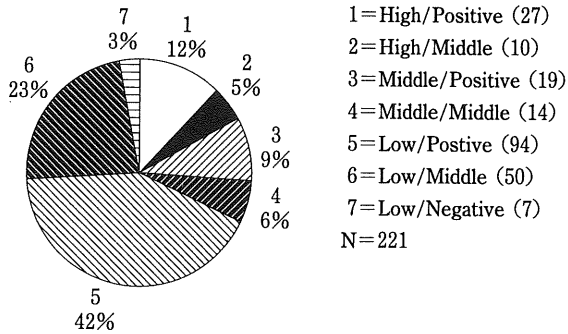


you like to read more books in English for pleasure than you do now?), 18 (Why don't you read more books in English for pleasure?), 19 (If you had access to interesting books that were suitable to your comprehension level, how many hours per week would you be willing to dedicate to reading in English?), 20 (Do you think reading books for pleasure in English is important?), 21 (Why do you think reading books for pleasure in English is important?) and 22 (Without considering possible lack of time or limited comprehension, would you find reading books in English a personally rewarding experience?). Scores ranged from 3 (1 point each for items 17, 20 and 22) to 24 (4 points for each item). The mean score was 17.7, and the resulting reading attitude index is illustrated in Figure 2.

To obtain L2 reading profiles for comparison with Camiciottoli (2001), individual scores from the frequency and attitude sub-scales were analyzed according to the following indices:

- high frequency score of 8 or above

Fig. 3 L2 reading profiles



- low frequency score of 5 or below
- positive attitude score of 18 or above
- negative attitude score of 12 or below

The L2 reading profiles that emerged are illustrated in Figure 3. The profile that describes most students in the current group is low frequency/positive attitude (42%), followed by a low frequency/middle attitude (23%). Taken together, these profiles account for 65% of this group. Similar to the Italian students in Camiciottoli's study, relatively few students correspond to high frequency/positive attitude (12%) or low frequency/negative attitude (3%). Not surprisingly, profiles including middle ranging scores also emerged as a large group (43%).

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the reasons cited for not reading more in English (item 18). The two time-related reasons (*lack of time due to studies and lack of time in general*) accounted for 38% of responses. These same two reasons were more predominant in the Camiciottoli study (48.1%). The 'logistical' reasons, *not knowing what to read* (16.6%) and *no access to English books* (17.3%) were comparable to the earlier study (17.2% and 12.5% respectively). In contrast to the earlier study, quite a few students indicated too difficult to understand (20.7%). When cited, this reason was ranked as the first reason 43.4% of the

Extensive Reading: Habits and Attitudes in a Japanese EFL Context

Table 1. Reasons limiting extensive reading in English (item 18).

| 1. Reasons cited | % | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| a. lack of time due to studies | 14.0 | | | |
| b. lack of time in general | 24.0 | | | |
| c. not knowing what to read | 16.6 | | | |
| d. no access to English books | 17.3 | | | |
| e. too difficult to understand | 20.7 | | | |
| f. no desire to read in English | 6.3 | | | |
| g. other reason | 1.1 | | | |
| Total | 100.0 | | | |
| 2. Ranking of reasons | 1 st reason(%) | 2 nd reason(%) | 3 rd reason(%) | Total(%) |
| a. lack of time due to studies | 29.4 | 44.1 | 26.5 | 100 |
| b. lack of time in general | 44.2 | 31.0 | 24.8 | 100 |
| c. not knowing what to read | 27.4 | 28.8 | 43.8 | 100 |
| d. no access to English books | 20.7 | 37.8 | 41.5 | 100 |
| e. too difficult to understand | 43.4 | 31.3 | 25.3 | 100 |
| f. no desire to read in English | 22.6 | 25.8 | 51.6 | 100 |
| g. other reason | 16.7 | 33.3 | 50.0 | 100 |

Table 2. Reasons why reading English is important (item 20).

| 1. Reasons cited | % | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| a. acquire wider vocabulary | 21.6 | | | |
| b. enhance general literacy | 22.0 | | | |
| c. useful for career | 9.6 | | | |
| d. learn about other cultures | 15.8 | | | |
| e. useful for English course | 24.4 | | | |
| f. useful for other courses | 5.7 | | | |
| g. other reason | 1.0 | | | |
| Total | 100.0 | | | |
| 2. Ranking of reasons | 1 st reason(%) | 2 nd reason(%) | 3 rd reason(%) | Total(%) |
| a. acquire wider vocabulary | 33.3 | 35.3 | 31.4 | 100 |
| b. enhance general literacy | 23.3 | 39.8 | 36.9 | 100 |
| c. useful for career | 27.3 | 25.0 | 47.7 | 100 |
| d. learn about other cultures | 28.6 | 33.3 | 38.1 | 100 |
| e. useful for English course | 49.1 | 29.3 | 21.6 | 100 |
| f. useful for other courses | 32.1 | 28.6 | 39.3 | 100 |
| g. other reason | 16.7 | 50.0 | 33.3 | 100 |

time. This same reason accounted for 12.5% of the responses by the Italian students. Relatively few students indicated *no desire to read in English* (6.3% in the current study and 8.1% in the earlier study). As for *other reasons*, two students

each wrote in that (1) they were more interested in reading in their native language, and (2) the English books they had access to were not interesting or entertaining.

Answers to item 21 (Why do you think reading books for pleasure in English is important?) were also calculated for analysis (Table 2).

The three answers indicating a broader awareness (a, b, d), as opposed to a short-term pragmatic view (c, e, f) accounted for 59.4%. Still, almost a quarter of respondents cited “useful for English course” (24.4%), and this was ranked as the first reason by almost half (49.1%) of the participants who listed it as a reason why reading in English is important.

Finally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to gain a better understanding of factors related to reading *frequency* and *attitudes*. The same four items pinpointed by Camiciottoli (2001) were chosen to represent these two dependent variables; (1) frequency of reading any type of English material, (2) number of English books read in the last 12 months, (3) attitude based on degree of willingness to find time to read as implied by reasons cited for limited ER, and (4) opinion on importance of ER in English. Correlation matrixes helped to determine five independent variables: item 5 (Have you ever attended private or extra-curricular English courses or lessons?), item 6 (During your previous studies, did you have access to books in English to read for pleasure?), item 8 (In reading for pleasure in English, how would you rate your comprehension level?), item 10 (Have you spent any time in a country where English is the dominant language?) and item 13 (In the last 12 months, how many books have you read for pleasure in Japanese?). Separate regression analyses were then run for each item representing the dependent variables. Results are listed for the dependent variable *frequency* in Table 3 and the dependent variable *attitude* in Table 4.

The same two independent variables (items 6 & 8) correlated significantly with

Extensive Reading: Habits and Attitudes in a Japanese EFL Context

Table 3. Multiple regression: frequency of extensive reading in English.

1. Frequency of reading any type of English materials (item 14)

| Independent variables | Beta | B | SE of B | t(215) | p-value* |
|--|--------|--------|---------|--------|-----------|
| a. Intercept | | 0.2901 | 0.2242 | 1.294 | 0.1969 |
| b. Private courses/lessons | 0.0895 | 0.0607 | 0.0453 | 1.340 | 0.1818 |
| c. Past access to English books | 0.3106 | 0.3527 | 0.0741 | 4.757 | 3.61e-06* |
| d. Self-rating of reading ability | 0.1527 | 0.1804 | 0.0759 | 2.377 | 0.0183* |
| e. Time spent in English speaking country | 0.1112 | 0.1292 | 0.0774 | 1.669 | 0.0966 |
| f. N. of books read in Japanese in last 12 mo. | 0.0077 | 0.0063 | 0.0500 | 0.127 | 0.8992 |
| R=0.4673 | | | | | |
| R ² =0.2184 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R ² =0.2002 | | | | | |
| F (5,215) = 12.02 p-value 2.855e-10 | | | | | |
| Std. error of estimate: 0.8085 | | | | | |

2. Number of English books read in the last 12 months (item 16)

| Independent variables | Beta | B | SE of B | t(185) | p-value* |
|--|--------|--------|---------|--------|----------|
| a. Intercept | | 0.1755 | 0.2040 | 0.860 | 0.3905 |
| b. Private courses/lessons | 0.0544 | 0.0335 | 0.0412 | 0.812 | 0.4176 |
| c. Past access to English books | 0.3258 | 0.4040 | 0.0675 | 4.829 | 2.6e-06* |
| d. Self-rating of reading ability | 0.2165 | 0.3050 | 0.0691 | 3.135 | 0.0020* |
| e. Time spent in English speaking country | 0.0419 | 0.178 | 0.0705 | 0.594 | 0.5530 |
| f. N. of books read in Japanese in last 12 mo. | 0.0612 | 0.097 | 0.0455 | 1.343 | 0.1806 |
| R=0.4634 | | | | | |
| R ² =0.2147 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R ² =0.1964 | | | | | |
| F (5,215) = 11.76 p-value 4.637e-10 | | | | | |
| Std. error of estimate: 0.7356 | | | | | |

n=221

* Significant at p<0.05

both items representing the dependent variable *frequency*. *Past access to English books* (item 6) was significant (t=4.757, p< 0.05 [item 14] and t=4.829, p<0.05 [item 16]) as was item 8 *self-rating of reading ability* (t=2.377, p<0.05 [item 14] and t=3.135, p<0.05 [item 16]).

As for the dependent variable *attitude*, these same independent variables

Table 4. Multiple regression: attitude toward extensive reading in English.

1. Attitude based on degree of willingness to find time to read as implied by reasons cited for limited extensive reading (item 18)

| Independent variables | Beta | B | SE of B | t(185) | p-value* |
|--|---------|---------|---------|--------|----------|
| a. Intercept | | 2.8878 | 0.2139 | 13.500 | <2e-16 |
| b. Private courses/lessons | 0.0146 | 0.0086 | 0.0432 | 0.200 | 0.8419 |
| c. Past access to English books | -0.1305 | -0.1291 | 0.0708 | -1.824 | 0.0695 |
| d. Self-rating of reading ability | -0.0273 | -0.0281 | 0.0724 | -0.388 | 0.6983 |
| e. Time spent in English speaking country | -0.1249 | -0.1264 | 0.0739 | -1.710 | 0.0887 |
| f. N. of books read in Japanese in last 12 mo. | 0.1473 | 0.1054 | 0.0478 | 2.208 | 0.0283* |
| R=0.2470 | | | | | |
| R ² =0.0610 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R ² =0.0392 | | | | | |
| F (5,215)=2.795 p-value 0.0181 | | | | | |
| Std. error of estimate: 0.7716 | | | | | |

2. Opinion on importance of extensive reading in English (item 20)

| Independent variables | Beta | B | SE of B | t(185) | p-value* |
|--|---------|---------|---------|--------|----------|
| a. Intercept | | 2.7728 | 0.1665 | 16.658 | <2e-16 |
| b. Private courses/lessons | -0.0867 | -0.0401 | 0.0337 | -1.191 | 0.2350 |
| c. Past access to English books | 0.1607 | 0.1244 | 0.0551 | 2.259 | 0.0249* |
| d. Self-rating of reading ability | 0.1601 | 0.1289 | 0.0564 | 2.288 | 0.0231* |
| e. Time spent in English speaking country | 0.0207 | 0.0164 | 0.0575 | 0.285 | 0.7756 |
| f. N. of books read in Japanese in last 12 mo. | 0.0935 | 0.0524 | 0.0372 | 1.411 | 0.1598 |
| R=0.2691 | | | | | |
| R ² =0.0724 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R ² =0.0508 | | | | | |
| F (5,215)=3.357 p-value 0.0061 | | | | | |
| Std. error of estimate: 0.6004 | | | | | |

n=221

* Significant at p<0.05

correlated with *opinion on importance of ER in English* (item 20), but not with *attitude based on degree of willingness to find time to read as implied by reasons cited for limited ER* (item 18). For item 20, *Past access to English books* (item 6) was significant ($t=2.280$, $p<0.05$) as was item 8 *self-rating of reading ability* ($t=2.299$,

$p < 0.05$). The only independent variable to correlate with this item at a significant level was number of books read in Japanese in the last 12 months (item 13) ($t = 2.208$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

In general, the questionnaire used in these studies has proven to be a useful instrument for investigating habits and attitudes related to L2 pleasure reading in a university EFL context in two different countries. The current study found that this group of non-English majors studying EFL at university in Japan exhibits similar L2 reading profiles to the subjects in the Camiciottoli study, namely low L2 reading frequency but rather positive attitudes toward reading in the target language. At the same time, significant differences were found, i.e. students' belief that L2 reading is too *difficult to understand* (20.7%) was the reason most often cited for limited ER in English after *lack of time in general* (24%). For those students who included this reason in their ranking of the top three reasons, 43.4% ranked it as their first reason. Together with (1) *no access to English books* (17.3%) and (2) *not knowing what to read* (16.6%), we have three reasons that are not time-related accounting for 54.6% of responses. This is a promising finding in that all three of these issues are addressed by an ER approach to teaching L2 reading (see, for example, Day & Bamford, 2002).

Research Question Number 1: How frequently do students read in English?

The finding that almost fifty percent of respondents answered that they *never* read something in English for pleasure confirms that this group is not motivated to read in English and thus unwilling to devote time to this pursuit. This attitude is at least partially a result of an overemphasis in EFL education in Japan on grammar-translation approach and other traditional approaches to reading instruction (Susser

& Robb, 1990). Readers are again reminded of the favorable findings regarding an extensive reading approach and attitudes among what have been described as reluctant readers (Day & Bamford, 2000; Mason & Krashen, 1997). The mean reading frequency index score of 3.9 was somewhat lower than the 4.7 reported in Camiciottoli (2001). In general, a total of 86% of respondents only rarely read in English or never do so. Again, we can confidently say that this group has not developed a reading habit in English. Findings by Mori (2001) suggest that, “foreign language reading motivation closely resembles more general forms of motivation laid out in expectancy-value theory.” If this is true, we need to find ways to help our new readers succeed and at the same time raise awareness concerning the value of L2 reading. The advantages of an ER approach to L2 reading instruction in addressing the former issue are apparent, but may also have potential in relation to the latter. New readers who are actually reading (as opposed to using reading for language study) are more likely to notice the positive influence of these efforts on their other language skills in the target language.

Research Question Number 2: What are students' attitudes toward reading in English?

Overall, this group seemed to have similarly favorable attitudes toward reading in English as the students in the Camiciottoli study. 78.3% of respondents answered that they would definitely (20.8%) or probably (57.5%) like to read more books in English for pleasure. Most respondents also recognized reading books for pleasure in English as either very important (41.2%) or fairly important (52.0%). At the same time, these learners clearly perceive reading books in English as a personally rewarding experience, 49.8% very much so and 45.7% fairly so. The implications are that this teaching context is fertile soil for an ER approach. The challenge then is how to nurture these positive attitudes into a flourishing L2 reading habit.

Extensive Reading: Habits and Attitudes in a Japanese EFL Context

The reasons selected by this group for why reading English is important provide some support for the assertion by Mori (2001) that for Japanese students an integrative orientation, as described by Gardner (see, for example, Gardner, 2001 or Gardner, 1985), may not be “such a distinct construct, at least when it comes to motivation to read in a foreign language, and may be better explained . . . by a more all-embracing motivational construct, namely Extrinsic Utility Value.” The most often extrinsically-oriented reasons cited were *useful for English course* (24.4%) and to *acquire wider vocabulary* (21.6%), but an encouraging number of intrinsically-oriented reasons also emerged, namely *enhance general literacy* (22.0%) and *learn about other cultures* (15.8%). A better understanding of the motivational orientations of their learners should help teachers find ways to make the value of L2 reading more apparent to individual learners.

Research Question Number 3: What are the reasons that may limit frequency?

I was encouraged that so many students cited factors other than time for their limited efforts at reading in English. The implication here is that parents, educators and the students themselves find ways to make interesting materials of the appropriate level available. Also, as mentioned above, students need to be encouraged through repeated successes in their L2 reading endeavors. The strength of ER in this area is again fairly well documented (Day & Bamford, 1998; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs, 1999). Following time-related reasons cited for limited ER in English, the second most common response was the perception that this endeavor was too difficult (20.7%). For these learners in particular, an ER approach may be the missing link.

Research Question Number 4: Which factors may influence frequency and attitude?

The current study found two key factors related to L2 reading *frequency* and

attitudes: past access to English books and self-rating of reading ability. This relationship does not suggest cause, but this correlation does have some implications. First, as concluded in the Camiciottoli study, L2 learners in this context (and likely many others) need to have exposure to target-language reading materials. Day and Bamford (1998) dedicate two whole chapters to this topic and highlight the need for a wide range of books (and other reading materials) that will attract students. This includes different genres as well as difficulty levels. A wide range of levels will help ensure that more learners find something at an appropriate level and “progress upward in small steps as their reading fluency develops.” The finding that *number of books read in Japanese in the last 12 months* correlated with only one of the dependent variables representing attitude requires further consideration. One possible explanation for this finding is that many of these first-year students may be experiencing burn out from the Japanese university entrance exam system (Berwick & Ross, 1989). Certainly, these students would likely have been busy concentrating on preparations for their entrance exams over the previous year and not been able to dedicate more time to pleasure reading.

Summary and Conclusions

The current study succeeded in gathering information regarding L2 reading habits and attitudes in a Japanese university EFL context. Further research in other specific learning contexts are of course needed, but a compelling case continues to be formed for an extensive reading approach to L2 reading instruction. Day and Bamford (1998) use the bootstrap hypothesis to explain the positive influences of extensive reading on affective variables:

The *extensive reading bootstrap hypothesis* works like this: Students’ initial successful experiences in extensive reading result in the discovery that they

Extensive Reading: Habits and Attitudes in a Japanese EFL Context

can read in the second language and that it is rewarding and pleasurable. This stimulates the development of positive attitudes toward reading in the second language and the growth of motivation to read in the second language. These positive beginning experiences then feed back into subsequent extensive reading experiences and assignments, resulting in greater gains in reading ability and positive attitudes, and increases in motivation and enjoyment (pg. 30).

If indeed we learn to read by reading and we recognize the language learning and affective benefits of L2 reading, then teachers need to explore ways to make L2 more meaningful, enjoyable and worthwhile.

One serious limitation to the current study was revealed in results of the multiple regression analyses, namely there are obviously other factors related to both L2 reading *frequency* and *attitude*. Other factors that may prove to be related to these dependent variables are individual language learning strategies, past experiences with L2 learning in general and L2 reading in particular, and psychological orientation (see, for example, Brown, Robson & Rosenkjar, 2001). This is another area ripe for further research.

It would appear that compared to Italian students, the current group has fewer opportunities to spend time in countries where English is spoken widely and thus likely have underdeveloped schemata in regards to English-speaking cultures. Despite the wide-spread influences of these cultures through movies, music and other media in Japan, the schemata building influences of more direct contact are not available to many of these students. For this reason, they may reap even more benefits from an ER approach, with its more intimate exposure to cultural aspects of the target language.

If we recognize that target-language reading is one of the most useful and worthwhile pursuits for L2 learners, especially in FL contexts, then finding ways to help

learners become enthusiastic fluent readers should be toward the top of the L2 teacher's list of priorities. With an ER approach, at least some of these learners may catch the "reading bug" and begin to take advantage of both the affective and language learning benefits.

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Appendix One—Reading attitudes questionnaire in Japanese

1. 性別 男性 女性 2. 年令 _____ 才

3. 英語を何年勉強していますか？（過去と現在の分を合算して）
2-3年 4-5年 6-7年 8-9年 10年以上

4. 現在、学校でどのような英語のクラスを受講していますか？（このクラス以外）
クラス名 _____ クラス名 _____ クラス名 _____

5. 学校の授業以外で英語を勉強したことがありますか？（英会話学校、個人レッスンなど）
1年以上（__年__月） 数カ月 数週間 一度もない

6. 今まであなたの周りに楽しんで読める英語の本や雑誌はありましたか？
よくあった 時々あった ほとんどなかった ぜんぜんなかった

7. 過去に先生より授業の為でわたくし楽しみのために英語の本を読むことを勧められたことがありますか？
一度もなかった ほとんどなかった 時々あった よくあった

8. 「楽しみの英語読書」の時、自分の理解力はどのくらいあると思いますか？
低い(辞書をよく使う) まあまあ よい 大変よい(ほとんど辞書を使わない)

9. もし英語読書のとき分からない単語があってもだいたいの内容を理解できますか？
いつでもできる ときどきできる ほとんどできない 辞書で調べなければできない

10. 英語を主要言語とする国へ行ったことがありますか？
一度もない(Q.11へ) 15日間以内 2-3週間 1-3ヶ月 3-6ヶ月 6ヶ月以上

11. 滞在の目的は？
観光 勉強 アルバイト 仕事 その他 _____

12. 暇があるとき、どのくらいの頻度で本（日本語）を読みますか？
少なくとも一週間に一度 1-2ヶ月に一度 ときどき（例えば、休暇の間など）

Extensive Reading: Habits and Attitudes in a Japanese EFL Context

全く読まない（他のことをする方がよい）（Q.13へ）

13. 過去1年間に、趣味の読書（日本語）で何冊ぐらい読みましたか？

1-2冊 2-5冊 6-8冊 8冊以上

14. どのくらいの頻度で英語で書かれたものを趣味として読みますか？

少なくとも一週間に一度（または以上） 1-2ヶ月に一冊
ときどき（例えば、休暇の間など） 全く読まない（Q.16へ）

15. どんなものを英語で読みますか？よく読む順に番号をつけてください。

__ ポップスやロックの歌の歌詞 __ 新聞 __ 雑誌 __ 本

16. 過去1年間で楽しむために英語の本を何冊読みましたか？

0冊 1-2冊 3-4冊 4冊以上

17. 今よりもっと英語で趣味の読書をしてみたいですか？

すごくしてみたい まあまあしてみたい あまりしたくない
いいえ、英語の読書に興味がない（Q.19へ）

18. どうして趣味の英語読書をもっとしないのですか？（下記の理由から3つ選んで順番をつけてください。）

__ 自分の英語レベルでは難しい __ 大学の勉強が忙しく時間がない
__ どんな本を読めばいいかわからない
__ 時間がない（アルバイト、家庭の事情など）
__ 英語の本に接する機会がない __ 暇があっても英語の本を読みたくない
__ その他

19. もしあなたの英語レベルにあったおもしろい本があれば、その本を読むのに週にどのくらいの時間をとれますか？

0時間 1時間 2-3時間 3時間以上

20. （授業以外に）楽しみで英語の本を読むことは重要だと思いますか？

とても重要 かなり重要 あまり重要ではない（Q.21へ）
全然重要ではない（Q.21へ）

21. なぜそのような英語での読書が重要だと思いますか？（下記の理由から3つ選んで順番をつけてください）

__ 自分のキャリアに必要 __ 他の文化をもっと知ることができる

- 知識や読み書きの能力を高めることができる 他の学問にも役に立つので
 単語力を身に付けるため 英語学習に役に立つので
 その他 _____
22. 時間の不足や自分の理解力のことは考えないで、趣味の英語読書は個人的に価値のある経験だと思いますか？
 とても価値がある かなり価値がある あまり価値がない 思わない
 （思わないと答えた人はここでアンケート終了です）
23. どんな英語の本を読みたいですか？（下記より3つ選んで順番をつけてください。）
 ミステリー、スパイ、探偵 冒険 サイエンスフィクション
 ロマンズ 趣味、旅行 古典 フィクション、小説
 ノンフィクション 詩、演劇
 社会科学（歴史、哲学、社会学、経済など） その他 _____

Appendix Two—Descriptive statistics (Numbers in parentheses are percentages).

1. Sex: M: 117 (52.9), F: 104 (47.1)
2. Age: 18: 89 (40.3), 19: 86 (38.9), 20: 30 (13.6), 21: 8 (3.6), 22: 4 (1.8), 24: 1 (0.1), 26: 1 (0.1), no answer 2 (0.9)
3. How many years have you studied English? (sum together past and present studies)
 2-3: 0 (0.0), 4-5: 5 (2.3), 6-7: 141 (63.8), 8-9 (or) over 10: 75 (33.9)
4. What other English classes are you currently taking at school? (Data omitted)
5. Have you ever attended private or extra-curricular English courses or lessons?
 yes, more than 1 year: 65 (29.5), yes, a few months: 38 (17.3), yes, a few weeks: 8 (3.6), no, never: 109 (49.5)
6. During your previous studies, did you have access to books in English to read for pleasure?
 yes, often: 6 (2.7), sometimes: 72 (32.6), rarely: 94 (42.5), no, never: 49 (22.2)
7. In the past, were you ever encouraged to read for pleasure in English by a teacher?
 no, never: 52 (23.5), hardly ever: 53 (24.0), sometimes: 104 (47.1), yes, very much: 12 (5.4)
8. In reading for pleasure in English, how would you rate your comprehension level?
 low (rely heavily on dictionary): 64 (29.1), average: 117 (53.2), good: 30 (13.6), very good: 9 (4.1)
9. If you do not know the meaning of all the words when reading in English, are able to understand the gist of what you read?
 yes, almost always: 21 (9.5), sometimes: 153 (69.2), rarely: 39 (17.6), no, I always rely on a dictionary: 8 (3.6)

Extensive Reading: Habits and Attitudes in a Japanese EFL Context

10. Have you spent any time in a country where English is the dominant language?
no, never: 135 (61.1), yes, less than 3 wks: 69 (31.2), 1-6 mos.: 6 (2.7) more than 6 mos.: 11 (5.0)
11. What was the purpose of your stay?
tourism/vacation: 47 (56), study: 32 (38.1), part-time work: 2 (2.4), business: 3 (3.6)
*n=84
12. In your leisure time, how often do you read books **in Japanese**?
__ once a week or more: 47 (21.3), once every 1-2 months: 38 (17.2) rarely: 98 (44.3), never: 38 (17.2)
13. In the last 12 months, how many books have you read for pleasure **in Japanese**?
1-2: 71 (32.1), 3-5: 78 (35.3), 6-8: 28 (12.7), more than 8: 44 (19.9)
14. How often do you read something **in English** for pleasure?
once a week or more: 19 (8.6), once every 1-2 months: 12 (5.4), rarely: 84 (38.0), never: 106 (48.0)
15. What do you usually read in English during your leisure time?
lyrics of pop, rock songs: 46 (40.7), magazines: 30 (26.5), newspapers: 14 (12.4), books: 23 (20.4) *n=113
16. In the last 12 months, how many books in English have you read for pleasure?
0: 26 (22.6), 1-2: 62 (53.9), 3-4: 17 (14.8), more than 4: 10 (8.7) *n=115
17. Would you like to read more books in English for pleasure than you do now?
definitely yes: 46 (20.8), probably yes: 127 (57.5), probably not: 42 (19.0), no: 6 (2.7)
18. Why don't you read more books in English for pleasure? (see Table 1)
19. If you had access to interesting books that were suitable to your comprehension level, how many hours per week would you be willing to dedicate to reading in English?
0: 3 (1.4), 1: 87 (40.5), 2-3: 87 (40.5), more than 3: 38 (17.7) *n=215
20. Do you think reading books for pleasure in English is important?
yes, very important: 91 (41.2), fairly important: 115 (52.0), not so important: 14 (6.3), not important at all: 1 (0.5)
21. Why do you think reading books for pleasure in English is important? (see Table 2)
22. Without considering possible lack of time or limited comprehension, would you find reading books in English for pleasure a personally rewarding experience?
yes, very rewarding: 110 (49.8), yes, fairly rewarding: 101 (45.7), only slightly rewarding: 8 (3.6), not rewarding: 2 (0.9)
23. What type of books in English would you like to read? From the list below, rank three preferences. (Data not included)