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# Students in College English Reading Classes: A Survey

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*A questionnaire was developed to investigate various aspects of students in college English reading classes. The foci were: students' perceived English reading abilities; perceived overall English abilities; motivation toward English reading; reading anxiety; English learning experiences; Japanese reading experiences; and needs and wants in English reading. The questionnaire was administered to approximately 90 non-English majors in two reading classes at a pharmaceutical university in Tokyo. The results showed that: students perceived their overall English ability, and English reading ability, as low; they were*

*neither well motivated, nor highly anxious, about reading English; and they viewed their English learning experiences rather negatively. Their motivation, perceived English ability, and reading anxiety were modestly correlated with their English learning experiences. These results call for English teachers to rethink their ways of teaching English.*

大学の英語講読クラスの学生の全体像を一度の実施で把握することを目的として質問紙が本研究のために作成された。特に調査されたのは、学生の英語能力全般および英語リーディング能力についての自己認識、英語リーディングに対するモチベーションおよび不安感、英語学習経験、日本語の読書経験、英語リーディングのニーズと欲求である。アンケートは東京にある薬科大学の講読の授業を受講している約90名(2クラス)の英語を専門としない学生に実施された。その結果、学生は自己の英語全般の能力および英語リーディング能力を低く評価し、英語リーディングについてとりわけ高いモチベーションや不安感を抱いているわけではなく、また英語学習経験を否定的に見ているということがわかった。また自己認識された英語能力、モチベーション、不安感は過去の学習経験と穏やかな関係があることもわかった。これらの結果は授業の方法について英語の教師に再考を促すものである。

Needs analysis is an important part of designing any curriculum (Brown, 1995). Information about student affective variables and past learning experiences is essential for college English teachers when they develop syllabi and teach. Considering the importance of reading instruction in college English education, those conducting tertiary level reading

classes will find such information indispensable, especially with respect to how students feel about reading English, and the kinds of learning experiences they have had in prior courses.

However, to my knowledge, existing questionnaires focus on particular affective variables, such as reading motivation (cf. Mori, 2002), and reading anxiety (cf. Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999). While studies utilizing these questionnaires have provided in-depth understanding of the target areas, none of these studies allow us to grasp the overall picture of our students. These questionnaires were designed for research, so they are inappropriate for classroom use. If teachers wish to gauge with existing batteries the affective variables of their students, they must administer multiple questionnaires, a cumbersome and time-consuming task. On the other hand, school-wide surveys are intended to obtain general data on students. These surveys are often too broad in focus, and do not provide detailed information necessary for English reading teachers.

A questionnaire was constructed to solve these two problems in investigating various aspects of students in English reading classrooms. The questionnaire was designed to collect this data in a single administration.

This study had three purposes:

1. Discover characteristics of students in college reading classes. Specific variables investigated are: (a) self-perceived English reading ability, (b) self-perceived general English ability, (c) English reading motivation, (d) English reading anxiety, (e) needs and wants, (f) Japanese reading experience, and (g) English learning experience.

2. Find relationships between students' self-perceptions and English learning experiences by comparing interactions among the seven variables.
3. Check and establish the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, which was designed to help English reading teachers better understand their students. If the questionnaire is not reliable and valid, the information collected may be inaccurate. According to Brown (2001), high reliability and validity are prerequisites for claims based on questionnaire findings. Therefore, these constituted an important focus of this study.

## Study

### Participants

Eighty-three Japanese sophomore students (50 females and 33 males) from two classes at a pharmaceutical university in Tokyo participated in this study. At the time the questionnaire was administered, the students were enrolled in a compulsory year-long course focusing on reading scientific English. The class met once a week for 90 minutes. Students were placed in the classes in *hiragana* order (equivalent to English alphabetical order) by family name, so the classes consisted of mixed-ability students.

### Instrument

The questionnaire, written in Japanese, consisted of seven parts, with a total of 82 questions. The seven parts were:

- Part 1: self-perceived English reading ability (12 5-point Likert-scaled items)
- Part 2: self-perceived overall English ability (14 5-point Likert-scaled items)

- Part 3: English reading motivation (16 5-point Likert-scaled items)
- Part 4: English reading anxiety (12 5-point Likert-scaled items)
- Part 5: students' wants and needs (three closed-response questions)
- Part 6: Japanese reading experience experiences (eight 5-point Likert-scaled items and three closed-response questions)
- Part 7: English learning experiences (14 closed-response questions)

For Likert-scaled items, students were asked to rank each statement from “1”, if strongly disagree, to “5”, if strongly agree.

### **Procedures**

Dörnyei (2003), Brown (2001), and Griffiee (1997) strongly advise the following five steps when constructing reliable and valid questionnaires: brainstorming, draft-writing, seeking opinions from others, revision, and piloting. In constructing this questionnaire, existing questionnaires (Hirai, 2001; Kite, Shen, & Sugitani, 2002; Matsuda & Gobel, 2001; Mori, 2002; Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999) were adapted, and several question items were created and added by the author where necessary. Next, two colleagues—a TESOL specialist and a college sophomore—were consulted. Revisions were made based on their suggestions. The questionnaire was subsequently piloted with 31 sophomore students at the same university. The items that did not correlate well with the mean of each section were deleted from the final version.

The questionnaire, to be completed at home, was distributed to the target groups in May, 2003. Ninety-one students were present on the day of administration, but only 83 students submitted it, a response rate of 91.2%.

### **Validation of the questionnaire**

#### *1. Reliability* (Cronbach's alpha)

Reliability of each part of the questionnaire was: Part 1, 0.93; Part 2, 0.93; Part 3, 0.86; Part 4, 0.87; Part 6 (only eight Likert-scaled items), 0.88; and Part 7 (Questions 2, 3, 10, 11 and 12), 0.71. After factor analysis, six items in Part 3 and two items in Part 4 were excluded from further analysis. Thus, Cronbach's alpha for these two parts became 0.84 and 0.87 respectively, indicating that each part of the questionnaire was satisfactorily reliable.

#### *2. Validity*

Factor analysis is a “statistical technique applied to a single set of variables when the researcher is interested in discovering which variables in the set form coherent subsets that are relatively independent of one another” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p. 582). For example, three factors found through a factor analysis imply three underlying constructs in the measurement.

The validity of Parts 1 through 4 was checked using factor analyses. After the first exploratory factor analysis, 12 factors were identified with an eigenvalue exceeding 1. However, the scree plot indicated that only the first three factors were relevant for further analyses. These three factors accounted for 50.01% of the total variance. All of the items in Parts 1 and 2 were loaded high on factor 1; most of those in 3, on factor 2; and most of those in part 4, on factor 3. This questionnaire was constructed with the intention of measuring self-perceived English reading ability in Part 1, self-perceived overall English ability in Part 2, English reading motivation in Part 3, and English reading anxiety in Part 4. Since the first two parts can be thought to have a common construct (self-perceived English ability), it seems that each part measured its intended psychological construct. Thus, the construct validity of the first four parts was established.

However, there were several items in Parts 3 (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 10) and 4 (items 1 and 12), falling outside the factors; they were excluded from the subsequent analysis. A second exploratory factor analysis yielded the following results after a varimax rotation: all the items in Part 1 and 2 loaded highest on factor 1; all of those in Part 3, on factor 2; and all of those in Part 4, on factor 3.

### Data analysis

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient were calculated using Excel and SPSS version 11.0.

## Results

### General tendency

As Table 1 shows, both self-perceived English reading ability (Part 1, mean=2.38) and self-perceived overall English ability (Part 2, 2.14) were low, but self-perceived overall English ability was lower than self-perceived English reading ability. Students also perceived their English learning experience negatively (Part 7, 2.57). Students' answers to Part 3 (English reading motivation), Part 4 (English reading anxiety), and Part 6 (Japanese reading experience) did not show extreme positive or negative orientation. In terms of reading motivation (Part 3, 3.28) and reading anxiety (Part 4, 3.29), students were neither very motivated/anxious nor unmotivated/anxiety-free. Students did not show any extreme tendencies in Japanese reading (Part 6, 2.96).

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of each part (except part 5)**

	<i>N</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>
Part 1: English reading ability (12 items)	83	2.92	1.00	3.92	2.38	.74	-.16	-.60
Part 2: Overall English ability (14 items)	83	2.71	1.00	3.71	2.14	.69	.18	-.57
Part 3: English reading motivation (10 items)	82	3.50	1.00	4.50	3.28	.73	-.73	.65
Part 4: English reading anxiety (10 items)	81	3.50	1.50	5.00	3.29	.74	-.11	.14
Part 6: Japanese reading (8 items)	81	3.63	1.00	4.63	2.96	.93	-.23	-.81
Part 7: English learning experiences (5 items)	79	2.80	1.00	3.80	2.59	.71	-.43	.39

Note 1: In Part 3, items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 10 are excluded.

2: In Part 4, items 1 & 12 are excluded.

3: In part 6, only 8 Likert-scaled items are included.

4: In part 7, only 5 questions (Q2, 3, 10, 11, & 12) are included.

5: Scores for negatively worded statements (S13, 14, 15, and 16 in Part 3, and 1 and 11 in Part 4) are reversed where computing descriptive statistics.

### Part 1: Self-perceived English reading ability

Table 2 reveals that more students perceived a need for a bigger vocabulary (Statement 3, mean = 1.90) than for grammar (S4, 2.70). In terms of ability to read general English magazines, students showed neither positive, nor negative, orientation (S11, 3.11), but ability to understand English in their special field (i.e., science) was rated lower (S12, 2.72) than ability to read general English magazines. Students also thought that they

had not yet acquired higher level reading skills, such as critical reading and making inferences (S7, 2.11; S8, 2.07). Furthermore, they considered themselves slow readers (S5, 2.17).

### Part 2: Self-perceived English ability in general

Table 3 shows that students perceived their oral communication skills as weak (S4-S7: speaking; S10 & S11: listening). However, they thought that they could understand English

**Table 2. Part 1 (self-perceived English reading ability)**

Statement		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>
S1	I'm good at reading English.	83	2.45	5	1	1.06	0.15	-0.94
S2	I can read English as confidently as I read Japanese.	83	1.70	4	1	0.77	0.91	0.29
S3	My vocabulary is big enough to read most of the passages written in English.	83	1.90	4	1	0.77	0.81	0.78
S4	I think I understand grammar well enough to read English	83	2.70	5	1	1.05	-0.13	-0.98
S5	I think I read English fast.	83	2.17	5	1	1.02	0.64	-0.36
S6	I can understand the writer's intention in materials written in English.	83	2.59	4	1	1.04	-0.08	-1.17
S7	I can both understand something clearly stated and infer something implied in English.	83	2.11	5	1	0.88	0.54	0.23
S8	I can critique contents of something written in English.	83	2.07	5	1	0.90	0.46	-0.14
S9	I think I can enjoy novels and essays written in English.	82	2.70	5	1	1.12	-0.16	0.81
S10	I can understand simple guidebooks and manuals written in English without using a dictionary.	83	2.43	5	1	1.01	0.33	-0.71
S11	I can read general English magazines such as Time and Newsweek (with the help of a dictionary).	82	3.11	5	1	1.08	-0.40	-0.62
S12	I can read literature about my specialty written in English (with the help of a dictionary).	82	2.72	5	1	1.12	-0.01	-0.93



news better than English dramas, or movies (S9, 2.05; S 10, 1.93). Many students believed that they had not yet developed academic speaking and listening abilities (S6, 1.44; S7,

1.89; S11, 1.55). They seemed to be more confident in their basic writing abilities (S12, 3.14; S13, 2.60), although their confidence was not high.

**Table 3. Part 2 (self-perceived overall English ability)**

Statement		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>
S1	Compared to my classmates, I think I am good at English.	83	2.09	4	1	0.98	0.43	-0.88
S2	I can carry on every-day conversations in English in such situations as shopping.	83	2.63	5	1	1.20	0.35	-0.74
S3	I can carry on general conversations in English with foreigners.	83	2.27	5	1	0.97	0.37	-0.47
S4	I can explain or describe things in English.	83	1.93	4	1	0.86	0.71	-0.04
S5	I can talk about or discuss current issues in English.	83	1.65	4	1	0.81	1.14	0.68
S6	I can carry on academic or business-related conversations.	83	1.44	3	1	0.61	1.04	0.09
S7	I can give presentations or speeches in English.	83	1.89	4	1	0.97	0.87	-0.25
S8	I can follow spoken instructions.	83	2.47	5	1	0.99	0.16	-0.67
S9	I can listen to and understand English news.	83	2.05	4	1	0.86	0.36	-0.68
S10	I can enjoy English TV dramas and movies without Japanese subtitles.	82	1.93	4	1	0.87	0.49	-0.73
S11	I can understand lectures on my specialty.	83	1.55	5	1	0.76	1.71	5.11
S12	I can write a few lines of simple sentences in English.	83	3.14	5	1	1.10	-0.24	-0.83
S13	I can exchange personal letters or email in English.	83	2.60	5	1	1.22	0.36	-0.93
S14	I can develop and express what I want to say in English.	83	2.23	4	1	0.90	0.04	-0.97

**Table 4. Part 3 (English reading motivation)**

Statement		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>
S1	I read English newspapers.	83	1.72	5	1	1.06	1.39	0.84
S2	I read English books (such as novels and essays) other than textbooks, reference books, and workbooks.	83	2.18	5	1	1.24	0.68	-0.84
S3	I read English sites on the Internet and read pamphlets or manuals written in English.	83	2.19	5	1	1.23	0.78	-0.41
S4	After my English courses at college finish, I think I will voluntarily keep contact with English.	82	3.00	5	1	1.20	-0.04	-0.95
S5	I can get more information related to my special field if I can read English well.	83	4.34	5	1	0.95	-1.85	3.77
S6	It is important to be able to read English well in order to enrich my future life.	83	4.45	5	1	0.91	-1.90	3.71
S7	I'm studying English because I want to study at graduate school (in or outside Japan).	83	2.28	5	1	1.12	0.42	-0.82
S8	I want to get high scores on English tests such as TOEIC and TOEFL.	83	4.13	5	1	1.17	-1.37	1.03
S9	I like to read English.	83	2.96	5	1	1.18	-0.29	-0.78
S10	I'm interested in articles and books (in Japanese or English) written about foreign countries.	83	3.67	5	1	1.19	-0.68	-0.46
S11	I feel a sense of fulfillment when I get some knowledge through English.	83	3.71	5	1	1.20	-0.62	-0.64
S12	Once I start reading an English passage, I'm totally absorbed in it.	83	2.65	5	1	1.07	0.20	-0.50
S13	It is too much trouble to read English.	83	3.41	5	1	1.18	-0.23	-0.99
S14	I'm taking English II because it is a required course.	83	3.17	5	1	1.17	-0.06	-0.78
S15	I think practicing speaking and listening to English is more important than reading English.	83	3.42	5	1	0.91	-0.16	0.52
S16	All I want to get from English II is a course credit; I don't care if I can't get a good grade for it.	83	2.22	5	1	1.20	0.88	-0.07

### Part 3: English reading motivation

From the results of S5, S6, and S7 in Table 4, students seemed to have quite high instrumental motivation (4.34, 4.45, and 4.13 respectively). However, their intrinsic motivation (S9, 2.96) was much lower, although reading English provided many with a sense of fulfillment (S11, 3.71). Their actual engagement in reading English materials was quite limited (S1, 1.72; S2, 2.18; S3, 2.19), and they tended to see reading as cumbersome (S13,

3.41). S10 (3.67) indicates students' moderately high interest in foreign countries. Students considered oral communication skills to be somewhat more important than reading skills (S15, 3.42), a thought-provoking result.

### Part 4: English reading anxiety

In Table 5, S2 (3.79) and S3 (3.79) indicate students' dependence on a dictionary, and lack of tolerance for ambiguity,

**Table 5. Part 4 (English reading anxiety)**

Statement		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>
S1	It is fun to read English.	81	3.14	5	1	1.11	-0.33	-0.60
S2	Reading English without a dictionary makes me feel very nervous.	81	3.79	5	1	0.99	-0.42	-0.51
S3	I feel anxious when I don't understand the content well while reading English.	81	3.79	5	1	1.06	-0.70	-0.24
S4	I feel uneasy when I don't understand sentence structures while reading English.	81	3.33	5	1	1.18	-0.31	-0.95
S5	I get so nervous when I read English that by the time I finish reading I forget the content.	81	2.77	5	1	1.17	0.38	-0.72
S6	I can't help translating English into Japanese when reading English.	81	2.57	5	1	1.11	0.49	-0.45
S7	I feel uneasy when I don't understand everything while reading English.	81	2.78	5	1	1.15	0.30	-0.78
S8	I think it's very difficult to read English.	81	3.60	5	1	1.11	-0.33	-0.83
S9	I feel so nervous when I think that I have to understand everything written in English.	81	3.31	5	1	1.19	-0.36	-0.81
S10	I'll be very perplexed if I am told to follow instructions written in English.	81	3.27	5	1	1.05	-0.12	-0.74
S11	I can read English with the same degree of presence of mind as when reading Japanese.	81	2.30	5	1	0.88	0.48	0.14
S12	It seems to me that I won't be able to comprehend written English no matter how hard I try.	81	2.35	5	1	1.06	0.61	0.09

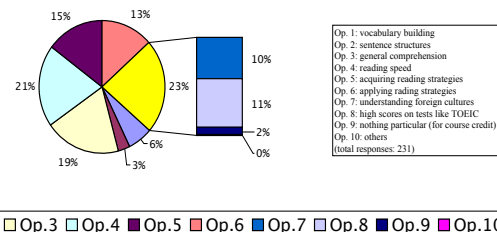


although showing some degree of tolerance (S7, 2.78). Students were neutral in terms of enjoyment of reading English (S1, 3.14), but reading English was perceived as somewhat difficult (S8, 3.60). While the idea that they must understand English seemed to cause anxiety (S3, 3.79; S9, 3.31), their anxiety level was not very high (S5, 2.77). They also felt uneasy if they were told to follow instructions written in English (S10, 3.27). Students also reported feeling more nervous when reading English than when reading Japanese (S11, 2.30).

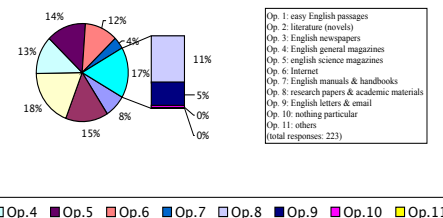
### Part 5: Students' wants and needs

In this section, students were asked to choose up to three answer options. A total of 231 responses were recorded for the question, *What would you like to be able to do through English lessons in college?* (Graph 1). The two most frequently chosen responses were increasing reading speed (46 instances), and improving general comprehension (45). The two responses with the next highest response rate were acquiring reading strategies (34), and applying appropriate reading strategies (31). Graph 2 indicates that students most frequently chose English newspapers (42), followed by literature (33), English science magazines (31), and English general magazines (28) as the genres that they wanted to be able to read. From Graph 3, it became clear that students frequently perceive English as necessary in the future for reading research papers (47), writing research papers (29), work (24), and studying for employment tests (20). It can be inferred from these results that reading research papers is not what these students wanted to do in college reading classes, although a great many perceived a future need.

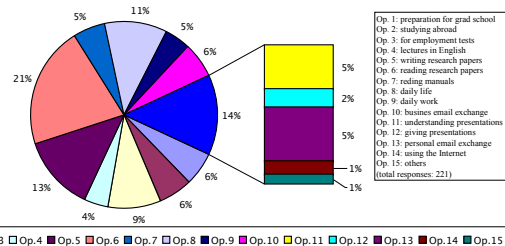
Graph 1: Part 5-1 Reading Wants



Graph 2: Part 5-2 Reading Reading Wants (Genres)



Graph 3: Part 5-3 Future English Needs



### Part 6: Japanese reading experience

Students generally liked reading Japanese books (S1, 3.72), but they did not often engage in this activity. The time they spent on reading was low (S7, 2.27), and the number of Japanese books they had read was small (S9, 1.89; S10, 2.40). Students had read, on average, only zero to three books in the previous month, and fewer than 24 books in the entire previous academic

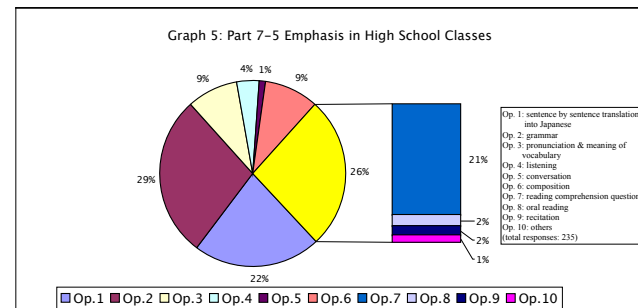
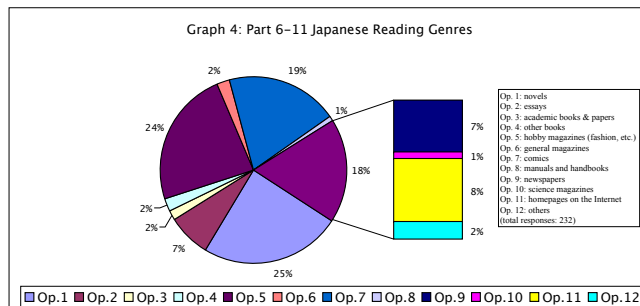
year. Reading Japanese sites on the Internet (S8, 3.40) seemed to constitute a larger portion of many students' daily activities than reading newspapers (S6, 2.79). S2 to S5 indicate that students were not particularly confident in their Japanese reading ability (2.90, 2.88, 2.77, and 2.99 respectively). Graph 4 shows that novels (57 incidents), hobby magazines (55), and comics (45) were the most frequently mentioned genres.

**Table 6. Part 6 (Japanese reading)**

Statement/Question		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>
S1	I like reading Japanese books.	81	3.72	5	1	1.21	-0.71	-0.45
S2	My grades for Japanese at high school were good in general.	81	2.90	5	1	1.49	0.06	-1.45
S3	I think my Japanese reading comprehension ability is high.	80	2.88	5	1	1.20	0.07	-0.70
S4	I can deeply appreciate Japanese literature.	81	2.77	5	1	1.13	-0.05	-0.79
S5	I can comprehend accurately something written in Japanese.	81	2.99	5	1	1.13	-0.03	-0.62
S6	I read Japanese newspaper everyday.	81	2.79	5	1	1.45	0.18	-1.33
S7	I read Japanese books (excluding newspapers, magazines, and comics) for about 30 minutes every day.	81	2.27	5	1	1.18	0.94	0.08
S8	I often read Japanese sites on the Internet.	81	3.40	5	1	1.34	-0.45	-1.02
S9	How many Japanese books (excluding newspapers, magazines, and comics) did you read last month?	80	1.89	4	1	0.74	0.75	0.78
S10	How many Japanese books (excluding newspapers, magazines, and comics) did you read last academic year (from last April to this March)?	80	2.40	5	1	0.86	1.40	2.36

Note: S9: 1) 0 books, 2) 1-3 books, 3) 4-7 books, 4) 8-11 books 5) 12 books or more

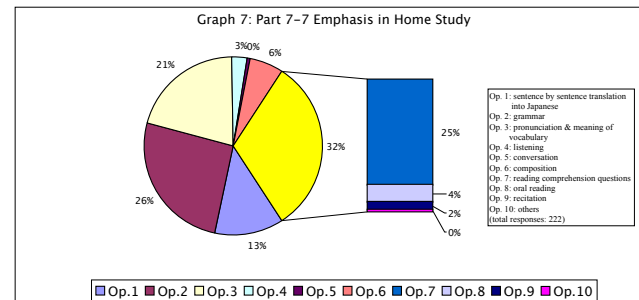
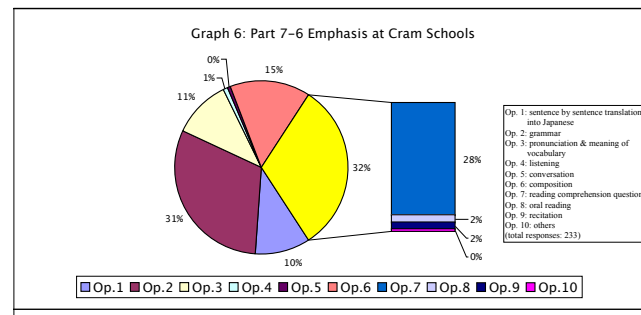
S10: 1) 0 books, 2) 1-11 books, 3) 12-23 books, 4) 24-35 books, 5) 36 books or more



## Part 7: English reading experience

Q1 in Table 7 indicates almost all students started studying English in the first year of junior high school. Their enjoyment in learning English decreased from junior high school through high school (Q2, 3.04; Q3, 2.58). Many of the students claimed to have very limited experience of extensive English reading (Q12, 1.96; Q13, 1.46; Q14, 2.17). However, they did not consider that the English they studied in high school was very difficult (Q10, 2.57), although they did not think they performed better in English than in other academic subjects (Q11, 2.77).

Questions 5 to 8 allowed students to choose three options, and Questions 9 asked them to choose only one option. Graph 5 shows that the majority of students reported undergoing grammar-translation (*yakudoku*) instruction (translation: 52 instances; grammar: 66 instances) in high school, and thought emphasis was predominantly on grammar (72) at cram schools (Graph 6). Graph 7 shows that they put similar emphasis on studying grammar (57) and vocabulary (46) at home. Graph 8 indicates that English-Japanese translation (61) was the primary instructional method in college reading classrooms. From Graph 9, it is clear that 25% of the students chose grammar as their favorite area of English learning. Twenty-one percent of them chose conversation as their preferred area.



**Table 7. Part 7 (English learning experience)**

Question		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>
Q1	At what age did you start learning English?	82	11.62	14	5	1.64	-2.39	6.39
Q2	Were English lessons in junior high school fun?	82	3.04	5	1	1.10	-0.13	-0.40
Q3	Were English lessons in senior high schools fun?	81	2.58	4	1	0.91	-0.24	-0.73
Q4	How many hours a week did you take English classes on average in senior school?	81	2.77	5	1	1.19	0.56	-0.55
Q10	What did you think about the difficulty of English you studied when you were in high school, generally speaking?	81	2.57	5	1	0.77	-0.07	0.59
Q11	Compared with other academic subjects, were you good at English or poor at it?	82	2.77	5	1	1.28	-0.01	-1.22
Q12	Have you ever read any English books for pleasure other than homework assignments from schools or cram schools?	81	1.96	4	1	0.96	0.58	-0.77
Q13	How many English books (excluding textbooks and reference books) did you read outside class last year?	82	1.46	5	1	0.67	2.15	8.24
Q14	How many English books (excluding textbooks and reference books) have you read outside class since you started learning English?	82	2.17	6	1	1.15	1.00	0.84

Note: Q2 & Q3: 1) not fun at all, 2) rarely fun, 3) occasionally fun, 4) often fun, 5) always fun

Q4: 1) 3 hours or fewer, 2) 4 hours, 3) 5 hours, 4) 6 hours, 5) 7 hours or more

Q10: 1) very difficult, 2) a little difficult, 3) right level, 4) a little easy, 5) very easy

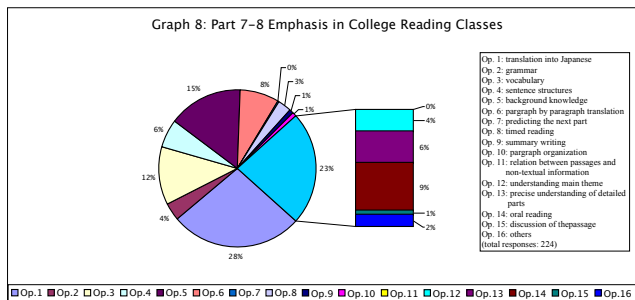
Q11: 1) the poorest, 2) rather poor, 3) no difference, 4) rather good, 5) the best

Q12: 1) not at all, 2) seldom, 3) sometimes, 4) often, 5) very often

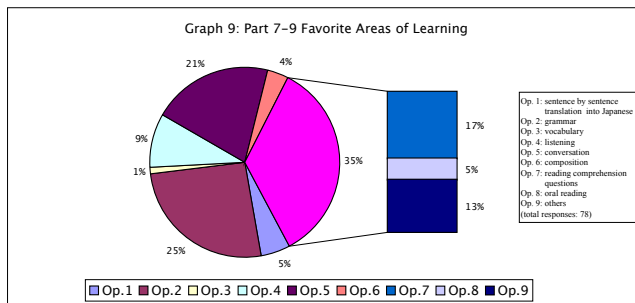
Q13: 1) 0 books, 2) 1-3 books, 3) 4-6 books, 4) 7-12 books, 5) 13 books or more

Q14: 1) 0 books, 2) 1-3 books, 3) 4-6 books, 4) 7-12 books, 5) 13-20 books, 6) 21 books or more

Graph 8: Part 7-8 Emphasis in College Reading Classes



Graph 9: Part 7-9 Favorite Areas of Learning



## Relationships among the parts

Pearson correlation coefficient statistics were computed to show the relationships among the parts ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The results are shown in Table 8.

Students' English learning experience (Part 7) was significantly correlated with their self-perceived English reading ability (P1), self-perceived overall English ability (P2), and English reading motivation (P3), and negatively, also significantly, correlated with English reading anxiety (P4). Self-perceived English reading ability (P1) and self-perceived overall English

ability (P2) were strongly correlated with each other ( $r = 0.86$ ). Self-perceived English reading ability (P1) and self-perceived overall English ability (P2) were moderately correlated with English reading motivation (P3) ( $r = 0.67, 0.61$ , respectively). English reading anxiety (P4) was moderately and negatively correlated with self-perceived English reading ability (P1), self-perceived overall English ability (P2), and English reading motivation (P3). Japanese reading experience (P6) was significantly correlated with self-perceived English reading ability (P1), self-perceived overall English ability (P2), English reading anxiety (P4), and English reading motivation (P3), but these relationships were weaker than those among the other parts (except the P3-P4 correlation; see the P6 columns above). Experience of extensive reading (P7-12, P7-14) was moderately correlated with self-perceived English reading ability (P1), self-perceived overall English ability (P2), English reading motivation (P3), and negatively correlated with English reading anxiety (P4). English lesson hours at senior high school (P7-4) did not have a significant correlation with self-perceived overall English ability (P2), English reading motivation (P3), and English reading anxiety (P4), but were weakly correlated with self-perceived English reading ability (P1).

## Discussion and conclusions

This study shows aspects of students with respect to perceived English reading ability, perceived overall English ability, English reading motivation, English reading anxiety, English needs and wants, Japanese reading experiences, and English learning experiences. Despite seven years of English education, students' perceptions of their English reading ability and overall English ability were quite low. This lack of confidence is strongly related to their negative view of their past English

**Table 8. Relationships between sections (correlations table)**

	P1	P 2	P 3	P4	P6	P7	P7-2	P7-3	P7-4	P7-10	P7-11	P7-12	P7-14
Part 1	1	.86**	.59**	-.50**	.41**	.65**	.31**	.37**	.29**	.54**	.58**	.48**	.49**
Part 2		1	.50**	-.49**	.35**	.64**	.35**	.48**	.25*	.43**	.46**	.50**	.52**
Part 3			1	-.24*	.31**	.63**	.29**	.47**	.15	.37**	.58**	.47**	.43**
Part 4				1	-.24*	-.33**	-.02	-.14	-.15	-.37**	-.31**	-.40**	-.37**
Part 6					1	.34**	.14	.15	-.03	.43**	.15	.30**	.28*
Part 7						1	.68**	.70**	.13	.61**	.83**	.59**	.56**
Part 7-2							1	.39**	-.02	.29**	.40**	.20	.35**
Part 7-3								1	.18	.18	.52**	.29**	.25*
Part 7-4									1	-.10	.22	.15	.09
Part 7-10										1	.50**	.22*	.36**
Part 7-11											1	.36**	.33**
Part 7-12												1	.67**
Part 7-14													1

Note: \*\* indicates correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* indicates correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



learning experiences, but it does not have a strong relationship with Japanese reading experiences. As for affective variables, their anxiety level was neither high nor low. On the other hand, students were not particularly motivated in English reading. Their reading wants and needs did not converge.

Comparison of affective variables with past experience indicates some interesting facts. First, for reading ability, students thought they were slow readers and did not have enough vocabulary to read English without a dictionary. Most of students reported that they had not experienced extensive reading, and that their higher level reading skills had not been yet developed. Past instruction may be the primary cause for these phenomena. *Yakudoku*, the predominant instructional method in their past experience, seems to hinder students reading quickly without a dictionary, and engaging in extensive reading. Interestingly, students who have experienced extensive reading viewed their English reading ability more positively. Although it is possible that their higher ability allowed them to engage in extensive reading, the strong connection between extensive reading and perceived English reading ability must not be overlooked. It should also be noted that, because of its frequent use, students seemed to be accustomed to the *yakudoku* method. Surprisingly, a quarter of the students expressed their liking to studying grammar.

Second, students wanted to increase reading speed and acquire reading strategies, which were not emphasized in previous English classes. They seemed to know what was necessary to improve their English reading ability.

Third, students with more favorable views on past English experiences perceived their English reading ability and overall

English ability as higher, were more motivated to read English, and had lower levels of anxiety in English reading. Although another interpretation—that more confident, motivated learners may reflect their past learning experience more favorably—is possible, this strong connection should be kept in mind.

Although providing insight, the results presented here cannot be generalized to students in other settings, because students in this study were pharmacy majors. Further, extensive research is required to make such claims. This study also has a limitation inherent to questionnaire studies—it reveals only students' perspectives. There may be other important constructs that have not been included in this questionnaire.

Although the results must be interpreted with caution, I believe that the following broad pedagogical implications may be drawn:

1. College reading classes should primarily focus on building confidence and elevating motivation.
2. The *Yakudoku* method should be avoided as much as possible, even though teachers and students seem to be accustomed to it. More opportunities should be provided for extensive reading and fluency building. Transition to newer, more unfamiliar teaching methods may evoke confusion with students. Communicating curriculum and task goals clearly would be helpful in minimizing misunderstanding and confusion.
3. Students need more enjoyable English reading experiences to make English reading a life-long practice.
4. Care should be taken to teach and develop reading strategies and higher level reading skills.

5. The syllabus should reflect students' future needs. It is recommended that instructors consult with professors in the students' major fields of study to ascertain future English reading needs.

I hope this study has provided college English teachers with a practical way to more fully understand and incorporate student experiences and beliefs into university reading courses.

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